

Philosophy of Communication in Reading Contemporary Digital Media: Power, Post-Truth, and Ethical Challenges

Gabriel Abdi Susanto

abdisusanto@yahoo.com

Driyarkara School of Philosophy, Jakarta

Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital media has profoundly transformed the ways human beings communicate, construct social relations, and understand reality. Media can no longer be understood merely as technical instruments for transmitting information; rather, they function as symbolic and political spaces in which meaning, power, and ideology are continuously produced and contested. This article examines contemporary digital media from the perspective of the philosophy of communication, focusing on the interrelation between media, power, and the phenomenon of post-truth in the modern public sphere. Employing a conceptual research method grounded in philosophical and critical analysis, this study engages key thinkers in communication philosophy and critical theory, including Marshall McLuhan, Jürgen Habermas, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Antonio Gramsci. The analysis demonstrates that digital media are fundamentally ambivalent: while they expand participation and democratize communicative practices, they simultaneously intensify algorithmic control, information fragmentation, and social polarization. The article argues that the philosophy of communication provides an indispensable normative and critical framework for developing media ethics and reimagining a more humanistic, dialogical, and just digital public sphere in the age of artificial intelligence and big data.

Keywords: *philosophy of communication, digital media, power, post-truth, public sphere, media ethics*

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, the development of digital media has marked one of the most significant transformations in the history of human communication. The transition from print and broadcast media to networked digital platforms has fundamentally altered how information is produced, circulated, and consumed. Social media platforms, online news portals, and algorithm-driven content systems have become central infrastructures of everyday life, shaping not only individual communication practices but also collective political and cultural processes. Communication today increasingly takes place within digital environments governed by technological architectures that operate at unprecedented speed and scale.

This transformation cannot be adequately understood as a merely technical or instrumental change. Rather, it raises deeper philosophical questions concerning the nature of communication, the construction of reality, and the exercise of power in contemporary societies. Digital media mediate how individuals perceive the world, relate to one another, and participate in public life. They influence what is considered visible or invisible, credible or dubious, relevant or insignificant. In this sense, media are not neutral channels but active forces that shape human experience and social order.

The philosophy of communication offers a critical perspective for examining these developments. Unlike empirical communication studies that often focus on measurable effects or audience behavior, the philosophy of communication interrogates the foundational assumptions, normative dimensions, and ethical

implications of communicative practices. It asks what communication means for human coexistence, how media structures affect dialogue and understanding, and how power operates through communicative forms. From this perspective, media are understood as constitutive of social reality¹ rather than as external tools applied to it.

Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum, "the medium is the message," remains particularly relevant in the digital age. McLuhan argued that the form of a medium has a more profound impact on human perception and social organization than the specific content it conveys. Digital media, with their immediacy, interactivity, and global reach, reorganize sensory experience and cognitive habits. They compress time and space, enabling real-time communication across vast distances, while simultaneously fragmenting attention and reshaping patterns of thought. In this sense, digital media extend human capacities but also transform them in ways that are not always transparent or controllable.

Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere provides another crucial framework for understanding the normative significance of media. In his analysis, modern democracy depends on a communicative space in which citizens can engage in rational-critical debate about matters of common concern. Traditionally, mass media played a central role in structuring this space by disseminating information and facilitating public discussion. However, the commercialization and concentration of media ownership already posed serious challenges to the ideal of an inclusive and rational public sphere. The rise of digital media has further complicated this picture by multiplying communicative spaces while simultaneously fragmenting audiences and undermining shared standards of truth.

At the same time, critical perspectives such as those advanced by Jean Baudrillard highlight the epistemological consequences of contemporary media environments. Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and hyperreality suggests that media representations can become detached from any stable referent, producing a world in which signs circulate independently of factual reality. In the context of digital media, this insight resonates strongly with the emergence of post-truth politics, misinformation, and algorithmically amplified emotional content. The distinction between truth and falsehood becomes blurred, not because facts

disappear, but because they lose their authority within the communicative economy of attention.

