Hindus and Dialogue: Implications of using Dialogic Structure in Expressing Philosophy

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Abstract: Dialogue has been a prominent device for the basis and structure of transmission of Indian and European (metaphysical) philosophical insights and thought. The impetus given by different models of dialogue (Peters & Besley 2021) in the Western tradition makes us ask – does the impact of a dialogue model on the evolution of society vary with its structure? To elucidate on this, the article identifies five infra-structural (essential) aspects that afford dialogue; it then examines three fundamental structural elements of dialogue (the nature of content, the medium of transmission and the accommodative capacity of the language used) and the choices in those three dimensions made therein to design a dialogue. Subsequently, the impact of different design choices actually made by the leading proponents of Indian and European philosophy are examined to understand their impact on the evolution of philosophy and philosophical traditions in these cultures. The impact on society of such evolution is left to the imagination of the intelligent reader.

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Introduction

'Dialogue' is used in common parlance to indicate a very wide variety of activities in every-day life – even in the philosophical, and particularly, in the metaphysical context. Black and Ram-Prasad (2019) observe:

> Dialogue plays an extremely significant role in various metaphysical philosophies emanating from the Indian subcontinent: it is an important compositional feature originating from the Ṛg-Veda and the Upaniṣads, and becomes a central device in terms of framing and structuring texts in the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa and Purāṇas. In Buddhism, dialogue features prominently in early literature such as the Nikāyas and the Jātakas, but continues to be important in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and other Mahāyāna sources. In Jainism, dialogue is used extensively in canonical texts – e.g. the Rāyapaseṇiya and the Vivāgasuyaṁ, and continues to be a dominant textual feature in the Vasudevahiṇḍi, and in Hemacandra's Sthavirāvalīcaritra. Apart from narrative, normative texts – e.g. the Mānava-dharma-śāstra are sometimes framed by dialogue, while philosophical texts, like sūtras, śāstras and saṃgrahas are often rhetorically in -dialogue with their opponents.

As expected, it is also the basis of philosophy in the Western tradition (Peters & Besley 2021). They identify a variety of forms found in Western philosophical works and treatises and go on to provide sketches of selected different 'models' of dialogue in the Western tradition.

We remain intrigued by the word 'model'. Models, in certain circumstances, represent simplified, proto-typical representations of complex realities; however, in the traditional sciences, as well as in the social sciences, models also serve to denote a condensed form of structural mechanisms which may be based on rules that enable some variety of prediction as a function of a provided set of inputs. Examples of well-known models are the biological, behavioural, cognitive, and psychodynamic models that explain psychological abnormalities. Each one presents a complex representation of the human being from these perspectives and formulates causal relationships between functionalities and abnormal behaviour.

If the vast varieties of dialogue available in Western and Indian-origin philosophies – particularly, metaphysical philosophies – were to be categorised in the form of models, one might ask: is there a link between the various forms of dialogue – along with their traditional modes of transmission – and the impact of the transmitted content on individuals and societies? Relevant here is David Bohm's (1996) spiritual view drawn from Eastern sources. He points out: in modern culture, people do not talk together about subjects that matter deeply without leading to dispute or conflict. This question is important because if it turns out that the impact of the variety of dialogues has been heterogeneous and divisive, the answer would indicate to readers to understand and appreciate which forms of dialogue are perhaps more beneficial to Homo Sapiens in continuing their trajectory of physical and mental evolution.

To answer this question, we provide a broader structural and functional perspective on the forms of dialogue. We commence with the infra-structural attributes of dialogue that influence the structure, content and style of the forms of dialogue that are manifested. We then point out the major differences in structure, content, style, and objective found across a fairly wide variety of dialogues. Subsequently, we point out the intended impact on direct participants and the observed impact on indirect participants. We then link the design implications of the infra-structural choices to the observed impact and deduce some implications in the discussion section. Before concluding, we contrast the different resultant trajectories of dialogues that communicate European and Indian metaphysical philosophies which we attribute to the differences in their design choices. In addition, we speculate briefly on what caused the differences in the infra-structural design choices seen in the dialogue models chosen.

The Infrastructure of Dialogue

Though 'dialogue' is very commonly used in everyday language, dialogue is a relatively under-theorised aspect of philosophical literature, and its significance remains implicit (Black & Ram-Prasad 2019). Therefore, it is beneficial to point out the intention of dialogue and get a sense of its boundaries as conveyed through the construct. The etymology of the word can be traced from English, through its contributory languages, to its ancient Greek origins – from διάλογος ('diálogos') meaning 'conversation, discourse' [διά ('diá') means 'through, inter' + λόγος ('lógos') meaning 'speech, oration, discourse')]. Alternatively, it is traced from the verb διαλέγομαι ('dialégomai'), indicating 'to converse', from διά ('diá') + λέγειν ('légein') 'to speak'.

