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Digitalization and Philosophy of Communication: Transforming Other-Self Relationships from a Spinozaist Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of digitalization on philosophy of communication, particularly in the context of self-other relationships, post-truth dynamics, and democratic deliberation. It argues that digital communication reshapes the conditions of dialogue by fostering epistemic fragmentation, digital tribalism, and the erosion of shared meaning. Drawing on Spinoza's philosophy, the study challenges dualistic frameworks that separate mind and from? body, truth and from? persuasion, or reason and from? affect, proposing instead a relational approach to communication. The paper highlights how deliberative democracy and mutual aid face significant obstacles in an era dominated by misinformation, algorithmic filtering, and identity-driven discourse. By employing an interdisciplinary literature review, this study identifies the potential of Spinoza's concept of *potentia* (power as capacity) as a theoretical foundation for rethinking agency, relationality, and communicative ethics in digital spaces. The findings suggest that addressing fragmentation requires promoting critical media literacy, encouraging dialogical engagement, and reconceptualizing communication as an embodied, interactive, and ethically responsive process.

Keywords: Digitalization, Philosophy of Communication, Other-Self, Spinoza, Digital Tribes

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Dijitalleşme ve İletişim Felsefesi: Spinozacı Bir Bakışla Dönüşen Öteki-Ben İlişkileri

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Öz

Bu makale, dijitalleşmenin iletişim felsefesi üzerindeki etkisini, özellikle benlik-öteki ilişkileri, hakikat sonrası dinamikler ve demokratik istişare bağlamında incelemektedir. Dijital iletişim, epistemik parçalanmayı, dijital kabileciliği ve ortak anlaman aşınmasını teşvik ederek diyalog koşullarını dönüştürdüğünü öne sürmektedir. Çalışma, Spinoza'nın felsefesinden yararlanarak, zihin ve beden, hakikat ve ikna, akıl ve duygular gibi ikili karşıtlıkları sorgulamakta ve bunun yerine ilişkisel bir iletişim yaklaşımı önermektedir. Ayrıca, dezenformasyon, algoritmik filtreleme ve kimlik odaklı söylemin hakim olduğu bir çağda, istişarı demokrasinin ve karşılıklı yardımlaşmanın karşılaşduğu zorluklara dikkat çekmektedir. Disiplinler arası bir literatür taraması yöntemi kullanılarak yapılan bu çalışmada, Spinoza'nın potentia (kapasite olarak güç) kavramının, dijital alanlarda öznellik, ilişkisel etkileşim ve iletişim etiği üzerine yeniden düşünmek için teorik bir temel sunduğu öne sürülmektedir. Bulgular, parçalanmanın üstesinden gelmek için eleştirel medya okuryazarlığının teşvik edilmesi, diyalojik katılımın artırılması ve iletişim bedensel, etkileşimsel ve etik açıdan duyarlı bir süreç olarak yeniden tasavvur edilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijitalleşme, İletişim Felsefesi, Öteki-Ben, Spinoza, Dijital Kabileler

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Introduction

Communication relies on an infrastructure that exists prior to the first exchange, forming the basis for any attempt at meaning-making. Traditional conceptions often assume a pre-established order or the construction of a transcendent one, framing communication as contingent on prior agreement or commonality. This approach presumes shared understanding and purpose, smoothing over the potential for disagreement or irreducible difference. Such perspectives risk reducing communication to a compatible and uniform process before it even begins, privileging commonality over divergence and coherence over ambiguity. However, this raises an important question: what happens if we reject such preconditions and embrace the inherent differences and tensions between self and other(s) as integral to the communicative process? This perspective opens the door to viewing communication not as a static exchange of pre-agreed meanings but as a dynamic, relational encounter shaped by diversity, complexity, and the unpredictable nature of human interaction (Pinchevski, 2005, s. 212). However, if communication is understood as a process shaped by inherent tensions and differences, it becomes necessary to reconsider its philosophical foundations and the assumptions that govern its study.

The term philosophy of communication is a doubly articulated concept that refers both to the foundational tenets and system of beliefs justifying a set of professional and pragmatic practices and to the study of those tenets and beliefs. As a field of study, philosophy of communication addresses questions that are fundamental to and foundational for any topical or disciplinary issue. It is broadly concerned with theoretical, analytical, and political issues that cut across various boundaries often taken for granted in communication studies. Such definitions create a vast and interdisciplinary field, making any attempt to define its scope either overly broad or narrowly focused (Anderson & Baym, 2004, s. 589). This broad and interdisciplinary approach to the philosophy of communication highlights the challenge of defining its scope, necessitating a focus on the tensions between structure and interaction in meaning-making processes.

Communication serves as a foundational infrastructure, shaping how meaning is created, shared, and understood within social interactions. This paper explores the tensions between pre-established frameworks of shared understanding and the dynamic, relational nature of communication. Drawing on philosophical insights about philosophy of communication, it interrogates how traditional models privilege coherence and commonality while

overlooking the productive potential of ambiguity, divergence, and self-other interplay. By rejecting the precondition of agreement, the study adopts a perspective that sees communication as a dynamic encounter that thrives on complexity and unpredictability, challenging reductionist and uniform approaches to meaning making. Conceptualizing communication as dynamic relationality necessitates examining its epistemological and ethical dimensions particularly in contexts where meaning is contested and continuously renegotiated.