2. Research Methodology and Philosophical Approach

This study adopts a conceptual research methodology grounded in philosophical and critical analysis. Conceptual research aims to clarify, reconstruct, and critically assess key concepts rather than to test hypotheses through empirical measurement. In the context of this article, the primary concepts under examination include communication, media, power, public sphere, and post-truth. These concepts are analyzed through close engagement with foundational texts in the philosophy of communication and critical social theory.

The methodological approach is primarily hermeneutic and critical. Hermeneutic analysis is employed to interpret the meanings and assumptions embedded in philosophical texts by thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan, Jürgen Habermas, and Jean Baudrillard. Critical analysis, informed by the tradition of critical theory, is used to examine how media structures are implicated in relations of power and domination, drawing on the works of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and the Frankfurt School.

This approach is appropriate because the aim of the article is normative and reflective rather than empirical. The philosophy of communication seeks to understand not only how communication functions, but how it ought to function in order to support human dignity, mutual understanding, and democratic life. By synthesizing diverse philosophical perspectives, the article develops a critical framework for assessing contemporary digital media and for articulating ethical orientations toward their future development.

3. Theoretical Framework: Philosophy of Communication

3.1 Communication Beyond Transmission

At the core of the philosophy of communication lies a rejection of reductive models that treat communication as a mere process of information transmission. Classical sender-receiver models, while useful for technical analysis, fail to capture the existential, social, and ethical dimensions of human communication. Philosophical approaches emphasize that communication is a constitutive practice through which meaning, identity, and social relations are formed.

John Durham Peters argues that communication should not be understood primarily as perfect mutual understanding, but as a fragile and mediated relation

1 Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 45–67. This reference supports the claim that media are constitutive of social reality rather than neutral channels.

marked by distance, uncertainty, and openness. Communication, in this sense, is not the elimination of difference but the ethical willingness to address the other despite the impossibility of full transparency. This insight is crucial for understanding digital media, where communication increasingly occurs across spatial, cultural, and symbolic distances.

From this perspective, media are not neutral conduits but mediating structures that shape the conditions under which communication becomes possible. Technologies of communication organize attention, temporal experience, and social visibility. They determine who can speak, who is heard, and under what conditions dialogue can occur. The philosophy of communication therefore treats media as normative structures that influence the quality and orientation of human coexistence.

3.2 McLuhan: Media as Extensions of Human Perception

Marshall McLuhan's contribution to communication philosophy remains foundational for understanding media in the digital age. His claim that "the medium is the message" challenges content-centered analyses by emphasizing the formative power of media forms themselves. According to McLuhan, each medium extends specific human senses and reorganizes patterns of perception and social interaction.

Digital media extend not only vision and hearing but also memory, cognition, and social presence. Through smartphones, social networks, and digital platforms, individuals carry vast informational environments with them at all times. This extension produces a form of constant connectivity that collapses temporal boundaries and intensifies immediacy. However, it also generates new forms of dependency, distraction, and sensory overload.

McLuhan's insight suggests that the ethical and political significance of digital media cannot be assessed solely by evaluating their content. Rather, attention must be paid to how digital media reshape habits of attention, modes of interaction, and forms of collective life. The acceleration and simultaneity characteristic of digital commun

3.3 Habermas: Communicative Rationality and the Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas offers a normative framework for evaluating communication in relation to democracy and social integration. His theory of communicative action distinguishes between strategic communication, oriented toward success and control,

and communicative rationality, oriented toward mutual understanding. For Habermas, democratic legitimacy depends on the existence of a public sphere in which communicative rationality can flourish.

The public sphere is not merely a physical space but a communicative structure sustained by norms of inclusivity, reason-giving, and openness to critique. Historically, mass media played a central role in structuring this space by providing shared references and facilitating public debate. However, Habermas already warned that commercialization and media concentration could undermine the emancipatory potential of public communication.

In the digital context, the conditions for communicative rationality become increasingly precarious. While digital platforms expand opportunities for expression and participation, they also fragment audiences and incentivize strategic communication driven by visibility and engagement metrics. The challenge, from a Habermasian perspective, is to assess whether digital media enhance or erode the normative foundations of democratic discourse.