The structure of dialogue

From the above we tease out some essential characteristics of dialogue. There are at least two explicit aspects in the etymology; these are (a) speech and (b) transmission

of the speech. Functionally, these aspects postulate that some content is being transmitted. From this follows an implicit aspect: there needs to be a medium or platform or both, which affords transmission of content.

Further, dialogue presumes at least two kinds of participants – a speech-generator and a speech-receiver. Additional categories of participants are active participants (e.g., speakers, actors, other performers influencing the dialogue) and passive participants (e.g., spectators, audience, readers, etc. who are removed from the performance of the dialogue).

Broadly understood, the content of speech is not limited to words that can be spoken but includes some kind of action meant to be observed and comprehended by the receiver – irrespective of whether the receiver uses their higher analytical powers of the intellect. If the receiver does not react to the transmitted content, then it is a monologue, not a dialogue; even if the reaction of the receiver is not directed at the transmitter, it is still classified as dialogue. This is consistent with Freire's (1972) insight that a dialogue has two dimensions – action and reflection; if even one of these is partly sacrificed, the other dimension also suffers.

This reveals another implicit aspect: intention; based on the content, this intention should be mutually understood by both kinds of participants. The fundamental aim of a philosopher is to make sense of reality and communicate it to others. In the context of shaping the intended communication, the philosopher has an intention whose nature is of an abstract objective; it would be relatively long-term and general compared to the short-term and specific objectives to be attained once the dialogue commences – for example, a participant in a debate has a general intention of transmitting some content by presenting information on a certain topic on which he or she may further superimpose a specific objective: winning the debate.

Collecting and parsing the above assertions, we identify five fundamental infrastructural elements inherent in a dialogue: nature of content, medium, general intention, receiver and transmitter. Examining them more closely, we assert that there are indeed choices available to the content-transmitter. The content-receiver is also a decision -maker in the design choice if the receiver actively participates in transmission of the dialogue. The element of choice implies the existence of the design aspects of a dialogue. We identify these choices below.

Design choices in dialogue

The first design choice is the nature of content. The most obvious method of classifying the nature of content would be on the basis of cognitive effort needed to comprehend the content, though this need not be the only basis. The choice made about

the nature of content depends on the level of qualifications of the transmitter and the receiver; the nature of content needs to be adjusted to suit the comprehension of the receiver. Depending on the qualification of the receiver, the nature of content varies from gross to subtle. We cite a couple of examples: Black (2019) analyses dialogues between sages and kings in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and the Dīgha-Nīkāya to show the similarities of messages when viewed from the perspective of the semantic implications of the conceptual constructs in the dialogues while also pointing to the differences in quality of advice given out as a function of who is taking on the role of the teacher. Amongst the nature of content, the most abundant consists of conceptual constructs to be cognised, analysed and comprehended by the intellect: its range varies from the well-known and easily comprehended constructs to extremely subtle and abstract constructs that are difficult to grasp for the untrained intellect. Besides, the content of some dialogue may be gross enough to require no intellectual effort (e.g., Jihadi communiqués).

The second design choice is the medium of transmission. The medium usually is either external or internal. Oral speech, written communication, as well as actions perceived and observed through the sense organs use some kind of an external medium – for example, the vast majority of philosophical content uses oral or written communication based on sound and script as external media. By contrast, dialogue also takes place using an internal medium – a modern, Western example is Buber's 'I – Thou' dialogue (1937, 1970). Some dialogues may use both external and internal media, even simultaneously, but the main point here is that some kind of medium needs to be chosen. Although the medium is very significantly influenced by the nature of the content to be addressed in the dialogue, it is not completely bound by it – for example, when Ramaṇa Mahāṛṣi answered questions about the search for one's own identity, he expounded on this subject using conventional forms, conveyed by external media, as well as complete silence, which is not dependent on external media. The importance of internal media and its potential hierarchy is very prominently brought to attention in the various levels of meditation practices detailed in the Yoga-sūṭra.

The third design choice is language. The medium varies from internal to external, the nature of content varies from subtle to gross, and the general intention varies from spiritual evolution to blatant political domination; affording such variance is the choice of language – from the language of gestures with coercive intentions at one extreme to the language of stillness and silence at the other extreme – for example, Lord Śiva taught Yogic meditation in silence while the Yoga practitioner utilises the techniques of transmission and withdrawal of intent, at various levels of meditative states, in silence.