This inquiry employs a literature review methodology, analysing foundational texts and contemporary contributions within the philosophy of communication to uncover the epistemological and ethical dimensions of dialogic interactions. The review focuses on works that address the implications of mediated communication, post-truth dynamics, and evolving conceptions of self-other relations. By synthesizing these perspectives, the paper aims to contextualize the challenges posed by the post-truth era while critically engaging with deliberative democracy and mutual aid as frameworks for navigating these complexities. This approach allows for an interdisciplinary understanding of communication, emphasizing its role in fostering inclusivity, meaning sharing, and ethical dialogic practice.

Philosophy of Communication

The philosophy of communication offers a framework for examining the interplay between abstract reasoning and contextual judgment. It highlights the importance of engaging with temporal and situational concerns rather than adhering to fixed truths. Rather than pursuing purely theoretical abstraction, this approach functions within public discourse, interpreting shifting realities through dynamic interaction. Its credibility stems from the integration of theory and practice, drawing from ethical considerations, dialogic perspectives, and critiques of modernity. This process remains iterative, pragmatic, and subject to public scrutiny. The relevance of philosophical perspectives is shaped by collective discourse, ensuring continuous adaptation. Once - dominant frameworks, such as those emphasizing language's structuring role, now hold historical significance but periodically regain attention, illustrating the field's flexibility and enduring impact (Arnett, 2010, s. 58). This adaptability of the philosophy of communication lays the groundwork for understanding its interdisciplinary nature and its engagement with fundamental issues of language, meaning, and human interaction.

The philosophy of communication is an interdisciplinary field that seeks to address fundamental questions about the nature of language, the formation of meaning, and the role of these processes in human interaction. Thinkers in this discipline often contrast internalist and intersubjective approaches to meaning. Internalist accounts argue that meaning flows from thought to language, where mental states or entities determine meaning, and language serves as a vehicle to express these meaningful thoughts. In contrast, intersubjective approaches maintain that meaning is constituted through communicative interaction, emphasizing the inseparable connection between language, and thought, both emerging simultaneously within the social fabric of communication. This intersubjective perspective forms the cornerstone of the philosophy of communication (Dresner, 2006, s. 155). Expanding on these foundational perspectives, the next discussion delves into how notable figures have shaped the intersubjective approach to meaning, emphasizing communication as a social process.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is widely recognized as a foundational figure in this tradition. His focus on understanding language through its use and function in life underscores the relational and contextual aspects of meaning. Donald Davidson further advanced the intersubjective approach during the latter half of the 20th century (Davidson, 1984, s. 272-273). His concept of radical interpretation explores how meaning emerges through interactions between individuals, particularly when encountering differences in cultural or linguistic contexts. Davidson's work underscores that meaning is not an isolated mental construct but rather arises through the dynamic interplay of communication, making it especially relevant for intercultural communication studies. The philosophy of communication, as shaped by figures such as Wittgenstein and Davidson, emphasizes that language and meaning are inherently social constructs. This perspective not only informs communication theory but also provides critical tools for examining issues such as ethics, intercultural dialogue, and the multiplicity of meaning in human interaction. These contributions make the philosophy of communication an essential discipline for understanding the intersection of language, meaning, and society (Dresner, 2006, s. 156). Building upon this exploration of language and meaning, Wittgenstein's contributions provide a concrete example of how communicative interactions construct understanding within specific contexts.

Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* provides a key illustration of his philosophy of language. He explores the relationship between certainty and doubt, emphasizing that meaning is shaped within a given context. He argues that an

isolated statement like “That is a tree” does not have a fixed meaning on its own but gains significance through its use in a specific situation. Every language game relies on the recognition of words and objects, a process learned with the same inevitability as mathematical truths. He questions whether certainty arises from the nature of the language game itself or from social interactions. These reflections highlight that language is not merely an individual cognitive process but a social and communicative practice, where meaning is not fixed but constructed through use (Wittgenstein, 1969, s. 63). Examining Wittgenstein’s reflections on certainty and meaning further underscores the broader ethical implications of communication, particularly in relation to rhetoric and persuasion.

The practical philosophy of communication is inherently tied to ethical considerations. Communication does not occur in a vacuum; operates within a social framework where rhetoric plays a crucial role in persuasion and public discourse. However, rhetoric is not primarily concerned with uncovering truth; rather, its function is to persuade an audience, making it both an ethical tool and a potential means of manipulation. This distinction is central to Plato’s critique of the sophists, whose rhetorical methods he opposed for prioritizing persuasion over truth. In contrast, the dialogue method, as employed by Socrates, seeks to uncover truth within the human soul through reasoned discussion. Aristotle, while acknowledging the potential ethical use of rhetoric, does not view it as necessarily truth-seeking. Instead, he sees it as a practical tool for argumentation that, when used responsibly, can contribute to civic discourse. Within the philosophy of communication, rhetoric shapes the way probabilities are assessed, and complex issues are navigated, necessitating ethical awareness to prevent misinformation or manipulation. The right to free speech, central to rhetorical discourse, underscores the importance of ethical responsibility. While free speech enables open debate and the exchange of ideas, it also demands caution in avoiding the spread of false or harmful information. Ethical dilemma in communication philosophy arise from this tension between persuasion and responsibility. Expressing oneself freely comes with a moral obligation to consider not just what can be said, but what should be said. Recognizing this dual role of rhetoric—as both a persuasive tool and an ethical concern—allows communication philosophy to address ethical challenges while fostering constructive public discourse (Arnett, 1990, s. 214). This ethical dimension of communication extends beyond rhetoric, influencing the responsibilities and obligations tied to free speech and the impact of communicative actions in society.

