

Research Article

The Politics of Communication Reconsidered: Buddhist Relationality, Cārvāka Materialism, and the Question of Critical Theory

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of information technology and artificial intelligence within contemporary capitalist frameworks has significantly transformed communication practices. This transformation has led to a narrowed focus on communication, predominantly emphasising the exchange of information. Furthermore, content is frequently crafted to be visually appealing and persuasive; however, its accuracy, truthfulness, and reliability are often questionable. Consequently, these factors shape public perceptions and attitudes, diminishing social interactions locally and globally. In this context, this study revisits philosophical discussions on human communication by drawing on Buddhist and Cārvāka traditions while critically engaging with contemporary thinkers such as Habermas, Foucault, and Levinas to examine the politics of communication. This study addresses three primary concerns: First, it explores the evolution of human communication by analysing the interconnections between the self and others, intersubjectivity, relationality, and the embodied self within a historical context. Second, it seeks to establish the philosophical underpinnings of communication by drawing on the foundational tenets of Buddhism and Cārvāka, while also engaging with critical theorists to explore the discursive conflicts inherent in human communication. This study aims to investigate the basis of knowledge claims and the reliability of human communication by integrating Cārvāka materialism with the relational ontology inherent in Buddhism. Additionally, the research seeks to deepen this integration by incorporating critical-theory perspectives. This research study critically examines the social conditions requisite for genuine human communication. It explores the relational interdependence inherent in self-other interactions, the diversity of perspectives, the dynamics of contestation and negotiation, and the mechanisms of consensus-building within sociocultural contexts, where meanings are co-constructed through communicative processes.

Keywords

Self, Other, Intersubjectivity, Agency, Human Communication, Philosophical Foundations of Communication

1. Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of life because organisms must respond to their environment and interact with each other to ensure survival. From the perspective of

evolutionary biology, the development of communication systems is regarded as an adaptive process that coordinates behaviour and facilitates the long-term survival of organisms.

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In the animal kingdom, communication predominantly relies on instinctive signal-generation processes. Animals communicate through vocalisations, gestures, chemical signals, and body movements, all of which are pertinent to the environmental conditions in which they exist. Notably, Charles Darwin observed that "the movements of expression in animals and man are largely innate or inherited" [9] (p. 29). These communication methods, shaped by natural selection, convey critical information regarding danger and reproduction, thereby enhancing the likelihood of survival. However, these signals are context-specific and inherently biological in nature.

Western linguistic and anthropological traditions explain the origins of human communication using cognitive and social processes. The difference between human language and animal signalling is that the former has structural and symbolic attributes, whereas the latter is limited to instinctive expressions. Linguist Charles F. Hockett states, "Man is the only animal that can communicate by means of abstract symbols. Yet this ability shares many features with communication in other animals and has arisen from these more primitive systems" [19] (p. 89). He further observed that human language is productive and that it is possible to produce an infinite number of new utterances using a finite set of elements. This ability allows humans to discuss past events, the future, and abstract concepts. Michael Tomasello explains that human communication is fundamentally cooperative [33]. He builds on Paul Grice's [15] idea that communication works through cooperation and shows that this cooperative feature is especially strong in human social interaction, unlike in other primates. Tomasello argues that human cooperative communication depends on a psychological infrastructure of shared intentionality (joint attention, common ground) that has evolved for collaboration and culture. "The crucial difference between human cognition and that of other species is the ability to participate with others in collaborative activities with shared goals and intentions: shared intentionality." [34] (p. 675).

Hence, based on the above understanding, communication develops primarily through biological adaptation, interpersonal cooperation, and cognitive complexity. Nevertheless, the shift from animal signalling to human language represents a radical evolutionary change. Most Western evolutionary and language theories attribute this transition primarily to biological evolution and cognitive development.