Even when between these two extremes, the choice of a conventional language typically reflects the general intention, while being in the dialogic mode (Bakhtin 1975). If the general intention is to cultivate freedom in thought and self-discovery by evolutionary progress through spiritual knowledge, a language like Saṁskṛt is ideally suited because its grammar and vocabulary afford the recipient the freedom and legitimacy to interpret the meanings of constructs at multiple levels. Interestingly, Buddhism was propagated, during and after the Buddha's lifetime, using local languages to preach to common folk, but used Saṁskṛt for (a) exposition of its doctrine and in philosophical debates, (b) documenting thoughts, insights and reasoning and (c) training its monks and preachers. The Catholic church, during the Dark Ages in Europe before the great schism, prohibited the translation of its Latin-based philosophical works and prayers to local languages, severely restraining intellectual discussion and consequent contemplation amongst those who were not part of the intelligentsia. If the intention is to extend dogma, a language like English or Arabic is better suited since their inherent features severely limit the freedom to re-interpret conceptual constructs, even in common words.

The choices made in the above-mentioned design parameters are determined by the nature of content, intention, and other contextual characteristics of the participants. These choices, which are fundamental decisions about the kinds of dialogue that are manifested, are usually taken implicitly. It should be noted that when such decisions are made without mutual agreement, the dialogue devolves to a grosser mode rather than to a subtler mode. Conversely, for example, when there are only active participants – as in an ongoing dialogue or debate – there is a possibility of changing the design choices during the conduct of the dialogue depending on mutual needs, but passive participants – as members of the audience or readers of a recorded dialogue – have to conform to the design choices to make it meaningful for themselves.

Forms of Dialogue and their Attributes

The Vedic base

The earliest philosophical literature available to mankind is the Ṛg-Veda, a collected body of literature. The earliest Vedic compositions were dominated by hymns and invocations to various gods; this is a dialogue rather than a monologue since it also conveyed practical information about the performance of rituals rather than conceptual constructs for the intellect to consume and digest; notwithstanding the lack of emphasis on conceptual implications, there was an implicit understanding of how the world functioned and how to manipulate that functioning in favour of oneself. Further, the Vedas were orally transmitted, so the process of transmission was not one-sided (Sen 2005). In addition to hymns and invocations, there were six auxiliary

disciplines to master before the study of the Vedas: phonetics, prosody, grammar and linguistic analysis, etymology, ritual instructions and astronomy-cum-astrology. The Vedas also inspired some works of a technical nature ('Upavedas') which include works on archery, architecture, music and dance and medicine. The Vedas associated with these disciplines are Yajurveda, Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda respectively.

As time passed, questions and accompanying answers appeared – though, initially, the questions were answered by the same person. There is a change in the nature of the content, and in the intent, as the shoots of gnoseology appear. In the latter parts of the Vedas – the Upaniṣads (e.g., Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad) – teachers appear who answer questions proposed by students. The teachers who appear in the Upaniṣads were known as Ṛsis. On examining various natural phenomena, the Ṛṣis were impressed by the metronomic regularity and order that they found there; consequently, they were inspired to determine the nature of the source of the order as well as the processes implementing the order, and beyond, to uncover the nature of the underlying platform that sustained the dynamics of the processes. Additionally, they felt that human transactions with nature, each other and the divine should be in accordance with the governing processes and purposes. Following this idea led – via their own internal dialogues – to speculations and revelations about the eternal unifying principle, of an infinite nature which sustains the apparent, finite and tangible objects in Nature, a teleological relationship with Nature and human beings and teleological imperatives which correlate with the different hierarchical levels of cognitive subtlety with respect to perception and reasoning.

The questions and answers evolved into penetrative dialogues about the nature of the world and its reality: for example, in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, Naciketā asks demigod Yama what happens to man's existence after death. The first question in the Praśna Upaniṣad is 'From whence may these creatures be born?' In the Kena Upaniṣad: 'On what basis do the sense organs and mind function'? In the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: 'What is that, by knowing which, everything else is known?' In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: 'What is light for a man?' Other questions raised in other Upaniṣads are the equivalent of 'Who created the world? Did it emerge spontaneously? Did the presumptive Creator know what really happened?'

Sometimes presented in symbolic form, it was difficult for the uninitiated to comprehend what was actually being asked or how the answers were to be interpreted. However, these dialogues – formulated with pedagogic intention by enlightened personages willing to be teachers – marked an unambiguous turn to explicit gnoseology. Temporally, this is where persistent exploration of the nature of the external

and internal world, using the available hymns in the Vedas, started yielding philosophical insights. In this phase, there were no structured commentaries or doctrinal expositions, but there was an accumulation and expression of a variety of ideas and arguments based on conceptual constructs that were common to the findings of these enlightened personages as well as consistent with the ethics of these findings.