Human interaction is inherently ethical, as it shapes meaning and influences others. Unlike private thought, exchanges between people carry moral weight due to their potential to affect or manipulate. The challenge lies in balancing influence with respect for autonomy, since every exchange is irreversible and its impact—positive or negative—can endure. Words can leave lasting effects, so ethical responsibility is essential. Coercion uses fear, exploitation manipulates choices, while facilitative approaches respect autonomy and broaden perspectives. This is especially vital in education, where teachers shape students' understanding. A meaning-centered perspective demands interdisciplinary awareness and highlights the impact communicators have on others' experiences. By prioritizing facilitative interaction, we protect symbolic integrity and enrich human connection (Barnlund, 2020, s. 31). Distinguishing between different forms of interference emphasizes the central importance of ethics in shaping discourse.

Habermas's concept of communicative reason can also be considered in the context of the philosophy of communication. Throughout his works, Habermas emerges as a philosopher concerned with dialogue, communication and the "ideal speech situation," where the "best argument" prevails in discussions. This concept is closely tied to the broader theory of communicative rationality, which seeks to establish the conditions for a discourse that is free from coercion and power imbalances. As Habermas argues, argumentative speech is a unique communicative process aimed at reaching rationally motivated agreement under conditions that, while often improbable, serve as an ideal framework for meaningful discourse. The "ideal speech situation" is thus not merely an abstract notion but a regulative principle that approximates conditions of fairness, equality, and mutual understanding in communication. In this regard, Habermas's emphasis on the presuppositions of argumentation underscores the necessity of reconstructing general symmetry conditions that all participants in discourse must assume to be adequately fulfilled. It is suggested that the very act of engaging in argumentation implies an "unrestricted communication community," wherein certain formal conditions are presupposed to allow for reasoned, inclusive, and equitable exchange. This framework highlights the deep interconnection between communicative rationality and the ethics of discourse, reinforcing Habermas's vision of a democratic and dialogical public sphere (Habermas, 2007, s. 88). These ethical considerations directly align with Habermas's theory of communicative rationality, which provides a framework for fostering fair and inclusive dialogue.

Central to his theoretical framework are concepts such as “communicative rationality”, “intersubjectivity”, and the “lifeworld”, which underpin his vision of “radical democracy.” For Habermas, the ideal speech situation represents an egalitarian and open communicative environment where individuals can freely exchange ideas and strive for mutual understanding. His notion of communicative rationality extends beyond mere information exchange, providing an ethical foundation for social consensus and the pursuit of truth. In this sense, radical democracy is not merely a political system but a broader societal ideal, grounded in active participation and shaped by individuals’ engagement within the lifeworld (Timur, 2017, s. 47). By situating communicative rationality within a broader democratic vision, Habermas underscores the role of discourse in achieving social consensus and mutual understanding.

The philosophy of communication focuses on understanding the communication process rather than enhancing practical skills, which fall under communication arts. However, it provides theoretical grounding that informs practice and prevents unrealistic expectations. It examines why and how communication succeeds or fails, critically assessing communication theories. Communication is the sharing of meaning, which is constructed through attentiveness, reflection, and judgment. Meaning requires external carriers—symbols and signs—to bridge individuals’ perspectives. Their appresentational function allows individuals to transcend subjective limits. Additionally, the philosophy of communication explores cognitive and social biases, highlighting obstacles in meaning-sharing (Kelly, 2017, s. 226-228). The emphasis on communication as a meaning-sharing process reinforces the significance of overcoming biases and cognitive limitations in ensuring effective interaction.

The philosophy of communication explores the intricate relationship between abstract reasoning and contextual judgment, emphasizing the creation and exchange of meaning as a structured process shaped by ethical, cultural, and social dynamics. Unlike applied communication studies, this field seeks to understand the success or failure of communication through a theoretical lens, addressing questions of intersubjectivity, meaning, and dialogue. It highlights the moral dimensions inherent in all communication, given its capacity to influence and shape others’ perceptions. Ethical communication emerges as a core focus, advocating for facilitative approaches that respect autonomy and broaden perspectives. Drawing on figures like Wittgenstein, Davidson, and Habermas, the discipline underscores the importance of dialogue, mutual understanding, and the lifeworld as founda-

tional to communicative rationality. In postmodern contexts, the philosophy of communication deconstructs traditional binaries such as self and other, engaging with themes of globalization, intercultural dialogue, and the mediation of meaning through digital technologies. By analysing the interplay between symbols, carriers of meaning, and human biases, the philosophy of communication provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting the complexities of human interaction, fostering ethical awareness, and enhancing our understanding of language, society, and the shared pursuit of meaning.

The Problem of Self and Other or The Other versus Self Problem

The dominant philosophy of communication stems from modernity's dualistic framework, rooted in Western metaphysics. This tradition seeks an unchanging substance behind change, as seen in Aristotle's distinction between essence and substance (Aristoteles, 2017, s. 306). Substance, viewed as self-sufficient, has been equated with concepts like logos, reason, and self, reinforcing the centrality of absolute knowledge. Western thought also relies on binary oppositions—being-becoming, matter-form, subject-object—originating from Plato's division of reality (Platon, 2010, s. 186-187). This dualism underpins hierarchies such as master-slave and civilized-barbarian, shaping historical structures from colonialism to modern imperialism. Descartes' mind-body distinction exemplifies this logic, which prioritizes Western rationality while marginalizing what lies outside its framework (Yılmaz, 2022, s. 3). This philosophical foundation of communication not only shapes historical structures but also informs contemporary debates on identity, interaction, and the evolving nature of discourse in a digitalized world.