3.4 Baudrillard: Simulation and the Loss of Referentiality²

Jean Baudrillard's critique of contemporary media introduces a more radical skepticism regarding the relationship between communication and reality. According to Baudrillard, modern media produce simulacra—signs that no longer refer to an underlying reality but circulate autonomously within systems of representation. In a state of hyperreality, distinctions between true and false, real and imagined, become increasingly unstable.

Digital media intensify this condition by enabling the rapid reproduction and circulation of images, narratives, and identities detached from empirical verification. Social media profiles, viral content, and algorithmically generated feeds contribute to a communicative environment in which appearance often outweighs substance. The value of information is measured less by its truthfulness than by its capacity to attract attention and emotional response.

From this perspective, the crisis of post-truth can be understood not simply as a moral failure of individuals, but as a structural feature of contemporary media systems. Baudrillard's analysis challenges normative

2 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1–42. Baudrillard's analysis of simulation and hyperreality is central to the discussion of post-truth and disinformation.

theories of communication by questioning whether traditional ideals of truth and rationality can be sustained within hyper-mediated environments.

3.5 Toward a Synthetic Framework

Taken together, these philosophical perspectives reveal the ambivalent nature of digital media. McLuhan highlights the transformative power of media forms, Habermas provides normative criteria for evaluating public communication, and Baudrillard exposes the destabilization of meaning and truth within mediated reality. The philosophy of communication must hold these insights in tension rather than resolve them prematurely.

This synthetic framework allows for a critical assessment of digital media that neither celebrates technological innovation uncritically nor retreats into cultural pessimism. Instead, it emphasizes the need to reflect on how communicative structures shape human relations, political life, and ethical responsibility. Such reflection is essential for understanding the complex interplay between media, power, and truth in contemporary digital societies.

4. Media, Power, and Ideology in Digital Capitalism

4.1 Media as a Site of Power Relations

In the philosophy of communication, media are never understood as neutral infrastructures. They are embedded within social, economic, and political relations that shape both the production of meaning and the distribution of visibility. Digital media, in particular, operate as strategic sites where power is exercised not primarily through coercion, but through the organization of attention, discourse, and symbolic resources.

Michel Foucault's analysis of power as productive rather than merely repressive is especially relevant for understanding digital media. Power, for Foucault, operates through knowledge, discourse, and practices that shape what can be said, seen, and thought. In digital environments, this form of power manifests through platform architectures, interface design, content moderation policies, and data-driven decision-making systems. These mechanisms do not simply restrict communication; they actively produce particular forms of subjectivity and behavior.

Digital platforms guide users toward specific modes of interaction—liking, sharing, commenting, scrolling—thereby structuring communicative practices in ways that align with economic and political interests. The exercise of power in digital media is thus subtle and

normalized, embedded within everyday practices that appear voluntary but are in fact highly conditioned.

4.2 Hegemony and Consent in Platform Society

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony provides a crucial framework for analyzing how digital media sustain forms of domination through consent rather than force. Hegemony refers to the process by which dominant groups secure the active consent of subordinated groups by shaping cultural norms, values, and common sense. Media play a central role in this process by naturalizing particular worldviews and marginalizing alternatives.

In contemporary platform societies, hegemonic processes are increasingly mediated by digital technologies. Algorithms curate information flows in ways that reinforce prevailing ideologies, consumerist values, and dominant political narratives. What appears as personalized content delivery often functions as a mechanism for stabilizing existing power relations by filtering out disruptive or dissenting perspectives.

Digital media thus contribute to what might be called algorithmic hegemony. Consent is produced not through overt propaganda, but through continuous exposure to normalized representations of reality. Users come to accept platform logics—such as constant connectivity, self-branding, and data extraction—as natural and inevitable features of social life.