We point out the role of the language which was used here: Vedic Saṁskṛt – commonly spoken at that time, centuries before the grammar of the language was frozen in time due to Panini's Aṣṭādhyāyī that became a tool for its preservation – was not only an excellent vehicle for the recitation and preservation of hymns because of the manner in which the language was used to compose the hymns, but also gave rise to an integrative and syncretic cultural outlook because the Ṛṣis used abductive reasoning to create philosophic constructs that were inclusive in nature (consistent with the aesthetics of their findings), by exploiting the polysemous word constructions (Jager & Cleland, 2016) of Saṁskṛt where individual words have increasingly subtle layers of allegorical meanings. Instead of the typical Western rhetorical practice of using the initial general premise as the basis to be polished, narrowed, and refined to root out faulty reasoning so as to reach the 'right' conclusions, the Ṛṣis integrated diverse claims and conclusions by explaining their emission as originating from increasingly abstract though inclusive conceptual constructs (Frazier in Black & Ram-Prasad 2019)[2], consistent with the logic of their findings.

Consequently, these teachers not only wanted their students to develop an adequate intellectual understanding of the ultimate nature of reality (i.e., the 'Absolute Truth') but also wanted their students, by progressively following the teleology that they uncovered, to ultimately attain and personally experience the infiniteness of the Infinite as they themselves had. Towards this end, we find in the Upaniṣads abundant specifics on abstract conceptual constructs without getting into detailed instructions on the kind of internal processes that students needed to practise. Though Western scholars have called the Upaniṣads the first 'philosophical treatises' of India, these neither contain any systematic philosophical reflections nor do they present any unified doctrine.

The emergence and impact of non-orthodox schools

Even as the Vedas developed and were institutionalised into various cultural aspects of Indian society, there were other streams of philosophy that rejected Vedic author-

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2 One of the remarkable features of the Socratic dialogue is that it often lacks a clear conclusion; the end of the dialogue is marked by the destruction of the interlocutor's thesis, yet Socrates advances no alternative that might take its place – Nicholson in Black & Patton (2015).

ity. The most prominent of these were the Cārvakas, the Jains and the Buddhists as well as some Vaiṣṇavite and some Śaivite Tāntrics. Most of these groups participated, with other schools of philosophy, in debates based on the principles of reasoning and argumentation laid down in the Nyāya-Sūtra of Gautama.

Debates based on the principles elucidated in the Nyāya-Sūtra, while not rhetoric-free, were not dominated by a rhetorical style that de-legitimised the opponent, as in the West. This is attributed to the different style and purpose of argumentation, arising from differing epistemologies of knowledge: Roy Perrett (1999) points out that 'a fundamental Indian assumption about the nature of knowledge…is that it is presentative (anubhava), not representative.' Further, Lloyd (2007) clarifies that in the Nyāya method, truth and validity tend to be co-associated with each other because the argument must be 'fruitful', whereas in Aristotelian logic one can make valid arguments that may be completely or partially untrue. Aristotelian logic uses broad major premises as its starting point; subsequent reasoning invokes the relevance of at least one major premise of a general nature to draw specific conclusions even though the major premise abstracts logic from context (Lloyd 2007). Since opposing viewpoints have to compare differences in the broad major premise (or theory) or find faults therein, it favours 'confrontational rhetoric' (Lloyd 2013) which, combined with the nature of conclusions that are mutually exclusive judgements of true or false, increases the salience of antagonistic competition rather than inspection of the premises themselves.

On the other hand, the Indian style of argumentation whose style and method began to entrench itself with the intelligentsia – which bridged Aristotle's rhetoric and dialectic (Lloyd, 2007) – makes abstract theory implicit and occupy a background position, so what comes to the foreground is the contextual application of theory to the specific situation that is more oriented towards teasing out hidden assumptions – it uses specific examples and experiences acceptable to the opposition and the audience (Perelman, 2002) to support their reasoning via comparison and therefore allows reformulations of examples and analogies to increase the rhetorical power of the argument which encourages further exploration. Simonson (1946) points out that the pattern of inference is a non-generalising one since it moves through individual instances of comparison; the explanatory principle must always mention the analogue – unlike the Aristotelian, even in the syllogistic form, begins with effects and infers causes. Even the judgements were not limited to mutually exclusive categories of true and false; there were additional categories of both true and false as well as neither true nor false; this broadened the variety of ways that the same conceptual constructs could be used in constructing arguments.

Through participation in philosophical debates and consequent intellectual refinement, the various streams of philosophy, both orthodox and heterodox, integrated their conceptual constructs more coherently to present a more systemic representation than the Upaniṣads, so as to resemble unified and internally consistent doctrines. At the same time, they clarified their distinct set of practices for adherents to follow via internal media, in order to experience and validate the objectives and destinations they claimed.