In postmodernity, the self-other dichotomy is deconstructed, reshaping interpersonal interaction. Digital communication and social media replace direct encounters, creating an "unreal reality" where empathy and connection are diminished. Technological mediators lack existential depth, altering the nature of human interaction. Beyond technology, globalization and mediatization foster a "spectacle-like society," prioritizing information over genuine bonds. The "digital human" emerges, marked by standardized identities. Globalization necessitates intercultural dialogue, simultaneously enriching and alienating the self and other. Various philosophical perspectives emphasize the mutual transformation between individuals, while some approaches underscore the importance of authentic engagement in dialogue. Postmodernity complicates but also redefines communication, urging an

ethical, responsive approach to identity and relationality (Chistyakova, 2017, s. 6-7). As postmodernity challenges traditional dualisms and reconfigures human relationships, it also invites a reconsideration of alternative philosophical frameworks that reject hierarchical and essentialist thinking.

Spinoza comes to the agenda with the discussions of postmodernity. Spinoza's subversive contribution lies in his opposition to metaphysical or transcendental reductions of ontology. He asserts that political and economic structures emerge from the creative, desiring nature of human beings. This insight aligns him with thinkers like Machiavelli, Gramsci, and libertarian Marxists, who emphasize the productive and transformative capacities of collective human action. In this way, Spinoza provides a framework for understanding society as a construct of immanent struggle, institutions, and historical processes, rather than as an abstract ideal or metaphysical entity (Negri, 2013, s. 5). So where does Spinoza stand in philosophy? Why does he take a position opposite to the Western tradition? Also, does Spinoza contribute to the philosophy of communication?

Spinoza

Spinoza's philosophy represents a radical departure from the dualistic and teleological structures of Western metaphysical tradition. His concept of *Deus sive Natura*, developed in *Ethica*, rejects the notion of a transcendent God, instead positing nature as the singular, self-sustaining substance governed by necessity. By emphasizing the unity and immanence of existence, Spinoza challenges conventional distinctions between mind and body, freedom and determinism, ethics, and metaphysics. For Spinoza, true freedom lies not in arbitrary choice but in understanding the necessary order of nature; ethics ceases to be a prescriptive system and instead becomes an intrinsic mode of being. His philosophical framework has far-reaching implications, particularly in contemporary debates on politics, ethics, and communication, offering a rigorous ontological and epistemological foundation for rethinking power, agency, and relationality in both individual and collective contexts (Spinoza, 1994, s. 85-87). Spinoza's critique of dualistic and teleological structures challenges long-standing metaphysical assumptions, setting the stage for a re-examination of ethics, politics, and communication within his philosophical framework.

Étienne Balibar argues that Spinoza's philosophy rests on three main pillars. Spinoza's philosophy revolves around fundamental issues concerning nature, humanity, and rights, which form the basis for his unique perspective on communication and shared understanding. His concept of *Deus sive*

Natura (God or Nature) identifies God and nature as identical, presenting all reality as modes of a singular substance. This radical naturalism, which once made Spinoza controversial, now contributes to his recognition as a pioneering thinker. Regarding humanity, Spinoza's anthropology underscores the intrinsic connection between the mind and body, where the mind is merely the "idea" of the body. This view, often associated with the term "parallelism," challenges traditional notions of human autonomy. However, Spinoza still envisions human perfection as attainable through intellectual knowledge and the pursuit of freedom, demonstrating a balance between natural determinism and individual striving. In the realm of rights, Spinoza asserts that right is nothing but power, whether individual or collective. This proposition situates his political philosophy within a framework where power dynamics shape justice and governance (Balibar, 2004, s. 124-126). By grounding his philosophy in nature, human interconnectedness, and power, Spinoza provides a foundation for reconsidering communication as a process shaped by immanence and relational dynamics.

Spinoza's ideal knowledge is the intuitive grasp of essence, requiring rational comprehension. True happiness, he argues, comes not from passions, material pursuits, or superstition but from a life guided by reason. To support this ethical vision, he demystifies the universe through a metaphysical foundation. His dual-aspect nature—*Natura naturans* (the active, creative force) and *Natura naturata* (produced, passive nature)—establishes nature as a singular, self-sufficient whole. Rejecting teleology, Spinoza sees God as acting out of necessity, not purpose. Ethically, he links virtue to self-preservation, making knowledge the highest good, integrating metaphysics, ethics, and psychology into a unified system (Nadler, 2013, s. 330-331). This holistic perspective on knowledge, virtue, and self-preservation further reinforces Spinoza's departure from traditional moral frameworks, situating ethics within a broader ontological and epistemological framework.

Negri highlights the distinctiveness of Spinoza's philosophy as a radical counterpoint to modern thought's oppressive structures. Spinoza embodies a "wild negation," which resists conformity and determinism, positions him both as an adversary of modern philosophy and a key figure for contemporary thought. He views existence as the fullness of being, contrasting with the emptiness of becoming. Unlike conventional conceptions, Spinoza sees time not as a metric but as a dimension of liberation, intertwined with life and imagination. His ethics, rooted in creation and transformation, is not merely a guide for behaviour but a revolutionary affirmation of life's continuous production and resistance (Negri, 2020, s. 25-26).

Spinoza's philosophical legacy goes beyond Romanticism, not just influencing but fundamentally shaping and completing it. His ideas challenge and reconfigure existential frameworks, offering an alternative that emphasizes abundance and creative potency rather than void and ambiguity. In this contrast, love opposes anxiety, intellect counters circumspection, desire challenges resoluteness, striving replaces mere presence, appetite contrasts with concern, and potency stands against mere possibility. These distinctions unify ontology's fragmented meanings, presenting being as inherently productive and full. While existentialist thought often dwells on the emptiness of existence and the ambiguity of the present, Spinoza reinterprets the "here-and-now" as a dynamic force of creative potential (Negri, 2020, s. 126). Spinoza's radical rejection of conventional metaphysics extends beyond ethics and knowledge, positioning his thought as a revolutionary force that redefines existence as a site of continuous creation and transformation.

