

The Philosophy of Movement: Using Affect Theory and Existentialism to Negotiate
Difference Online

by

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Abstract

The design of comment systems on social media and news websites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are not made to promote critical discussions or find the source of political conflict. The integration of digital tools like social media to enact politics online and the shift to identity-based politics further complicates the political space. The speed at which digital communication occurs and the rate at which online news is released places stress on the ability to pause and think about critical and sensitive issues like death. This paper introduces a new theory called the philosophy of movement. It will explain how adopting this philosophy will help the user be a more effective and affective communicator of political issues. The philosophy of movement incorporates affect theory, existentialism, and conflict resolution to produce an actionable and theoretical model to understand and respond to political difference in the digital space. In the philosophy of movement through existential authenticity the individual is faced with the ambiguity of reality and the multitude of contending truths. They are able to negotiate through this conflict by accepting ambiguity, but empowered to act in spite of not knowing through their affective potential, the ability to affect and be affected in the public space and make an impact in the field of relation. The philosophy of movement is implemented in a case study examining a local conflict where a woman is at odds with a town that believes driving a hearse as a regular vehicle is inappropriate. The philosophy shows how the dissemination of the conflict online obscured the true source of the issue and did not enable reconciliation due to the inauthentic response of the public and the style in which the articles were published. This paper shows how the philosophy of movement contributes to authentic problem solving so that reconciliation can be reached through conflicts with ambiguous truths.

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Introduction

During my childhood there was always a computer in the house. My father, a former computer scientist, saw a future in digital technology. I would watch him flip the black Nokia phone open with an authority that I could only imagine to possess for when I would one day become an adult.

In 2015, over one quarter of students in Grade 4 had their own cell phone. This rose to an 85% ownership rate by Grade 11.¹ Although my childhood usage was limited to (offline) Solitaire and Minesweeper, which then evolved to top gaming websites such as Addicting Games and Miniclip in the early 2000's, these websites have long since been usurped by social media by youth. As Valerie Steeves notes:

In 2005, half of the 10 most popular sites were game sites. Although the top 10 list in 2013 still contains two game sites, they no longer occupy the top two spots (instead coming in at numbers seven and eight), and the list is dominated instead by social media (taking four of the top 10 spots) and YouTube (at number 1).²

Canadian youth are becoming increasingly digitally literate at younger ages as Canada continues to live and participate in a growing network culture. The boundaries of appropriate use and addiction become blurred as an individual's work and personal lives are managed through the same device. Without appropriate measures taken, work emails are received at home and managing personal relationships online spills over into the workplace. With growing concerns over this balance, France legislated a need for employers to make alternative arrangements and

1. Valerie Steeves, *Young Canadians in a Wired World: Phase III* (Ottawa: MediaSmarts, 2015), 4.

2. Ibid., 5.

protocols so that work does not spill over into time off.³

In spite of new boundaries being built over digital technology, the Internet allows individuals to communicate with other types of people they otherwise may not have had the opportunity to meet. With individuals of a variety of experiences and demographics interacting online, there is the potential to miscommunicate as differences in culture and social etiquette may confuse or frustrate the recipient. At the same time, while anonymity may not directly promote the user's desire to harass others online, it does provide a tool to hurt others as Canada attempts to balance privacy and criminality in legislation related to use of the Internet.

This abusive behaviour has exposed itself in anonymous and non-anonymous issues related to politics, where conversations are an exchange of abusive words in a desire to win or dominate rather than solve a problem. While many individuals are earnest in their desire to solve or improve political issues, the intent to help can be overshadowed by other aspects of human nature. Emotions can be high when one's beliefs are endangered by other individuals whose beliefs are contrary to their own. Efforts to understand can lead to frustration and/or cynicism in trying to express oneself and make a difference in an ocean of online activity.

I believe the beginning to improving online communication starts at the individual level. I believe that strong individuals build strong collective action and builds outwards to influence other people. Furthermore, I believe building a tool with a humanities specificity is what is needed. I believe in understanding oneself and one's motives for participating in the world and accepting those motives, perhaps at the consequence of being selfish, may ultimately manifest itself not as selfishness, but *care*. While there may be no economic or political demand for the humanities, I believe the humanities builds individuals, and those individuals can help produce conversations to engage with aspects of daily life and ongoingness that they otherwise could not have tackled. At the same time, I wonder why the humanities must defend itself when many of its disciplines can be practiced alongside the so-called realistic and pragmatic choices of business, engineering, computer science, and beyond.

Ironically, this thesis is ultimately meant to show that the humanities *is* pragmatic. My

3. Alissa J. Rubin, "France Lets Workers Turn Off, Tune Out and Live Life," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2017, accessed August 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/02/world/europe/france-work-email.html>.

solution to building more effective online and offline communication is the philosophy of movement. I built the philosophy to aid in guiding oneself through politics and difference by building self-awareness. The philosophy of movement also delves into the complicated relationships between the individual and the world by deconstructing actions and events through affect theory. The philosophy behaves as not only a set of values to practice, but *why* and *how* these values are important and their significant relationship to the world we inhabit.

The goal of this thesis is to:

1. Introduce and explain the philosophy of movement.
2. Introduce and explain the positives and negatives of online politics.
3. Through a case study, show how the philosophy of movement can be effective to communicate through difference online and enable reconciliation.

In Chapter 1, I will explain the philosophy of movement. I will begin with the first foundational pillar, affect, by bringing together a string of definitions made by established theorists in the field such as Brian Massumi, Lauren Berlant, and Sarah Ahmed to build a cohesive understanding of the term. This is meant to later establish affect's role in the production of events and the body's capacity to feel and act through them.

For the second pillar, I will draw upon existentialism. While I reference and discuss notable existentialists such as Kierkegaard, de Beauvoir, and Sartre, my focus is Martin Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time*. I draw upon these works to put together an understanding of existential "authenticity," because I believe critical self-awareness occurs when one becomes authentic. Finally, I will deconstruct the metaphor of movement which will allow me to put together how affect and existentialism build the philosophy.

In Chapter 2, I will turn towards politics. In order to build an understanding of the contemporary political climate, I will discuss digital developments in politics and the transition of politics to online spaces. I will consider social media, online news outlets, and other digital tools to think about how the way individuals practice politics has changed over the course of the last decade.

I will also think about the many ways which democracy manifests and consider the pros and cons of living in a democratic society. In this way, I can introduce the concept of "difference."

I will discuss why conflict is necessary to produce a politics of change when done from a critical perspective instead of antagonistic. I will end the chapter with discussing why philosophy is integral to making this healthy conflict possible, specifically the philosophy of movement.

Chapter 3 is a case study of a conflict between one woman and the small but wealthy town of Rothesay, New Brunswick. The conflict stems from one individual choosing to drive a hearse as their daily vehicle, and certain individuals being opposed to its use. I will discuss the ambiguity of the conflict, why the conflict developed the way it did, the online response as a result of the conflict, and how the philosophy of movement could improve communication and promote critical conversations with the online community to find a collective solution to the problem.

Before I begin, I want to end the Introduction on a note from Justin Stover in consideration of why there is no case for the humanities:

We are often told that we need to articulate the case for the humanities in order to survive the current budgetary and political landscape ... The confusion over the purpose of the humanities has nothing to do with their relevance. The humanities are no more or less relevant now than they ever were. It is not the humanities that we have lost faith in, but the economic, political, and social order that they have been made to serve. Perhaps we only demand a case for the humanities because we cannot fathom having to make a case for anything else.⁴

In creating the philosophy of movement, I wanted to produce a way to optimistically communicate and behave in the political space. I wanted a tool to overcome difference with curiosity and criticality, to not respond with antagonism, and to be okay in times where I may undoubtedly be in the wrong. The humanities does not and should not serve the institutions. Institutions die and change with the cultural trends of an era. The humanities are witness and testimony to traditions and beliefs that have thrived, failed, and mutated to the new needs of society. There is a slow ongoingness to politics, to life, which one must be patient in attending to, but if they do, can greatly reward them.

4. Justin Stover, "There Is No Case for the Humanities," *American Affairs* 1 (2017), accessed August 7, 2018, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/11/no-case-humanities/>.

Chapter 1

Affect, Existentialism, and the Philosophy of Movement

I am riveted by the prospect exploring alternative ways of understanding the world. To not be entirely bound by a structure which overwhelmingly lends itself to the clockwork of the universe means our imaginations can thrive; we are free to dream of other possibilities—possibilities that may, in fact, be real. I believe that digital technology has helped grow this imagination.

In our current society, the digital need no introduction. It seems that every day some new idea moves from the realm of science fiction into reality, particularly with advances in artificial intelligence (AI), big data, neural networks, and deep learning. The aforementioned concepts, combined with smaller and more powerful physical computing infrastructures, led to world chess champion Garry Kasparov losing to AI Deep Blue in 1997.¹ Twenty years later, Chinese Go master Ke Jie would lose to the Google-developed AI AlphaGo.² However, there is one caveat: these game-playing AI computers are programmed with a database of thousands of moves and

1. Mark Robert Anderson, “Twenty years on from Deep Blue vs Kasparov: how a chess match started the big data revolution,” *The Conversation*, May 11, 2017, accessed September 7, 2017, <http://theconversation.com/twenty-years-on-from-deep-blue-vs-kasparov-how-a-chess-match-started-the-big-data-revolution-76882>.

2. Paul Mozur, “Google’s AlphaGo Defeats Chinese Go Master in Win for A.I.,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 2017, accessed September 7, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/business/google-deepmind-alphago-go-champion-defeat.html?mcubz=0>.

examples to draw from. Combined with extremely fast processing speeds, the AI can decide on an action by juxtaposing their opponent's move against the database of examples provided. While Deep Blue and AlphaGo can play their respective games with masterful precision, that is their sole purpose. They are not able to connect with humans in a meaningful way through any conversational or emotional interaction. Even tools designed to provide emotional support, such as the fluffy seal Paro, a therapy robot, are built to provide specific forms of comfort to those suffering from dementia.³ While Paro challenges notions of building emotional bonds between humans and robots, the therapeutic seal possesses a sophisticated, specific set of responses set to activate based on external human stimuli.

Similarly, this deep form of human communication is also still not possible with voice recognition-based AI. While individuals are able to speak to the AI personalities encased in their cell phones and computers to help them organize their day-to-day activities and gather information, they are not conversing with their computers at the same level as with HAL from Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. For instance, the tech company Garmin produces outdoor and sporting watches made to track distance, location, and heart rate, a popular choice among distance runners. On the other hand Garmin watches, Deep Blue, AlphaGo, and Paro are still not capable of responding beyond their core programming, and are still capable of internal error with regular maintenance and updates required. For the moment, it seems that society is still safe from the robot takeover hailed by science fiction and scientists alike. Famous minds in the tech industry like Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, and Steve Wozniak caution against using AI technology to build autonomous weapons for war, signing an open letter requesting the banning of autonomous weapons without human control.⁴ With technology still in its youth, legislation and ethical boundaries are yet to be solidified. However, scientists and engineers continue to furiously pursue smarter and more emotionally intelligent robotics every day.

3. Amy Harmon, "A Soft Spot for Circuitry," *The New York Times*, July 4, 2010, accessed April 17, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/05/science/05robot.html?_r=2%5C&pagewanted=1.

4. Future of Life Institute, "Autonomous Weapons: An Open Letter from AI and Robotics Researchers," July 28, 2015, accessed May 6, 2018, <https://futureoflife.org/open-letter-autonomous-weapons/>.

Despite the paranoia that may follow with AI, the implementation of digital devices into our everyday lives has generally been considered positive, especially with access to the Internet. According to the Internet Telecommunication Union (ITU), an agency of the United Nations, 86.6% of Canadian households have access to the Internet, with 88.47% of those individuals using it.⁵ Furthermore, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) specifies that while the majority of Canadian Internet use is for email at 92%, over half of Canadian Internet users also do their banking (68%), participate on social media (59%), read current events (55%), among other things.⁶

However, as Internet use continues to increase, new cultural questions begin to be posed based on privilege (e.g. low income families, homeless, and third world countries having voices and access), human rights (e.g. censorship and free speech), economics (e.g. e-commerce, buying out-of-country, and a shifting job market), law (e.g. how far does the law extend into digital space and what is actionable in court), and politics (e.g. fake news/propaganda and sensitive information leaks) as society questions how to proceed with this budding technology. Yet in spite of its youth, computers and digital technology have become the contemporary backdrop for our fictional and real explorations of imagining life in the centuries to come. From dystopian mass surveillance à la George Orwell's *1984* to 90's pop music superstar NSYNC foreshadowing Skype and tele-intimacy in the song *Digital Get Down*, digital technology has embedded itself into the creative fibers of our world.

I am interested, and concerned, with the new cultural practices that have been adopted as a result of the normalized presence of the Internet in globalized communities. More specifically (or broadly, depending on how you think of it), I am concerned about life, presence, and our bodies within the context of the production of effective politics. That means physical change, whether it be lobbying, legislation, running for office, et cetera. How has the way in which we

5. International Telecommunication Union, "ICT Development Index 2016," accessed September 7, 2017, <http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2016/%5C#idi2016countrycard-tab%5C&CAN>.

6. Canadian Internet Registration Authority, "Internet use in Canada 2016," accessed September 7, 2017, <https://cira.ca/factbook/domain-industry-data-and-canadian-Internet-trends/internet-use-canada>.

practice politics changed as a result of adopting digital culture, and how has our overall relationship to politics changed as a result? Does a computer, the Internet, and what it affords us make us more effective activists? What about *affective*?

I believe that there are limits and consequences to our current relationship to the Internet as a tool for digital politics, activism, and communication. I believe there are some naively laudatory predictions, but also a breadth of overlooked potentials and qualities that make digital culture great. I am interested in digital-material relations, and how leaning on the digital *or* material in our current society can lead to a less strategic and effective form of politics.

In order to explore these implications, I have developed a lens that builds upon the previous work of other talented writers and researchers. It is called the “philosophy of movement,” a self-evaluative line of inquiry where the individual considers the body’s potential in the political context of digital-material culture. Beyond that, it is a set of optimistic life practices which demands both responsibility, authenticity, and action. This philosophy allows the individual to explore their relationship to digital-material spaces and give them confidence in their actions.

In this chapter I will build on the foundational theories which informs this philosophy and put them in conversation to develop its line of inquiry. The consideration for this chapter is recognizing the act of movement not as the displacement of points, but as positive transitions in the overall scope of one’s life. In Chapter 2, I will examine digital and material forms of politics and the expression of difference and disagreement, and in Chapter 3 I will explore the dissemination of difference online in a case study to better contextualize the philosophy of movement within the real world.

1.1 Before Affect: The Mind-Body Relationship

If we look on a smaller scale, the mind-body relationship is a topic of much contention. How, and why, do our bodies do what they do, and how do we perceive those reactions? How does a body *feel*? Early examples of attempting to make sense of the mind-body relation date back to ancient Greece and early recorded history. Greek philosophers believed in the body encompassing a soul, a separate entity which leaves the body after death, and eventually reincarnates into a new being (i.e. transmigration). Plato popularized this idea in the *Republic*. Orphism, a set of religious

beliefs from ancient Greece, held the belief that the soul was held prisoner in the body and had to suffer many lifetimes living an ascetic life before being released. Another religion with a similar belief of the soul is Buddhism—the continuous painful repetition of rebirth will not end until the individual reaches enlightenment and puts out the fires of rebirth, a state known as Nirvana.

Ideas of the soul and reincarnation informs later understandings of the mind-body relationship as theorists continue to separate the two entities. René Descartes famously separated the mind and body, arguing that the mind exists beyond the body, but the body cannot think, providing the general premise that the body is a vessel for the mind and/or soul.⁷ However, later conversations would challenge the dichotomy of Cartesian dualism, opting for a more fluid understanding of the mind and body, working in conjunction to form experience and reality. Post-structuralism, for example, rejected structuralism's notion that the world can be understood in terms of thousands of organized structures, interpreted and described through linguistics. Instead of deterministic and singular understandings of society and culture, post-structural theorists opted for a multiplicity of realities, interpretations, and experiences to understand the world.

The foundation of these post-structural concepts have roots in philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* where he differentiates between the objective world and how one experiences that objective world, coining the terms *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge.⁸ In the case of post-structuralism, there is the *a priori* object or phenomenon of study, and the *a posteriori* formulations of personal, cultural, and societal beliefs at play which produce different bodies of knowledge that inform how one interprets and deconstructs those objects and phenomena. While not formally going under the lens of post-structuralism, contemporary society has adopted the idea of multiplicity in politics and the everyday, noting that individuals have a unique set of experiences which contribute to the multicultural makeup of communities.

An example of multiplicity can be seen in Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author*, which rejects the author's exclusive artistic and contextual claim to the meaning of their work.

7. René Descartes, "Meditations On First Philosophy," in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 1–32.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1781]).

Once published, a work is subject to the interpretation of the reader, another reality that cannot be rejected even if it runs counter to the author's original intent.⁹ Later, queer theory would problematize dualist notions of understanding the world as individuals took to having complicated relationships to their bodies, such as opting to be aligned along spectrums of sex and gender instead of binary oppositions like male and female, heterosexual and homosexual. Judith Butler's theory of performativity would put into question socially constructed understandings of gender, actions, and the idea of being a sole identity. Instead, she argues, individuals inhabit multiple identities which are performed through their actions, words, and appearances.¹⁰ Erving Goffman provides the much needed prelude to Butler through his work in dramaturgy in the 50's, describing face-to-face social interactions as a theatrical play and the individuals in the play adopting roles based on their social setting.¹¹

As the public's relationship to their bodies have changed, with the body becoming an intimate part of an individual's identity and self-representation of the inner self to the outer world, the argument of a soulless physical vessel shifts into an incredulous concept. Jean-Paul Sartre heralds this shift, critiquing dualism in noting the following: "There is no longer an exterior for the existent if one means by that superficial covering which hides from sight the true nature of the object ... The obvious conclusion is that dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy."¹²

From looking at these different ideas of how the body and the mind relate to the greater world and beyond (i.e. the afterlife), we can start to see a patterning and slow shift in societal beliefs of the mind-body relationship, the change in adoption of past values and the reinterpreting of those values based on religious and non-religious beliefs, and cultural shifts in notions of individual identity. However, in relation to this shifting landscape, another important question

9. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (Hammersmith: Fontana Press, 1977), 142–148.

10. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

11. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [1943]), xlv.

remains: how does one's body and mind, together, navigate and interpret the world around them? How does a body *feel*? Finally, what are the sensations which avail us that we cannot describe? For the latter, affect theory is one possible line of inquiry which seeks to explore on what exactly those sensations are.

1.1.1 Describing Affect

How can one tell when they are “affected”? To answer this question, one must first acknowledge that affect does *not* draw upon nostalgia. Affect is not the act of smelling a rose and remembering summers at the cottage, rather, it is as Brian Massumi describes, a “prepersonal intensity.”¹³ Affect precedes the individual's capability to perceive it. It activates sensations in the body, welling up, rising, and lowering. It is a reminder of how the body thinks and senses just as minds do. Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern the language of the body when it has a grammar of its own, something that the medium of spoken word can attempt to replicate but not fully capture.¹⁴ Yet, affect *moves* the individual, where they continue to feel compelled by its magnetic force. Seigworth and Gregg describe that strange allure well, stating:

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name that we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward *movement* [emphasis mine], toward thought and extension.¹⁵

Sara Ahmed picks up on this “other than conscious knowing,” describing affect as “sticky.” To Ahmed, affect is “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas,

13. Brian Massumi, “Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements,” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

14. Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C Journal* 8 (2005), accessed October 6, 2016, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>.

15. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

values, and objects.”¹⁶ Affect serves these concepts as a strong but malleable foundation which bends and breathes. It is sticky like gum, but can dry in the sun, and moisten in liquid. As this stickiness holds together these ideas, values, and objects, it simultaneously allows them to produce new relations but still maintain themselves as separate and unique. The insistent, visceral forces of affect which Seigworth and Gregg allude to may be this “stickiness” which Ahmed describes.

Further building on the gum metaphor, Megan Watkins reminds individuals of the “impressions” of affect. A shallow glance of affect theory can make one deem the prepersonal intensity, the “preconscious phenomenon” of affect as something which “arouse individuals or groups in some way but then seems to dissipate quickly leaving little effect.”¹⁷ However, Watkins argues that this is not the case. Watkins returns to Spinoza’s original work on affect to remind readers of the residues, the impressions which remain after affect, and the actions informed by it. Through *affectus* and *affectio*, force and capacity, Watkins insists that readers remember the dynamic relationship of affect’s integral role in continuing to persist after-the-fact *because* of impression. Affect is like a faded thumb print in gum, present and overlapping among many others, stuck beneath the table. While it may dissipate with time, there is an effect left behind from its impression.

Massumi adds to the idea of Spinoza’s impression, describing affect as having an “experience of the experience.”¹⁸ Massumi, taking from Deleuze and Guattari, calls this phenomenon “infolding,” a meta-experience. Bertelsen and Murphie provide a synopsis of infolding describing it as “the folding of broader affective intensities into the nervous system, eventually to become recognizable as *register*, eventually the representation, of the ongoing

16. Sara Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 29.

17. Megan Watkins, “Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 269.

18. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 4.

folding of self and world, *as* the person.”¹⁹

If affect moves the individual and leaves an impression, the question then shifts to become a matter of action. As Seigworth and Gregg ask, “How does a body, marked in its duration by these various encounters with mixed forces, come to shift its affections (its being-affected) to action (capacity to affect)?”²⁰ Once more, I find myself back to the question of how does one know when they are affected and how does one know when they affect others? How does one know if the affect prompted action? While there is no *de facto* method to answer this question, I can set the basic premise that affect is always present in some form. What I can also do is think about *subtractions* from possible answers to the inquiry.