Indian philosophical traditions view communication differently from Western perspectives. They primarily focus on the metaphysical and epistemological concerns of communication (language) in cognition. They view language (communication) as the primary source of cognition. They propose that communication is not only a means of transmitting information but also a constitutive principle for finding a sense of reality in the world. For instance, in his treatise *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartrhari offers a holistic approach to the meaning of language, and Indian grammatical traditions tend to link language with metaphysical principles. Bhartrhari presents the idea of such a category,

called *sabda-brahman*, in which the unity behind reality is expressed as follows: Bhartrhari asserts that linguistic knowledge can be acquired through the unity of a sentence but not through single words. Bhartrhari posits that the sentence (*vākya*), rather than individual words, serves as the primary vehicle of meaning; words derive their significance only within the cohesive structure of the sentence (VP 1.44–1.45)¹. In the *Brahmakāṇḍa*, he further equates Brahman with the eternal principle of language, from which the cosmos emerges (VP 1.1) [2]. Interestingly, Western philosophy has theorised about language since at least the modern era, and it tends to discuss language first and foremost as a cognitive instrument of humans rather than as a principle of being. Another specialty of the Indian approach is the epistemological significance of the prototype of *śabda* (verbal testimony). The tradition of Nyāya philosophy recognises language as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). The Nyāya Sūtra defines verbal knowledge as "Śabda (verbal testimony) is the statement/instruction of a reliable (trustworthy) person (*āpta*)." (1.1.7)² [38]. The focus on testimony attests to the deep-rooted nature of communication in Indian philosophies. Accordingly, communication is closely correlated with the development of consciousness and culture, rather than biological adjustment alone. The Indian school of thought incorporates linguistic, metaphysical, epistemological, and spiritual aspects of knowledge.

This study reinterprets testimony as a socially mediated epistemic practice rather than as an unquestionable authority. In dialogue with Jürgen Habermas, we interrogate whether such trust can be normatively grounded through intersubjective justification and valid claims [17]. Extending this critique, Michel Foucault's [10] analysis of discourse situates *śabda* within historically contingent regimes of power/knowledge that authorise certain voices while excluding others. Simultaneously, Bhartrhari's metaphysical notion of *śabda-brahman* enriches the ontological depth of communication but risks obscuring language's sociopolitical mediation. Against such transcendentalism, the Cārvāka tradition foregrounds perception and embodied experience, challenging nonempirical claims [7]. Levinas reorients communication toward ethical responsibility, emphasising the primacy of the Other over totalising unity [22]. Thus, a critical reconstruction of communication must integrate epistemic normativity, discursive power, embodied materiality, and ethical relationality, situating Indian epistemologies within contemporary debates on discourse and social critique to be effective.

Notably, both Western and Indian perspectives recognise that human communication occupies a distinctive and advanced stage in the development of life. It is not merely a tool for exchanging information but a complex process through which meaning, intention, and shared understanding are created. This development is usually explained by Western theories using the terms biological evolution, cognitive complexity, and social cooperation. In contrast, Indian philosophy places greater emphasis on the holistic, epistemological, and

metaphysical properties of language.

2. Buddhist Communication: Relational Meaning

The principle of dependent origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*)³ in Buddhism is articulated in the *Śālistambasūtra* as the process of conditioned arising and cessation [37] (pp. 100–101). The text states, "When this condition is present, that phenomenon occurs; with the emergence of this, that subsequently arises. "When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases" [5] (AN 10.92; pp. 1464–1465). Additionally, the doctrine of *Dvādaśānidāna*⁴ (the twelve links of dependent origination) describes how suffering results from a sequence of conditions: ignorance (*avidyā*) gives rise to formations, which lead to consciousness, name-and-form, sensory bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, and birth, ultimately culminating in ageing and death. This indicates that existence relies on conditions and that eliminating ignorance results in the cessation of suffering. [36]. This principle serves as the basis for communication and improves dialogue, thus shaping and strengthening the communicative network. Buddhist philosophy presents a philosophically grounded framework for understanding human communication predicated on the notion that communication emerges from the autonomous yet constructed self. At the heart of Buddhist philosophy is a doctrine called *anattā* (no-self), which denies the existence of a permanent self. Unlike the Vedāntic idea of a permanent self, Buddhists propose that the self is composed of five aggregates (*skandhas*): form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and awareness. None of these aggregates have an abiding nature; they fall and disappear as circumstances shift. According to Walpola Rahula, it is only a convenient term or name used to denote the association of these five groups that constitute what we mean by a being, an individual, or 'I. [29].