Spinoza occupies a unique position in the history of ontology and conceptions of being. His affirmation of the materiality of being dismantles deist and pantheist understandings of existence. His philosophy is characterized by a continuity that bridges physics and ethics, phenomenology, and genealogy, as well as ethics and politics, making his ontological framework distinct. Spinoza's ontology views disruption as a process of transformation within dystopia, setting it apart in its uniqueness. While echoes of this perspective on being can be found in ancient materialism, particularly in Epicurean thought, Spinoza reimagines it for modernity. He positions his philosophy as a counterpoint to the emerging conditions of capitalist development, offering an alternative to the ideological and political vacuity of his time. At the core of Spinoza's ontology lies the idea of being as revolutionary and collective, integrating rather than rejecting objectivity. It presents an ethical space for freedom, one that emphasizes the necessity of transformation as an integral part of existence. This conception of being, defined by extraordinary abundance and overflowing vitality, aligns with a radical notion of revolution. Spinozist being is, fundamentally, the ontology of revolution—a collective, transformative force that challenges and redefines the structures of existence (Negri, 2020, s. 134-136). By affirming the materiality of being, Spinoza offers an alternative to the emerging capitalist order, presenting an ontology that not only resists ideological constraints but also envisions revolution as an intrinsic force of existence.

Deleuze highlights Spinoza's break from Western dualism, positioning him as both revered and misunderstood. Spinoza's radicalism lies not just in his monist view—Deus Sive Natura—but in his rejection of “consciousness,” “values,” and “sad passions.” These ideas align him with Nietzsche and explain accusations of materialism and atheism. Spinoza shifts focus to the body, provocatively stating, “We do not yet know what a body can do.” While philosophy fixates on consciousness and control, he emphasizes the body's unexplored potential. His doctrine of parallelism denies hierarchical causality between mind and body, dismantling moral traditions and re-framing ethics as a unified, embodied process (Deleuze, 2005, s. 24-25). His rejection of Western dualisms and emphasis on embodied ethics challenge traditional moral hierarchies, making his thought a critical reference point for contemporary philosophy and political theory.

Like Spinoza's substance, desire is its own cause; however, unlike the conventional interpretation of Spinoza's substance as a static entity, desire exists only within the relationships and transformations it generates. Desire operates through a self-overdetermining cycle: on the plane of immanence, events, relationships, or becoming encounter one another and produce new relations, thereby generating desire. In turn, desire creates new relationships within this plane, perpetuating a dynamic and transformative process (Goodchild, 2005, s. 75). This perspective on desire as an immanent and generative force aligns with broader debates on power, relationality, and transformation, demonstrating Spinoza's enduring influence on contemporary thought.

Spinoza's philosophy provides a valuable framework for analysing communication, particularly in digital capitalism and power dynamics. While he did not address digital communication, his ideas on power, desire, and expression remain relevant. Discussions often focus on three dimensions: the communication of bodies, imagination, and freedom of speech. However, attempts to link Spinoza to class struggle or immaterial labour face limitations, as his concepts stem from sensory and symbolic processes rather than capitalist structures. More productive engagement lies in his concept of *potentia*—power as capacity—which aligns with digital capitalism, where communication serves both production and control. Spinoza's view of desire as a driving force clarifies how social media platforms shape and exploit interactions. His rejection of dualisms also supports a comprehensive approach to communication, integrating thought, emotion, and action (Fuchs, 2025, s. 4-6). Spinoza's insights on power, desire, and communication pro-

vide a valuable lens for understanding the complexities of digital capitalism, highlighting both its constraints and transformative potential.

The section delves into Spinoza's contributions to the philosophy of communication, highlighting his relevance to contemporary issues such as digital capitalism and power dynamics. Spinoza's rejection of dualistic frameworks in Western philosophy and his emphasis on the unity of substance, desire, and immanence provide a foundation for rethinking communication's role in society. The text examines three key dimensions—communication of bodies, imagination, and freedom of speech—often associated with Spinoza's philosophy. While these have been explored in existing literature, their application to modern contexts, like labour and capitalist communication, remains limited or problematic. The concept of *potentia* (power as capacity) emerges as a central theme, offering a lens through which to analyse control, resistance, and transformation within communicative practices. Spinoza's understanding of desire as a driving force behind human interaction is particularly relevant in analysing digital spaces, where communication serves both as a tool for personal expression and as a medium of commodification. His comprehensive approach, rejecting mind-body dualism, aligns with modern efforts to view communication as an integrative process encompassing thought, emotion, and action. Spinoza's philosophy invites a re-evaluation of communication's ethical and social dimensions, emphasizing its transformative potential in addressing contemporary challenges.