For instance, asking the question, “Is affect simply the product of our limited life experience, and all affect is latent emotional knowledge that time and experience will uncover?” unveils another line of inquiry which leads us to better understanding the role of affect. While affect and emotion share an intimate relationship, they will never directly equate to each other. Once again, where Massumi describes affect as a prepersonal intensity, he also claims it as something which is “not ownable or recognizable.”²¹ It is the broader range of yet-to-be-interpreted intensities which emotion draws upon, emotion then being that unknown intensity owned and recognized.²² In other words, emotion is affect that has been subjectively labeled through the personal lived experience of the individual. The affect in question has been recognized and quantified to a specific semantic label by the person in question, informed by culture and society.²³

So, while emotions are subjective labels placed upon affect, it must be noted that affect is *not* simply unlabeled emotion in waiting. Massumi characterizes emotion as the partial fulfillment

19. Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, “An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 140.

20. Seigworth and Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” 2.

21. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 28.

22. Ibid.

23. Basic examples of emotion would be happiness, sadness, disappointment, et cetera.

of affect. He states that emotion “only draws on a limited selection of memories and only activates certain reflexes or tendencies.”²⁴ This suggests that affect supersedes emotion in how it functions and is far more complex. Emotion helps individuals articulate affect, albeit in small partitions, and only in a way which is meaningful to them *personally*.

To further explain, an individual can draw meaning through affect because of their lived experience, but this experience is subjective and pulls from memories, idiosyncrasies, and regularities on the *individual level*, making each affect a unique experiment in feeling. It is a *perception* of the affect which is unique to every individual. Ahmed chimes into this difference between affect and emotion—where affect is sticky, “emotions work by working through signs and bodies to materialise surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds.”²⁵ Remembering the conversation with affect and the gum metaphor, affect serves as the malleable foundation that holds the signs and bodies together. These signs, their meanings, and their accompanying emotions change according to *whom* the affect is affecting.

Through the understanding that affect arises from prepersonal sensations in the body, one can conclude that affect and bodily experience go hand in hand. If one thinks about affect and the body in this way, it provides a reminder that bodies are important participants in helping individuals feel, and from that feeling, *think*. The mind does not simply move the body—the body is implicit within the mind’s actions. This line of thought produces a layer of complexity to the very way one can understand bodies not just as mechanical maintenance machines like cars, but as embodying our *selves* within its robust yet sensitive walls.

Massumi expresses this concept of the complex body when he says, “the body is as immediately abstract as it is concrete; its activity and expressivity extend, as on their underside, into an incorporeal, yet perfectly real, dimension of pressing potential.”²⁶ This potential which Massumi alludes to is extremely important to the infolding of affect and to understanding the

24. Brian Massumi and Mary Zournazi, “Navigating movements,” in *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 5.

25. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 191.

26. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30.

affective power of politics. In the next section, I will tease out this “potential” that Massumi references, and link the concept to existentialism.

1.1.2 Potential and the Virtual

When one thinks of the term “virtual” within contemporary culture, one’s mind may immediately dart to the following: virtual reality and disembodied spaces. Examples of virtual reality would be the latest gaming devices such as Oculus Rift and HTC Vive, where users don headsets and handhelds which allow them to simulate themselves in first-person fictional environments. Examples of the latter would be avatar-based video games like *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*, two examples which already have extensive scholarship in game studies. In short, the user uses a traditional mouse and keyboard to control their virtual avatars as they wander the world, complete quests, and socialize. However, in respect to the virtual in the context of affect, it is neither of these examples.

Virtuality, as a philosophical term, was introduced by Henri Bergson in his work *Matter and Memory*. At its heart, the virtual is a processual act in which possibilities run themselves through bodies and materialize as actions. “[T]he virtual image evolves toward the virtual sensation and the virtual sensation toward real movement: this movement, in realizing itself, realizes both the sensation of which it might be the natural continuation and the image which has tried to embody itself in the sensation.”²⁷ Where affect and the virtual meet is at the point of impression, which I examined in the previous section. “[T]hese virtual sensations themselves, in order to become real, must tend to urge the body to action and *impress upon it* [emphasis mine] those movements and attitudes of which they are the habitual antecedent.”²⁸

From Bergson, I interpret the virtual as the potential sensations which can be activated into action. Furthermore, it is not the random manifestation of any action which occupies the virtual. The body is urged by impressions which are informed by *ritual*. Whatever more closely aligns to one’s physical and emotional habits will come forward as the more “appropriate” act for

27. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991 [1908]), 131.

28. *Ibid.*, 130.

that period. For example, if I sit at the table with a delicious plate of scalloped potatoes, my habitual precedent is to stab my fork into the potato, not slap the sauce and horrify the other diners as hot liquid flies through the air and onto their clothes. Bergson places emphasis on the idea that individuals should heavily reconsider the virtual and how the impact of the past can come and reconquer their present. Through habit, individuals build unique actions and behaviours to different contexts, but they also produce collective cultural and societal habits in turn.

Deleuze, heavily influenced by Bergson, would later revisit the virtual and deliver a similar addendum in remarking upon Bergson's original work. He sees the virtual as *generative* in nature, producing a potential and then fulfilling the potential in the "actual"—the material manifestation of potential into action. Unlike virtual reality, *virtuality is fully real*, and what the individual witnesses of a virtual manifestation is its *actualization*.²⁹ Ultimately, Deleuze agrees with Bergson's initial theory of virtuality, and makes no significant changes to the principal concepts, but instead builds upon them.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Massumi further builds upon virtuality. Massumi warns against equating the virtual with digital spaces, stating, "Nothing is more destructive for the thinking and imaging of the virtual than equating it with the digital ... Equating the digital with the virtual confuses the really apparitional with the artificial."³⁰ Instead, he proposes the virtual as the realm of potential in which possibility inhabits.³¹ Together, with a body that is "as immediately abstract as it is concrete," a "dimension of pressing potential" emerges in which the individual's body is complicit in a "field of relation" where multiple potentials co-extend.³² Eventually, "an individual action or expression will emerge and be registered consciously."³³ This field of relation harnesses all the bodies and relations into a collective becoming. Seigworth and Gregg know it all too well, remarking, "[T]he capacity of a

29. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991 [1966]).

30. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 137.

31. *Ibid.*, 30.

32. *Ibid.*, 31.

33. *Ibid.*, 30.

body is never defined by a body alone but is always aided and abetted by, and dovetails with, the field or context of its force-relations.”³⁴

This is all to say that the virtual is the realm of potential actions within the material world. Not all potential within the virtual is realized; rather, all individuals, when acting in any situation, become a part of the field of relation. Within this field is the virtual, where potential actions mull within an apparitional space that cannot be experienced, however faintly felt in that this potential stirs within the body’s possibilities. This is not to say that these potentials play roulette in choosing what the next action within that field will be, as that would suggest that individuals have no control and are merely thrown to the whims of chance. Rather, the virtual keeps one mindful of the internal *and* external factors which intermingle to produce events. If the sheer amount of possibilities were made acutely available to any one individual at any moment, it would be counter-intuitive to making swift decisions; unlike AI which requires massive processing power to search through thousands of possible reactions to one action, humans may act based on their lived experience and their cultural values which illuminate particular actions more clearly than others. Man does not have to wander the labyrinth of possibilities, as the possibilities reveal themselves.

If we now understand the virtual as the abstract field in which potential inhabits, and potential itself as possible actions to produce events, it seems odd and perhaps redundant to speak of a term like “affective potential” if potential is implicit in affect. However, I extend potential in this sense to further *multiply* the potential within affect. If affect is a bodily intensity, then *affective potential is the capacity to transmit bodily intensity to other people*, this intensity creating the potential for action.

Affect is important because I believe that it carries the concept that people can be strong affective participants who carry both agency and responsibility in acting within the world, while also understanding that there are factors they cannot control. Ideally, everyone would be a strong affective participant in the everyday, where they feel that they have the power to make personal decisions which strongly reflect their personal values. I believe that adopting an affective practice would provide the capacity for individuals to feel more intimately grounded and connected in the

34. Seigworth and Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” 3.

world through an understanding of the inter-relation of individual action, in turn providing a much needed context into how everyday affective action can translate into effective political action. Unfortunately, there are those who feel that they do not have the freedom to make those types of decisions possible, whether that be through economic, familial, emotional, or medical problems impeding the possibility of agency.

In this case, I turn to Massumi once more, who interprets freedom as “not about breaking or escaping constraints,” but about “flipping them over into degrees of freedom.”³⁵ What Massumi means in saying this is that in society there are clear boundaries we cannot escape (i.e. the law), scientific laws we cannot escape (i.e. gravity), but there are degrees to which one can blur those boundaries through participation. Massumi provides the example of how one may not be able to escape gender identity, but they can take steps to encourage understandings of gender to “flip.”³⁶ Through degrees of affective potential, one can be a stronger proponent to that flipping through action.

On one hand, while affect is a very interesting concept and one with many contributors, it covers a very unique space where it is vulnerable to criticisms of indeterminism and not having a cohesive identity. However, it is in that very indeterminism that determination can be found—the freedom to pursue the senses. As Seigworth and Gregg navigate the many forms of affect they remark, “There is no single, generalizable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be.”³⁷ Massumi shares a similar opinion, stating, “To get anywhere with the concept, you have to retain the manyness of its forms. It’s not something that can be reduced to one thing. Mainly because it’s not a thing. It’s an event, or a dimension of every event.”³⁸

Critiques of indeterminism raises the question of how can one maximize or be sensitive to affective potential, exactly? One possible solution, and the next step of this thesis, is through building an understanding of existentialism. I will use theories of authenticity, being-in-the-world,

35. Massumi and Zournazi, “Navigating movements,” 17.

36. *Ibid.*, 18.

37. Seigworth and Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” 3.

38. Brian Massumi and Joel McKim, “Of microperception and micropolitics,” in *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 47.

and care as a method of living which produces relational connections, stimulates others through affect, and produces action on the individual level, a crucial idea for effective politics. In the next section, I will look at existentialism which will finally allow us to build a cohesive definition of the philosophy of movement.

1.2 Existentialism

As a popular 20th century philosophy, existentialism was informally conceived by Søren Kierkegaard in the late 19th century. At its core, existentialism is about an individual pursuing freedom and authenticity in the world; however, freedom and authenticity are broad terms with various interpretations. In order to unpack the existentialist interpretation, one must begin with the main point of departure: the meaning of one's existence. While at the time existentialism had no formal term, Kierkegaard wrote about the values which would later become the philosophy as we know today.

Kierkegaard, writing from a Christian viewpoint, had a unique relationship to both academia and religion. He did not want to live a life solely of knowledge, producing his works as a service to Christianity. While this context is crucial in understanding Kierkegaard's initial intent in his writings through aiding the reader in recognizing the religious references, whether the reader identifies as spiritual in faith or not matters little in how one can appreciate his works. The essence of Kierkegaard's writing is the *responsibility to oneself in determining their truth*, something which can be clearly extrapolated from the religious undertones of his rhetoric.

The truth which Kierkegaard attempts to reconcile is the subjective-objective paradox. Are either of the concepts of subjectivity or objectivity "more" or "absolutely" true? Is there a way to harness or use both concurrently? First, he questions purely objective thought remarking, "Away from the subject, the path of reflection leads to the objective truth, and while the subject and his subjectivity become indifferent, the truth becomes that too, and just this is its objective validity."³⁹

What objectivity offers is security. Why would one question the validity of purely

39. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1846]), 162-163.

objective facts? While the concept of objectivity is of great import to understanding the world from a “unbiased” perspective, it is also a difficult fact to uphold in the face of funding institutions and the fallibility of the researcher. In aspects of objectivity, while one can maintain with some certainty a degree of accuracy, to Kierkegaard the highest form of “truth” is accepting uncertainty with inward passion and pursuing the truth *in spite of it*. “All he has objectively is uncertainty, but it is just this that tightens the infinite passion of inwardness, and truth is precisely this venture of choosing an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite.”⁴⁰

From Kierkegaard one can notice the beginning of the transition of subjectivity and lived experience as a legitimate method to experience the world and determine one’s “truth,” a perspective practiced in contemporary society. His criticism of objectivity, with the rise of lived experience becoming a valid form of “truth,” would lay the foundations which would carry over into existentialism. “That the cognizing spirit is one that exists, and that every human being is one who exists for himself is something I cannot repeat often enough, since the fanciful neglect of this is responsible for much confusion.”⁴¹ To live in the face of uncertainty, with inward passion towards imminent death, with responsibility to one’s self, is the greatest life one can achieve. It is “authentic.”

To Kierkegaard, the inauthentic self is described as one in “despair.” This despair comes in three forms: not being conscious of having a self, not willing to be oneself, and despair at willing to be oneself but unable to.⁴² The Christian references persist in his writing as he suggests the authentic self impossible without the “leap of faith,” the acceptance of uncertainty around whether God exists at all, and choosing to believe in spite of it. Later existentialists would reconfigure Kierkegaard’s work for the general public. Two of note for this section are Heidegger and Sartre.

Heidegger provides a powerful point of departure from Kierkegaard with his work in

40. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 171.

41. *Ibid.*, 159-160.

42. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1849]).

existentialism. His exploration into the nature of being provided a fresh ontological interpretation of what it means to exist. He makes it abundantly clear that *being* and simply *being present* are two different concepts, and for the latter he coined the term “objectively present” for talking about the immediate material-spatial occupation of things. For the former, he coined the term “Dasein,” one who is “ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being.”⁴³ That is to say, wondering about what it means to exist and why. Theoretically, all human beings have the potential to be Dasein, as Dasein is simply the authentic manifestation of the individual.

Dasein’s conscientiousness about its being lends to its “basic constitution” of *in-der-welt-sein* (being-in-the-world).⁴⁴ Being-in-the-world is more than objective presence and spatial recognition. Dasein, in its concern for its very being, has a relationship to the world which is characterized by everydayness. The individual becomes closer to the world through an active concern for who they are and what they do, manifested through their everyday experiences. Heidegger was, as proposed by Simon Critchley, “inverting the usual distinction between theory and practice.”⁴⁵ Heidegger is emphasizing lived experience before theory and knowledge, an unusual and dangerous point of departure in research, especially following a period of science and objective truth as the ultimate forms of knowledge in producing reality.

During that time, the concept of lived experience as having any precedence was novel. Some current contributions to the rise of subjectivity in recent years include feminism and science studies. Science studies have helped further open that conversation with theorists such as Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway contributing important work inquiring into knowledge production

43. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010 [1927]), 11.

44. *Ibid.*, 127.

45. Simon Critchley, “Being and Time, part 3: Being-in-the-world,” *The Guardian*, June 22, 2009, accessed August 27, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jun/22/heidegger-religion-philosophy>.

and problematizing the objective basis of the hard sciences.^{46,47} In order to arrive at this point, the work of predecessors like Kierkegaard and Heidegger was essential to shift the cultural landscape. To further put into perspective, this was during a period in which phenomenology was just being introduced to philosophy. Phenomenology being the study of consciousness in direct relation to other objects and subjects in the world (i.e. lived experience). Heidegger dedicated *Being and Time* to his colleague, and phenomenology's creator, Edmund Husserl.

Dasein, being-in-the-world, and lived experience are crucial because they raise concerns on an individual level. It raises the question of authenticity and inauthenticity, and promotes living towards becoming a conscious participant in a world inhabited by others who are called to the same responsibility, but who do not all respond. Consequently, if the individual never realizes their unique presence, they will live the remainder of their life in inauthenticity, following the whims of the public and never coming to see their individuality, responsibility, or agency.

Authenticity, a keyword of existentialism, is a term used to define the ability of the individual to allow their true self to shine in the face of the external pressures of the world. It is an individual who does not allow themselves to be coerced into adopting the popular values of society out of fear of ostracization, and acts in a way that feels true to themselves and taking full responsibility for those actions. What they represent to the world is who they "are."

Sartre, informed by Heidegger, would write about the unique responsibility of the individual in determining their being, stating:

From this point of view—and if it is understood that the existence of the Dasein precedes and commands its essence—human reality in and through its very upsurge decides to define its own being by its ends. It is therefore the positing of my ultimate ends which characterizes my being and which is identical with the sudden thrust of the freedom which is mine ... Thus since freedom is identical with my existence, it is the foundation of ends when I shall attempt to attain either by the will or by

46. Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

47. Donna J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 183–202.

passionate efforts.⁴⁸

Sartre is ultimately talking about the agency to determine one's being. Man/woman is responsible for themselves and making the choices and actions to lead an authentic life. *One must make a passionate effort, not fall into others' efforts.* Ultimately, it is one's choices which constitute who they are. It is not about what one possesses, but what one does.

Although authenticity is criticized as being overly idyllic and self-indulgent in a contingent world, there are attempts to circumvent the "ideal" of authenticity through embracing ambiguity. This ambiguity is the non-religious manifestation of Kierkegaard's uncertainty. Ultimately, it means taking on the responsibility of one's action and inaction, while simultaneously embracing not knowing. One makes their choice and accepts the consequences, whatever they may be, positive or negative. Simone de Beauvoir, a well-known feminist, existentialist, and close writing companion to Sartre, embraced and built upon that uncertainty declaring, "Let us try to assume our fundamental ambiguity. It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting."⁴⁹

Later, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor attempts to undo notions of self-indulgency in authenticity by first describing the leading-up to the conception of the authentic self by taking the reader through a tour of Descartes's disengaged pure rationality, Locke's willing of the self before social obligation, and beyond to the earlier articulations of what would later become authenticity by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Taylor describes Rousseau's idea of authenticity as "self determining freedom," saying, "I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences ... Self determining freedom demands that I break the hold of all such external impositions, and decide for myself alone."⁵⁰

This self determining freedom, or authenticity, has informally developed in contemporary culture in the colloquialism of "being true to oneself." However, this form of authenticity can just as soon become a falsity if there is a lack of criticality with the original notions of what it means

48. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 443-444.

49. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1948), 3-4.

50. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 27.

to focus on oneself and one's fulfillment. This, at its core, is "inauthenticity," a self-indulgence, and an inherent selfishness which leads to negative perceptions of existentialism and authenticity specifically. This false authenticity is not seeking truth inwardly, but fulfilling a shallow authenticity by excusing one's responsibility so they can act freely against others, a false and abusive form of "freedom."

Taylor uses the example of sexual preference to describe this: to one who is inauthentic and decides heterosexuality as one's truth means rejecting all other forms of truth, allowing them to trivialize, shame, and negate others' truths. As Taylor says, "Difference so asserted becomes *insignificant*."⁵¹ By claiming an authentic truth to oneself in determining their being, one then has a moral grounding, a virtuous claim in rejecting others' truths, thus never having to truly face themselves in a critical background.

With the knowledge of false authenticity (inauthenticity) with the example above, I can now describe what it means to actually be "true to oneself." To be truly authentic, as I explored with Sartre and de Beauvoir, is to *embrace ambiguity*. As de Beauvoir said, "To declare that existence is absurd is to deny that it can ever be given a meaning; to say that it is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won."⁵² As the individual is thrust into a meaningless world, they must determine meaning in their truth. However, the meaning which the individual imbues is contrasted against opposing meanings from other individuals. In spite of negative perceptions or negations of one's truth, the truly authentic individual accepts that other truths exist and that what they choose to be significant (i.e. their truth) also functions in a contextual background which ultimately interacts with others' truths. Taylor summarizes this idea as follows:

Otherwise put, I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I can find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters ... Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate beyond the

51. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 38.

52. Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 57.

self; it supposes such demands.⁵³

It is possible (and perhaps inevitable) that over the course of one's lifetime, one who seeks to act authentically should encounter other possibilities which puts into question their being, their truth. Critically taking to task these contradictions and being unable to reconcile those contradictions is, at the core of it, *life*. Taylor provides a profound observation of those who use authenticity for their own means as a crux to live selfishly, to negate difference, and to avoid facing their innermost self in a critical way, a form of inauthenticity.

Heidegger builds upon the concept of inauthenticity in *Being and Time*, paralleling it with authenticity to help the reader understand the intricacies which are crucial in determining when one is acting in an authentic way over one who is inauthentic and who seeks to disguise a shallow motive as authenticity. He characterizes inauthenticity as one who has "fallen prey," differing from Kierkegaard's use of "despair." According to Heidegger, inauthenticity does not mean that Dasein is no longer in-the-world, it is the very opposite. "Dasein *can* fall prey *only* because it is concerned with understanding, attuned being-in-the-world."⁵⁴ Inauthenticity is a self-absorption which is distinct from authentic being-in-the-world. Through this understanding, it puts into perspective that those who act inauthentically do not recognize themselves in their behaviour, and need a way to jolt themselves out of their fallenness.

In this state, they have fallen prey to "idle talk." The individual becomes entangled in the everydayness and ambiguity of conversation, "Where the loudest idle talk and the most inventive curiosity keep the "business" going, where everything happens in an everyday way, and basically nothing happens at all."⁵⁵ This entanglement in the everyday is "tempting" and "tranquilizing"—Dasein falls into a reverie of busyness, living amongst others, concerned for its very being, but in its tranquilized state unable to reach or recognize its authentic presence and freedom to pursue it. Thus, they become entangled in themselves and become lost in banality.⁵⁶

53. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 40-41.

54. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 172.

55. *Ibid.*, 168.

56. *Ibid.*, 171.

This inauthenticity is further described as being “alienating,” as one is both living, but disconnected from their actions and thoughts in relation to the larger world.⁵⁷

In some sense, it seems odd. Idle talk can bring people together; it is a form of socializing and connecting through mutually interested topics. Gossip, a type of idle talk, while intellectually contentless, can produce connection among individuals.⁵⁸ However, idle gossip is not the type of alienation that Heidegger is describing. Rather than being alienated from other people, the individual becomes alienated from *themselves*, from their being. They become lost wading through the gossip and lose sight of their critical link to the external world.