An exemplary instance of this Buddhist conception of the self is the dialogue between Milinda, a king, and the monk Nagasena in *the Milindapañha*. At one point, when King Milinda asks Nagasena to tell him what precisely a person is or who they are, Nagasena answers with the well-known analogy of a chariot. A chariot is not, he contends, a separate thing existing independently of its own parts; it is merely a customary name for a collection of wheels, axles, yokes, and frames, and so on. Similarly, the human person is not more than an abstract term used to categorise the combination of the five aggregates. According to the *Milindapañha*, "just as the word 'chariot' is but a mode of expression for its parts... so 'being' is only a name, a designation, a conventional term for the five aggregates" [30]. This comparison highlights the Buddhist view that personal identity and communication are built through systems of interaction rather than being based on the separate nature of the self. Buddhist teachings on dependent origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*) clarify the philosophical implications of

this perspective. This principle asserts that all phenomena are characterised by mutual dependence between cause and effect. When applied to communication, this understanding implies that communication and comprehension are predetermined by various factors, including emotions, cultural context, social power relations, and past experiences. Communication is thus not a meeting point or a unilateral exchange of information between predetermined entities but a contingent and active process that unfolds within a network of causes and effects.

Speech is also of central ethical importance in Buddhist philosophy. Right Speech (*sammā vācā*)⁵ is considered one of the eightfold path, which is articulated in the Pali Canon, comprises right view, intention, Speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration as an integrated path of ethical and mental cultivation [4]. The Buddha directs people not to engage in deceptive speech, divisive language, harsh speech, or frivolous gossip. Communication should be honest, balanced, soft, and significant. According to Harvey, right speech involves abstaining from "false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech" and idle chatter, while encouraging truthful and harmonious communication [18] (p. 83). In conclusion, this moral rule states that a person who adheres to Right Speech utters only truthful, friendly, and helpful words to others [29] (p. 48). The Buddha explains in "the Abhaya Sutta" that not only must speech be verified as true, but it must also have an ethical effect on the audience. He suggests saying words that are "true, helpful, and, at an appropriate time, with a loving-kindness state of mind" [24]. (pp. 394–395; MN 58). Buddhist communication is ethically grounded in compassion (*karuṇa*) and loving-kindness (*maitrī*). These values encourage people to empathise with others' suffering through communication. This ethical perspective is expressed in the *Metta Sutta*, which advocates the cultivation of "boundless goodwill toward all living beings" [3] (Sn 1.8). In this view, communication must not be based on identifying opponents of the argument but on reducing suffering and building understanding with one another. Such ethical disposition can provide a worthwhile alternative to the competitive or adversarial discourse that often dominates political and social speech. David J. Kalupahana [20] believes that the Buddhist approach to philosophy focuses not on metaphysical speculation but on practical changes in the world. Kalupahana maintains that the teachings of the Buddha were meant to help lead the individual towards understanding and moral existence through reflection and dialogue rather than through theorising. Nāgārjuna achieves flexibility and receptivity, the hallmarks of philosophical dialogue, by describing every category of concept as relational and provisional [14, 21]. The *anattā* doctrine denies the existence of a self, both by repudiating the self as permanent and asserting that a common discourse supports the continuity of personality and moral responsibility [8, 29]. As a philosopher, Paul Ricoeur suggests that personal identity depends on the continuity of history, the continuity of telling stories about ourselves and others, and all our actions in which the self is created. He writes that "selfhood... implies otherness to such

an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other” [31] (p. 3). Against this backdrop, the Buddhist denial of self in any fixed way can be reconstituted to encompass continuity as a necessary constituent of communication and as a moral obligation to the other.

In addition, the moral principles of conscious speech may face challenges in contemporary social life, as they are predetermined by power mechanisms and institutions. Jürgen Habermas has underlined that, for true communication, there must be conditions under which participants can communicate with each other without domination and oriented toward mutual understanding. Habermas’s *The Theory of Communicative Action* [17] defines communicative action as “oriented to reaching understanding” among partners. In the absence of such social conditions, the moral premises of Buddhist communication may be difficult to actualise in the context of modern publicity. The Buddhist perspective on communication as relational, contingent, and ethically grounded is open to convergence and critique by critical theory. The theory of communicative action developed by Jürgen Habermas aligns with the focus on communicative dialogue, as in Buddhism, especially in its demand for sincerity, truthfulness, and mutual understanding [17]. The ethical discipline of Right Speech aligns with Habermas’s validity claims. However, he argues that Buddhist ethics are not sufficiently institutionalised to secure the procedural conditions of freedom from domination and equality of participation, which are needed to support undistorted communication.