Considering the Question of Truth in the Context of Spinoza's Contributions to the Philosophy of Communication

The concept of post-truth became widely debated following Donald Trump's election as U.S. president in 2016, culminating in its selection as Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year. At its core, post-truth suggests the existence of a preceding era of "truth." This earlier period, particularly during the 20th century, was characterized by the ideological struggle between the socialist and capitalist blocs. The presence of the Soviet Union compelled capitalist states to adopt welfare state policies, centred political struggles around class issues, and fostered strong class-based parties and unions as central tools of political engagement. The premise of post-truth is that this era of truth has eroded and given way to a period where facts and reality lose significance, or the concept of truth itself is entirely abandoned. The post-truth phenomenon should not be viewed as a mere conceptual framework but rather as a defining characteristic of our era. While the manipulation of truth has always existed, a significant shift began in the 1980s, marked

by the rise of neoliberalism and right-wing populist actors. These actors accelerated the erosion of truth by transforming state structures, political struggles, and tools of governance. The systematic weakening of the left—through state repression, ideological attacks, and its incorporation into the system—further diminished its capacity to produce alternatives (Yılmaz, 2023). The erosion of truth as a defining feature of the post-truth era raises critical questions about the mechanisms that sustain and amplify this phenomenon, particularly in political and media landscapes.

In a post-truth game, the goal is to outmanoeuvre your opponent with the understanding that the rules of the game can change at any moment to your advantage. This shifting nature of competition transforms the essence of the struggle, turning it into a contest of strategic adaptability rather than adherence to fixed principles. Donald Trump exemplifies this dynamic by challenging traditional liberal media outlets like *The New York Times* and CNN, which rely on the distinction between truth and fabrication. By embracing “fake news,” Trump raises the stakes, leveraging the rise of social media to amplify his approach. Platforms like Breitbart, an anti-establishment “alt-right” news source, have successfully positioned themselves alongside or even as alternatives to mainstream media on platforms like Facebook. This shift has significantly altered the media landscape. As a result, audiences are left to navigate contradictory news stories on their own or gravitate toward information that aligns with their preferences, as determined by their social media habits. This reliance on personalized content and the erosion of clear distinctions between truth and falsehood reflect the post-truth era’s fundamental transformation of how information is consumed and contested (Fuller, 2022, s. 23). This transformation of media dynamics not only redefines the nature of public discourse but also reshapes the broader structures of political engagement and information consumption.

The post-truth era operates in a moral grey area, enabling individuals to obscure reality without perceiving themselves as dishonest. When actions contradict principles, values are often adjusted rather than confronting the inconsistency. Few people are willing to admit, even to themselves, that they are behaving unethically; rather, alternative moral justifications are developed to validate choices. These justifications function as distinct ethical perspectives, moulded to legitimize actions in a landscape where truth and accountability are increasingly fluid. This shifting framework underscores the ethical dilemmas of a post-truth society, where notions of integrity and moral responsibility are constantly renegotiated (Keyes, 2019, s. 22). The ethical complexities of post-truth extend beyond individual perception,

influencing broader societal norms and the ways in which truth claims are justified and contested.

Post-truth communication manifests through a repertoire of deceptive forms, including misinformation, fake news, rumour bombs, and disinformation, all of which represent deliberate or careless distortions of facts for strategic ends. These practices thrive on widespread distrust of institutions once respected as reliable sources of truth. While misinformation arises from unknowingly spreading false information, disinformation involves the intentional production and dissemination of falsehoods, aligning it more closely with lying. Between these lies the figure of the “bullshitter,” who disregards truth entirely, focusing on effect rather than accuracy. Post-truth is not merely about lying but also about fostering confusion amidst an overload of information, making it difficult to discern accuracy and honesty. Strategic communication exploits this environment, leveraging selective information presentation for political and business objectives. The resulting misinformation often generates a responsive industry of fact-checking and rumour debunking, creating what some term “truth markets.” Ethically, the distinctions among misinformation, and disinformation highlight varied degrees of intent and impact. Misinformation reflects inaccuracy without dishonest intent, while disinformation is a calculated falsehood aimed at manipulation. Post-truth communication, therefore, represents a critical challenge for ethical discourse, necessitating vigilance and media literacy to navigate its complexities (Harsin, 2018, s. 6-7). The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation underscores the need for critical media literacy, as the strategic manipulation of information continues to shape public opinion and political discourse.

In the post-truth era, where subjective interpretations overshadow objective knowledge, meaningful dialogue between the “self” and the “other” becomes increasingly difficult. Media discourse frames truth as subjective, further complicated by misinformation and strategic communication, leading to a fragmented reality with competing narratives. Philosophers emphasize dialogue’s ethical and relational dimensions, highlighting openness and mutual recognition as key to self-understanding. However, post-truth conditions erode this recognition through cognitive scepticism and knowledge relativization. Theories like Habermas’ communicative action stress intersubjective understanding, yet they struggle in an era where language is often manipulated. Despite these challenges, dialogue remains essential for countering fragmentation and fostering shared meaning, requiring ethical engagement, active listening, and efforts to bridge ideological divides

(Khrystokin & Yastrebova, 2023, s. 33-34). The fragmentation of reality in the post-truth era complicates the conditions for meaningful dialogue, challenging traditional frameworks of communication and mutual understanding.