The heterodox groups, rejecting the authority of the Vedas, produced formal and systematic bodies of thought, organising it in a way not seen in the Upaniṣads. As the heterodox schools systematised their philosophy, it yielded a common feature: the Jains and the Buddhists rejected the most abstract conceptual constructs (e.g., Brahman, Atman and Creator) while retaining many of the others; they led in organising their philosophies into newer forms that were easier to follow for the uninitiated. These formulations delivered an alternative perspective to the increasingly complicated rituals that were being practised in the Vedic tradition. The nature of the content of these philosophies was simpler than the Vedas; this made the corresponding internal processes to be followed simpler as well.

The Scope and Impact of Internal Dialogue

In Indian culture, philosophical debates and discourses among different groups or individuals were not dominated by ontic distinctiveness about the ontological origins of Reality; they put the experiential aspect (of attaining and verifying their preferred hypotheses) on an equal footing. This required perseverance and perfection with dialogues whose nature of content consisted of internal practices transmitted using internal media. As an example of such dialogue, we have a systematic method of inner development in the Yogasūtra of Patañjali – Aṣṭāṅga Yoga or the Eightfold method of holistic development (Dasgupta 1920). Dialogue reaches a different level of understanding from this perspective where the whole being is not only the expression of the deepest ontological Being but is also the recipient of the subtlest form of communication – an intuitive ability to reach the depth of being with the other in the very ground of Reality. This eightfold system, when practised according to the prescriptions in the text, leads to development of a moral order with the outer life and inner focus in the mental realm. Starting with the values that determine the basis of choices in the transactional life in the *Yama* and *Niyama*, the cultivation of body through Yogic postures achieves a stability and sensitivity in the body that surpasses ordinary phenomenal experiences (Bryant, 2009).

Training the breath with the prāṇāyāma brings about a balance in the inner vital energies that leads to further settling down of the inner agitations and development of inner focus. *Pratyāhāra* is the practice of withdrawal of attention from the external world into the inner world of sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Further stages lead to intense inner concentration and stages of altered states of consciousness called samādhi that eventually lead to a metacognitive state of heightened inner and outer awareness. This state is the basis of an all-inclusive awareness that goes beyond the subject-object duality of the transmitter-receiver model of communication to a field of awareness where dialogue goes even beyond words. This is described as one of the siddhis or powers of Yogic practice and development: 'whose primary target is the flashing forth of *transcendental-insight* (*prajñā-āloka*)' (Feuerstein 1989, 104).

Pre-Aristotelian Greece

Compared to developments in metaphysics in the Indian sub-continent, Europe started late. Given the trade between ancient Greece and the Indian sub-continent through the Achaemenids prior to the sixth century bc (Karttunen, 2014), it is difficult to verify the indigenousness of a couple of the earliest metaphysical positions which appeared in ancient Greece in the fifth-century BC. Expressing fundamental positions on the nature of reality, and made prominent by Heraclitus and Parmenides, these were formulated as aphorisms that sought to characterise the nature of the Infinite Reality, but they employed conceptual constructs that directly oppose each other ontologically. Heraclitus, adopting the concept of impermanence, declared the world to be constantly in flux, while Parmenides prescribed two 'views' of reality: the way of 'Aletheia' or truth, where change is impossible and existence is timeless and uniform because all reality is one, in contrast to the other way of 'Doxa', or opinion, that describes the world of appearances, in which one's sensory faculties lead to false and deceitful conceptions. Here we have the formulation of abstract yet fundamental concepts that neither assist the intellect to comprehend the nature of reality due to their opposing perspectives, nor provide a practical path towards directly experiencing its nature.

This gap between Heraclitus and Parmenides led to the establishment of various types of dialogue amongst the intelligentsia. The great Socrates recognised this gap; his intent, reflected in his method of teaching through dialogues based on question-and-answer, was rather a search for collaborators than a traditional teacher-student relationship. Peters and Besley (2021) describe the nature of his content as elenchus rather than eristic – for example, Socrates elicited knowledge from Meno, rather than telling him what is true (Frazier in Black & Ram-Prasad, 2019). It led to the development of certain methods of enquiry that persuaded his dialogue partners to acknowledge their shared ignorance of the ultimate reality as well as the imper-

manance associated with knowledge, but he did not bridge the divide or resolve the debate engendered by the opposing points of views of Heraclites and Parmenides. His dialogical engagement and leadership neither propounded a point of view identifying definite constructs nor was there an attempt to thresh out a path (i.e., a set of processes) that could definitely connect a seeker to the Infinite, or to subtle happiness as was attempted by the Cynics and the Stoics.