Meanwhile, Foucault goes further and radicalises the assumption that the purification of communication can be achieved through ethical intentions. Although dependent origination also considers the contribution of conditioning by context, Foucault builds on it by showing how the matrices of discourse are constituted by the rule of power-knowledge that produces subjects and determines what is and is not allowed to be said, where discourse operates through “rules of formation” that define “the conditions of existence” of statements [11] (pp. 37–44). Consequently, Buddhist compassion may be ineffective in addressing structural imbalances in modern communicative spaces. Ethically, Levinas is concerned with Buddhism’s emphasis on duty and the elimination of suffering, but he disagrees with Buddhism on the dissolution of self. Levinas sees ethical communication as not the result of self-negation but the relation of the irreducible Other, whose alterity cannot be placed under the umbrella of relational interdependence, since the Other is “absolutely other” and cannot be reduced to the same” [22] (pp. 43–44).

Authentic communication must be re-grounded as an ethical, dialogical, and institutionally sustained practice. Insights from Buddhism foreground mindfulness, compassion, and reflexivity; however, their realisation requires structural conditions. Jürgen Habermas’s emphasis on undistorted communication highlights the need for inclusive, rational public spaces; Michel Foucault exposes how power shapes communicative possibilities; while Emmanuel Levinas anchors authenticity in

responsibility toward the Other. Together, they suggest that authentic communication emerges not merely from inner sincerity but from the dynamic interplay of ethical intentions, critical awareness, and communication structures.

3. Cārvāka: Embodied Self, Material Conditions and Communication

The Cārvāka system proceeds from a materialist understanding of the self and explains that consciousness emerges from the synthesis of physical elements in the body (*śarīra*). It rejects both dualist and transcendental conceptions of an independent, immaterial self. The ontological stance has far-reaching consequences for communication, as it decisively shifts communicative power to the physiological, sensory, and affective states that accompany an embodied being. Thus, communication is not an abstract exchange of meaning but a material-based practice grounded in bodily processes. According to Cārvāka, communication cannot be separated from the activities of the senses (*indriyāḥ*) or from the immediacy of perception (*pratyakṣa*). The conditions and capacities of a material body strictly determine its communicability.

This introduces a formidable epistemic limitation, as meaning can exist beyond the confines of embodied experience. Accordingly, bodily conditions are socially and historically constructed, rather than merely biologically determined. Labor, the environment, and socioeconomic structures form the body and constitute the communicative possibilities. In this regard, Cārvāka envisions Karl Marx’s insight that human sensuous function is historically produced, in which the body itself is an object of production, discipline and constraint. In modern capitalist settings characterised by digital mediation, the commodification of attention, and packaged forms of governance, communication is becoming increasingly divorced from lived bodily immediacy and is being restructured along lines of increasing visibility, persuasion, and profitability. Thus, communication is not only a reflection of perceptual immediacy but also of the material organisation of social life.

The rejection of transcendence also brings a pragmatic approach to ethics rather than an idealised consensus. Without metaphysical assurances, communication becomes consequence-, utility-, and experience-oriented. Cārvāka’ does not submit to ideological conceptions that ignore material facts and reveals the mode in which truth-claims in general may actually become an instrument of power. This scepticism has new significance in the modern environment of fake news, influence, persuasion, and emotional manipulation. For the Cārvāka, knowledge claims must be based on observable experiences and verifiable evidence. According to his statements, metaphysical conjectures lead to coercion and misrepresentation. Inference (*anumāna*) can be pragmatically relevant but fallible, as generalisations often lead to errors. A prime classical example of concluding without sufficient evidence is the conclusion that fire exists based on smoke alone. Notably, this

scepticism does not deny everyday experiences and reasoning but requires epistemic caution. Communication should not be premature and must not be excessively ideological or rhetorical. In this regard, Cārvāka's stress on empiricism can be related to David Hume's insistence that all knowledge is ultimately based on sensory impressions [16]. In the context of the political logic that dominates contemporary communication studies, the notion that empirical verification alone constitutes adequate evidence is no longer tenable. Foucault argues that what is considered observable, true, or sayable is constituted within historically contingent regimes of discourse, located in networks of power that operate through institutional and social practices, and embedded in power relations [11]. Consequently, perception is never neutral but is always mediated by authority, discourse, and ideology. Thus, even communication grounded in empirical data is shaped by the structures that control visibility and legitimacy.