Digital tribalism, a feature of the post-truth era, underscores the fragmentation of dialogue and the erosion of genuine interaction between the “self” and the “other.” While digital technologies and social networks promote connectedness and inclusivity, they often foster isolated, ideologically homogeneous communities. Driven by algorithms designed to reinforce confirmation biases, these platforms create “safe spaces” that filter content to align with users’ existing beliefs, thereby nurturing segregated realities, and limiting exposure to differing perspectives. This phenomenon reflects a broader societal trend where polarization and tribalism thrive, fuelled by a reluctance to engage with opposing views. Instead of fostering meaningful dialogue, digital tribalism perpetuates the delusion that one’s beliefs are universally shared, leading to a decline in the capacity to address disagreement constructively. Professionalism and advocacy often reinforce this segregation, as individuals and groups prioritize specific issues over collective struggles, inadvertently contributing to the isolation of causes and communities. Addressing digital tribalism requires a deliberate effort to intersect with the realities of the “other.” This involves acknowledging and engaging with differing perspectives, even when they provoke discomfort or anger. Ethical dialogue demands more than silence or dismissal; it requires active listening, respectful disagreement, and a commitment to bridging divides. In a world increasingly defined by division, recognizing the shared humanity of the “other” and creating spaces for intersectional dialogue are essential steps toward overcoming the fragmentation of the post-truth era (Aghasaleh, 2019, s. 8-9). Digital tribalism reinforces this fragmentation, further isolating individuals within ideological echo chambers and undermining the potential for constructive engagement across differing perspectives.

The phenomenon of post-truth is intricately tied to the philosophy of communication, emerging within a “new aestheticized regime” shaped by neoliberalism, digitalization, and mediated communication. Post-truth thrives on the epistemological foundations of mediation, where truth is constructed and manipulated through digitalized illusions and aestheticized narratives. Neoliberal governmentality fosters individual autonomy while intensifying alienation, creating “productive individuals” who navigate a fragmented and chaotic global capitalist system under the guise of enlightenment. Modern aesthetics are described as mechanisms of sensory overload

and numbness that perpetuate alienation and produce a “digital flaneur”—a self-centred subjectivity detached from collective realities. Non-philosophy critiques this mediated reality, advocating for a mode of thinking beyond alienation and mediation. This critique underscores how post-truth operates as a convergence of neoliberalism, communicative capitalism, and digitalization, challenging traditional frameworks of truth and communication and calling for a re-evaluation of communication’s role in fostering critical engagement in a fragmented, post-truth world (Cvar & Bobnič, 2019, s. 99-101). The entanglement of post-truth with communication philosophy highlights the urgent need to reassess how mediated narratives, digital capitalism, and neoliberal governance shape contemporary perceptions of reality.

So, after considering the self-other relations and the possibility of dialogue developed in the discussion referred to as post-truth, can it be considered whether this will have an impact on daily politics? In other words, how can concepts such as deliberative democracy and mutual aid be possible in political relations on a ground where dialogue is impaired? This discussion is made in the next section.

Political Relations: Deliberative Democracy and Mutual Aid

Deliberative democracy prioritizes collective decision-making through reasoned discussion among equals, countering critiques that dismiss deliberation as irrelevant in mass democracy. It seeks to balance inclusivity with rational discourse, requiring participants to justify decisions with reasons others can accept. Unlike aggregative democracy, which advances interests, or moral-political models reliant on individual judgment, deliberative democracy emphasizes the “force of the better argument.” Proponents stress reason-giving and reflection, highlighting preference transformation without coercion. Despite its promise, challenges remain in making democracies more deliberative and assessing its political impact (Cohen, 2007, s. 219-222). However, deliberative democracy does not operate in isolation; it must be examined within a broader deliberative system that distributes dialogue and reasoning across different institutional and societal levels.

The concept of a deliberative system emphasizes evaluating the deliberative qualities of the entire system, not just its individual components. This approach recognizes that deliberation occurs across various sites and forms, each with unique roles and constraints within a democratic system. Key challenges for deliberative democrats include understanding how these diverse deliberative spaces interact with their environments, established institutions, and each other, and how deliberation scales from small face-to-

face interactions to larger systemic processes. From a systemic perspective, deliberative ideals can be achieved in distributed ways, with different venues or participants excelling in specific functions: some offering high-quality reasoning, others fostering active listening and common ground, and yet others ensuring the inclusion of marginalized voices or catalysing current ideas. For example, inclusion might occur in the public sphere, strong justification in legislative debates, and reflection in smaller “mini publics.” This systemic distribution can enhance equality, as deliberatively disadvantaged groups may find spaces for focused discussion in enclave deliberation, though such spaces carry risks of reinforcing insularity. Another example of distributed deliberative labour is evident in judicial systems, where juries reflect on arguments presented by lawyers, embodying a division of deliberative roles within the broader system. By examining deliberation as a networked and multifaceted process, the deliberative systems approach provides a nuanced framework for understanding how democratic ideals can be realized through diverse, interconnected deliberative practices (Bächtiger et al., 2018, s. 23). This systemic approach to deliberation highlights the importance of distributed democratic participation, but it also raises questions about how deliberation interacts with larger social structures, particularly in the face of epistemic fragmentation.

Mutual aid plays a crucial role in the evolution and survival of species. Natural mechanisms that regulate reproduction are more decisive for species preservation than competition among individuals. Observations in nature, such as bird migrations and herd movements, highlight the importance of cooperation and solidarity. Life’s sustainability depends not only on competition but also on mutual support as a fundamental principle. Evolution is driven more by cooperation than by relentless struggle. This instinct fosters not just survival but also social emotions and collective practices, originating from early colony living. Mutual aid is not just a precursor to moral instincts but a natural law shaping evolutionary processes. Over time, it has reinforced the strength derived from cooperation and the benefits of social life, establishing itself as both an evolutionary and ethical foundation (Kropotkin, 2001, s. 6-10). Similarly, mutual aid emphasizes cooperation as a fundamental force shaping both evolutionary and social development, challenging conventional perspectives that prioritize competition.