To summarize what I have covered so far, authenticity and inauthenticity are both forms of being-in-the-world, but different in how they engage with it. Authenticity forms as thoughtful, participative action while inauthenticity forms as actions marked by passivity and disconnectedness. They are forked branches that can ultimately rebranch and change if Dasein comes to recognize their fallenness. I place emphasis on the importance of authenticity because the form of *care* it takes is ultimately one of responsibility and criticality while inauthentic care materializes as self-indulgence and antagonizing difference. Regardless, Heidegger describes both types of being-in-the-world as “essentially care,” although the nature of that care, and what is being cared about, is different.⁵⁹

Responsibility, a quality nurtured from authentic care, is one of the utmost requirements for the philosophy of movement and existentialism. Heidegger describes authentic care as “willing” and its opposite, inauthentic care, as “wishing.” According to Heidegger, wishing is “an existential modification of understanding self-projection which, having fallen prey to thrownness, simply indulges in possibilities.”⁶⁰ The indulgence of possibilities then leads to the inauthentic individual never moving towards those possibilities, although they project the possibility onto the object of their indulgence. The possibilities before the inauthentic Dasein are “changed in such a

57. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 171.

58. The quality of those relationships is another question.

59. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 193.

60. *Ibid.*, 195.

way that there is an illusion of something happening.”⁶¹ Being in a tranquilized state, they cannot recognize stagnation.

An example of inauthentic care can be examined in Lauren Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism,” which she defines as, “something [that] you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.”⁶² In a capitalist society individuals are made to *desire*, but the desire is manifest as material objects. Thus, the individual works to get paid to purchase the object. That object is a projection of their “wishing.” Berlant describes the allure of the object, saying, “When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us.”⁶³ An example would be the retired, balding middle-class individual who purchases an expensive sports car to fulfill various desires they never could achieve: wealth, a younger lover, freedom, while at the same time incurring impossible debt at 65 years of age. They are optimistic at what the sports car does for them, but the sports car, cruelly, cannot provide the desires imbued by the individual, and ultimately acts to tranquilize them.

An authentic, willing Dasein is always held before its projected possibilities, its *potentiality-of-being*. Within “one’s ownmost potentiality-of-being lies the existential and ontological condition of the possibility of *being free* for authentic existentiell [sic] possibilities.”⁶⁴ Dasein understands the possibilities which lay ahead and pursues them *actively* as an agent of their own personal freedom. This suggests that inauthentic being-in-the-world is not free, which falls into line with the concepts of idle talk, being tranquilized, and alienation. This draws parallels with Massumi’s understanding of freedom that we previously explored—the ability to flip one’s actions into degrees of freedom is an ability that is exclusive to one that is not tranquilized, can recognize the possibilities before them, and can take action. Thus, *only a being who is authentic can fulfill their affective potential*.

61. Ibid.

62. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

63. Ibid., 23.

64. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 193.

In short, Dasein is an individual who is concerned about their being. Therefore, human beings are Dasein. All Dasein are of the basic constitution of being-in-the-world, where their being manifests as care. Authentic and inauthentic Dasein have all of the characteristics listed above, although their definitions are modified based on the authentic-inauthentic state. However, authentic Dasein, in its willingness to pursue its possibilities, has room to move toward their personal freedom and fulfill their affective potential, while inauthentic Dasein remains tranquilized by the objects of desire imbued with wishes they can never fulfill.

Affect, being-in-the-world, care, authenticity, potential, and possibility. These are the paramount terms on which I base the philosophy of movement. They are the foundation by which I can build a basic understanding of being present and living life to its utmost potential, and for individuals to maximize their affective potential, all qualities which make a strong political participant. In the next section I will describe the philosophy of movement which will prepare us for an exploration of our digital-material relationship and our foray into democratic politics.

1.3 The Philosophy of Movement

The philosophy of movement is an optimistic and action-oriented way to relate to the world under the primary influences of affect theory and existentialism. At first, it seems that the two concepts would not pair well—affect, which I have defined as undetermined, prepersonal intensities, and existentialism, a commitment to authenticity and responsibility. Neither appear to have any discernable points of entry to begin a conversation. However, the one concept which links these seemingly unrelated, disparate ideas is *potential*. This relationship will be explained in this section, but first I will define the philosophy of movement itself, and then define the particulars which make up its line of inquiry.

I chose the word “movement” for two reasons: one, I enjoy the metaphoric potential, the ability to play with such a broadly-encompassing term. Two, as this thesis has to do with politics, I believe “movement” captures a particular trajectory (i.e. activism) and provides a space to really describe and explore the significance of something small into something significantly large. We often see movement from a physics perspective as the expenditure of energy to move from one point to the next, but what happens in the “in-between” of that movement? Start and end points

aside, there is a transitional period of making movement where potential extends.

Movement is not simply the displacement from one point to the next, and I believe to suggest such would be an oversimplification of its significance. To start, Massumi's understanding of movement is based on Bergson's deconstruction of Zeno's "arrow paradox." In short, Zeno shoots his arrow, and this arrow must occupy all the linear points in its path to infinity, but infinity has no end. Therefore, the arrow is in transitional flux and becomes immobilized.⁶⁵ Massumi's explanation of this paradox is that the arrow never occupied any points at all. Rather, "It was in passage across them all ... A path is not composed of positions. It is nondecomposable: a dynamic unity."⁶⁶ What Massumi interprets from Bergson is what I use to understand movement—as a "dynamic unity." If movement is not a series of points, it facilitates a more complex understanding to movement within the context of perception and lived experience. Memories are not discrete events in the timeline of personal history, they are passages building upon each other to who we are today.

As a starting point, *the philosophy of movement embodies transitions*. In transition one can change, but they can also retain. The philosophy adopts the existential qualities of demanding authenticity and responsibility as I outlined in the past section with existentialism. Sartre was adamant about the importance of being responsible for one's actions and defining one's self and being through what they *do* (one's actions), because "existence precedes essence."⁶⁷ While Kirkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre use what could be perceived as pessimistic terminology (i.e. anguish, anxiety, despair, fallenness, alienation), the theories they propose are optimistic in nature. A self-determined being, acting through self-responsibility in the world, is more positive than a life that is simply caught and doomed to a lifetime without agency, thrown to society's whims. However, in order reach a state of authenticity, one must take it upon themselves to recognize the importance in determining their being and practicing it through deliberate action.

65. See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1998 [1907]) for Bergson's full discussion of Zeno's paradoxes of movement.

66. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 6.

67. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, [1946] 2007).

They must commit to deliberate movement.

Unfortunately, statements like “be responsible,” “take action,” and “be authentic” are much too broad for any individual to produce a discernible life philosophy. Fortunately, the philosophy of movement is a self-evaluative line of inquiry which brings together broader modes of thought in existentialism and affect theory so that one can understand how everyday, self-determined micro-actions are crucial to one’s being and their agency, similar to Heidegger’s understanding of how “everydayness” grounds one in the world, but with my added concern for defining one’s affective potential. Affect further impresses upon the significance of one’s actions. Previously, I explained affect as a prepersonal intensity. On top of this intensity, there is potential which inhabits the virtual. *However, one can only produce affective potential if they act.*

Imagine two individuals: one authentic, one inauthentic. They live in the same scenario: detached house, children, spouse, car, and Monday to Friday employment. The inauthentic individual gets lost in the everyday rituals of life, spending little time on self-reflection, and is perhaps concerned with their social standing and the visual representation of their lifestyle, even if they must carelessly work and spend to continue that representation. They are enacting a societal expectation, although it may wound them. The authentic individual has the conviction to take responsibility for their life and actively engages with it in a critical manner. They think of the consequences of their actions in relation to the greater world. Their concerns are not so much about the representation of their lifestyle, but about the ethics of the representation. The nature of authenticity means an authentic individual in this scenario may make very different choices from another authentic individual, because they do what they believe brings them closer to their truth. The inauthentic individual is not entirely discernible from another inauthentic individual from the same community, because they want to represent a similar image.

With this in mind, let’s return to Heidegger. Much of *Being and Time* is concerned with fulfilling one’s “potentiality-of-being” which Heidegger describes as follows: “The potentiality-of-being as which Dasein exists has always already given itself over to definite possibilities.”⁶⁸ While at first glance it appears to be a perplexing statement, I interpret potentiality-of-being and its possibilities in the larger scope of existential authenticity. Dasein’s

68. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 260.

potentiality-of-being means opening oneself up to ambiguity and to the possibilities of the world. To “give oneself” is to make oneself open and vulnerable to the alternative paradigms and paradoxes coinciding with other contradictions and possibilities. This makes potentiality-of-being compatible with the other theorists I described like de Beauvoir with “embracing ambiguity” and Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith” to accept God. In this potential, I also see a link to affect theory. This is why I turn to Massumi whose work deals in potential while addressing its meaning through affect and virtuality.

Potential, as addressed by Massumi, are the possible events that have yet to materialize. It is in the virtual, the abstract space where potential inhabits, that one event (produced by an action) comes to the forefront. This event does not happen randomly, but through understanding patterns, regularities, and idiosyncrasies on the individual level which allows it to emerge. When individuals and objects communicate, they produce a field of relation where potential interacts. When there are thousands of possible events interacting in the field of relation, while one can presuppose an event, one never absolutely know the future. In spite of that, Dasein leaps into it. In their authentic state they throw themselves into the possibilities.

In using Massumi’s affective understanding of potential, I can look at Heidegger’s potentiality-of-being with an additional lens. If the individual seeks authenticity, they must face the uncertainty of relational spaces (i.e. the world) in an open and optimistic manner. *I believe the strength to engage with the uncertain potential of the world produces one’s agency.* Rather than becoming obsessed with guessing the next event, or believing that one should sit idly and let God, life, or destiny decide, they *take* life into their own hands and face that uncertainty. This is where they find their power, their agency. They allow themselves to not just participate, but *engage* with it through self-determined actions, rather than waiting to be acted upon. They do this because they are being true to themselves and acting authentically in the world. One of their motivations to acting this way is because of their affective potential.

Many theorists’ point of departure for affect theory is Spinoza’s seminal quote, “To affect and be affected,” from his *Ethics*. From this viewpoint, affect has a doubling effect which couples into itself. Affective potential is produced through this doubling relationship, or as I previously

referenced from Massumi, an “experience of the experience.”⁶⁹ Affective potential arises from history of the past event, the current event happening in the present, and the uncertainty of the future. Furthermore, it is not limited to one individual. In a single event, all individuals engaging with the same event have that potential, but one who is authentic may have more agency over their actions. Their life is created by the choices made by them and not others for them, and they accept that their actions will not produce determined events. As Heidegger would put it, they are “resolute.”

According to Heidegger, to be resolute is to authentically be-in-the-world.⁷⁰ Resolution takes bravery—to be resolute is to face ambiguity and do it *anxiously*. It means coming to terms with life and with imminent death in such a way that the individual does not fear it, but they continue to engage with the world with their anxiety. As Heidegger puts it, “*The reticent projecting oneself upon one’s ownmost being guilty which is ready for anxiety—we call resoluteness [sic].*”⁷¹ To be resolute is to be okay with uncertainty, to be concerned for one’s own being, and to break away from the “they,” inauthentic beings who have fallen prey to idle talk. In a similar vein, Heidegger calls them “irresolute,” and describes them as follows:

The term irresoluteness merely expresses the phenomenon that was interpreted as being at the mercy of the dominant interpretedness of the they. As the they-self, Dasein is “lived” by the commonsense ambiguity of publicness in which no one resolves, but which has always already made its decision. Resoluteness means letting oneself be summoned out of one’s lostness in the they.⁷²

To be resolute does not mean breaking off contact with the “they,” as “they” occupy the majority of the population. Also, one cannot be resolute without “them,” because individuals start in the world as fallen, and must come to resolution through their own self-realization to

69. Massumi’s comment indicates that affect always builds on itself, thus affective potential is doubled in the process. The potential produced from affective interactions overlap and intersect through the fibers of individual actions in the field of relation.

70. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 285.

71. *Ibid.*, 284.

72. *Ibid.*, 286.

become conscientious. Although they are resolute, “the “world” at hand does not become different as far as “content,” the circle of the others is not exchanged for a new one.”⁷³ Authentic being-in-the-world and resolution does not mean ex-communication or rising above and leaving others behind. “The resoluteness toward itself first brings Dasein to the possibility of letting others who are with it “be” in their ownmost potentiality-of-being, and also discloses that potentiality in concern which leaps ahead and frees.”⁷⁴ An individual who has become authentic, who faces anxiety, is resolute. Breaking from “them” is simply being aware of their potentiality-of-being and wanting to be in the world for their own reasons and not live by popular expectation. Consequently, this Dasein is able to reflect that back onto “them” with authentic concern and action. *Dasein has the potential—the affective potential—to help others seek their ownmost authenticity.*

The philosophy of movement embraces the aspects of existentialism which call for responsibility and self-actuation through authenticity. However, while existentialism calls for one to act in the world and produce meaning for oneself, *existentialism does not explicitly place the responsibility upon the individual to use their authenticity to produce authentic action in a way which benefits society and culture.* While one is authentic, they are still a participant in the popular culture of the “they,” which I believe to be a selfish participation if the authentic being does not make efforts to change what their innermost self perceives to be unjust. I suggest that to be truly authentic, to fulfill one’s affective potential, and to live toward one’s potentiality-of-being, is done through movement. Whether we emotionally move others, move our bodies, or participate in political movements, we should be in action in the world and participating in a culture of change which represents our authentic truth, and this truth should interact with others in difference.

To summarize, “potential” is the possible events that have not yet materialised. It inhabits a virtual space, in the material world. “Potentiality-of-being” is fulfilling potential authentically and anxiously, as outlined in Heidegger’s existentialism. “Affect” is unqualified, prepersonal bodily intensity, while “affective potential” is the doubling capacity of affect, or to

73. Ibid., 285.

74. Ibid.

have an experience of the experience as Massumi says.

I interpret movement as transition and uncertainty. Nothing is predetermined, or determinable, but the individual is comfortable with that uncertainty and continues to live and participate in an honest, authentic, caring way in the world, self-determined and not afraid of diverging from popular discourse, as taken from existentialism.

In essence, the philosophy of movement is about mobility. *The philosophy of movement is about one's affective capacity to mobilize others.* Through authentic self-awareness one can produce a more effective and affective politics. The philosophy of movement is practiced as follows:

1. All individuals possess a degree of affective potential.
2. To *fulfill* one's utmost capacity to mobilize others into action, one must be existentially authentic.
3. Movement is action. Action produces an event.
4. The goal is to act with authenticity, always, embrace ambiguity, and in turn always produce authentic events which may inspire others to seek and act authentically.
5. By acting authentically, and inspiring others to seek authenticity, one helps to shape a healthier society.

The above rules are meant to outline *the potential of one's affective potential*. While all individuals possess a degree of affective potential, I argue that an authentic beings possesses a *higher degree* of affective potential (i.e. the potential to motivate otherse into action is higher). However, due to the ambiguous nature of events, and the embracing of ambiguity in authenticity, one cannot say with certainty that authentic action will produce a motivated action, thereby creating a significant event.

Some aspects of the philosophy of movement may seem self-evident to the reader; however, when applied to our current relationship to digital-material culture, I believe we should recognize that there are economies which require more accountability for their contributions to the digital space and how it has shifted digital culture. In our excitement for digital utopian

fantasies, digital optimisation, and digital spaces there is a narrative of “anything is possible,” and we are bearing witness to very impressive digital feats, but this digital zeitgeist also opens further avenues of inquiry into ethics, morals, and philosophy.

Digital culture is becoming deeply entangled with material culture, and I believe we should be applying philosophy to new digital practices and spaces to determine what is harmful, what is useful, and what we should be conscientious of when participating in online communication and dissemination. There are already organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation which seek to “defend civil liberties in the digital world.”⁷⁵ This includes privacy *and* free speech. With little regulation surrounding our online activities, there has been a capacity for kindness, vitriol, and attempts to tighten control over our digital spaces through government censorship. The Supreme Court of Canada recently ordered Google to remove an *entire domain* from their global search results setting a dangerous precedent for Canadian Courts in online rulings.⁷⁶ The United States has also made attempts to control and censor online content under the guise of stopping online sex trafficking, but compromising all general content hosts and providers in the process.⁷⁷

As these dangerous legislation and court rulings persist, there is also the matter of how the public uses the Internet for activism. As the Internet changes the public’s capacity to participate in politics and have it be reflected in our material world, and as the Internet continues to be widely consumed by Canadian and American residents, there is a precarious shift to balance what power we give to companies which control the most popular content and news hosting websites in the world. Furthermore, how can one balance these digital mediums with one’s being? How does one retain authenticity and face ambiguity in a digital space where millions of people

75. “About EFF,” Electronic Frontier Foundation, accessed October 16, 2017, <https://www.eff.org/about>.

76. Aaron Mackey, Corynne McSherry, and Vera Ranieri, “Top Canadian Court Permits Worldwide Internet Censorship,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, June 29, 2017, accessed October 15, 2017, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2017/06/top-canadian-court-permits-worldwide-internet-censorship>.

77. Elliot Harmon, “Internet Censorship Bill Would Spell Disaster for Speech and Innovation,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, August 2, 2017, accessed October 15, 2017, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2017/08/internet-censorship-bill-would-spell-disaster-speech-and-innovation>.

reside with the capacity to shame and attack on a new level? It is in these moments where one must be steadfast in their values and courageous in their voice. I believe that a way to bolster that courage is through understanding one's value as an individual in the political space with the capacity to change. The philosophy of movement combines elements of agency, self-criticality, and self-worth—existentialism and affective potential—to help drive the user toward an anxious yet caring politics of cultural change.

1.4 Closing Thoughts

The reality is that first world countries and economies make use of digital technologies. That cannot be ignored. However, we also cannot ignore the role of the body as a meaningful outlet of communication and feeling. Furthermore, we certainly cannot ignore the body's individual livelihood which continuously affects us in the everyday and its capability *to affect and be affected*, and what those implications may play in the political space.

I raise this point because in recent years there has been increased opportunity for individuals to form connections and participate in online politics, crowdsourcing, and information dissemination with the closing in of temporal spaces through faster network connections. Platforms like social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), online crowd funding (e.g. Kickstarter and Indiegogo), or simply accessing personal online information like student loans, it would be an understatement to say that supporting distant communities and projects, paying bills, or even watching television has become more convenient.

Where I take specific interest is in the activist end of politics, in digital-material spaces, *at the individual level*. Our innermost walls are where we find the strength to face our selves and the other in a politics of difference which ultimately seeks to define new popular truths for society, and our outer walls which seek to communicate it, transmit its potential, in a public space.

In this context, where can one find a philosophy that is optimistic, agential, and demands participation in building *effective* and *affective* individual who is confident in themselves, but who would also gladly face ambiguity? Where is a philosophy found that is both conscious of the body, mind, and abstract spaces between, so that one can account for both material and abstract events and potential? The philosophy of movement can be both metaphoric and specific in how it

is employed, and can, in conjunction with existentialism and affect theory, help individuals produce a practical way of engaging with the world. *I am responsible for my being, for my actions, and for the representation of my beliefs in the world, with others.*

In this chapter I explored, defined, and put into conversation affect theory and existentialism. Thanks to Massumi's clarification of virtuality and potential built upon by Bergson and Deleuze, I was able to produce a more sophisticated meaning of "potential" in Heidegger's "potentiality-of-being" through introducing "affective potential." Finally, I combined Massumi and Heidegger's work to tease out the concept of "movement" as not just a playful metaphor, but also having practical use in determining a life philosophy. This philosophy, which I deemed the "philosophy of movement," appears to be a weighty term, but essentially interprets movement as a positive and transitory concept borrowing from existentialism and affect theory to produce a set of beliefs which gives one the foundation to function as meaningful political activists in a fused world of digital-material culture.

In the next chapter, I will begin exploring democratic politics in the Canadian context, the meaning of "difference," and why it is natural and healthy for politics if approached carefully and critically. Before I am able to apply the philosophy of movement to politics, I want us to understand the contemporary political situation and the public's relationship to that situation.

Chapter 2

Digital Activism, Affective Politics, and the Need for Philosophical Practices

In Chapter 1, I explored affect theory and existentialism to develop the philosophy of movement. I proposed movement as transitional and nonlinear, concluding that it has enormous political and agential power if paired with existentialism and affect.

The philosophy of movement introduces a line of inquiry to self-evaluate and engage with life authentically and critically. It provides the tools to live for oneself with their unique power in shaping society and culture through the individual's affective potential. I concluded with the idea that the link between existentialism and affect revolved around "potential," the potential of events (virtuality) and one's potentiality-of-being. Taking from Heidegger, potentiality-of-being is the ability to face uncertainty with anticipation, not fear. As a result, my final conclusion was that through the philosophy of movement individuals can fulfill their affective potential. It is the capacity to transmit affect to other people by acting as authentic beings in the world, and as a result produces a more effective and affective politics because this potential *moves*, whereas inauthenticity is *tranquilizing*, further taking from Heideggerian terminology.

Furthermore, within the philosophy of movement I theorized that movement itself can be interpreted twofold. First, that *movement can be deconstructed as an everyday practice*. Not

simply as the use of one's bodily mechanical motor movements, but also as an optimistic life philosophy that rewards actionable movement over stationary reaction. The second interpretation is that *movement can be read as a theoretical approach*. Depending on the context of its use either of these interpretations are fair, are not mutually exclusive, and can run parallel to each other. One merit of the philosophy of movement is in its flexibility to take on these various embodied and disembodied roles. It is an important characteristic as I am both concerned with activist practices but also ways of feeling when performing the aforementioned practices. The affective "experience of the experience" impression is an important detail to keep in mind through self-critical reflection of one's behaviours and beliefs, a necessary quality of authenticity.