This would involve a critical synthesis of these methods. First, empirical verification should be upheld as a norm to counter misinformation and false beliefs. Second, it must be supplemented with a discussion of the organisation of communicative conditions in terms of power, relying on genealogical and discourse analyses. Third, the normative frameworks of intersubjective validity introduced by Habermas should be critically re-evaluated in light of material and discursive inequalities [17]. In practice, this approach requires analysing today's communicative spaces, such as digital media, social speech, and institutional communication, where facts, power inequities, and ideological perversions are interwoven.

The reconfigurations of communication may be understood as embodied, materially conditioned, and politically debated through adherence to the empirical vigilance of Cārvāka and the critical means of diagnosing the existence of power. This framework defends communicative integrity and specifies the desirability of reflexivity, accountability, and democratic participation in situations that are mediated by capital.

4. Towards Reconstruction of Human Communication

At present, the politics of communication obtains its structure from infrastructural dominance, affective circulation, and the process of datafication, which leads to a drastic transformation in the way meaning is produced and legitimised. Srnicek rightly points out that various platforms function as "digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact" while simultaneously extracting and monetising data [35] (pp. 29–31). 29–31). Consequently, communication has been incorporated into capital circuits where visibility and attention are reconfigured as economic merchandise. This metamorphosis is further intensified through affective economies, since "the more they circulate, the more affective they become", thereby adding economic advantage to emotional intensity over epistemic validity [1] (p. 120). Moreover, Rosa

writes that accelerated social change renders "social constellations and structures as well as patterns of action and orientation unstable and ephemeral", which matches your point [26] (p. 7). These developments build on Karl Marx's insight that life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life, and extend it into the visual sphere of digital infrastructures [23]. Interestingly, this visuality resonates with Michel Foucault's claim that power involves "a productive network that runs through the whole social body" [10] (p. 119). Accordingly, communication is a historically conditioned and regulated phenomenon.

Foucault argues that human life is organised through four interrelated technologies—"production, sign systems, power, and the self" [12] (p. 16). These shape how individuals act, communicate, and understand themselves in the world. Therefore, communication is not a neutral exchange but a structured practice formed by discourse rules, institutional forces, and ongoing processes of subject formation. Interestingly, Foucault's schema of four "technologies" (production, sign systems, power, and the technologies of the self) can be combined with a Buddhist account of communication to form a single rigorous framework that is simultaneously analytical, ethical, and practice-oriented. The connection is grounded in a shared diagnosis of how subjects and meanings are produced and complementary solutions that operate at different levels of analysis.

Foucault's technologies demonstrate how subjects are constituted through practices, institutions, and discourses. For Buddhists, communication between people is relational, as it is grounded in the doctrines of Dependent Origination and Anattā (no-self). Accordingly, communication arises in the interaction between a 'speaking-self' and a 'listening-other', where the other is an interpreter, evaluator, and responder. Thus, the philosophical investigation of communication confronts issues such as subjectivity, recognition, and the ethical circumstances under which dialogue becomes possible. For communication to function effectively, participants must acknowledge one another as genuine speaking subjects and engage in mutual trust and respect.

Therefore, the present study visualises the following ethical conditions, which form the basis for sincere and meaningful dialogue.

First, meaningful communication is grounded in the authenticity of the communicating self as the first condition. It is only when conviction goes with expression that speech is trustworthy. When people speak in a manner that is not in line with what they believe or intend to say, communication becomes distorted, and trust is destroyed. Therefore, authenticity is a fundamental principle of communication. Indian seekers describe the coherence between thought, word, and deed, often expressed through *manasā, vācā, and karmaṇā* [28]. This moral integrity makes communication a vision of true belief and not manipulative politics. In this sense, authenticity in the self is the primary requirement for engaging in significant relationships. Communication involves critically examining the

formulation of subjectivity. Western philosophers, especially Taylor [32], insist on the interpretive nature of language by presenting the view that human beings are interpersonal syncretic beings whose identities are both constituted and encompassed in dialectic and narratively ingrained cultures. Such an approach shows that the self emerges as a contingent process in which communicative agents are understood as situated and historically determined rather than as mere bearers of meaning. The implication of scholarship is obvious: scholars need to track how communicative capacities are constructed through institutions, habitual acts, and embodied training, rather than assuming the existence of a having-in-common communicative subject.