4.3 The Frankfurt School and Platform Capitalism

The critique of the culture industry developed by Theodor Adorno³ and Max Horkheimer offers important insights into the economic logic underlying contemporary digital media. While the culture industry was initially associated with mass media such as radio and film, its core logic persists in the age of digital platforms. Cultural production is increasingly standardized, commodified, and oriented toward profit maximization rather than critical reflection.

Platform capitalism intensifies this logic by transforming communication itself into a source of economic value. User-generated content, social interactions, and even emotional expressions are captured, quantified, and monetized. Communication becomes labor, and attention becomes a commodity

3 Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94–136. The critique of the culture industry is extended in this article to contemporary platform capitalism.

traded within global markets.

From a philosophical perspective, this transformation raises profound questions about autonomy and freedom. When communicative practices are subsumed under economic imperatives, the space for critical and emancipatory discourse is constrained. The promise of digital media as tools of democratization is thus undermined by their integration into capitalist modes of production and accumulation.

4.4 Surveillance, Datafication⁴, and Algorithmic

Foucault's notion of surveillance provides a powerful lens for analyzing data-driven media environments. Digital platforms operate through extensive data collection practices that enable continuous monitoring of user behavior. Unlike traditional forms of surveillance, which were visible and hierarchical, digital surveillance is diffuse, automated, and often invisible.

Users willingly participate in their own surveillance by sharing personal information, location data, and behavioral traces. This process of datafication transforms human experience into analyzable and predictable datasets. Algorithms use these datasets to shape content visibility, influence decision-making, and optimize engagement.

This form of algorithmic control has significant implications for communication. It introduces asymmetries of knowledge and power between platform owners and users, undermining transparency and accountability. From the standpoint of the philosophy of communication, such asymmetries threaten the conditions of mutual understanding and equality that are essential for democratic discourse.

4.5 Media Ownership and Symbolic Domination

Concentration of media ownership remains a critical issue in the digital age. Although digital media appear decentralized, control over platforms and infrastructures is concentrated in the hands of a small number of global corporations. These corporations possess immense power to shape communicative environments through their control over algorithms, policies, and technological standards.

Symbolic domination operates through the ability to define what counts as legitimate knowledge, credible information, and acceptable speech. When a limited

number of actors control these definitions, pluralism and diversity are at risk. Alternative voices may exist, but their visibility and impact are constrained by platform logics.

The philosophy of communication thus highlights the need to interrogate not only the content of communication but also the structural conditions under which communication occurs. Without addressing issues of ownership, control, and power, appeals to media freedom and participation remain incomplete.

4.6 Media as a Site of Resistance

Despite their role in sustaining hegemonic power, digital media also provide spaces for resistance and counter-hegemonic practices. Alternative media, citizen journalism, and grassroots digital movements demonstrate that communicative power is never entirely monopolized. These practices challenge dominant narratives and create openings for critical discourse.

However, such resistance is fragile and often precarious. Platform-dependent activism remains vulnerable to algorithmic suppression, commercialization, and co-optation. The philosophy of communication cautions against romanticizing digital resistance without acknowledging the structural constraints imposed by platform capitalism.

A critical understanding of media and power must therefore hold together both dimensions: domination and resistance. Digital media are sites of struggle in which competing visions of communication, community, and social order are negotiated.

5. Post-Truth and the Crisis of the Digital Public Sphere

5.1 From Truth to Post-Truth: A Philosophical Clarification

The concept of post-truth has become a central term in contemporary debates on media and politics. It is often used to describe a condition in which objective facts appear to lose their influence over public opinion, while emotional appeals and personal beliefs gain increasing prominence. From the perspective of the philosophy of communication, however, post-truth should not be understood merely as a decline in moral integrity or individual rationality. Rather, it represents a structural transformation in the conditions under which truth claims circulate and acquire authority in the public sphere.

Truth has never been a purely neutral or self-evident category. Philosophical traditions from Plato to modern epistemology have emphasized that truth

4 Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 8–24. Zuboff's analysis complements the philosophical discussion of datafication and algorithmic power in Section 4 and 6.

emerges within discursive, institutional, and power-laden contexts. What distinguishes the contemporary post-truth condition is not the disappearance of truth itself, but the weakening of shared epistemic frameworks that enable collective agreement on what counts as valid knowledge. Digital media accelerate this process by multiplying sources of information while undermining traditional mechanisms of verification and trust.