Kropotkin argues that mutual aid, as a libertarian-solidaristic tendency of “social being,” has always been present throughout human history and will eventually assert itself against the selfish, domineering, and centralist tendencies of the state. According to Kropotkin, two fundamentally differ-

ent tendencies confront one another within the history of humanity. In one tendency, all spheres of life are structured based on principles of communal understanding, federation, and cooperation, embodying the principle of mutual aid. In contrast, the other tendency is characterized by centralization, exploitation, and domination (Cantzen, 1994, s. 27). The historical tension between mutual aid and centralized control reflects broader ideological struggles, raising the question of how cooperation and solidarity can be sustained in increasingly fragmented societies.

Kropotkin proposes a dialogue between self and other, along with mutual aid – just like deliberative democracy. Post-truth dynamics significantly undermine deliberative democracy and mutual aid by eroding the epistemic trust necessary for collaborative decision-making and collective action. At the heart of deliberative democracy lies the principle of reasoned discourse among equals, where participants engage in rational argumentation, seek shared understanding, and aim to arrive at decisions that reflect collective reasoning. Similarly, mutual aid relies on a foundation of solidarity and shared purpose, often mediated through a collective understanding of needs and reciprocal support. The fragmentation of the public sphere and the post-truth condition stem from capitalism's dominance of the market as a "universal language." Deleuze identifies the market as a truth regime that marginalizes alternatives, similar to populism's anti-pluralism. Liberal politicians function as market translators, just as populist leaders claim to embody the people's will, reducing politics to technocracy. Neoclassical economics sustains its hegemony despite empirical contradictions, fostering post-truth politics and disillusionment with neoliberalism. The 2008 crisis exposed the false narrative of no alternatives, yet critiques increasingly come from the right, merging protectionism with attacks on civil liberties. Covid-19 deepened this crisis, prompting liberalism to reclaim legitimacy by countering populist falsehoods while defending global trade (Van Dyk, 2022, s. 44). The erosion of a shared epistemic foundation in the post-truth era has profound implications for both deliberative democracy and mutual aid, making collective decision-making and solidarity-based action increasingly difficult to sustain.

Post-truth conditions, shaped by digital communication and social media, disrupt shared facts, and foster epistemic fragmentation. Fake news and disinformation, often exploited by right-wing actors, erode rational discourse, replacing it with identity-driven partisanship. Deliberative democracy struggles as individuals seek confirmation rather than engagement, reinforcing echo chambers and distrust in traditional media. Mutual aid also

suffers, as fragmented realities weaken solidarity and hinder collective action. Digital tribalism further isolates groups, limiting universalist cooperation. To counteract these effects, rebuilding trust, enhancing media literacy, and fostering cross-group dialogue are crucial for restoring democratic and cooperative ideals (Chambers, 2021, s. 11). Addressing these challenges requires active efforts to rebuild trust, strengthen media literacy, and encourage dialogue across ideological divides to restore the conditions necessary for meaningful democratic and cooperative engagement.

Conclusion

In the post-truth era, deliberative democracy, and mutual aid struggle against the erosion of shared epistemic foundations, which are essential for rational discourse, collective reasoning, and social solidarity. The philosophy of communication offers a valuable framework for understanding and addressing these challenges by emphasizing the ethical and relational dimensions of dialogue. Communication, as an inherently social and meaning-making process, is not merely a tool for transmitting information but a medium through which individuals and communities negotiate reality. The fragmentation caused by misinformation, disinformation, and digital tribalism disrupts this process, replacing deliberative engagement with ideological entrenchment and identity-driven polarization. The weakening of trust in traditional media and the rise of algorithm-driven echo chambers further isolate individuals, making the pursuit of truth contingent on group affiliations rather than shared epistemic principles.

Deliberative democracy, which relies on communicative rationality and inclusive dialogue, is particularly vulnerable in this environment. The philosophy of communication, particularly through Habermas' concept of communicative action, suggests that rational discourse is only possible when participants engage in good faith and adhere to norms of mutual justification and reason-giving. However, post-truth dynamics challenge these assumptions, as public discourse is increasingly shaped by strategic communication rather than genuine deliberation. Addressing this requires a renewed commitment to fostering spaces where reasoned dialogue can occur, independent of ideological and algorithmic biases. Critical media literacy programs should be integrated into educational curricula and public discourse initiatives to empower individuals to evaluate sources, recognize manipulative narratives, and engage in discourse that prioritizes reason over identity-driven rhetoric.

Mutual aid, rooted in cooperation and reciprocal support, also faces epistemic fragmentation that weakens collective solidarity. The philosophy of communication highlights that solidarity is constructed through shared meaning and intersubjective recognition, which becomes difficult when digital tribalism fosters insular communities that reinforce narrow perspectives. Overcoming these divisions requires not only pragmatic solutions—such as cross-group collaborations and inclusive policy-making—but also a deeper commitment to ethical communication that prioritizes understanding over persuasion. Encouraging intersectional dialogue and cooperative initiatives that bridge ideological and social divides can counteract the fragmentary effects of post-truth conditions.

To counter these threats, rebuilding the epistemic infrastructure necessary for shared reality is imperative. This involves strengthening institutions that promote credible information, supporting public deliberation platforms, and developing communicative practices that resist the manipulative tendencies of digital capitalism. Philosophy of communication provides the theoretical tools to critically analyse and reconstruct these practices, advocating for communicative ethics that resist instrumentalization and foster inclusive, open-ended dialogue. By addressing the structural and discursive challenges of the post-truth era, communication philosophy not only diagnoses the crisis of truth but also offers pathways toward restoring deliberative democracy and mutual aid as viable political and social practices. The future of democratic engagement and collective solidarity depends on our ability to reimagine communication as a space of ethical responsibility, relational understanding, and epistemic resilience.

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