The most famous student of Socrates, Plato, in trying to resolve the opposing theses of Heraclitus and Parmenides at a metaphysical level, through his dialectics (Peters & Besley 2021), brought forth new conceptual constructs such as Pure Reason. His intent was to resolve – with the aim of connecting with the Infinite Reality, with new conceptual constructs and the nature of their inter-relationships, for example, idea as the Ideal – the relationship between Soul, Ideas and Reason, and so on. In order to make a contribution to the on-going debate, these concepts had to be explained to other thinkers, which was done through a famous set of works ('Dialogues') involving yet more conceptual constructs and relationships, with a view to establishing his metaphysics and integrating it with extant concepts. These new concepts dealt with issues that were not as subtle or abstract as those already formulated by Heraclitus and Parmenides. Plato emphasised deductive critical analysis: parsing ideas and seeking certainty in their logic (Frazier in Black & Ram-Prasad 2019); the short-term objective of the dialogues initiated by him was more oriented towards convincing others about the explanatory power of the conceptual linkages he created.

The Post-Platonic West

There was definite progress compared to Socrates in clarifying the nature of the Infinite Reality and its connection with the physical everyday world; Plato also gave some indications of a path for the individual to progress on and experience the unbounded happiness of the Infinite. However, this aspect was not developed by him nor institutionalised by his students when compared to the importance given to legitimising and propagating the conceptual underpinnings of his metaphysics. It was left to the Stoics, whose major founders were Zeno and Chrysippus – neither of whom were direct followers of Plato – to expound and develop a set of external and internal practices that indicated a dogma-free path towards experiencing the happiness that was conditioned on virtue. This path focused on regulating the mind towards the practice of essential virtues rather than emphasising yet more new and sophisticated conceptual constructs.

In order to consolidate and institutionalise his work, Plato's student Aristotle, sought to assert the relative legitimacy of the concepts they formulated. To this end,

he utilised dialogue to transmit theories about their metaphysics by creating and using a basis of logic and adapting its application through syllogism. This shows a clear shift in the content and form of dialogue compared to the earlier Greek philosophers: the dialogue became more focused on convincing others at an intellectual level about the explanatory power of the conceptual linkages created and reinforced its external orientation. Aristotle shifted the nature of objectives, dialogues and attention towards conventional intellectual analysis based on the subject-object mode due to its external orientation. It gathered momentum towards elaboration and establishing legitimacy of conceptual constructs at the expense of practices – which depended on the use of internal media – that had been chosen by the Stoics for experiencing subtler states of inner happiness.

The subsequent Abrahamic religions' emphasis on exclusionary monotheism made them distinct. The philosophers of their orthodox schools, with complete certainty about their ideology, had no use for intellectual debates to collaboratively search for the truth. With the well-established tools of logic in rhetoric, they used the form and structure of Aristotelian logic initially to focus on winning theological arguments and later to propagate dogmatic ideologies which shut down debates and open dialogue.

Post-Enlightenment Dialogue in the West

The 'Dark Ages' were truly dark from the philosophical point of view: there were even language restrictions on philosophical scholarship by the Abrahamic religions with the intent of exploiting their dogmatic positions to entrench their political power. It was only after their domination during the 'Dark Ages' that major philosophers re-invigorated metaphysics in Europe. After Kant's critique of Plato's Pure Reason, there were the Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau; later, from the early twentieth century there were philosophers who are classified as Existential, including Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Berdyaev, and Buber. But as for dialogue, it was Buber who made a very distinguished exposition that focused on the internal medium of dialogue in order to reach the Infinite.

In Buber's (1923) metaphysics on dialogue, the main conceptual distinction is between the traditional mode of interaction carried out between subject and object on one hand ('I – It'), and the higher level of communion with the Infinite on the other hand ('I – Thou'); the dialogue (or relationship) between I and Thou is the essence of reality. According to Buber, the participants of this dialogue, while superficially being an individual and another entity, in reality are essentially the permanent aspect of the individual and the infiniteness of the Infinite. The dialogue exists beyond time and beyond the conventional forms encountered in the world, is spon-

taneous and while its 'content' is non-transmissible to others, there is always the Presence of the Infinite in the dialogue.