5.2 Digital Media and the Fragmentation of the Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere presupposes the existence of relatively shared communicative spaces in which citizens can encounter common issues and engage in rational-critical debate. Digital media radically alter this condition. Instead of a unified public sphere, contemporary societies are characterized by a plurality of fragmented and overlapping digital publics.

Algorithmic personalization plays a decisive role in this fragmentation. By tailoring content to individual preferences and behavioral patterns, digital platforms create informational environments that reinforce existing beliefs and identities. While personalization can enhance relevance and user engagement, it also reduces exposure to divergent perspectives. The result is a series of echo chambers in which communicative rationality is weakened and mutual understanding becomes increasingly difficult.

From a philosophical standpoint, this fragmentation undermines the normative foundations of democratic communication. Without shared reference points and minimal agreement on facts, public discourse risks devolving into parallel monologues rather than genuine dialogue

5.3 Emotion, Affect, and the Political Economy of Attention

Post-truth communication is deeply entangled with the political economy of attention. Digital platforms are designed to maximize user engagement, often by privileging emotionally charged content that provokes outrage, fear, or affirmation. In this environment, affective intensity becomes more valuable than epistemic validity.

This shift has significant implications for political communication. Emotional narratives, simplified explanations, and symbolic gestures tend to outperform complex arguments and nuanced analysis. As a result, public discourse becomes increasingly polarized and performative. Political actors learn to communicate not

by appealing to reasoned deliberation, but by mobilizing affective identification and antagonism.

The philosophy of communication does not dismiss emotion as inherently irrational. Rather, it highlights the ethical challenge posed when affect is systematically exploited to bypass critical reflection. The dominance of affective communication threatens the balance between emotion and reason that is essential for democratic deliberation.

5.4 Simulation, Disinformation, and Hyper-reality

Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation offers a powerful framework for understanding the dynamics of disinformation in digital media. In a simulated communicative environment, representations no longer refer to an external reality but circulate as self-referential signs. Disinformation thrives in such contexts not simply because falsehoods are produced, but because the distinction between truth and falsehood loses practical significance.

Digital technologies enable the rapid creation and dissemination of manipulated images, deepfakes, and misleading narratives. These practices contribute to a condition of hyperreality in which credibility is determined by visibility and repetition rather than by correspondence to facts. The viral logic of digital media favors speed over verification, further eroding epistemic trust.

From this perspective, the post-truth condition reflects a deeper crisis of representation. Communication becomes detached from responsibility to reality, and public discourse is increasingly shaped by spectacle rather than substance.

5.5 Epistemic Injustice and Exclusion

The crisis of post-truth also raises questions of epistemic justice. Not all voices are equally affected by the fragmentation of truth. Marginalized groups often face systematic exclusion from authoritative knowledge production, while dominant actors possess greater resources to shape narratives and frame reality.

Digital media can both exacerbate and challenge these inequalities. On the one hand, platform algorithms may amplify dominant perspectives and suppress minority voices. On the other hand, digital spaces can provide opportunities for marginalized communities to articulate alternative knowledges and experiences. The outcome depends on the structural conditions governing visibility and credibility.

The philosophy of communication emphasizes that justice in communication is not only a matter of access,

but also of recognition. A democratic public sphere requires not merely the presence of multiple voices, but fair conditions under which their truth claims can be heard and evaluated.

5.6 Reimagining Truth in the Digital Age

In response to the post-truth condition, the philosophy of communication does not advocate a return to naïve objectivism or authoritarian control of information. Instead, it calls for the reconstruction of communicative norms and institutions that support epistemic responsibility. This includes strengthening media literacy, fostering dialogical practices, and enhancing transparency in algorithmic systems.