Second, the two theoretical explanations operate on complementary timescales. Foucault provides analytical instruments for macro-level conditions, regimes of truth, institutional power relations, and discursive exclusions that define what utterances are allowed and who is authorised to speak. In contrast, micro-level interventions (e.g. attentional regulation, ethical restraint, and contemplative training) provided by Buddhist practices regulate the instantaneous production of speech and listening. The combination of these scales helps explain the issue more holistically: structural constraints explain the predominance of some forms of communication, whereas contemplative and ethical practices explain how interlocutors can reorganise their dispositions within these constraints.

Third, the normative traditions of the two are corrective of each other. Foucault's critique of power warns against the instrumentalisation of freedom in communication, and Buddhism provides a substantive ethic of heedfulness, right speech, and compassion, which can be used to direct communicative change to mitigate harm, rather than amplify expression. In contrast, Foucault helps in Buddhist practice by encouraging scepticism toward strong moral assertions and questioning whether ethical actions need to be questioned in light of their ensconcedness within relations of power and their capacity to formulate power anew.

Fourth, the proposed synthesis suggests a mixed methods approach. Phenomenological and practice-oriented approaches (such as micro-ethnographies of conversations, participatory mindful listening interventions, and pre/post measures of communicative harm) should be integrated with discourse and institutional analyses. Such methodological convergence makes it possible to formulate hypotheses that would otherwise be uninterpretable, such as the fact that institutional rhetorical frames influence habitual attention and limit the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions.

Finally, an integrated view reframes the concept of authenticity. Rather than equating authenticity with unmediated self-expression, it defines communicative authenticity as the capacity to reduce harm, disclose intention, and sustain reciprocal recognition — a capacity that both resists oppressive discursive formations and is cultivated through concrete ethical practices. Therefore, for a research paper, the argument is to

treat Foucault and Buddhist resources as a single research program: use Foucault to map the field of constraints and Buddhism to identify and test practices that can ethically reconfigure communicative relations within that field.

With such reflexivity, people can realise how their assumptions inform communication. Speech may display unscrutinised principles or be driven by an unconscious mind without conscious awareness. By engaging in self-critical reflection, people will be able to converse more responsibly and be ready to listen to different perspectives and opinions. It also involves communication in which the other person is an autonomous subject of the communication. There can be no dialogue when the other is viewed simply as an object to be convinced to act or controlled by the self. Rather, the meaning of communication exists only when the parties recognise each other as joint partners in understanding.

As Martin Buber writes in *"I and Thou"*, genuine human life unfolds in mutual encounter: people truly live when they meet one another openly and are met in return — "all real living is meeting." In such encounters, communication is not only expressive but also emancipatory, enabling each party to appreciate the other as a subject [6]. Philosophical hermeneutics concerns the dialogical nature of knowledge itself. Hans-Georg Gadamer believed that meaning can be found in dialogue, where different opinions collide and mutually recreate each other. This process will have the effect of what Gadamer terms a "fusion of horizons", in which persons broaden their interpretive perspectives through dialogue [13] (p. 305). Therefore, communication encompasses the desire to be questioned and changed by others in the communication process.

5. Intersubjectivity and Authenticity: Effective Forms of Communication

Effective communication is achieved not only through clarity but also through genuineness, openness, and a willingness to seek common ground. In this regard, subjectivity is inherent in communication; it is the process of making oneself known by acknowledging others' opinions. The ethical aspect of communication is reflected in traditions concerned with the unity of the inner experience and external expression. The Indian approach emphasises the alignment of thought, speech, and action as the basis for moral virtue. When these dimensions are not separated, communication is honest and ethically effective. Speech based on authentic speech is about the internal disposition of the speaker and is not an instrument of strategy. Through this, communication acquires both epistemic and ethical significance.

Efficient communication presupposes openness to criticism and reflection. Conversation entails not only the sharing of personal perceptions but also engagement with others' perceptions in a process of common enquiry. Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action is an attempt to analyse this process, in which communication is focused on rational cognition

rather than strategic achievement. According to Habermas, communicative interaction aims to achieve “reaching understanding” (Verständigung) among participants [17] (p. 287). Such a predisposition to mutual understanding assumes truthfulness, honesty, and willingness to prove oneself in dialogue situations.