Buber's dialogical content is not so much about the propagation of new concepts or even the transmission of extant concepts for the intellectual benefit of others, which is typically performed on an external medium of dialogue. His dialogue is more about the transmission of the Presence to the individual who needs to acknowledge the Presence and intuit the content implicit in the transmission. The important distinction from other conventional European philosophers is a change from a focus on the intellectual content of dialogue which is dependent on an external medium to an explicit focus on the internal medium of dialogue that renders the content and form of his dialogue more subtle. In contrast with conventional European philosophy, it approaches 'dialogue' with the aim of bringing in the role of what is beyond objectification and conceptualisation. Buber is possibly unique among European philosophers of the last two thousand years because they have usually approached the Infinite Reality as an object capable of being grasped by the human mind; aiming to practice Buber's dialogue requires turning away from conventional intellectual engagement with theories towards progress on the path to proximity with the Presence of the Infinite.

Impact of Dialogical Forms

The Upaniṣadic Period

Black and Ram-Prasad (2019), in their collection of studies of dialogues in Indian philosophical literature examine dialogue along the dimensions of encounter, transformation, and interpretation, based on a review of some selected dialogues from the vast compendium available in Indian literature. The examination, along the dimension of encounter speaks, aside from the distribution and implications of exogenous power related issues, to how dialogues can also serve as a collaborative or didactic tool that can extend epistemological boundaries. The dimension of transformation points out the potential to transform, that is, an initiation of internal dialogue, conditioned on the skills of the teacher and preparation of the student, even as it brings up the social implications of an inexperienced seeker's internal practices as well as the manifestation of differences in the power dynamic. The dimension of interpretation points out how the dialogue can be crafted to influence indirect participants, among other things.

The analytical framework we have used in this paper to review dialogues, as described in the previous sections, reveals certain patterns and styles of dialogical forms. We now add some specific insights about their unique impact on the com-

munities in which they were prevalent. Consider Black and Patton's (2015) observation that many of the dialogues from the Upaniṣads, do not throw adequate light on the personal details of the participants in the dialogues and appear explicitly inconclusive in nature.

While a Western perspective expresses unease at not knowing who won what or how much from a dialogue, from an Indian perspective this is rather advantageous. First, if the participants do not acknowledge that they have won or lost a debate, it implies that the two parties are less likely to develop an antagonistic relationship with each other; a potential wholesale change of internal convictions driven by external conditions has been avoided, thereby weakening an element of coercion that may have become a motive for the winner. Second, this absence of coercion would be desirable as it was one of the values (Ahiṃsā) that the Ṛṣis cherished, Ahiṃsā being consistent with the ethics of the philosophical reality that they uncovered. Third, this atmosphere of non-coercion enhanced a greater spirit of inclusiveness which is also consistent with the aesthetics of the philosophical reality that they uncovered. Fourth, inconclusive dialogues allowed both parties the freedom to either refine and re-calibrate their arguments or to collaborate with each other in deepening their knowledge. Fifth, collaboration would also have assisted both sides to develop their internal practices by comparing them, leading to consensus and co-construction of theory.

The Post-Upaniṣadic Period

The post-Vedic period of debates among various orthodox and heterodox philosophy schools conformed to the conventions found in the Nyāya-sūtra[3]. Lloyd (2007) quotes Simonson: '[s]eeking and obtaining a consensus may yield harmony and self-abnegation, predominantly the ends of Hindu thinking' (409). The rhetor's goal is not self-expression, persuasion, or winning, but a 'seeing together.' Burke's notion of 'consubstantiation' – unification based on identification with common goals – is true consubstantiation. Since the typical method of conducting or presenting a dialogue used abductive reasoning instead of deductive reasoning and was in concordance with the spirit of non-coercion that originated from the protagonists of the Upaniṣads, these debates were generally constructive; the various schools maintained their separate identities but within constraints. Specifically, it led to the de-

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3 Lloyd (2007) quotes Simonson: "[s]eeking and obtaining a consensus may yield harmony and *self-abnegation*, predominantly the ends of Hindu thinking" (409, emphasis added). The rhetor's goal is not self-expression, persuasion, or winning, but a "seeing together." Burke's notion of "consubstantiation"— unification based on identification with common goals—is true consubstantiation.

velopment of a commonly accepted collection of technical conceptual terms that facilitated persistent mutual learning due to a dynamic balance of the centrifugal forces and the centripetal forces; while the former was generated by the contrastive nature of debates, the latter resulted from internal practices that were used in the inner journey and also from the transcendental and inclusive nature of the target of the internal practices.

In fact, the orientation and commitment towards the inner journey and its concomitant internal practices of the mind, which were dialogues in another form using internal media, such as the various stages of concentration to get to the highest state of mediation as outlined in the Yoga-sūtra, were means to mastery in controlling the mind; they also engendered the practice of non-coercion which was consistent with Yoga ethics. On one hand, this translated to respecting the free will of others and the freedom to learn at one's own pace, while on the other hand, there was also the demand to learn the subtle skills from accomplished masters. This led to the formation, sustenance, and institutionalisation of the master-disciple tradition (*Guru-Śiṣya Paramparā*).