If Chapter 1 is about philosophy, Chapter 2 is about politics. While the last chapter introduced the theoretical concepts of affect and existentialism to apply and create the philosophy of movement, this chapter is about narrowing into politics. Specifically, I will expand on the shift of deliberative politics to identity politics and how the Internet has expanded the potential for the public to participate. From there, I can define *why* a humanist philosophy beyond mere conversations about power is relevant to politics, and *how* new political cultural practices online could be improved by the philosophy of movement.

This chapter is split into the following points of interest:

- 2.1 Exploring democracy and activism in contemporary culture. What remains the same and what has changed in recent times.
- 2.2 Alternative democracy and the shift to identity politics.
- 2.3 The case for why humanities philosophy should return to digital and material political practices.

The last section will allow me to proceed to the final chapter where I will use the philosophy of movement in relation to activism to perform a case study. In this case study, I take on a local New Brunswick conflict where a woman is pressured by the community to sell or conceal her hearse. She uses the hearse as her daily mode of transportation, creating tensions in the town. I will examine the conflict and look closely at how the online response changed. Ultimately, I want readers to understand why we need alternative political practices and mindful

philosophy for effective and affective digital politics.

As a final note before I get into the chapter, I want to clarify how I want us to think about activism. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, activism is “[t]he policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.” This means *any* form of political practice that seeks to make change is inherently activist. We cannot forget the forms of activism which makes use of the traditional political system to subvert current practices and laws from the *inside* as well as the outside, such as joining a political party to change its internal policies. I want us to be conscious of this idea, and put aside prejudices over digital manifestations of traditional activism (i.e. online petitions, social media campaigns, crowdfunding), so we can have a fruitful and honest conversation going forward.

2.1 Using the Internet to Participate in Democracy

First, when I mention the “material” world, I am explicitly referring to the “real” and immediate world. I am not suggesting that the Digital is not authentic or has no relation to the material world. This definition merely pulls from old ways of speaking of the Material. That is to say, the immediate physical space that humans inhabit. The space where physical bodies interact and participate in embodied movement. The physical forms that encompass and interact in one’s immediate space including human, non-human, and object.

On the other hand, when I write about “the Digital,” I am referring to a specific set of cultural practices of digital technology most commonly used in contemporary society. For my purposes, this term explicitly encompasses the Internet and the use of personal computers, cell phones, tablets, video game consoles, et cetera, used for communication, information, and leisure/pleasure. Generally, individuals can participate and disseminate from online networks from wherever they are located through social media, blogs, forums, online video streaming, and online news providers. Businesses are turning more readily to the Internet and digital technology to engage their audiences through convenient tools such as online shopping, banking, and advertising. Managing one’s life becomes more convenient as bills, news, and consumables become accessible and purchaseable from the ease of one’s digital devices. This builds new relationships, but also a deep reliance, on one’s digital tools to help manage the day-to-day.

As society uses digital tools to reach ever more convenient forms for the public to organize their lives, society also enters into the realm of ethical use of digital technology. It is common practice for large companies to collect and track the data and behaviour of a participant's online activities. Some choose to sell that information, a point I explored in Chapter 1. Furthermore, with access to the Internet and the ownership of digital technology as a privilege afforded by countries with the infrastructure to allow it to thrive, questions of power enter the convoluted fray. In a country like China, the ability for the individual to freely participate in the online sphere is hindered by large-scale censorship. They do this through the outright banning of popular social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, used frequently and available globally to the public.¹ These platforms are replaced by Chinese alternatives and are constantly under moderation for "anti-nationalist" content.² As the public pushes back from a censored Internet culture, dictatorships disguised as democratic or communist governments attempt to legislate or control what is accessible or what can be said by the individual. It allows the country to have more control over the dissemination of political information; consequently, also threatening the safety of activists who wish to speak out, but whose lives are endangered by being forced to use state-run social media. As a result, their personal information is collected and available to authorities to prosecute.

Barring China, there are other unequal distributions of power that keeps individuals from making use of digital technology. Literacy, economic status, where one lives, and even *how* one lives affects one's capacity to use digital technology. While some institutions, like the public library, try to circumvent these difficulties through providing free access, digital participation is not equal nor is it equitable. Despite its global scope and reputation, digital technology and the Internet are not always indicative or even representative of real life economic situations. In spite of these setbacks, it would be foolish to allow questions of privilege and power to negate the

1. Biz Carson, "9 incredibly popular sites that are still blocked in China," *Business Insider*, July 23, 2015, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/websites-blocked-in-china-2015-7>.

2. Josh Chin, "China Targets Social-Media Giants WeChat, Weibo in Cybersecurity Probe," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 11, 2017, accessed October 20, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/wechat-weibo-among-targets-in-china-cybersecurity-probe-1502432081>.

otherwise positive traits that digital technology affords the public. However, it does force one to be conscientious of how they navigate and communicate in digital spaces, such that they do not exclude themselves from other valid and sobering realities.

The contemporary moment offers numerous ways of transmitting and absorbing messages with each new form of mediation, enhancing or minimizing certain aspects of the message to be conveyed. The spaces one occupies, the conversations they have, and the objects they see are not contained to single geographies and contexts. The multiple layers that these messages travel ultimately alters the message itself and how individuals perceive it. To be fair, messages are never singularly bare—they are dependent upon the cultural conditions of the individual and the circumstances in which it is produced. However, there are now *more* conditions than ever which determine how one interprets a message.

Although there are many new forms, or layers, of communication, it is also important to note that these new types of digital communication are simply abstractions of traditional material forms. For instance, the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) made use of “crowdsourcing” before the term was popularized in contemporary digital culture with websites such as GoFundMe, Indiegogo, Patreon, or the online message board. The OED was made from thousands of readers who would submit sentence samples of specific words by lettermail to the editor where they were held in a physical database: a pigeonhole shelf.³ As a more relevant example, the transition from the mechanical computer to reprogrammable desktops powered by electricity. Material switches which directly altered the computer’s function in-person are now done through programming on a keyboard through a digital monitor, saving space and time as processors become more powerful.

I emphasize “abstraction” from the previous paragraph due to the new affordances that appear as a result of further embedding traditional practices within new digital technology. As a result, the original message has more potential to become altered due to the various intersecting layers that compose the medium surrounding the message, ultimately molding the message into

3. Simon Winchester, *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

new forms. As McLuhan wrote, the medium *is* the message.⁴ As such, there is tremendous potential for enhanced communication in digital mediums. These mediums can amplify and supplement the effects of traditional modes. In the case of the OED, the exchange of a physically-imposing, paper-holding shelf into a digital database with the ability to submit content from anywhere in the world with an Internet connection, all contained in far less spacially demanding servers with far more capacity.

Furthermore, as society moves toward digital communication like video calling and other online alternatives to embodied socialization (i.e. social media and dating apps) there is new creative potential. A new social performativity with the digital where affective politics can take place against a global audience. However, the economic future of these digital communication platforms is uncertain. Twitter, one of the largest social media platforms in which one posts short “Tweets” (140 character-limited messages) has been attempting to monetize their business venture for many years. However, as their stock prices gradually fall, investment companies reconsider buying in as they reconsider its potential.⁵

Despite these complications, the use of digital communication technology has provided a useful outlet for politics. Local activism has been able to branch out to digital activism, broadening the scope of their political cause to international communities by imploring through various crowdfunding and social media outlets. How they “do” democracy has fundamentally changed in the face of new technological developments. Public figures and ordinary citizens now go online to organize political activities or garner visibility for specific political issues.

However, “being political” may be considered a job on top of one’s everyday activities. As the government functions through a bureaucracy, one who engages with the government must wade through its various levels. Moreover, this participation must be sustained, and oftentimes made through embodied communication. Many government departments do not yet have the sophisticated online and internal infrastructure for quick and efficient online communication. One has to make appointments, meet the people in charge, and be involved in a very embodied way.

4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

5. Mathew Ingram, “Here’s Why Twitter’s Share Price Is Plumetting,” *Fortune*, October 6, 2016, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2016/10/06/twitter-stock-bids/>.

There is enough labour to have a full-time job, but they have to do it after hours; they want to be political, but they don't have the time when they and the government from Monday to Friday. This inability to easily interact with the mechanisms of government inhibits proper participation.

In this way, it makes sense that people turn to online participation. Individuals can interact with a community of people almost immediately. They can get organizational responses much faster by going public about unprofessional or abusive corporate practices and behaviour. It does not take weeks, but days. It is not abnormal to see cases of individuals taking to Twitter to express their discontent over attempting to get through the bureaucratic layers of corporations and governmental bodies, only to have their concerns immediately dealt with after a tweet is shared by thousands.⁶ Many companies, organizations, and politicians have personal Twitter and Facebook pages with social media representatives in charge of protecting and building a brand. Thus, it reflects badly on them and potential sales, support, or votes if there are traces of malpractice spread over their online accounts and published in online journals and communities. Activists see the capacity to reach a wider audience while simultaneously accessing the inner walls of politics much faster through threatening the visibility of a company or government's internal practices.

As politics moves online, new possibilities for political participation are appearing, and new methods to take to task the internal injustices of government at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Peter Dahlgren calls this concept "alternative democracy," the possibility of using alternative political practices to circumvent internal democratic processes. Digital media, and social media in particular, have been a great asset to making this possible. While there is increased interest in doing politics online, the public must remain conscientious of traditional politics in the face of endangered voter turnout rates.⁷

Despite its drawbacks in privilege and power, there are helpful characteristics that come out of digital media. Its greatest strength comes in its numbers. Suffice it to say, it is a useful tool in conducting politics and being heard. However, caution is required when stepping into digital

6. Lucy Wallis, "Why it pays to complain via Twitter," *BBC News*, May 21, 2014, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-27381699>.

7. Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters* (Gatineau: Elections Canada, 2003).

territory, as aspects of reality can be lost when one forgets the inherent privileges of the Digital. Thus, I recommend a combination of material *and* digital activism. Furthermore, the digital is not exempt from many of the seminal theorists whose work in power, society, and the State paved much of the way we study the organization of society today.

For instance, Marxist philosopher Althusser provided important work expounding upon state power and state apparatuses through the introduction of “ideological state apparatuses.” The state apparatuses are “the police, courts and prisons—but also the army ... Presiding over this ensemble are the chief of state, the government, and the administration.”⁸ According to Marxism, the State is inherently repressive as possessors of state power use it to produce class struggle. This allows the dominant class (i.e. bourgeois) to oppress and dominate the proletariat (i.e. working class) and use the working class as surplus labour in the capitalist system, hence Marxism’s and Karl Marx’s desire for a communist state. Whether communism is an effective form of undoing the ills of capitalism is another question entirely, but ideological state apparatuses provides an interesting point of departure in understanding how crime and punishment are enacted in a society where physical violence is forbidden.

Althusser lists ideological state apparatuses as “the Scholastic, the Familial, the Religious, the Political, the Associative, the Information and News, the Publishing and Distribution, the Cultural ... This list is ... not exhaustive.”⁹ These apparatuses function differently from the repressive state apparatuses because they do not use “direct or indirect use of *physical violence* [sic],” but instead run on the concept of “means other than violence, namely, on *ideology* [sic]”¹⁰ These ideological state apparatuses serve to enforce the state ideology, therefore increase the state power of the dominant class who control the repressive state apparatuses.¹¹ The State pervades public and private spaces through ideological state apparatuses, imbuing practices and values which serve to further organize society under the oppression of capitalism.

8. Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2014 [1970]), 70.

9. *Ibid.*, 75.

10. *Ibid.*, 78-79.

11. *Ibid.*, 81.

As I stated, while physical punishment is generally unacceptable, even from state apparatuses (minus some international military torture controversies), there is still the implicit and insidious *threat* which pervades society and enables the State to function. Michel Foucault narrated the cultural change from punishment-as-spectacle to the *idea* of it, stating:

Punishment, then, will tend to become the most hidden part of the penal process. This has several consequences: it leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness; its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability, not from its visible intensity; it is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment that must discourage crime; the exemplary mechanics of punishment changes its mechanisms.¹²

The entirety of punishment then rests on the *representation* of it in a natural-seeming system.¹³ Marxism aside, both Althusser and Foucault paint a disturbing image of contemporary society in which the dominant class *do* rule, the working class *do* struggle, and there are ideological apparatuses that *do* enforce state ideologies that continue to tie and bind the public to the capitalist-democratic state. How then could countries have nationwide access to the Internet? The massive infrastructure, telephone poles, the labour, the cost.. can only be possible from private forces which possess state power, a state apparatus which possesses internal state power, or essentially both which are fueled by labourers and a public which submits to the state ideology because it *works*. However, it can be said that a lot of things work.

Thus, as consumers I believe the public must be ever vigilant when faced with the forces that make online access possible. If one steps back to consider these forces and weigh the pros and cons of what digital communication affords them, a difficult decision must be made, and a difficult balance must be employed.

Still, according to statistics youth choose alternative forms of politics over electoral, and

12. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975]), 9.

13. *Ibid.*, 104.

that means going online.¹⁴ The shift towards lived experience as a valid form of reality and truth also brought a new take on politics: a politics of identity. While this new form of politics provides positive aspects to the political realm, it places further precedent on the ability to communicate through difference as different identities clash online. I believe we should be looking at ways to improve individual communication and openness to difference which is why I created the philosophy of movement. In the next section, I will explain identity politics so readers have a better understanding as to why the philosophy of movement may be necessary in producing a more effective and communicative politics.

2.2 Identity Politics and Online Influence

There is a marked difference in how individuals navigate political spaces in contemporary culture. Beyond my explorations of youth and online participation, the turn toward lived experience as a dominant form of identification has changed how individuals relate to politics and how they choose to participate. The statement “the personal is political,” first derived from feminist discourse, provides a short yet accurate descriptor of current political trends. The shift to “lived experience” as a dominant mode of knowledge determines what kinds of politics individuals may choose to adopt, especially as the private, public, social, and political boundaries become blurred, as noted by Hannah Arendt.¹⁵ However, this connection produces a paradox in political participation.

Peter Dahlgren provides a picture into this political paradox stating, “The growing structural gaps between organized political life and people’s everyday realities reinforce a sense of distance from the political system.”¹⁶ While individuals feel a growing distance as their engagement with official political structures becomes further mediated by bureaucratic systems producing, further producing a lack of trust, the individuals themselves are becoming more

14. Martin Turcotte, *Political participation and civic engagement of youth* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, October 7, 2015).

15. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 33.

16. Peter Dahlgren, *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26.

personally invested in *specific political causes*. Rather than campaigning for a general party, they curate a political scheme that falls into line with their identity, aided by digital spaces which can expedite the dissemination of political opinion and action.¹⁷ It feels natural and more personal to vet for issues that individuals feel connected to rather than supporting a political party which adopts only a portion of their political views while also supporting other issues that they find problematic. This creates a rift between the individual and the political party, voting for issues they agree with while other issues run counter to their identity.

Furthermore, navigating official channels seems like too much of a mediation of one's resources, too much time spent waiting on politicians to enact the platform they voted them in for, and sometimes politicians reversing their platform. In contrast, individuals can directly support specific political problems and organizations through online petitions and crowdfunding. Through a combination of social media and embodied conversations there is a closing of the gap between the individual and the individual problems they seek to change. Generally, I would posit this new shift in politics toward the specific and the personal as positive. As politics becomes increasingly porous with continual intermixing of private and public issues, the boundaries of traditional democratic politics have faced difficulty in shifting their position to better reflect the cultural shifts of its citizens. It is no longer about choosing parties on bipolar spectrums, but about a range of beliefs that are regularly enacted in everyday lives, and it is becoming increasingly easy to do so with the help of digital technology. However, it comes with significant risk. Privacy is at the forefront of these issues.

I turn to Dahlgren as he provides a well-rounded comment to generally understand the consequences of digital technology:

Some observers are quick to point to the power *of* the media, in shaping political agendas, in conveying and reproducing certain world-views. Others will underscore the power *over* the media, for example, how politicians, private interests, and audiences influence how the media operate and the kinds of representations of reality they provide. Still others highlight how various power vectors can generate ambivalent force-fields in and around the media. All of these perspectives are of course valid, if

17. Examples of specific politics would be anti- or pro-abortion, oil or green energy, et cetera.

not always simultaneously.¹⁸

I appreciate Dahlgren's emphasis on how public audiences can influence politics and the media just as much as large corporations. Dahlgren's work builds upon a history of understanding the public in relation to the political, most theorists (including himself) building from a Habermasian model and reshaping it to current relevance. It would be simply untrue to reduce the public to pawns by the whims of the economically wealthy and powerful. There are, as Dahlgren says, "vectors of power" which intersect and intermingle to produce outcomes not exclusive to one interest.

This is all to say that how the Internet will shape the far distant future of politics is uncertain, but I can look at contemporary uses of media technology in relation to the political to understand why it is meaningful today, and how it is altering how the public does politics in the present. In particular, in this section I explored the transition to a politics based on identity, heralding a shift deeply connected to the "affective turn" in contemporary culture. Lauren Berlant and Brian Massumi frequently allude to how we are now in the time of "affective politics," Massumi describing it as follows:

Politics, approached affectively, is an art of emitting the interruptive signs, triggering the cues, that attune bodies while activating their capacities differentially. Affective politics is inductive. Bodies can be inducted into, or attuned to, certain regions of tendency, futurity and potential, they can be induced into inhabiting the same affective environment, even if there is no assurance they will act alike in that environment.¹⁹

As such, individuals should think about how political practices have shifted according to these new cultural paradigms, such as the new paradigm where the body's response to politics becomes another form of "truth" over deliberation, deliberation being a style of conversation which seeks "rational" truth. However, due to the unstable and unknown nature of affect, it

18. Dahlgren, *Media and Political Engagement*, 50.

19. Massumi and McKim, "Of microperception and micropolitics," 56-57.

further complicates the domain of politics. While speaking from a queer viewpoint, Berlant discusses how the instability of affect may lead to new discoveries:

[W]hile one can't intend an affect, one can become attentive to the nimbus of affects whose dynamics move along and make worlds, situations, and environments. In attending to, representing, and standing for these alternative modes of being, we seek to provide new infrastructures for extending their potential to new planes of convergence.²⁰

In the spirit of authenticity, affective politics calls upon ambiguity to tease the individual into wondering what lays ahead in the political space, navigating unknown yet powerfully sensational spaces. At the same time, it provides clarity into how one's actions can potentially impact the direction of a political movement or even lead the movement to new realizations. While inconclusive, it shows the vulnerability of politics and "pure" rationality in the face of bodies responding to affect, inducting the mind to other possibilities and reactions which can catch the political sphere off guard.

However, there can be danger in affect that is registered as negative emotion by the individual, where one cannot be certain whether the potential will induct one to shame others or seek the necessary critical conversations to move politics forward. This is why I want readers to consider the significance of philosophy in aiding in the shaping of a healthier "personal is political" scheme, a point I will explore at the end of this chapter.

On the other hand, one of the positive aspects of the affective turn is the criticism of traditional political practices. This has indicated a move towards the creation of dialogue and action around new alternatives to a system that no longer caters to the breadth of its citizens. While the term "democracy" comes from the Greek words for "common people" and "strength," there is always a struggle to balance the powers of the public with the needs of society. The Internet has played a major role in helping to highlight and promote new forms of inclusive political participation, and despite its own critiques mired in privilege, has become a reputable and popular format of practicing alternative democracies.

20. Lauren Berlant and Jordan Greenwald, "Affect in the End Times: A Conversation with Lauren Berlant," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 20 (2012): 88.

Dahlgren defines an alternative democracy as “efforts aimed at attaining social change by democratic means while circumventing electoral politics.”²¹ While Dahlgren maintains that he does not wish to undermine the traditional democratic system, he also wants to emphasize and point towards the creation of alternative ways of participating in democratic institutions, all in frustration with the inability of old democratic methods to fulfill the current needs of its citizens. The cancellation of electoral reform to implement proportional representation in Canada was a major disappointment to supporters of the Liberal Party and to many minority voices.²² In such times of anger and disappointment, and without the support of the party they elected, the public turns to the Internet to voice concern, frustration, and question what possible recourse they may have, creating new avenues for political action online.

While Evgeny Morozov uses terms like “slacktivism” and “clicktivism” to describe digital activism, I suggest it would be unwise to approach new concepts with pessimistic cynicism towards the general populace’s activities of consumption. I do not think that we should be looking at the increased use of digital mediums in politics and activism as an unwelcome transition, but as a helpful reality and a logical step from traditional democracy’s lack thereof. This is a change for general politics, and while there is excitement for the possibilities of the Internet, the transition comes with its own issues.

As I previously mentioned in Chapter 1, while the shift to doing politics online is generally welcome it has also raised questions of privilege. Furthermore, the ethics of anonymity and the ethics of censorship online are both crucial points which society is still attempting to figure out and balance against the abuse of those ethics. Producing fair legislation around online activity continues to be a struggle.

At the same time, online participation in politics may provide a more accessible voice for minorities, refugees, and the less educated. It provides a more even ground for voices to be heard and to find support in each other. Moreover, it provides communities of different cultures to more

21. Peter Dahlgren, *The Political Web: Media Participation and Alternative Democracy* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3.

22. Aaron Wherry, “Liberal fears of proportional representation and a referendum killed Trudeau’s reform promise,” *CBC News*, February 3, 2017, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-reform-promise-referendum-1.3963533>.

easily find each other and participate in collective dialogue and deliberate over politics. This deliberation is a positive and affirming act for those who struggle to be heard in the everyday, but this deliberation comes with a caveat.