The Upanishadic tradition reflects philosophical concerns through dialogue, which is a key element of philosophical enquiry. Many Upanishads take the form of dialogues between teachers and their students, in which philosophical knowledge is accumulated through questioning and meditation rather than pronouncements. An example of this can be found in the Chandogya Upanishad, where the sage Uddalaka Arunjani instructs his son Svetaketu through a series of dialogues. It presents a deep epistemological problem, to wit: “What is that, knowing which we know everything” [25] (p. 147). In this way, the question reintroduces philosophical enquiry not merely as the sum of particular facts but as an attempt to uncover underlying knowledge that sheds light on all experience. The Upanishadic reply makes one focus on the self (atman) as the centre of ultimate reality in the form of the famous saying, *tat tvam asi* (That thou art), thus defining the found truth as the inner self [25] (p. 156).

The Upanishads' focus on self-knowledge implies that true knowledge begins with self-awareness. The realisation of the self makes it possible to see the underlying unity of being, as well as to denote the person toward a fulfilled interaction with the world. The discovery of the self, as explained by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, is the ultimate goal of the philosophical enquiry of the Upanishads: "The central aim of the Upanishads is to find out the ultimate reality in the depths of the human self, as it is with the help of the knowledge of the self that the whole universe is intelligible [27] (p. 24). In this sense, philosophical dialogue is a tool that helps participants navigate their attempts to reach a reflective state in their inner reality. As a result, genuine communication presupposes auto-epistemic awareness; a person who does not know their assumptions, wants, and drives cannot engage in a clear dialogue with others. Therefore, communication distortion occurs when an individual has not critically analysed themselves. The Upanishadic tradition hence attaches importance to reflection, enquiry, and concentrated listening as important elements of philosophical dialogue. According to Radhakrishnan (in *The Principal Upanishads*), the ultimate identification of the self is not possible through intellectual reasoning. According to him, the self cannot only be understood by discursive thought but also by being directly understood through spiritual realisation. To illustrate, he points out that the Upanishads emphasise that the awakening of the self should be achieved through inner awakening and not through authority or rational thought. According to Radhakrishnan, the self is not known through extensive learning or intellectual debate but through first-hand experience and spiritual insight [27].

With this understanding of the conceptualisation of human

communication, there is a need to critically examine it and explain where the ontological self intersects with communicative practices. The discourse eventually narrows down to a larger philosophical question: How does our understanding of the self influence the production and importation of meaning among interlocutors? Different philosophical traditions provide different answers to this question. In Adi Shankaracharya's non-dualism, acts of communication are considered reflections of the fundamental unity of consciousness that cuts across all living beings. In contrast, the Buddhist view holds a relational view of existence, stating that meaning emerges through interdependent processes rather than through fixed self-imprinting. However, Brihaspati's materialist approach situates the process of communication within the sphere of sensual perception and traditional human communication. None of these traditions, together with others, shed light on the divergent horizons of communication's realisation. The critical theoretical approach shows that the proposed account of intersubjectivity and authenticity should be both supported and revised, especially in light of contemporary communication practices. Habermas would probably approve of a focus on openness, honesty, and common understanding, as communicative action is based on the concept of mutual understanding and communication (Verständigung) grounded in validity claims [17]. However, he would warn that authenticity can only be pegged to publicly falsifiable discourse and not to individual self-realisation. Meanwhile, his ideal of pure communication was interrogated by Michel Foucault, who contended that even supposedly pure dialogue is embedded in regimes of power-knowledge that dictate who can see, who has power, and who is considered an authority [11]. In ethics, Emmanuel Levinas imagined communication as oriented to the irreducible Other, thus criticising the Upanishadic tendency toward ontological unity (thou, thee, *tat tvam asi*) [22]. Relational ontology is in dialogue with critical theory regarding its rejection of fixed selfhood, and Nāgārjuna's relational ontology is in dialogue with Indian traditions, where the non-dualism of Adi Shankaracharya is a subsumption of difference. These tensions develop in the contemporary virtual realm, where consumption, marketing, and algorithmic mediation are generally witnessed. Communication is increasingly being commodified, with expression being made visible, influential, and valuable to economies rather than being understood. Authenticity is usually played using digital instruments, and intersubjectivity must be agreed upon using market logic. Thus, to create a critical reconstruction, it is necessary to include Habermasian normativity, the Foucauldian critique of power, and Levinasian ethics to overcome commodification and rejuvenate communication as an embodied, responsible, and dialogical endeavour directed at truth and mutual recognition.