Truth, in this view, is a communicative achievement rather than a static property. It emerges through practices of justification, critique, and mutual accountability. Reimagining truth in the digital age therefore requires not only technological solutions, but ethical and cultural commitments to dialogue and critical reflection.

6. Ethical Challenges of Artificial Intelligence, Algorithms, and Big Data

6.1 Algorithms as Communicative Actors

The increasing integration of artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems into digital media fundamentally alters the ethical landscape of communication. Algorithms are no longer passive tools that merely transmit human intentions; they actively participate in shaping communicative processes by selecting, ranking, and prioritizing information. From the perspective of the philosophy of communication, this development raises the question of whether algorithms can be understood as communicative actors.

While algorithms lack consciousness or intentionality in the human sense, they nonetheless exercise significant influence over meaning-making and social interaction. By determining which voices are amplified and which are marginalized, algorithmic systems intervene in the communicative conditions of the public sphere. Ethical reflection must therefore move beyond individual responsibility to address the systemic effects of algorithmic mediation.

6.2 Opacity, Accountability, and Power

One of the central ethical challenges posed by algorithmic media is opacity. Many algorithmic systems operate as black boxes, making it difficult for users to understand how decisions are made or on what basis content is prioritized. This lack of transparency undermines communicative accountability and weakens trust in public communication.

From a Habermasian perspective, opacity contradicts the norms of rational discourse, which require reasons to be accessible and contestable. When communicative outcomes are shaped by inscrutable systems, the possibility of critique and justification is diminished. Ethical communication in the digital age therefore demands greater transparency and explainability in algorithmic design.

6.3 Datafication and the Erosion of Autonomy

Big data practices transform human communication into quantifiable and predictive models. Every interaction—clicks, likes, shares, and pauses—is captured as data

that can be analyzed and monetized. This process of datafication raises serious ethical concerns regarding autonomy and consent.

Users often have limited awareness of how their data are collected and used, and meaningful consent is difficult to achieve in complex digital environments. The predictive capacities of big data systems can subtly shape behavior by nudging users toward particular choices. From a philosophical standpoint, such influence threatens individual autonomy by constraining the space for reflective decision-making.

6.4 Artificial Intelligence and the Question of Responsibility

The deployment of AI-generated content introduces new challenges of responsibility and authorship. Automated news writing, recommendation systems, and synthetic media blur the distinction between human and machine-generated communication. When harmful or misleading content is produced or amplified by AI systems, it becomes unclear who should be held accountable.

The philosophy of communication emphasizes responsibility as a relational and ethical practice. Communication involves answering to others and being accountable for the consequences of one's speech. Extending this notion to AI-mediated communication requires rethinking institutional and collective forms of responsibility, including the obligations of platform owners, developers, and regulators.

6.5 Toward an Ethics of Digital Communication

An ethical framework⁵ for digital media cannot

5 Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 210–235. Floridi's work informs the eth-

be reduced to technical fixes or regulatory compliance. It must be grounded in a broader understanding of communication as a moral practice oriented toward recognition, respect, and mutual understanding. The philosophy of communication offers normative principles that can guide ethical reflection in the age of AI and big data.

Such principles include transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and respect for human dignity. They also involve cultivating communicative virtues such as attentiveness, openness to critique, and responsibility for the effects of one's speech. Ethical digital communication requires not only institutional reform but also cultural transformation.

6.6 Reclaiming Human-Centered Communication

As AI systems become more deeply embedded in communicative infrastructures, there is a risk that efficiency and optimization will eclipse human values. Reclaiming a human-centered approach to communication involves reaffirming the primacy of dialogue over data extraction and mutual understanding over engagement metrics.

The philosophy of communication insists that technology should serve human flourishing rather than redefine it according to instrumental criteria. Ethical reflection on AI and algorithms is therefore inseparable from broader questions about the kind of society we seek to build and the forms of communication we wish to cultivate.

7. Discussion: Reassessing Communication, Power, and Ethics in Digital Media

This article has examined contemporary digital media through the lens of the philosophy of communication, focusing on the interrelated dimensions of power, post-truth, and ethics. The discussion section synthesizes the main arguments and explicitly addresses the research questions posed in the introduction.