Deliberation was (and still is) considered one of the closest ways to achieve rational decisionmaking and consensus. Only through deliberation can one discern the “truth,” debating through the pros and cons of a particular issue which would enlighten the best decision for both parties. Wit and intelligence is required to navigate these formal conversational spaces. While it seems that a deliberative democracy, based on the description above, would be the end-all solution to all political problems (who doesn’t want pure, rational decisionmaking?), it manages to enshroud its own deeply entrenched privileges.

The deliberative democracy requires a level of education, literacy, and oral skill that some individuals simply do not have. It is just as exclusionary, if not more, of specific social classes where access and support to formal education is not supported, where the curriculum and tutelage is poor, or where a non-native arrives in a country without sufficient proficiency in the nation’s language. This is why individuals are quick to accept new forms of alternative democratic participation not simply predicated on level of education and rational capability.

While I do not believe we should completely dismiss deliberation, I want readers to understand the power of persuasion that comes from speech. Deliberation does not simply produce truth or rationality, it can also be a tool for control. As Dahlgren says, “We use discourses—but they also use us, and their entanglements with power relations are always potentially present.”²³ I believe we must not completely remove deliberation from political practices, as it is an integral and necessary form of participation and dialogue-creation; it is one of the most basic and fundamental forms of communication. Rather, I believe we should take into account the context in which deliberation manifests, its affordances, and provide alternatives for where it lacks. I believe the shift to affective politics provides a necessary outlet for political participation where deliberation would only serve as a detriment to some.

I believe that together, affect and deliberation produces a more inclusive way to engage in politics. Alone, they stand to suffer from ideas of accessibility and privilege. While some of

23. Dahlgren, *The Political Web*, 26.

deliberation's positive traits remain in the affective political turn, affect theory has teased itself into the strands of how contemporary politics is done today. This relational dynamic provides a wider range in which citizens can both feel through, think through, and speak through politics. Absolute rationality is balanced by identity and a personal code of ethics and morals. On the other hand, new dangers permutate as affective politics increases in scope, creating unnecessary conflict as the personal is political becomes a conflict of personal beliefs as "truth" emerges.

It was easier to isolate oneself from differing opinions in the past, but even with the curation of the individual's online forays, one can never absolutely stop the possibility of stumbling upon news or conversations made by people of different ideologies. On Facebook, depending on one's beliefs, the shock of finding out an individual's longtime acquaintance is a white supremacist, racist, feminist, Liberal, Republican, or more may lead to quick unfriending, but may also have the potential to initiate an uncomfortable but beneficial conversation. For example, Sarah Schulman documents her personal Facebook and Twitter conversations over the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the alleged mass murdering of innocents. In doing so, she shows the exchange of differing opinions coming together under critical dialogue, although with heated moments.²⁴ However, more often than not, conversations may end under *ad hominem* attacks, creating deeper fissures and antagonisms in political matters.

Lastly, while online politics and digital activism can be seen as an alternative democratic practice by virtue of circumventing electoral systems, I believe we should not forget the powerful forces which can take advantage of it. Mega-corporations and governmental bodies also make use of digital media to attain their own personal goals. The powers which control specific media outlets (news websites, social media, software, et cetera) have the ability to control behind-the-scenes curation and data gathering of personal information. As such, users should be conscious of *what* they are giving when they use online digital services and *where* it is going. Being online is not an escape from capitalist and consumerist forces, and more than ever continues to prove itself as further exacerbating the power of those forces. As I spoke about the potential to have critical conversations over Facebook, Facebook is also under heavy scrutiny due

24. Sarah Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 209-269.

to the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the improper handling of information.²⁵

In many ways, when one participates in politics, they are readying themselves for the anxieties of what may come by bracing for inevitable disappointments. Despite this, people thrive. While institutions fail, collective societies grow. As institutions take more time to adapt, humans can more readily change. Lauren Berlant captures this sentiment when she says, “One really big difference between political institutions and people is that people are able to manage ordinary affective incoherence and disorganization with much grace as long as their anchors in the ongoing world or the ordinary feel sufficiently stable.”²⁶ She describes the ever resilient human as they try to navigate a complicated and sometimes upsetting political institution.

In a cultural climate where individuals are feeling more alienated from electoral politics as they turn to specific politics, I believe we must find new ways to better connect the electoral through digital technology instead of simply using Twitter accounts and online news outlets. To do this, engagement must be encouraged. However, engagement must transform into participation for one to enact the change they desire.²⁷ Simply being interested is not enough, one must also take the leap into action. My hope is that the philosophy of movement will help inspire that leap.

2.3 Digital Activism and Philosophical Practices

While the first part of this chapter was about understanding the current political climate within democratic politics, more specifically how digital activism is changing the culture of how individuals “do” politics from outside the electoral system, this part of the chapter comes back into the conceptual realm of philosophy.

As I have previously discussed, we can understand digital activism as an important alternative democratic practice. I have explored the ways in which it can both be an excellent supplement to politics, but also cautioned the limits of using it exclusively. I have looked at the

25. Andrea Valdez, “Everything You Need to Know About Facebook and Cambridge Analytica,” *Wired*, March 23, 2018, accessed May 8, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/wired-facebook-cambridge-analytica-coverage/>.

26. Berlant and Greenwald, “Affect in the End Times,” 76.

27. Dahlgren, *Media and Political Engagement*, 81.

ways in which online users can also impede the process of digital activism, periodically making it more difficult and more frustrating to deal with than traditional bureaucracies. Ultimately, I found that the subversive methods it provides was worth its criticisms in power and accessibility.

I also concluded that mindfulness is always required when navigating digital spaces for political purposes, as certain realities have the possibility of being obfuscated in the process. As Sarah Schulman notes, “I believe in action. But there are all kinds of actions: some are designed to acknowledge and reveal the sources of conflict and pain in order to resolve them, and some are designed to obscure those sources so that resolution/change can never occur.”²⁸ There are sacrifices to every action, pros and cons of using certain mediums over others, and I believe we should be aware of this fact when approaching politics.

Now, I want to think of ways that one can improve the quality of digital activist practices, online and offline. My suggestion, and the entire point of the philosophy of movement, is about *philosophical practices for everyday life*. Philosophy courses in post-secondary education generally follow a direction which can feel counter to or inaccessible to its students. It becomes the study of the study of philosophy. While I find it important to have the context and history of old philosophers, I believe there has to be a remarketing of philosophy as something that, just like democracy, is something that is *enacted*, not just studied, paralleling with Dahlgren’s notions of “doing” democracy.

In the coming sections I will further elucidate the uses of philosophy within the context of digital activism, and how it enhances one’s ability to fulfill their affective potential and build more effective political publics for greater change. Ultimately, I believe philosophy will enliven contemporary democracy online to reach more sophisticated points of intersection that will improve how digital activism affects politics and people. From there, readers will be prepared for my case study of the hearse in the final chapter.

2.3.1 Philosophy in the Digital Realm

In cases of the digital, I believe users must be even more conscious of their online behaviours and how they may affect other people. Affect is not simply transmitted through immediate, material

28. Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, 140.

communication, it is also embedded in the texts that are read, the images that are seen, the videos that are watched, all present online. Forays onto the Internet are not simply opening and closing a closet door. It is a medium, and as all mediums, there are messages. These messages are deconstructed and reconstructed from person to person, or as Fuchs describes, “Confronted with content provided by the media, humans create, re-create and differentiate meanings of the world in various social roles.”²⁹

There is potential for situations of difference while navigating online communities which can escalate into abuse if approached improperly. Difference requires tolerance; one is not mandated to agree, but if they are authentic they must participate critically. They must listen and be open to dialogue. When used properly, difference can be the most powerful tool, and if used improperly, utterly destructive.

Difference is the unconditional respect for mutual communication. *Difference is not about silencing what is different.* These differences come from a global cultural confusion where the participants are forced to renegotiate, gracefully or ungracefully, the fact that there are different standards of belief around the world which seem demonstrably ridiculous, unethical, strange, cruel, or other. Arjun Appadurai presses upon this issue saying, “The central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.”³⁰

In these cultural conflicts, people at odds with other people, sometimes the difference is too overwhelming. Instead, they take to silence: ignoring and/or refusing to respond to the difference. However, Schulman notes that silence *is* a form of abuse and escalation.³¹ To make positive difference, I believe one must stop reacting to difference on one’s own terms, and have philosophies that guide it. That means to not hide from difference, and to not to shut out other realities counter to one’s own. However, instead of struggling with the innermost self to accept it, what if there was a mandate, a rule to follow, which demanded it? A philosophy *cum* ritual which

29. Christian Fuchs, “Social Media and the Public Sphere,” *tripleC* 12 (2014): 66.

30. Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Theory, Culture, & Society* 7 (1990): 295.

31. Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, 140.

normalizes healthy difference through adopting new thinking, acting, and responding practices? Ultimately, with the goal of producing new rituals which desensitizes emotional discontent to difference through repetition?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines philosophy as, “A theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behaviour.” Philosophy is encountered everywhere, although more commonly manifests as culture, mandate, best practice, religion, and beyond. However, these other terms are missing the crucial aspect of philosophy which is to *question*. Another definition given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls philosophy, “The study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic principle.” Especially, but not exclusive to academia, philosophy can be practiced and shared by anyone who is open and willing to think, question, know, and *not* know. Philosophy is not inherently tied to education and class, although history would make it seem so, but rather a question of opportunity and awareness. Many people encounter philosophical practices without ever encountering philosophy itself, a far more weighty term than problem-solving, thinking, inquiring, questioning, contemplating, and beyond.

However, this begs the question of *how* and *why* should one practice philosophy. I provided an account of reasons as to the “why”: to be able to respond to conflict and and engage with it critically. However, philosophy does not promise this behaviour, and yet one must still commit. In that moment of faltering belief I believe one must, as Kierkegaard said (albeit in terms of God), take the leap of faith.³²

While Richard Shusterman explains the two types of philosophy which have manifest in tradition, philosophy as theory and philosophy as “the art of living,” I believe one cannot have philosophical practices without thinking, theorizing the type of life they wish to have and what encompasses that life.³³ Thus, diverging theory and life would be foolish. To study Stoic philosophy and do nothing with that knowledge, or to practice Stoic philosophy because it is a trend, are both dangerous propositions, as both suggest an inauthentic or shallow conception of

32. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*.

33. Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 2.

the practice of philosophy. As Shusterman explains later, “[P]hilosophical theories of the world typically serve as logical grounds or guiding orientations through which philosophical arts of living are developed and defended.”³⁴

In this sense, when Shusterman talks about the “art of living” he does not mean a visual representation of life, but the authentic and internal creation of one’s Being manifest into the world. If one is true to oneself, they do not fear the visibility of their character. Michel de Montaigne put it clearly when he said, “To compose our character is our duty, not to compose books, and to win, not battles and provinces, but order and tranquility in our conduct. Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live appropriately.”³⁵

Montaigne begs a modesty but curiosity of character to know oneself, know others, and be at peace in conducting oneself. I believe this tranquility of conduct is especially crucial as individuals’s attentions turn to digital space to be political, and in spite of its speed of transmission, still take the time to ponder and consider how the Digital and their digital behaviour relates to the cultivation of their personal “truth” in their art of living. As Dahlgren notes, “From the perspective of the public sphere, such high-speed political communication can be deemed out of sync with the pace of human reflection and discussion, generating stress and unreason, notably in situations of decision-making.”³⁶ The philosophy of movement is simply another “guiding orientation” in which individuals may employ if they believe in authentic and critical engagement with situations of difference. The stress of politics in general combined with the fast turnover of online communication means that the only way of responding slowly and thoughtfully online is for the individuals themselves to purposefully choose to pause and think about how their actions relate to the greater digital space and its participants.

The mediation of stress and unreason does not mitigate its presence. Rather, stresses appear to be higher than ever as digital technology has entered the workplace. Answering e-mails afterhours and checking a potential employee’s Facebook page have citizens stumbling through

34. Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 3.

35. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), xiv.

36. Dahlgren, *Media and Political Engagement*, 55.

the social repercussions and corporate boundaries of wanting to “unplug.” These pressures follow through in digital politics as individuals begin to experience the consequences of speed, creating unneeded conflict. With the Internet changing their relationship to time and space, notably making it feel faster, there may be difficult situations in which the knee-jerk reaction is to respond immediately. There are many examples online where that has only been to the detriment of the responder, posts being deleted and sometimes even a second apology for the insensitivity of the first apology. Famous YouTuber Logan Paul has recently had to release a second statement after publishing an online video (now removed) where he recorded a dead body (from suicide) and proceeded to proclaim his finding to his online audience, the body on film.³⁷

However, as I previously touched on, the problem is not about how to slow down digital communication, *it is about how to slow down the individual*. It is about rejecting the expectation and pressure that one must respond immediately by virtue of online communication being fast. One does not and should not be expected to respond at the pace of the design of digital technology. To do this I suggest philosophy. I want the public to turn to philosophical practices which do not just serve their politics, but their humanity. Philosophy, and existentialism for that matter, have never been about oppression but about freedom in one’s choices. Carl Jung once said, “I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.” Although I disagree about shedding one’s contextual history, as in one *is* what happened to them, individuals should feel comfortable with this concept and be able to make positive decisions without letting their past negatively control them.

However, that is the problem with Internet justice: it is fast and it is cruel. There are always remnants of one’s past behaviours coming back to punish them. The online beauty community is coming to grips with famous beauty YouTubers’s pasts where they tweeted racist messages. Users read the entirety of these individual’s Twitter accounts, screenshotted the tweets in question, and rehosted them on other image sharing websites to ensure they remain for the

37. Abby Ohlheiser, “YouTuber Logan Paul apologizes for showing dead body in Japan’s ‘suicide forest’,” *The Washington Post*, January 2, 2018, accessed January 11, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2018/01/02/youtuber-logan-paul-apologizes-for-showing-body-in-japans-suicide-forest/?utm_term=.6ccc7dd1d31b.

Internet's consumption.³⁸

There are also no repercussions against public assumptions. There are dozens of examples of online vigilantes releasing a believed criminal's information online, only to have their lives and family's lives endangered and threatened. When it is revealed that they are not linked to the crime at all, the vigilantes move on to the next target. Or in the case of online news forum Reddit, their "criminal" Sunil Tripathi was declared not a suspect after being found dead in the Providence River.³⁹ However, it was not just a problem of Reddit, it was a problem with the media adopting the community's allegations and publicizing it as truth. Jay Caspian Kang, a journalist who interviewed Tripathi's family, carefully reflects on the aftermath of the debacle:

To blame Reddit is to pretend that the platform is the problem ... This is what media is now, a constantly evolving interaction between reporters working for mainstream companies; journalists and writers compiling and interpreting news for online outlets; and thousands of individuals participating on their own in the gathering and assembling and disseminating of information. It's a tremendously messy process, at times thrilling and deeply useful, and at times damaging in ways that can't be anticipated.⁴⁰

I raise this issue because these conflicts are not exclusive to the large-scale level, the aftermath of these types of scandals affects on an individual level through shifts in expectations and culture. With a news cycle whose turnaround rate is already extremely fast, to then turn towards online communities with an equally as fast turnaround rate, accountability and care is required lest faith be lost in both politics *and* journalism. Tripathi's death was the abuse of his

38. Alex Abad-Santos, "Laura Lee, Jeffree Star, and the racism scandal upending the YouTube beauty community, explained," *Vox*, August 31, 2018, accessed September 12, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/28/17769996/laura-lee-jeffree-star-racism-subscriber-count>.

39. Jess Bidgood, "Body of Missing Student at Brown Is Discovered," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2013, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/26/us/sunil-tripathi-student-at-brown-is-found-dead.html>.

40. Jay Caspian Kang, "Should Reddit Be Blamed for the Spreading of a Smear?," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 25, 2013, accessed November 14, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/magazine/should-reddit-be-blamed-for-the-spreading-of-a-smear.html?pagewanted=all%5C&_r=1%5C&.

internal conflict with mental health by the online community and journalists in their desperation to find the suspect of the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing as soon as possible. However, speed can lead to carelessness.

On the individual level, this capacity to transform conflict into abuse and the speed of digital communication further manifests itself as identity politics comes into the blogging sphere, public news, and social media eyes, allowing for a far more visible and public decrying, shaming, and silencing of difference, turning it into the abject Other. Julia Kristeva describes it perfectly, saying, “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”⁴¹

The abject is horrific, but the abject is not an object. “The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I.”⁴² Antagonizing and dehumanizing the other, turning them into the abject, allows one to obfuscate the ambiguity of morality and what produces culture. They can claim a virtuous self, a moral high-ground, and the capacity to enact power over another. This process of rejecting the other is easier through mediated online communication, through text, through authorities. There is no sympathy for the horrific and no need for context—the action is the abject, and the perpetrator less than the action. However, the individual is not the true abjection, as the abject is unnamable and has no form. *The individual stands in place of the abject as an attempt to make sense of an affect which disturbs us.* “‘I am afraid of horses, I am afraid of being bitten.’ Fear and the aggressivity intended to protect me from some not yet localizable cause are projected and come back to me from the outside: ‘I am threatened.’”⁴³ In this case, when Reddit visualized the Boston Bomber as Tripathi, he became the abject and suddenly the excitement overrode the careful attention to a sensitive issue.

I believe we should be vigilant when addressing political conversations online to undo the process of abjecting the Other. To fear and feel threatened by another force, one which makes no

41. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

42. *Ibid.*, 1.

43. *Ibid.*, 39.

claims at hurting one's body, one's physical safety, except a challenge of one's Self, one's identity, that is the challenge of life. The Self is fragile which makes it difficult, but the Self is meant to handle difference, because that difference helps individuals grow. In addressing difference, let us have a philosophy which aids in abetting what we so fear, and allow us to live in *anticipation* of the challenge of the in-between, the ambiguous, and the composite.

Philosophy comes from the Greek word *philosophia* which translates as "love of wisdom." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, wisdom is "[t]he quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement; the quality of being wise," and wise as being "[s]ensible or prudent." And so I suggest not a call to arms, but a call to thought—let us be prudent and wise in how we address otherness and difference online. Let us be tolerant of listening and being listened to. Let us speak, be spoken to, and respond in sensitive and ever more thoughtful ways. Let us return to being philosophers in our daily lives, material and digital. Furthermore, let us be curious philosophers in our pursuit of actionable politics.

2.4 Closing Thoughts

We find ourselves in a time where politics is navigated through identity and feeling, allowing for the affect to inject itself into politics, with one caveat: although an affective politics provides a way for political participation to encompass the majority demography through impressing upon the body, how is it that participation in electoral politics has generally reduced?

I surmised that through continuous acts of attrition, the populace has simply become tired and jaded of traditional forms of politics, moving on to alternatives that provide a more immediate change online, such as petitions, crowdfunding, blogging, news, and social media to bring visibility of issues faster. In spite of the increase in online political participation and the speed at which online politics is carried out, this speed also impedes the ability to be thoughtful in online communication as I examined with Sunil Tripathi.

There appears to be an abusive relationship to conflict in today's global society, and access to the media online is not helping. As Steven Pinker and Andrew Mack systematically work through the various dangers of contemporary society, showing how each of them have gone *down*, they finally reach the question of why the public continues to fear more than ever: "Too

much of our impression of the world comes from a misleading formula of journalistic narration ... Newspaper columnists instruct their readers on what emotions to feel ... An evidence-based mindset on the state of the world would bring many benefits.”⁴⁴

As the public continues to turn to their digital devices for information, to news websites, to disseminators who distribute that news (including friends and family), to their social media feeds—there is truth, but also self-deception. Moreover, tremendous potential for these powers to play on affects of the time, able to instill both fear and hope as they navigate their new, complicated relationship to globalism and the Internet. As society slowly moves forward and becomes safer, other factors will arise that gives the public new sources of anxiety. It just means that whatever is experienced today is the *real* threat, because it is a part of the contemporary moment and shapes one’s identity.

Further referencing Pinker and Mack’s observations, I am reminded of Berlant when she says, “We can bear a lot of wobble, but when the media and state-interested institutions orchestrate all kinds of situations as crises and as threats to the infrastructures that organize nextness and vague senses of the projected out future, anxiety levels rise that are not just about the singular situation but about ongoingness itself.”⁴⁵ As such, the people need practices and thought strategies to adopt that make them *hopeful* in building a future that represents an inclusive, engaged, critical, and participative society. I believe through the practice of philosophy, we can produce that hope by allowing us to accept difference.

The forgotten (or often overlooked) concept of philosophy and being a philosopher has become lost within ideas of classism, privilege, and inaccessibility, but as I explained in Chapters 1 and 2, philosophy can be practical. It begins from the desire to care for one’s Being, and as Montaigne said, live appropriately, in whatever manner that may manifest according to one’s authenticity.

The public is already making positive steps in acknowledging and making use of digital

44. Steven Pinker and Andrew Mack, “The World Is Not Falling Apart,” *Slate*, December 22, 2014, accessed November 15, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2014/12/the_world_is_not_falling_apart_the_trend_lines_reveal_an_increasingly_peaceful.html.

45. Berlant and Greenwald, “Affect in the End Times,” 76.

technology for alternative means of practicing politics and shaping the future of democracy, but I have shown how politics online can in fact end dangerously. In those moments, I believe a philosophy is necessary by which one can refer themselves to and have an ethical foundation in which to ground one's digital practices.

While concepts like equality, opportunity, and access for all individuals sound like wonderful ideas, they are tall orders that have no direction for individuals to take immediate action. Rather, they should be practiced under concepts of tolerance, kindness, benevolence, and beyond. Furthermore, these very qualities can be further distilled into *philosophy*. Essentially, I suggest that an activism grounded in philosophy has more affective potential, thus more potential to produce engagement and participation through thoughtfulness and care.

To distill what I went over in this chapter: I defined the Digital and the Material and contextualized it within the use of digital technology in democratic politics, I further distilled democratic politics into alternative democracy to further understand how identity and affect plays into contemporary digital political culture, and finally I introduced a need for philosophy to help mitigate the speed of digital communication and act as a supplement to increase the *affectiveness* of digital activism, thereby increasing the odds of an effective politics (i.e. engagement and participation) to produce change.