6. Conclusion

This study commences by contextualising contemporary communicative practices within the paradigm of late capitalism,

wherein digital mediation, algorithmic distribution, and market demand have reconceptualised communication as a tool for persuasion, consumption, and regulating affect. This transformation is not merely technological; it also represents a profound philosophical change. Communication is increasingly characterised not by the pursuit of mutual understanding but by the acquisition of strategic power, compromising authenticity and fundamentally altering intersubjective relationships.

In this context, the initial argument invokes Buddhist epistemology, which provides an alternative framework for understanding communication as relationality and contingency. The doctrine of dependent origination replaces the notion of a fixed, independent subject and is significant in the processes of interaction. Consequently, communication is no longer viewed as an expression of an a priori self; rather, it is understood as the process through which relational forms are developed, in which selves and meanings are co-constructed.

This study posits that Cārvāka situates knowledge within the realm of sensory experience, dismisses transcendental abstractions, and anticipates the material conditions of communication practices. Furthermore, it asserts that communication is a corporeal, empirical, and context-dependent practice grounded in lived experiences and is accountable for observable realities. However, these philosophical resources require critical augmentation to be effective. Habermas provides a normative framework suggesting that communication should be guided by the intent to understand each other through rational discourse. Foucault illustrates that communicative practices are inextricably linked to the dynamics of power, discourse, and institutional structures that define the conditions of speech. Levinas extends this discourse by positioning communication within the ethical obligation to the Other and rejecting instrumental rationality and ontological closure. Ultimately, this study advances a philosophical argument that conceptualises human communication as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon composed of relational contingency, embodied experience, discursive power, and moral responsibility. It is crucial to recognise that the essence of communication cannot be confined to a simplistic notion of sincerity, empirical validation, or rational procedure; rather, it evolves into a process of creative critique and moral awareness.

Abbreviations

AN	Āṅguttara Nikāya
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
SN	Sutta Nipāta
VP	Vākyapadīya

Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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End Notes

¹ anvitābhīdhānam vākyam padānām tu prthag bhavet | padānām tu prthag bhāve nārthaḥ kaścana vidyate || See: [2] Bhartṛhari. (1976). *Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari with the Vṛtti* (K. A. Subramania Iyer, Trans.). Deccan College, Pune. (See I.44).

² āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ (Nyāya Sūtra 1.1.7) See: [38] Jha, G. (Trans.). (1913–1922). *The Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama* (Vols. 1–4). Motilal Banarsidass.

³ Praṭīyasamutpāda (dependent origination) is classically expressed as “asmin sati idaṃ bhavati; asyotpādād idaṃ utpadyate; asmin asati idaṃ na bhavati; asya nirodhād idaṃ nirudhyate,” indicating conditioned arising and cessation. See: [5] Bodhi, B. (Trans.). (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Wisdom Publications.

⁴ avidyāpratyayāḥ saṃskārāḥ; saṃskārāpratyayam vijñānam; vijñānapratyayam

nāmarūpam; nāmarūpapratyayāḥ ṣaḍāyatanāni; ṣaḍāyatanapratyayāḥ sparśaḥ; sparśapratyayā vedanā; vedanāpratyayā ṛṣṇā; ṛṣṇāpratyayam upādānam; upādānapratyayā bhavaḥ; bhavapratyayā jātiḥ; jātipratyayā jarāmaraṇa-śoka-parideva-duḥkha-daurmanasya-upāyāsāḥ sambhavanti” See: [37] Sastri, N. A. (Ed.). (1950). *Ārya Śālistamba Sūtra*. Madras: Adyar Library.

⁵ In terms of human communication, right Speech (sammā vācā) holds particular significance, prescribing truthfulness, non-divisiveness, gentleness, and purposeful expression. It prohibits false, harsh, and idle Speech, thereby cultivating trust and harmonious social relations. Communication, thus, becomes an ethical practice grounded in wisdom and compassion (See: [4] Samyutta Nikāya 45.8; Magga-vibhanga Sutta; Bodhi, 1984).