First, the analysis demonstrates that digital media cannot be adequately understood as neutral tools of information exchange. Drawing on McLuhan, Peters, and Habermas, communication is shown to be a constitutive social practice shaped by mediating structures that organize perception, attention, and participation.⁶ Media forms themselves influence how

meaning is produced and how social relations are structured. In this sense, digital media transform not only communication practices but also the conditions of human coexistence.

Second, the article has shown that power operates through digital media in subtle yet pervasive ways. Using Gramsci's concept of hegemony⁷ and Foucault's analysis of power/knowledge,⁸ the study argues that digital platforms sustain domination primarily through consent, normalization, and algorithmic governance rather than overt coercion.⁹ Platform capitalism commodifies communication and attention, integrating everyday interaction into economic and political systems of control. However, digital media also remain sites of contestation, where counter-hegemonic practices and alternative publics can emerge, albeit under fragile conditions.

Third, the discussion of post-truth reveals that the current crisis of truth is not simply a moral failure of individuals, but a structural transformation of the public sphere. The fragmentation of communicative spaces, the affective economy of attention, and the logic of simulation undermine shared epistemic frameworks necessary for democratic deliberation.¹⁰ From a philosophical perspective, this challenges traditional assumptions about rational discourse and calls for a reconstruction of communicative norms rather than a nostalgic return to past media regimes.

Finally, the ethical analysis highlights the urgency of rethinking responsibility in AI- and data-driven

Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7–21. McLuhan's thesis that the form of media reshapes perception provides the foundational assumption for this article's non-instrumental understanding of digital media.

7 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12–13, 181–182. Gramsci's theory of hegemony supports the argument concerning consent and ideological normalization in platform societies.

8 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 109–133. Foucault's concept of productive power informs the analysis of algorithmic governance and surveillance.

9 John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1–30. Peters' critique of transmission models informs the philosophical conception of communication used throughout this article.

10 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 27–56. Habermas' notion of the public sphere underlies the normative analysis of democratic communication in Sections 3 and 5.

ical framework applied to AI, algorithms, and big data.

6 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of*

communication environments. Algorithms and artificial intelligence function as mediating agents that shape visibility, credibility, and interaction, raising questions of transparency, autonomy, and accountability.¹¹ The philosophy of communication contributes a normative framework that emphasizes human dignity, dialogical responsibility, and communicative justice as guiding principles for ethical digital media.¹²

Taken together, these findings underscore the original contribution of this article: it integrates classical and critical philosophies of communication to provide a comprehensive normative diagnosis of contemporary digital media. Rather than offering technical solutions or policy prescriptions, the article articulates a philosophical orientation that can inform ethical reflection, media education, and democratic practice.

8. Conclusion

The transformation of media in the digital age represents one of the most profound challenges to contemporary societies. Digital media reshape how individuals communicate, how publics are formed, and how truth and power circulate. This article has argued that the philosophy of communication offers indispensable conceptual and normative resources for understanding and responding to these transformations.

By analyzing digital media as mediating structures rather than neutral instruments, the study has shown that communication is deeply entangled with power relations, economic interests, and ethical concerns. The rise of post-truth, algorithmic governance, and AI-mediated communication signals not the end of truth or democracy, but a crisis in the conditions that sustain them.

The conclusion of this study emphasizes that ethical digital communication cannot be achieved solely through technological innovation or regulatory intervention. It requires a renewed commitment to communicative responsibility, critical reflection, and dialogical engagement. Reclaiming a human-centered

vision of communication is essential if digital media are to contribute to democratic life rather than undermine it.

Ultimately, the philosophy of communication invites us to ask not only how media function, but what kind of communicative world we wish to inhabit. In an era increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and data-driven systems, this question is both urgent and unavoidable.

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11 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 86–101. This work provides the conceptual basis for communicative rationality employed in evaluating digital discourse.

12 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 92–130. Honneth's theory of recognition underpins the discussion of communicative justice and epistemic inclusion.