In the final chapter, I can finally wed the philosophy of movement with digital activism so readers can understand how philosophy specifically aids in digital political practices through a case study over an in-person and online moral conflict over the use of a specific vehicle.

Chapter 3

Case Study: Breaking Traditions

Reflecting upon the previous two chapters, I can see the overall trajectory: there is an overarching concern towards society's relationship to digital technology, how one perceives it, and how it is used to be political.

I reflected upon the current political climate in Canada and its digital infrastructures. I looked at how the Internet can be useful for democracy; for example, how it aids in producing alternative democratic practices to give a voice to minorities. I also remarked on how the Internet is vulnerable, as I looked at its inability to disconnect from systems of privilege and power. Despite helping certain minority voices, the Internet can also produce and further exacerbate political issues beyond reasonability. While a democracy may be one of the current best imagined political ideologies, it does not come without its own weaknesses and failures. Especially in the case of Canada, while boasting a rich multicultural citizenship, its many voices are left askew for the democratic majority.

In light of these observations, digital culture still matters. Digital activism is a necessary and contemporary method of being political and helping youth participate in political affairs early on in their lives. In Canada, individuals cannot vote until they are 18 years of age and they are a Canadian citizen. This leaves out not only youth, but permanent residents and other non-documented persons, all stakeholders in the future of Canadian politics.

Still, the night is young, and digital technology is barely in its adulthood. As such I caution that individuals must be careful, attentive, and critical to its other possibilities. There remains to be seen further developments as we continue to build upon each new iteration of

digital technology. My hope is to lend to its political shaping and help provide further context on how we can be better effective and affective participants in our democracy through the careful use of both philosophy and digital technology in unison.

With these thoughts in mind, this chapter is the final culmination of all my work, plus some added observations to finalize the philosophy of movement's place within digital activism and show how philosophy can be a tool for positive change, warranting a revisit to philosophy for contemporary culture and how it may be used in other areas of our lives.

This chapter will be a case study to exhibit the philosophy of movement in action. Titled *Breaking Traditions*, I will provide the background on a conflict in a small New Brunswick (NB) town in Canada. It encapsulates two sides to a complicated issue that the parties in question cannot negotiate: what does a hearse symbolize? From there, I will show how adopting the philosophy of movement can allow individuals to engage with each other critically and without antagonism, allowing the situation to deescalate and a more nuanced understanding of the conflict to develop.

3.1 Conflict Background

Hannah Fleet lives in Rothesay, NB, a town that houses the 5 top richest neighbourhoods in the entire province.¹ Fleet's first car is a 1994 Cadillac hearse, a vintage item that drives well, is spacious, and suits the style of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design's (NSCAD) visual arts student. Fleet has owned the hearse since October 2016, a purchase made through the online classifieds website Kijiji, the equivalent to Craigslist. Prior to Fleet's ownership, the hearse was acquired and used by Rooney Funeral Home in Alberton, Prince Edward Island.

As a former student of film history, Fleet enjoys quality vintage objects with a past. She boasts the Cadillac's smooth ride and excellent stereo, considering it a practical \$2,000 purchase for transporting photography gear and other supplies for her art practice. Generally, hearses can be sold with low mileage cheaply. According to Fleet, "Most people don't want to drive hearses,"

1. Canadian Business, "The Top 5 Richest Neighbourhoods in New Brunswick," Canadian Business, September 4, 2015, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.canadianbusiness.com/lists-and-rankings/richest-neighbourhoods/top-5-new-brunswick-2015/>.

citing how her car is often alone when parked at the store and friends unwilling to drive with her.²

Part of the community of Rothesay enjoys the irreverent or pragmatic use of the hearse, Fleet sometimes receiving thumbs up from passersby. However, there is another part of the town which is opposed to its daily use, its visibility as a reminder of death, as part of a traditional ritual, or disrespectful to its main purpose as the transportation of the deceased. As a result, Fleet has received letters from the city, visits from the RCMP, and harassment from unknown persons. At the same time, the residents of Rothesay are publically criticized online for being traditionalist and discriminating against Fleet.³ Both sides cannot seem to agree on whether the hearse is a sign of traditions, death, and mourning, or a vintage luxury vehicle with practical use for the everyday.

The conflict itself has developed in such a way that it appears there is no possibility for negotiation on either side. To the individuals involved, the only options appear to be to keep the hearse, hide it from view, or sell it. However, within this conflict is an even greater precedent: closure and reconciliation on an issue which has produced antagonisms on both sides of the issue. Furthermore, producing the ability to talk about the true source of the conflict—what does the hearse symbolize, to whom, and can these perceptions interact peacefully?

I argue that the philosophy of movement will enable these conversations to happen through allowing the involved parties to achieve mutual acceptance of the situation *with or without the hearse*. In order to do show this, in the next section I will delve deeper into how the conflict manifest itself online and the response of both sides.

3.1.1 Communication Timeline

While Fleet has possessed the hearse since October 2016, media attention was not drawn until March 2017, when an article interviewing Fleet and her problems with the town of Rothesay

2. Julia Wright, “Spinning in her grave: Rothesay woman’s ride is to die for,” *CBC News*, March 10, 2017, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/death-becomes-her-1.4018928>.

3. Julia Wright, “Dead tired: Harassment in N.B. town makes woman want to sell hearse,” *CBC News*, May 31, 2017, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/rothesay-hearse-harassment-1.4139215>.

surfaced five months after her purchase. Ample time to produce conflict, the first article by CBC publishes Fleet's struggles with complaints made to the town manager, John Jarvie, and raised in council meetings. The names of the complainants are privatized in each case.

The issue the complainants raised was that Fleet regularly parked the hearse in the lay-by, an area on the side of the road where cars are allowed to pull over and park. The lay-by is located across the road from her family home. The visibility of the hearse was a concern to them, one individual going so far as to calling Fleet's neighbour. "My [Fleet's] neighbour got a phone call. Some people have made complaints. I'm not really sure what their problem is with it, but I assume it's something to do with the mortality that a hearse makes you think of."⁴

Fleet explains that because her home is located in a tight corner, and the driveway is made of full gravel, her low-sitting hearse is difficult to maneuver in a potentially dangerous space on a road with regular traffic. Furthermore, there is no by-law indicating that a hearse cannot park in the lay-by, as that is the lay-by's purpose, "Provided it's inspected, not blocking traffic and in compliance with other traffic laws."⁵

However, in spite of no laws prohibiting hearses from being driven and parked in public, complaints made their way to a February 13th, 2017 town council meeting. As Jarvie remarks for CBC, "It's unusual to see a hearse, other than at a funeral home or at a funeral ... When one is parked on the road, it raises questions."⁶ Jarvie goes on to explain that during the meeting, a comment was raised that the hearse's presence was unusual. In spite of that, Jarvie states that he is not aware of by-laws preventing Fleet from driving and parking the hearse as she wished.

The conflict continued, and the hearse was brought up once again in a Rothesay town council meeting on April 10th, 2017. A letter was submitted to the council in which the individual, whose name is blacked out, remarks that Fleet's hearse is regularly parked in the lay-by. In this case, the writer of the letter interprets Rothesay's by-laws differently, citing:

From by-law 5-03 Section 8, the definition of street is as follows:

4. Wright, "Spinning in her grave."
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

(8) “street” means a Rothesay street, highway, road, lane, sidewalk thoroughfare, bridge, square and the curbs, gutters, culverts and retaining walls in connection therewith and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, *includes the full-width of the right-of-way*; [sic]

From by-law 3-03, Section 16B, it states:

(b) In those months of April, May, June, July, August, September, October and November, between the hours of 02:30 and 06:30 of any day, no person shall park a vehicle unattended on any highway, except parking lots ...

I am requesting that the law be enforced in the case of this vehicle, restricting it from parking there overnight.⁷

According to the publically available town council minutes on Rothesay’s website, in response to the letter Deputy Mayor Matt Alexander notes that the hearse is parked on the lay-by, *designed for short-term parking*. Thus, is exempt from the by-laws which the writer cites, leading the Deputy Mayer to note, “The resident may have an issue with the type of vehicle parked in the area.”⁸ The argument of the lay-by being a short-term parking option would later reappear as council would take matters into their own hands.

After the April 10th council meeting, on May 2nd, 2017, Fleet received a letter from the town, signed by Jarvie, requesting her to stop parking the hearse on the lay-by. While recognizing a “long wheelbase vehicle may be difficult to manoeuvre on the driveway of the property [Fleet’s home],” the letter goes on to state that the winter conditions have subsided and that Fleet must make alternative arrangements to park her vehicle or to resume use of her driveway.⁹ One week after the letter, Fleet noticed a flat rear tire on the hearse, facing Rothesay Road where she lives

7. N. A., “Letter from resident RE: Hearse Parking Overnight on Rothesay Road,” *April Rothesay Council Meeting* (Rothesay), April 3, 2017, 38, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.rothesay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017Apr10-OpenSessionFINALRedacted.pdf>.

8. Rothesay Town Council, “April Rothesay Council Meeting Minutes,” *Rothesay Council Meeting* (Rothesay), April 10, 2017, 5, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.rothesay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MinutesOpenSessionApril102017.pdf>.

9. Wright, “Dead tired.”

and parks. In the same week, a driver pulling out of town hall honked their horn and gave the middle finger.

The town letter and Fleet's subsequent troubles are published in the follow-up CBC article from May 31st, 2017, titled *Dead Tired*. Also in the article is a comment made by Sergeant Evan Scott, head of the traffic division of the Kennebecasis Regional Police Force, the unit in charge of Rothesay. Sergeant Scott states that while lay-bys are part of the highway as indicated in the anonymous letter, it does not mean no one can park there unless it is wintertime.¹⁰

However, a week before the second CBC article was published, Fleet was visited by a police officer at her doorstep claiming the town sent him. Fleet describes the encounter saying, "They warned me that I had to move my vehicle immediately to avoid being ticketed that night. If I didn't move it, they said they would ticket me again the next night, then tow me the next time."¹¹ In contrast, Sergeant Scott points out that without signage indicating the proper by-laws and no-parking zones, no one would know that they cannot park on the lay-by or for how long.

In a twist of events, the officer that visited Fleet suggested that she park the hearse in Renforth Park, an area with no parking signs clearly displayed, further adding to the confusion and politicism of the conflict. Confused, Fleet remarks, "If they can make an exception for me to park at the wharf, why can't they make an exception for me to park in the lay-by?"¹²

On June 2nd, 2017, an article was published by car enthusiast news website The Jalopnik. In the article, the writer recounts the events of Fleet, her hearse, and the town of Rothesay, referencing the CBC articles. In addition, the author states that he had tried to contact Fleet and the town for a comment. The only response he received from the town was that only the Mayor of Rothesay, Nancy Grant, would answer inquiries regarding the town and Fleet's hearse.¹³ There were no updates to the article or further comments made regarding the situation.

10. Wright, "Dead tired."

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Jason Torchinsky, "Awful Little Town is Harrassing a Woman Because She Drives a Hearse," *Jalopnik*, June 2, 2017, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://jalopnik.com/awful-little-town-is-harassing-a-woman-because-she-driv-1795727504>.

Eventually, Hannah Fleet would leave the town of Rothesay to pursue her education in the visual arts at NSCAD in Nova Scotia, taking the hearse with her. At the same time, on July 10th, 2017, during a Rothesay town council meeting, a revision was made regarding the lay-bys on Rothesay Road to clarify parking limits. Lay-bys on Rothesay Road are now limited to 2 hour parking between the months of April 1st and November 30th according to the updated by-laws.¹⁴

3.1.2 Case Significance

There is an important point that I must make before continuing the case breakdown. Upon first reading the timeline, while readers may wish to support Fleet due to the public harrassment she has received, *those actions made upon her person and her car are red herrings to a deeper conflict that is never addressed*. Furthermore, this conflict is further confused by approaching the situation as a pragmatic interpretation of the law to decide who is legally in the wrong instead of addressing the true conflict. Both of these issues demand the individual to decide who is wrong and who is right, creating tensions and antagonisms.

Undoubtedly, there were forces at play which attempted to intimidate or coerce Fleet to move or get rid of the hearse. CBC published an article in that direction, but at the same time missed an opportunity to approach the issue from a deeper perspective with greater potential to enable reconciliation between both parties. The media chose to emphasize a conflict between two individuals over a conflict of cultural beliefs. However, if approached from the other direction, individuals may find that what appears to be a simple issue of a woman being harrassed by town officials and the police becomes a deeper issue of communication. At the same time, these beliefs are not so easily reconciled as right or wrong due to the split in cultures defining different types of morality.

At the centre of these cultures lies the question, “*What does the hearse mean to me?*” When this question is posed, the conflict will shift from an issue of discrimination to an issue of symbolism. The argument then shifts to draw upon semiotics, the study of signs. According to Umberto Eco, signs are, “*everything* that, on the grounds of a previously established social

14. Rothesay Town Council, “July Rothesay Council Meeting,” *Rothesay Council Meeting* (Rothesay), July 10, 2017, 118-120, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.rothesay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017Jul10-OpenSessionFINALRedacted.pdf>.

convention, can be taken as *something standing for something else.*¹⁵ This problem becomes more complex as Eco builds upon the original work of Charles W. Morris, who claims, “Something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter ... Signs which refer to the same object need not have the same designata, since that which is taken account of in the object may differ for various interpreters.”¹⁶

Based on Eco and Morris I can determine that the hearse is a sign by virtue of there being individuals who see more than the vehicle’s material appearance. One party interprets the hearse as a simple car, a very spacious and useful one. Another party may see death, and another may see a historical context of the hearse’s use in funerals, feeling disrespect at its public use. Suddenly, the hearse is imbued with individual beliefs on behalf of the interpreter, and these beliefs are in conflict with one another. The discrimination of Fleet then becomes a product of the inability to communicate personal interpretations of the symbolism of the hearse and the inability to reconcile its other interpretations.

This case perfectly captures the concept that the truth is not simple, it is *ambiguous*. When individuals treat an issue as simple, as right or wrong, conversations and actions can dovetail into harm and antagonisms, like Fleet and her interactions with the town of Rothesay and the police. This case shows how dangerous it is to refuse or be unable to engage with other forms of reality, as individuals will take into their own hands the ability to abuse public resources to legitimize their beliefs, instead of approaching the situation critically and peacefully to discuss their differences without resorting to mediating their conflict through CBC, town managers, town councils, and law enforcement.

However, I contend that it is in one’s interest to find ways to negotiate oneself in a world where ambiguity is ample in various forms. From flags to music to photos, signs are everywhere and mean something different to every person. Conflict is inevitable as these ulterior meanings intersect and juxtapose against each other, the differences jarring. However, at the heart of the issue is how one deals with the conflict. I believe the philosophy of movement will help individuals

15. Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 16.

16. Charles W. Morris, “Foundations of the Theory of Signs,” in *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 4.

cope and respond to conflict without escalating to antagonism and abuse. However, first I must show how and why individuals and groups of people may unconsciously or more readily resort to escalation in conflict in conjunction with the online response.

3.2 Online Response

While the first CBC article does not have comments turned on, the second article does. Upon inspection of the comments in July 2018, there was a total of 284 comments made on the article titled *Dead Tired*. CBC adopts a Reddit-style comment system, enabling “upvotes” and “downvotes” so that readers can decide if they like/dislike or agree/disagree with a user’s comment.

To help gauge user participation and general sentiment, I organized comments based on the number of upvotes and downvotes to discover trends in the public. Despite CBC being the largest news broadcaster in Canada, I must acknowledge that CBC has political leanings that trend towards liberal values which may affect the types readership that frequent the website and its responses. At the same time, because it is the largest broadcaster and the most referenced, it increases the chances of a wider range of demographics to frequent it as their main source of news.

That being said, I decided to make note of the comments that had 15 or more upvotes and downvotes. There were no comments which were “controversial,” meaning a large split of equal upvotes and downvotes in one comment. Of the 284 comments, 71 had upvotes of or exceeding 15, exactly 25% or a quarter of the total comments. At the same time, 10 of the 284 comments had downvotes of or exceeding 15, 3.5% of the total comments. The majority of the comments averaged little to no participation with between 1-6 upvotes or downvotes each.

In the upvoted comments, there is a very clear trend of support for Fleet and deriding the town of Rothesay. These comments criticize the police and the town council in general for wasting public resources to harrass Fleet, criticize Rothesay for being closed-minded, and further comments believing that Rothesay houses the elderly, rich, and snobby. Empirically speaking, I can confirm that Rothesay does house the rich, as noted at the beginning of the case study as it possesses the 5 richest neighbourhoods in New Brunswick. In regards to age, in the 2016 census, 83.5% of Rothesay’s population are 65 years old and below. This also means that 16.5% of the

population are 65 and above.¹⁷ However, the average age of the population is 40.5, suggesting a “mature” population, but not elderly. The claims of snobbish behaviour are anecdotal, inflamed by the conflict, CBC’s human interest point of view, and potentially the product of class discrimination.

In the downvoted comments, the general trend is criticism for Fleet’s choice of vehicle, believing it as a cry for attention and the negative publicity a reality of her choice. These opinions are subjective observations, although Fleet does agree that the hearse compliments her visual art practice on top of its practical use. Otherwise, the belief that the negative reaction of some in the community is a natural outcome presumes an outstanding shared belief that hearses are inappropriate to drive regularly, of which there is no specific data to confirm. There were some comments calling the use of the hearse as “disrespectful,” while others claim that “it’s just a car,” further adding to the moral divide. Overall, the CBC comments suggest that commenters are not well-informed or simply making anecdotal statements as they see fit in reaction to the article itself, but not the conflict.

The Jalopnik article had a total of 334 comments, although the vast majority of comments were facetious with “memes” attached, insider cultural images and text meant to be humorous. While the majority of the comments were irrelevant, one comment with 162 upvotes claimed to be from Rothesay, citing confusion over any other purpose for the lay-bys other than solely for parking. In response to this comment, another user with 42 upvotes cited a CBC article in which Rothesay spent over \$140,000 in legal fees to defend itself against James Crosby, President and descendant of New Brunswick company Crosby Molasses, to redevelop an open grass area across from his family home for use by the public.¹⁸ Crosby, claiming private persons asked him to pursue the appeal, believed that proper consultation with the planning advisory committee and citizens was not considered. While the appeal failed, the user used this example to show the

17. Statistics Canada, “Census Profile for Quispamsis - Rothesay, NB,” 2016, accessed August 15, 2018, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

18. Rachel Cave, “Rothesay’s Crosby loses appeals against Common project,” *CBC News*, May 24, 2017, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/rothesay-common-james-crosby-appeal-1.4129989>.

wealth of specific families living in Rothesay, such as the Irvings (oil, forestry, etc.) and the Olands (Moosehead Brewery). Otherwise, the comments that did reference Fleet and Rothesay's case mimicked the CBC comments in favour of Fleet, although still with the theme of little to no evidence and anecdotes.

Upon inspecting the Tweets and Facebook posts following the event, there was little engagement except for CBC New Brunswick's Facebook page. Julia Wright's Twitter page, the writer for the two CBC articles, has only one to two responses on any Tweets referencing Fleet, the hearse, or Rothesay. The town of Rothesay's Twitter and Facebook had no references to the controversy, ostensibly due to preserving their public image and not wanting to bring attention to any controversy surrounding the community.

CBC New Brunswick's Facebook page from May 31st, 2017 referencing the *Dead Tired* article has 38,000 views of the brief video with Fleet, 59 likes on the post itself, 103 Facebook users sharing the post on their personal pages, and 123 comments directly on the post.¹⁹ Much like the comments on the CBC article, the CBC Facebook post also has comments in favour of Fleet. Facebook does not implement an upvote-downvote system, only allowing "Likes," leaving little room to assess disagreement or controversy on top of CBC's Liberal-leaning voice.

Overall, very few comments raise points of interest beyond criticizing Fleet or Rothesay, and where the heart of the problem lies and the significance of the philosophy of movement to aid in shifting the conversation. Instead, conversations derail into *ad hominem* attacks against Fleet or Rothesay. However, CBC and The Jalopnik also have some responsibility in providing an outlet for this behaviour to manifest, publishing articles with titles such as *Spinning in Her Grave*, *Dead Tired*, and *Awful Little Town is Harrassing a Woman Because She Drives a Hearse*, falling into line with Pinker and Mack's assertion that too much of one's impression on the world comes from journalistic narration, skewed towards feeling a certain way.²⁰ Already, there is significant manipulation of the facts of the case to create a human interest angle, made to incite emotion in the reader.

19. CBC New Brunswick Facebook Page, "Hannah Fleet considers selling hearse," May 31, 2017, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/CBCNB/videos/vb.161231191936/10154483255566937/?type=3%5C&theater>.

20. Pinker and Mack, "The World Is Not Falling Apart."

In these articles, the precedent is placed upon the harrasing behaviour Fleet has received with no commentary on how may the parties involved reconcile or negotiate their differences. No solution is offered or thoughts provided on deescalating or resolving the conflict, leaving no critical prompts to promote conversation. Instead, they allow time to make the problem disappear in the news cycle instead of facing it, but the parties involved must live with the aftermath. As shown in the timeline, in the end Fleet leaves for NSCAD with the hearse, upset by the events that have transpired in her hometown. Meanwhile, town council edits the by-laws to keep *any* vehicle from parking in the lay-by for more than two hours in the hopes to maintain impartiality despite a clear link to the original source of the change.

I believe the journalistic side of the conflict could have played a crucial role in enabling a more positive and critical outcome through challenging the parties to engage with each others' discomforts over the hearse, the town, and police's response. If they had published a story in this direction, I believe it would also spur the public into having more engaged conversations instead of posting obscenities and stereotypes based on anecdotes. Pulitzer Prize winner Bret Stephens lectured on the virtues of discomfort in critical discourse and journalism's crucial role in delivering that discomfort, noting the following:

“The answer to a politics of right-wing illiberalism is not a politics of left-wing illiberalism. It is a politics of liberalism period. This is politics that believes in the virtues of openness, reason, toleration, dissent, second-guessing, respectful but robust debate, individual conscience and dignity, a sense of decency and also a sense of humor. In a word, Enlightenment.”²¹

What Stephens is asking for, and what he believes a healthy politics requires, is a politics predicated on difference. This sentiment is compatible with the qualities of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's concept of “radical democracy,” which believes that political change is enacted

21. Bret Stephens, “Free Speech and the Necessity of Discomfort,” *The New York Times*, February 22, 2018, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/22/opinion/free-speech-discomfort.html>.

through disagreement, and the renegotiation of those disagreements moves society forward.²² However, in order to have high-level discussions, an understanding of difference is required. In this case, I turn to Sarah Schulman's work in conflict resolution from her book, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, where Schulman outlines the ways in which individuals overreact to difference through responding with abusive forms of communication such as silence, shunning, and outrage. These are all familiar themes exhibited in the online comments section of the above journalistic sources. Following in Stephens, Laclau, Mouffe, and Schulman's steps, I believe that in order to progress conversations disagreement is required, but a disagreement of mutual respect and the desire to problem solve together.

However, to begin, I wish to show that there are social and cultural reasons to explain why individuals may easily or more readily turn to escalation and alienation in conflict. There are pressures at play which contribute to inter- and intragroup competitiveness and aggressive behaviour. For instance, within social psychology Felicia Pratto et al. conceptualized "social dominance theory" and "social dominance orientation" which they describe as follows:

The theory postulates that societies minimize group conflict by creating consensus on ideologies that promote the superiority of one group over others ... To work smoothly, these ideologies must be widely accepted within a society, appearing as self-apparent truths; hence we call them *hierarchy-legitimizing myths* [sic] ... That is, they minimize conflict among groups by indicating how individuals and social institutions should allocate things of positive or negative social value.²³

Pratto et al. appear to mirror Althusser's ideological state apparatuses, although Althusser places more focus on the class power aspects than Pratto et al.'s more general social aspect. Despite the negative connotations the word "ideology" carries, not all ideology is bad or counterintuitive to the progress of society. That being said, if the ideology is not the problem, the individuals who espouse said ideologies could still endanger positive progression of new ideologies

22. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (United Kingdom: Verso, 1985).

23. Felicia Pratto et al., "Social Dominance Orientation: A Personality Variable Predicting Social and Political Attitudes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67 (1994): 741.

and values due to their commitment to their ideology and their antagonism of others. Pratto et al. identified this behaviour as social dominance orientation, meaning “[t]he extent to which one desires that one’s in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups.”²⁴

In this case, the ideology at play is the symbolism of the hearse as a sign of mortality and death from its history of being a vehicle for transporting the deceased. What may also contribute to this symbolism is the fact that in the funeral industry and certain countries, a hearse goes by the name of “funeral coach.” Historically, those who choose to drive a hearse not for ceremonial business, but for other reasons, are outliers. Those with high social dominance orientations are more likely to be disapproving of alternative uses of a hearse which is not compatible with their beliefs, and may go so far as to take direct action against them.

Examples of alternative use would be Canadian singer-songwriter Neil Young, who drove a hearse to transport musical equipment. American rock musician Sam the Sham also used a hearse to haul equipment. The 1984 film *Ghostbusters* depicted the use of a hearse to transport equipment to on-site jobs. In these three examples, the hearse is used like Fleet, as a mode of transporting weighty equipment for their respective practices.

In contrast, while Harold drives a hearse in the 1971 film *Harold and Maude*, it is as a result of an obsession with death, as did Elijah Goldsworthy from the Canadian television show *Degrassi*. Finally, brooding artist Claire Fisher from the HBO show *Six Feet Under* drove a 1971 Cadillac hearse as the daughter to a family-run funeral home. These examples serve to further embed the hearse as a sign of death.

Pratto et al. are not the only researchers to examine the phenomenon of intergroup conflict. To further complement Pratto et al.’s work, there is Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner’s concept known as “social identity theory.” It is another seminal theory which provides another explanation to intergroup behaviour and competitiveness. Individuals with strong connections to their group, and who heavily base their identity and self-concept on that group, may discriminate against out-groups to maintain a positive self-concept.²⁵

24. Pratto et al., “Social Dominance Orientation,” 742.

25. Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour,” in *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, ed. John T. Lost and Jim Sidanius (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 283-284.

Furthermore, extensive studies show that even “the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group.”²⁶ Experiments conducted on groups found that, “The basic and highly reliable finding is that the trivial, ad hoc intergroup categorization leads to in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out-group,” and when provided with a task for both groups, group members “seem to be competing with the out-group, rather than following a strategy of simple economic gain for members of the in-group.”²⁷

Both these studies suggest that groups do not purposefully seek to antagonize or discriminate against other groups, but for reasons beyond the scope of this thesis. Regardless, these intergroup antagonisms playing out are dangerous for the progression of positive and critical politics. On a broader scale, it also endangers society’s capability to have cultural peace. Johan Galtung released an important article outlining the concept of “cultural violence,” a broader term which runs parallel to Pratto et al.’s hierarchy-legitimizing myth from social dominance theory. Cultural violence, Galtung says, are:

[T]hose aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence ... cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right—or at least not wrong.²⁸

In that sense, one can conceive of Pratto et al.’s hierarchy-legitimizing myth as grounds for cultural violence. The violence which Galtung is referencing to is not explicitly physical; as Foucault made known, contemporary society has new ways of punishing individuals without physical force. In the case of Fleet and the town of Rothesay, law enforcement officers and town by-laws are used as an alternative form of implicit violence to coerce her into moving or selling the hearse. These forms of violence are legitimized by the moral compass of society. The ruling ideology can produce the hierarchy-legitimizing myths which enable structural violence upon

26. Ibid., 281.

27. Ibid., 282.

28. Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1990): 291.

outgroups of differing or unpopular ideologies. In this case, that hearses are inappropriate for daily driving due to its symbolism and use in funerals.

Galtung ends on a note that while the triangle of violence (i.e. direct, structural, cultural violence) is internalized and institutionalized within society, there is still the potential to transform the triangle of violence into one of peace which engenders “symbiotic, equitable relations among diverse partners, and direct peace with acts of cooperation, friendliness and love.”²⁹ To reverse the triangle, I believe we need widespread education of the systems in place and recognition of the potential for violent group behaviour which does not always manifest as physical.

If there are aspects of evolution, in one’s biology, that promotes competition among different groups and ideologies, it is not inherently a bad thing; challenge is good and can produce drive. But when that challenge is construed as a threat, is met with abusive rhetoric or the oppression of others, even when the abuser was the previously oppressed, then I believe we should begin to look at ways to continue promoting challenge not for group survival, but equitable change. This change to self-awareness and care begins from understanding the root of violence. Violence has changed throughout history and does not simply define physical harm but also psychological. As Galtung says, what is manifest and what is latent, violence versus the threat of violence, misunderstanding versus intent to harm.³⁰

All this being said, to summarize the current conversation: social dominance theory and social identity theory promotes identifying oneself through the group’s ideology, promotes solidifying and maintaining a positive self-concept through this ideology, and being prejudiced against other groups to maintain a positive self-concept to preserve and extend the ideology and the self. This is enacted through competing with others groups rather than working together (or critically disagreeing together) to renegotiate societal values. This competition has the potential to produce violence—using hierarchy-legitimizing myths to legitimize latent cultural violence (structural and psychological oppression) against other ideologies deemed incompatible through

29. Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 302.

30. Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1969): 172-173.

leveraging public resources such as the government, the town, law enforcement, and beyond.

That being said, I believe the philosophy of movement provides the psychological and physical tools to act in the world in a critical and thoughtful manner to diffuse the heated political outrage of our contemporary political climate. However, first I would like to further examine the online response to show how the Digital has contributed to intergroup violence and competition against Fleet and Rothesay, further stressing the conflict.

3.2.1 Digital Design and Difference

I believe the design of specific digital spaces does not promote an ambiguous truth, the cultural and social differences between individuals, but instead further exacerbates binary groups to homogenize a uniform interpretation of reality. In this case, I take note of Facebook, Twitter, The Jalopnik, and CBC's comment and feedback design. I believe these digital spaces, while they are meant to promote conversation and enable individuals from around the world to participate, are not *designed* to enable the types of critical response they seek nor the expression of authenticity online.

On top of the dramatized article titles, as previously noted CBC's comment system employs an upvote-downvote structure. This suggests an agree-disagree, like-dislike, right-wrong relationship. In the case of Facebook, Twitter, and Jalopnik, only "liking" (i.e. upvote, heart, etc.) a comment is available and disagreement can only be expressed by explicitly responding to the comment. Even though CBC and Facebook does not allow pseudonyms, they also do not monitor registration for fake names, and further investigation enters into the ethics of privacy online.

The design of these digital comment systems, combined with the human interest angle, are inciting an emotional response from the reader, leading online conversations on the wrong foundations for discourse. This produces a significant online divide where neither side is engaging with each other, but instead indulging in criticizing an entire community or individual for their choices with little proof or significance. This is clearly exhibited in the data collected from the previous section, where all the comments with the most engagement are either heavily stereotyping and criticizing the town of Rothesay or Hannah Fleet with anecdotal evidence, which is not appropriate proof as exhibited in a simple check of census data and using basic reasoning.

Furthermore, anecdotes also serve as stories to express an opinion or assert a truth, but these comments are not inviting critical response except a quick agree-disagree. This is also seen in the data, as the CBC comments had no significant controversial comments with high agreement/disagreement levels in the same comment at once or a significant thread conversation, while the other comment sections on Facebook, Twitter, and Jalopnik do not even have disagree buttons. Furthermore, there are no threads *anywhere* with significant conversation happening at all—rather, serving as an area for individuals to assert their confirmation bias, or escalate to abuse by employing *ad hominem* attacks against the commenter beginning a cycle of abusive communication with no resolution.

In the entire comments section of all the collected commentary, there is only one significant comment that raises the same issues of symbolism and interpretation that I tackled at the beginning of the chapter. This comment was posted by the user Colin Knight on the CBC article *Dead Tired*. It had 0 upvotes and 6 downvotes with no responses:

It sounds to me like the people of the town approached the situation ineffectively. They took a legal standpoint when they should have taken a moral/ethical standpoint to suggest that the mere sign of a hearse is a reminder of death. People who have lost loved ones are saddened by the reminder of death. This approach to using art as a means of opening discussions of difficult topics can be healthy (or maybe the hearse really was the best deal at the time); however, an artist who attempts to tackle death in such a visibly imposing way is in danger of hubris, not to mention disrespect and inconsideration. I believe if the town had approached this artist in a more meaningful way, she would have understood.³¹

This comment is barely detectable, hidden in the high turnaround of dozens of other comments. It is the only comment which shows understanding of both positions and also raises the point of symbolism while subtly expressing their personal opinion. There is barely any engagement, only a handful of downvotes with no explanation as to why, and no responses. Yet the comments which enable the collective outrage of groups thrive.

31. Colin Knight, *Dead tired*, online comment, May 31, 2017, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/rothesay-hearse-harassment-1.4139215>.

For example, one comment with 43 upvotes and 1 downvote says, “Rothesay is definitely an old fogey place. Rich, snobby, and looking down on those with less money is the way of life there.”³² In a similar vein, another comment with 4 upvotes and 34 downvotes says, “She bought it to be a peacock, so she got what she wanted, being noticed.”³³ However, *these comments are not outliers*. There are many comments with 15+ and even 25+ upvotes or downvotes with the same style and theme of commentary as I previously noted in the Online Response section.

There is a need to create and design online spaces which promote difference and authenticity, not group dominance or indulgence in collective agreement. It is clear that the current comment systems’ designs in place for these online communities is not working with the public to have them engaged in a critical and civil way, nor is the style of writing and titling of the articles. Furthermore, possible solutions or requests to act on the conflict are nonexistent. Not only is there the enactment of right-wrong (or just right) in the comments, nothing is happening except feeding into the cynicism and distrust of Rothesay and its public resources or Fleet, an individual who made a vehicle decision which is not normal by social conventions.

With this in mind, in the coming sections I want to show how the philosophy of movement would enable individuals to communicate critically and authentically together, and then show how it would help with the dissemination of the conflict online.

3.3 Shifting Conversations with the Philosophy of Movement

It goes without saying that the language one uses affects the types responses they will receive. When individuals enter a conversation with the desire to “win,” their language (including body language) changes based on their desired intentions. However, to enter a political conversation with these intentions in mind, ruinous results are inevitable. Instead of an open and critical conversation over differences, it becomes a war between the individual and the target of their political ire. It goes without saying that throwing around labels like “bigotry” are not the ideal

32. Rose Michaud, *Dead tired*, online comment, May 31, 2017, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/rothesay-hearse-harassment-1.4139215>.

33. Craig Nettles, *Dead tired*, online comment, May 31, 2017, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/rothesay-hearse-harassment-1.4139215>.

nor appropriate way of initiating a conversation regarding any type of politics.

The challenge of undoing identity comes face to face with the desire for solidifying the self and self-preservation. While individuals should maintain the threads of cultural relationships, they should also be able to tease out and produce new threads with other cultures, sometimes these cultures opposing and disagreeing. As I noted in Chapter 2, philosophy can be used in an actionable manner to support the nurturing of political individuality and criticality through providing a solid foundation to pursue the deconstruction and reconstruction of political and cultural beliefs. As a result, I believe that the philosophy of movement provides the tools to function and act authentically. In turn, it carries over to our digital tools.

While Fleet and Rothesay's disagreement is not innocuous like our everyday, mundane tasks, and potentially more emotionally charged, it just places emphasis on the need for practices like the philosophy of movement to undo defensive or aggressive responses. As I found with the studies from the previous section, individuals may unconsciously find themselves being competitive which may contribute to intergroup discrimination and aggression. In this case, *self-awareness is required to combat intergroup difference*. I contest that one way to make that self-awareness possible is through adopting the philosophy of movement. Self-awareness is tantamount, but if this self-awareness has no guidance or self-evaluative line of inquiry to follow, then it can just as easily become lost without a way of manifesting into civil good.

For this reason, the philosophy of movement is necessary. Combining existentialism, affect theory, and conflict resolution, it enables the user to produce events in the world which mobilize others. *The philosophy of movement is not simply about the movement of the self. It is about one's capacity to mobilize others. Through authentic self-awareness one can produce a more effective and affective politics.*

As I noted, self-awareness is not enough. Authenticity as outlined in existentialism is required which is adopted by the philosophy of movement. In Chapter 1, I looked at various philosophers who contributed to the construction of existentialism and was able to produce a general outline of what it means to be truly authentic—most commonly, one who is authentic does not bow to the pressure of the public, accepts ambiguity and the possibility of never knowing, accepts death, and in spite of these oppositions pursuing a life of truth and passion and taking responsibility for one's actions in pursuit of these things.

To accept does not mean to ignore, it is to be keenly aware and critical of these distractions but not allowing them to manipulate the individual to living in fear, but instead live with anxious anticipation for a future which they will create. Sometimes, it means courting a degree of controversy and a risk of danger for challenging popular beliefs. Kant calls the capacity to act without intervention “moral autonomy,” described as, “Man’s emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one’s own understanding without another’s guidance.”³⁴

In Steven Pinker’s new book *Enlightenment Now*, much like Bret Stephens, he makes the argument that society needs to take back Enlightenment qualities such as reason, science, and humanism in global society to combat the ills of intergroup conflict.³⁵ While one could argue that the philosophy of movement is simply Enlightenment ideals repackaged, the Enlightenment is compatible but it does not account for the fact that sometimes Enlightenment thinking is not enough.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the weaknesses of discourse and reason to the underprivileged, underserved, and uneducated, providing the potential for unequal power structures and class differences to occur. In its place, I introduced affect, and the ability to use it for good. *This affect is guided by the desire for cultural peace introduced by Galtung*. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the weaknesses of authenticity in the philosophy of movement is if one’s “truth” manifests as violence. However, if one’s truth is informed by the desire to live differently *and* peacefully, I believe the individual will make decisions which will allow cultural peace to be tantamount to fulfilling their truth while guiding others through the same trajectory.

At the most basic level, Galtung defines peace as the absence of violence, and peace does not imply utopia or lack of struggle.³⁶ To bring about political peace, or at least produce a decline in violent rhetoric and protest, individuals need the tools to stop interpreting the affective

34. Immanuel Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?,” 1784, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html%5C#note1>.

35. Stephen Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Viking, 2018).

36. Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” 168.

words of those with opposing views as outrage and anger. This is the first step to engaging with difference critically. This comes from authentic self-awareness based in the desire to care for the world, this allows one to be mindful of traps to escalate conflict into abuse and not to engage with those individuals.

The philosophy of movement provides all these tools: authentic self-awareness, the capacity to mobilize others through the awareness of oneself, affect theory to understand how one's actions may produce bodily intensities through events, and the refusal to escalate into abusive dialogue while under pressure. These concepts cannot be contained as singular theories as they must be practiced together, under one brand, to produce the positive political climate one desires. The philosophy differs from Enlightenment thinking because it does not demand absolute reason to produce a positive society, but ways to engage with society peacefully while still able to produce effective politics, regardless of background.

Turning back to Heidegger for a moment, he coined a term called “ready-to-hand.” This term encompasses the individual's relationship with everyday tools and the world. To Heidegger, there is the potential for individuals to get caught up with higher intellectual pursuits while neglecting the everyday objects and practices which embeds one in the world, and which provides the foundation to reach higher ends. In doing so, they also neglect the significance that is found within those objects, like the hammer. Or more specifically for this thesis: computers, cell phones, tablets, and other digital devices which provide access to the Internet, the outlets which enable individuals to engage in the online communities that produced the digital response to Fleet and Rothesay's struggles.

I believe that something is lost as one extends through their digital tools to engage politically with the outer world. As they assimilate with the group to collectively pursue political change, one now characterized as “identity politics,” they may lose sight of the individual self which is part of the whole—and I believe this individual has to be authentic to truly enact effective and affective politics. For a politics predominantly made through emotions is one that ultimately lacks the tools to engage critically. One who is authentic can negotiate with their conflicting identities and act with a self-awareness that is more conscious of their individual self *relating* to others rather than *representing sameness* with others.

This “representing sameness” behaviour is visible in the online comments, as I examined

the comments section of six different sources (CBC, CBC Facebook, Jalopnik, Julia Wright's Twitter account, Rothesay's Twitter account, and CBC's Twitter account), a collective 741+ comments, and *I could only find one significant and critical comment with no responses, no upvotes, and 6 downvotes*. At the same time, the comments with the most engagement were meant not to be critical but to build group consensus over mutual dislike of Rothesay or Fleet. The users provided anecdotes to confirm sameness amongst the group, not difference.

By coincidence I had the opportunity to meet Fleet and her family a year after the events took place, and they mentioned not feeling satisfied by the articles released by CBC. Despite Fleet and her family receiving overwhelming support from car enthusiasts, locals, and individuals from around the globe, *they are not satisfied*. Why? Because while there was action in the form of symbolic support in online comments, there was no conversation amongst the commenters on how to resolve the conflict. There was no solution or *reconciliation* from the events that took place. As I quoted from Schulman, “[T]here are all kinds of actions: some are designed to acknowledge and reveal the sources of conflict and pain in order to resolve them, and some are designed to obscure those sources so that resolution/change can never occur.”³⁷ While I do not believe the users *intended* to obscure the source of the conflict, it is because the action of responding with outrage and anecdote is *designed* to obscure the source, confusing an already complicated conflict of symbolism.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, reconcile is defined as follows:

1. Restore friendly relations between.
 - (a) Settle (a quarrel).
 - (b) Make or show to be compatible.
 - (c) (**reconcile someone to**) Make someone accept (a disagreeable or unwelcome thing).

All of the sub-descriptions are compatible with what I am trying to achieve with the philosophy of movement and what I believe to be the positive solution to Fleet and Rothesay's problems through imploring the online community to make a difference. What the online

37. Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, 170.

response shows is an attempt to “make or show” the *incompatibility* of Fleet’s beliefs that the hearse is a practical vehicle and the beliefs of those against her, believing it to be inappropriate for regular use. However, when weighing both sides and the fact of the matter that the conflict is about the symbolism of a vehicle, the compatibility of these beliefs are *ambiguous* and thus a negotiation of differences is required, and the philosophy of movement required.

This leads to the final sub-description of reconciliation, “(**reconcile someone to**) Make someone accept (a disagreeable or unwelcome thing).” This is a part of life. In conflict, sometimes there is no solution, but there can still be reconciliation. This is far more important than winning or losing, *it is accepting ambiguity*. While I determined that the design of the online comments section does not promote critical conversations, there is still the responsibility of the individuals themselves to self-aware enough to understand that many of the comments are inappropriate or self-serving and not acting to produce authentic cultural peace, but instead reify hierarchy-legitimizing myths to produce a self-evident and socially accepted “truth,” (i.e. hearses should not be regularly driven or hearses are just cars) enforced through social structures (i.e. employing Rothesay town council, police, etc. to either leave Fleet alone or force her to comply). This produces *inauthentic* peace through the rejection of ambiguity, lack of criticality, and production of cultural homogenization. There is no reconciliation, no acceptance of difference.

Through the philosophy of movement, I believe that the moment where one decides to authentically engage digitally is not when they pick up their digital device, not when they turn them on, and not when they begin to navigate online spaces. *Being critical with one’s digital tools is secondary to being critical of oneself*. Utmost authenticity of the Self is essential to negotiate difference online, but further tools are required to communicate that authenticity. This is where affect theory enters the fray. When these authentic realities collide, they create a field of relation. No one knows what actions will produce what events, but individuals can be “attuned” to possible responses. This is crucial in understanding communication. Affect itself is unqualified intensity; a bodily response without subjective meaning. In the philosophy of movement, I believe that living authentically produces greater affect in individuals. To truly be oneself and act in the world as such will create more authentic fields of relation. *To affect and be affected authentically is what the philosophy of movement strives to create*.

Because authenticity requires one to engage critically with the world by virtue of being

and living with it, one cannot be in a field of relation without also engaging with its other participants. If two individuals, both living authentically, engage with each other, they will communicate critically and be able to reconcile their differences. On the other hand, if only one individual is authentic, according to the philosophy of movement that individual has the capacity to affectively “mobilize” or “inspire” the other party to seek authenticity as well. Neither of these scenarios are occurring in the online response to the conflict between Fleet and Rothesay, instead leading to an ideological standstill of right and wrong instead of two ambiguous interpretations that coexist, and thus need to be negotiated.

By seeking collective online confirmation of the conflict through one lens, and rejecting all other interpretations of the conflict as false, the online users are promoting a “They” and “Other” relationship, but the individual is a part of the “They,” which as Heidegger describes are inauthentic. “They” said that this is inappropriate, “They” said it is just a car, the individual is possessed by “Them” and their homogenized, uncomplicated reality. Based on these thoughts, combined with the data collected on the comments, the articles written, considerations of the digital medium, and the design of the comment system, there appears to be overwhelming proof that the expression of authenticity, of criticality, online is not currently possible on the widescale level, despite the widescale reach. Instead, consensus is built on two sides, leaving the rest of the structure to be built elsewhere.

I do not believe there is a solution which will perfectly fit to change this situation, but instead a series of changes which will slowly shift the expression of difference online. At the systematic level, employ a new type of comment system which accounts for the complexity of individual beliefs. I do not know how that will manifest, but I do believe it will be an important part of building a strong online culture for the future. However, at the individual level, I provide the philosophy of movement as a way to induce authenticity *before* engaging online, potentially nipping in the bud the communication issue in lieu of overplacing responsibility on the design aspect of the online space.

Movement and action share a careful relationship that is balanced by one’s intentions and beliefs. To fulfill the philosophy of movement to its highest capacity one must take control of that teetering relationship through authenticity. I believe as co-participants in producing our social and political culture, each person has individual responsibility in ensuring they are promoting the

expression of difference for the sake of political change for good, instead of consensus for the sake of reifying and cementing social trends.

A true alternative politics is one where individuals can seamlessly move between these digital and material spaces to enact the most effective and affective politics possible, that circumvents the traditional system with a fusion of different practices, that subverts traditional political norms with injecting a new demographic—women, men, people of colour, LGBTQ+ communities, young adults, and youth interacting, objecting, differentiating, running simultaneously parallel *and* perpendicular in and through each other. At that time, I hope I can say the alternative politics which Dahlgren describes is no longer alternative, it is simply *politics*.

In those times, if the public could be supported and guided by a philosophy which helps them understand their individual, micro, and macro role in politics, I believe society can reach a new trajectory in our political culture which will be supported by a stronger foundation: a breadth of unique individuals sharing the common goal of authentic care and action, uniting in difference, to produce real change in the world.

With this in mind, it still begs the question: does an authentic being translate to being authentic online? In the next section I will take this thought into consideration and explain how the philosophy of movement integrates itself into social spaces online, and reconsider once more how this affects the case study.

3.3.1 The Philosophy of Movement Online

There are various ways that the philosophy of movement may manifest itself online. To begin, does an authentic being translate to being authentic online? Maybe. The conceptual, individual, and circumstantial nature of the philosophy of movement, the individual, and the environment in which it is being practiced means that there is no clear, objective answer to this question.

However, the uncertainty, or the ambiguity of the nature of things does not limit my ability to be able to think about the issue. Digital culture is still very young and society should be carefully attending to possibilities and consequences of online communication and its relationship to the material world. That being said, I will talk about how the philosophy of movement may lend to building a healthier and more critical online political culture.

As I mentioned in the previous section, Heidegger's term ready-to-hand places emphasis

on the tools which enable individuals to embed themselves in the world. I believe the scope of what that tool can be has expanded to include the Digital. In this case, I mentioned digital devices such as computers and cell phones. While some individuals argue that digital devices alienate the individual from the world, it would run counter to Heidegger's assertion of ready-to-hand as a mode of being where a tool serves as a crucial presence in a network of meaning and purpose. A tool becomes a part of that network if it seamlessly integrates into the world as a natural practice.

Digital tools have successfully embedded themselves into this network of meaning. As I explored in previous chapters, cell phone and/or computer ownership and access to the Internet in Canada is extremely high. More individuals travel regularly with their digital devices and defer to them over traditional tools like the claw hammer. Because these tools have meaning, they lend themselves to a relational space of meaning-making. Instead of looking at the cell phone as a pragmatic tool, it becomes a gateway of potential in a field of relation.

However, one's individual constitution when they engage with the tool entirely shifts its affective possibilities. As I noted with authenticity/inauthenticity, both states alter how one engages and participates in the world. One who is authentic is concerned for their Being and how they relate to the greater world. One who is inauthentic is fallen, lost in the everyday and idleness. This becomes an important point of departure when a digital tool, such as the cell phone, materializes as a ready-to-hand presence in a relational network of meaning-making. *Depending on the constitution of the individual, how one relates to their device and engages with it will change.*

The scope of meaning-making in digital devices is incredibly vast, and they have the potential to be dangerous because of how well they compliment the lifestyles of both the authentic and the inauthentic. This complex network of human-computer interaction, graphical user interface, and visual design combined with a large array of available uses such as gaming, planning, monitoring, and socializing blends so well into the everyday that one can get lost in its everyday use instead of thinking about how they relate to the digital device, the Digital, and the rest of the world they engage with from within its small visual display. It both compliments and trivializes the ability to effortlessly communicate with a large community of people or disseminate to a wider audience. As such, it can complicate the individual's ability to carefully think about how they use their digital devices and to what end, and how to make sure they are using their

device critically.

I believe this difficulty then leads to the online response I encountered in the case study, where the response manifests as collective outrage from both sides, with no sense or thought of responsibility in how might they contribute to the reconciliation of the conflict. There are so many layers which mediate the individual and the message, so many layers to undo, that it appears natural to respond in such a way. However, as digital tools contribute to a network of meaning-making, and as these tools possess potential when ready-to-hand in a field a relation, where actions will materialize based on a complicated web of idiosyncrasy, bodily attunements, ritual, culture, and beyond, we come full circle to the original notion of accepting ambiguity in authenticity, leading to the philosophy of movement.

If one who is authentic is concerned for their Being, their existence, and how they relate to the world, and digital tools enable the individual to communicate with that world on a greater scale, the authentic individual's concern must then *extend* through their device into a digital field of relation. While Brian Massumi specifies the in-person, embodied experience of affect, when ready-to-hand the digital tool is an extension of our Being, and one who is concerned for their Being will engage with the tool that is tethered to their Being which enables them to engage and communicate with the world.

As I explained with the philosophy of movement, the knowledge of affect theory, existentialism, and conflict resolution provides the authentic individual with the ability to participate in the world knowing the significance of their individuality in determining and representing their "truth." As I mentioned in my criticism of the design space for the comments sections of the various social media and journalistic outlets in the case study, they are not designed to promote critical engagement. Furthermore, these spaces may be unconsciously designed to impede reconciliation by hiding the true source of the conflict. As I noted, there was one significant comment hidden amongst the majority of the anecdotally outraged users, with the majority of participants choosing sides rather than how to solve the problem. However, from this gap I believe authenticity can grow.

If the design space does not promote criticality, how does one who is authentic manifest authenticity in the digital space? *Through problem solving and creation.* Digital culture and the production of digital tools has widened the scope of politics and the ability to shape one's politics

through the production of tools meant to be shared and disseminated with the public, spreading their cultural beliefs through the representation of applications and objects meant to change how users engage with each other and the world.

The dating app Bumble subverted dating trends by making interested women make the first move. Grindr was the first phone app to help gay men to meet each other locally. Airbnb changed the hospitality industry by allowing homeowners to rent their cottages and apartments easily to the public. Uber challenged the taxi industry by allowing drivers to easily find users through GPS on their phone, users knowing the fare ahead of time, and simplifying the paying process by processing through the app. All these apps are political and attempting to change society and have not operated without consequence from the public or from the courts. This type of digital alternative politics allows the creators to shape what they imagine to be the next significant cultural change for society, and share it immediately without being hindered by traditional forms of entrepreneurship and democracy.

It takes courage and care to produce and share tools with the world that challenge social expectations and convention with the hope of improving the lives of others, in spite of the uncertainty of success and the potential for public outrage. They produce meaning and expand the field of relation from within digital space and in the material world as these digital applications bleed over into new cultural and social expectations in real life. The Digital is constantly growing and individuals are seeking new ways to enhance, challenge, and complicate what they think lies ahead for society. The Digital is no longer a separate space where only fictional worlds are enacted. *We are our tools*, and I believe that those who are authentic, who want to participate in politics online, and who want to challenge the boundaries of social acceptability, will find ways to express difference and novelty through their digital tools and create the healthier digital culture they desire.

With these concepts in place, I believe it further adds to the understanding of the case study. There was but one online comment indicating some sense of problem solving and openness to conversation during my research of Fleet and Rothesay. Furthermore, multiple journalistic sources titling their articles and representing the facts of the case in ways to incite emotion in the reader, but not provide a means of reconciling the emotion or helping to resolve the conflict. Finally, a town pressuring one woman to make her hearse disappear instead of attempting to

understand the symbolic complications of the issue, and eventually pushing the problem away by changing the by-law to affect all drivers on the lay-by in an attempt to appear impartial after pressuring Fleet through law enforcement. In the end, little has changed and the conflict was never resolved. In that sense, I believe there was little expression of authenticity through the lack of critical intervention directly with the conflict and no attempts at solving the problem, but rather what appear to be shifting responsibilities and obscuring the real source of the conflict.

This case study serves as a warning and a discussion of how inauthentic expressions of difference and human-interest angles can hinder the journalistic process and the ability to reconcile conflict. From the chapters of this thesis, I believe individuals can now engage with their digital tools with the care, attention, and responsibility of someone who understands their crucial role in the collective online space. In a digital field of relation where everyone is extending through their digital tools to be producers of meaning, they should also collectively problem solve and be open to representations of difference online and be willing to engage with that difference. Change has and will continue to enact itself online. Just as the public rose up to challenge sexual harrasment in the film industry with the recent #MeToo movement, I hope that individuals will be willing to share and be critical on the smaller community scale so that conflicts like the one undergone by Fleet and Rothesay will not repeat where no one is satisfied and there is no reconciliation in sight.

3.3.2 Limits to the Philosophy of Movement

As with all case studies I must acknowledge the limits of the philosophy of movement as it will allow myself to produce recommendations going forward and understand that many solutions, working together, are required to produce the best outcome possible for everyone involved regardless of class, income, race, and beyond.

That being said, the philosophy of movement is heavily reliant on the adherence of its line of inquiry by those who choose to adopt it. There is always a danger of bastardization of the philosophy's concepts to increase a greater divide in politics rather than use it to help. Existential authenticity comes with the caveat of having no moral compass—the individual must decide what their truth is and how to respond to it. Heidegger himself had ties to the Nazi Party, later

classifying it as “the greatest stupidity of his life.”³⁸ Although I am inspired by Heidegger’s work in *Being and Time*, I must also acknowledge the past which he comes from, one which haunts a country and its people decades later. However, in response to that, I hope that other aspects of the philosophy which I emphasize throughout the chapter like cultural peace and reconciliation will help practitioners make the decision to help and not destroy.

Furthermore, I most also acknowledge that the philosophy of movement does not directly fix structural problems in the democratic system nor the online space, it is a self-evaluative line of inquiry which helps individuals navigate this system and feel empowered to participate critically. This in turn may bring the change and fulfillment one desires, but it is a result that rewards one’s resilience in the face of many difficulties.

Finally, the philosophy of movement cannot directly challenge social dominance theory or social identity theory directly. However, it does provide the tools to understand and respond critically during moments of competitive or antagonistic group behaviour. The philosophy of movement’s role is to make the individual aware of their body and its ability to be swayed by external factors while providing the tools to understand them. This is why affect theory is introduced. In this way, the individual can practice and produce new rituals to combat moments of frustration and escalation which run counter to civil conversations of difference, and to not respond to extremism with extremism.

While this case study seems to be on the outer fringes, I believe it shows how much impact the philosophy can have on an individual’s mundane and everyday life. Making the choice to respond to difference with openness creates a whole other trajectory of engaging with the world, one which can be rewarding but also challenging. Difference may manifest itself in every social encounter of our lives, no matter how little, and we must be cognisant of it if we are to respond to it in ever thoughtful ways.

38. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger: 1929-1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 37.

3.4 Closing Thoughts

I looked at various researchers to examine the social and psychological ways which unconsciously promote antagonistic behaviour towards other groups with differing beliefs, and also the ways one's mind produces information biases to enforce one's identity and beliefs as "true." To look at this, I introduced the concepts of social dominance theory and social identity theory. In social dominance theory, the researchers also introduced one's "orientation" or proclivity for desiring that their in-group dominate the out-group. As previously stated, this is done through legitimizing their group's ideology through government support, producing hierarchy-legitimizing myths that are then adopted by its citizens. Social identity theory then further supports social dominance theory by proposing that in order to maintain a positive self-concept, in-groups will discriminate against out-groups. Both these concepts are done with degrees of unconsciousness.

I also looked at peace researcher Johan Galtung's work in cultural violence and cultural peace to understand how these violent in-group actions can go unchallenged under public scrutiny, and it was found that individuals legitimize their beliefs through the subversive method of validating it through aspects of culture such as religion, math, science, and art. They produce these truths and enforce them through the structures which organize society such as law enforcement and government.

However, I believe that knowledge of the possibility of *why* and *how* groups enact discrimination and antagonisms can provide these groups the clarity to pursue politics ever more thoughtfully. I provided the philosophy of movement to help the individual engage with others critically, understanding that from individuality comes the power to affect others, and the ability to deescalate potentially harmful conversations to have a more critical exchange of thoughts. This is not something that is limited to groups, it is present in the most everyday exchanges, and change begins from the smallest, unnoticed aspects of one's life.

I expanded the philosophy of movement into the digital realm by bringing Heidegger's concept of ready-to-hand to explain how tools help embed individuals in the world and make meaning. At the same time, I showed how authentic manifestation of the use of tools may lead to problem solving and challenging social and cultural expectations with examples of problem solving through digital applications, ultimately leading to changes in dating culture,

transportation, and hospitality. Finally, I took one last look at the case study of Fleet and Rothesay to consider the consequences of when the online and in-person community does not make attempts to reconcile a conflict.

With this in mind, I hope we can produce more effective politics going forward with digital tools, and use them more conscientiously for greater rewards. While there is no certainty that individuals using these methods to engage online will provide peace and criticality going forward, I believe with more individuals aware of their power in shaping communication and politics they will be ever more thoughtful when approaching conversations of difference.

If Hannah Fleet, Rothesay, CBC, and the online commenters could have negotiated and reconciled with the philosophy of movement, I believe the outcomes and writing style of the public online may have had a slight (albeit slow) shift in how they chose, or unconsciously chose, what to feel and think regarding the conflict. Great change starts from the smallest beginnings, digital culture is still new, and I hope as a result more critical and civilized conversations await in online and offline exchanges.

Conclusion

When individuals use their digital devices for political means, they are opening themselves to the projected possibilities embedded within themselves and the devices they use. However, because it is difficult to gauge the affective collective atmosphere from digital networks, primarily with the use of text, there is doubt over the power of digital communication and social media to produce change in the democratic system.

I decided to approach the problem of digital tools for activism from a different direction; instead of thinking of how to control the tools and the messages, instead I put concentration and faith into the *recipient* of the message. In returning to the humanities aspect of politics, I changed the argument from approaching the tools to approaching the thought processes and foundations of the individuals themselves.

Sarah Schulman once said that “[c]hange requires awareness to propel a transformation of attitude.”³⁹ I believe her words compliment what I set out to do with the philosophy of movement. From outlining authenticity to reach self-awareness with existentialism, to understanding the significance of one’s body and capacity to produce events with affect, I wished to outline the significance of individual action in events. While some of these events may never surface from the Virtual, the act of *being* and being there, participating, engaging in that space, makes a difference, shifts the series of potential actions, and produces affect.

The argument that I made is that one who is authentic has a larger impact—they can induce more affect than one who is inauthentic. What is comfortable is safe, and what is safe is not shocking nor is it propelling. Without conflict and without a healthy means of addressing that conflict, society cannot move forward. In Chapter 3 I showed how simple, ambiguous

39. Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, 23-24.

conflicts can blow out of proportion when the means of clear and honest communication is cut. In those moments when one's body is attuned to respond with rage, I sought to undo with the philosophy of movement. The predisposition to frustration when one's beliefs are questioned could shift instead to critical disagreement to solve a problem together. In the case of the problem not being solved, at the very least reconciliation is possible.

I caution individuals to be aware of times when what they believe to be true may actually be a hierarchy-legitimizing myth. The context of one's knowledge production should always be at the forefront of determining what is objective reality and what is the reality an individual shapes to make sense of the world. This is not meant to displace one's position, but rather make one seriously consider what motives and influences they have in their life and be more critically selective to the values they adopt.

I also caution that individuals should remember the capacity of the digital imagination to inform the material world (and the other way around). The continuous feeding between these different spaces is constantly being renegotiated, the boundaries blurry, as societies integrate deeper into a digital information society. It is fascinating to dream and wonder about what possibilities lie ahead for Canadian politics and culture; however, it also means we have yet to contend with potentially even more challenging developments as a consequence of politics and life going online.

Fake news, alternative facts, Twitter wars, online criminal allegations, corporate bullying, egregious journalism, and beyond. It can be disorienting and disconcerting. The flow of information online can only be described today as fast, complex, and disjunctive. Appadurai explores the new global cultural economy through a selection of five dimensions (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes) stating that these scapes are not only non-objectively related, but that "they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors ... Indeed, the individual is actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes."⁴⁰

This complicated global landscape puts a further necessity on educating the public on the forces at play with digital dissemination. I sought to create a foundation by which one can begin

40. Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," 296.

to critically engage using the philosophy of movement. By navigating a perspectival digital landscape through critical difference and authenticity, I believe it will make more visible the five dimensions which are often obscured by the private and public structures which seek to obfuscate using imagery, text, and audio to lull the individual into a state of desperate desire, or a cruel optimism as Berlant would put it.⁴¹

With this in mind, it is more important than ever to build a critical global audience who are able to understand that not all information should be taken at face value. Furthermore, to not fool themselves to eagerly believe any detail which further supports their beliefs without taking a moment to understand *why* they want to readily believe and *what* types of influences, what types of structures, are creating these messages and whether they are safe to consume, or a dangerous reminder that misleading information is not a low-hanging fruit, the individual is.

My hope is that going forward we can share a philosophy which attends to one's needs and desire to take action, care for others, embrace difference, and take to task the institutions which seek to control not for public good, not even just for power and wealth, but the ability to subtly shape national and/or global culture and desire. I hope the philosophy of movement will enable more individuals to understand the importance of authenticity and action when engaging with a global audience with differences in culture and belief, so that conflict does not become a negative headline, but the potential to collectively solve a problem on a grand scale.

Going forward, I hope my research will invigorate further conversations in affect theory and collective atmospheres. While my thesis contends that authenticity produces greater potential affect, it is entirely conceptual with no studies to prove it. The nature of affect makes it nearly impossible to produce scientific data, but I hope there are other theorists or philosophers who may be interested in further studying the relationship between self-awareness and the power to inspire. In contrast, the power of manipulation.

Furthermore, the case study of my final chapter attempted to measure critical public engagement as a result of online coverage of the Fleet VS. Rothesay conflict. I am interested in seeing this expanded to other larger and more significant conflicts, with a team of researchers finding a method to truly deconstruct critical response versus symbolic outrage for whichever side

41. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.

of an issue. Furthermore, how the writing style of an article may affect the reader's response, shifting conversations toward journalistic integrity and responsibility in storytelling to help engage readers.

The nature of my area of study makes it difficult to directly quantify certain states. In this case, it is difficult to determine what is absolute authenticity, although I was able to discern what is false authenticity in Chapter 1 using Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Using this as a point of departure, I think it would be interesting and useful to monitor individuals with degrees of authenticity and how they use the Internet and consume information. I wonder if it could produce patterns which would help us understand online culture and how to build healthier sources of information and participation. However, I am not sure how a "metric" of authenticity would work, and if it would simply be offensive.

Finally, while I have provided a way to engage peacefully with difference, noting self-awareness and the understanding of how conflicts escalate, I am interested in seeing it in action. While I am my own test subject, I wonder again if levels of authenticity also affect one's communication skills and ability to deescalate potentially abusive conversations. More specifically, I wonder if this line of inquiry may actually work online, as it is much easier to diffuse or escape a disembodied online forum post over an in-person conflict. As such, I am following in the pragmatist tradition of philosophy where the theory I propose must be practiced in real life to determine its use.

There is much to consider as Canada looks to the future. The design of online culture has changed over the decades that the public has been interacting with it. From the gray, square, and heavily shadowed boxes of the Netscape and Internet Explorer era to the flat, light, and minimalist designs seen today on modern Internet browsers like Chrome and Firefox, I wonder how further aesthetic changes in digital space combined with self-guided philosophies will help design new and critical methods of digital communication.

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