Given the respect for mutual co-existence and the intent to learn from each other while determined to maintain its independence, each school, whether orthodox or heterodox, developed a portfolio of epistemologies (*pramāṇa*) to justify their chosen conceptual constructs through logical connections for intellectual consistency using external media; much of the output in this mode is in the form of narratives and discourse (Black & Ram-Prasad 2019) – of which, narratives proved to be more popular than discourses. Narratives are dialogues that portray characters interacting with each other, as found in the Upaniṣads, Nīkāyas, Jātakas, Sutta Nipāta, Rāmāyaṇa, Yoga-Vasiṣṭha, etc. The other form is discursive texts, such as philosophical commentaries. Although this literature does not depict characters in conversation with each other, they are also composed as dialogues, but in a rhetoric style in which the positions of rival schools are refuted.

The overall impact was the mosaic-like independence, co-existence and implicit collaboration of different schools of philosophy rather than a merger into a homogenous doctrine or exclusive dogmatic schools based on non-compatible doctrines. For example, the influence, acceptance, and status of Buddhism increased dramatically to occupy the leading position in the aristocratic, intellectual, and other strata of Indian society. For a considerable length of time (about eight centuries) Buddhism became more popular than the Vedic practices. It became the state religion in many kingdoms in India and dominated the cultural life of not just the Indian sub-continent but also of those cultures outside the Indian sub-continent that had earlier been influenced by Vedic culture, including South-East Asian countries and Japan. Yet,

when Buddhism's influence and standing was displaced by the later schools of Vedanta in most of the Indian sub-continent, it left a permanent mark on the religious and cultural evolution of Indian society, making it more pluralistic and syncretic.

The European Experience

In Plato's dialogues we often see arguments of the dialectical type (Fink 2012); this led to the genre of polemic. A formal feature of this genre has each section end with a final decision. With the increased emphasis on using logic since Aristotle, Lloyd (2013) suggests that it favoured 'confrontational rhetoric' since opposing viewpoints were made to compare differences in the broad major premise (or theory) or find faults therein. Combined with the nature of conclusions that are mutually exclusive judgements of true or false, all of Aristotelian dialectic falls within 'wrangling' (Lloyd 2007); such a procedure brought impetus to antagonistic competition rather than inspection and self-revision of the premises themselves.

This emphasis on winning arguments directed momentum towards elaboration and establishing legitimacy of conceptual constructs at the expense of internal practices which depended on the use of internal media. Neglecting to develop a path for the inner journey contrasted with Stoical practices pursuing a path of regulating the mind by practising essential virtues in order to experience subtler states of happiness. The Stoics expounded their views using a form of logic that was different from the syllogisms used in Aristotelian tradition; their mutual incompatibility thwarted European philosophers from creating something more complex, sophisticated, or integrated that exploited their mutual differences in a productive, syncretic manner.

Subsequent Abrahamic religions in these locations sealed the shift in content of dialogue from competitive debate to unchallengeable dogma; dialogue moved from being a tool for conveying and understanding concepts (and their mutual relationships) about the nature of the subtle Infinite to a tool for propagating ideologies. Consequently, it forestalled progress on the internal path towards attainment of subtler metaphysical objectives with obvious implications for its propagation and diffusion. Those who rejected the agenda of the organised religions were effectively prohibited from conventional intellectual engagement, distorting their theories towards secrecy and protection of one's intellectual positions to avoid conflict and suffering at the body-level.

Buber's eventual attention to the human dialogic relationship with the Infinite offered a potential shift in focus from an external medium-based dialogue to an internal medium. Either due to a prevalent lack of a popular but institutionalised system to pursue internal dialogues, or Buber's hesitation to put forward a well-defined structure/model/methodology (Asakavičiūtė & Valatka 2020) for others to become

qualified in utilising it, or both, Buber's ideals have not been used to their fullest potential, even as they are being employed towards objectives studied by social science (Avnon 1993; Pauly 2022).

Discussion

This article has shown the different evolutionary trajectories followed by philosophical dialogues in India and in Europe. Srinivas (2011) attributes this divergence to different philosophical traditions which arose from differences in the 'art of philosophising'. He attributes the developments in Indian philosophical tradition largely to the commentarial tradition, practised by the heavyweights of the different philosophy schools, in which one critiques one's own and opponents' works before rebuilding.

To understand why we designed a framework identifying the fundamental design choices made when planning and participating in dialogues. Further, we showed the different choices made by different sets of philosophers in different eras and different locations. After that, we described the historical implications of making different design choices. The figure plots the impact of different kinds of dialogues that arose from making different design choices when planning and participating in dialogues.
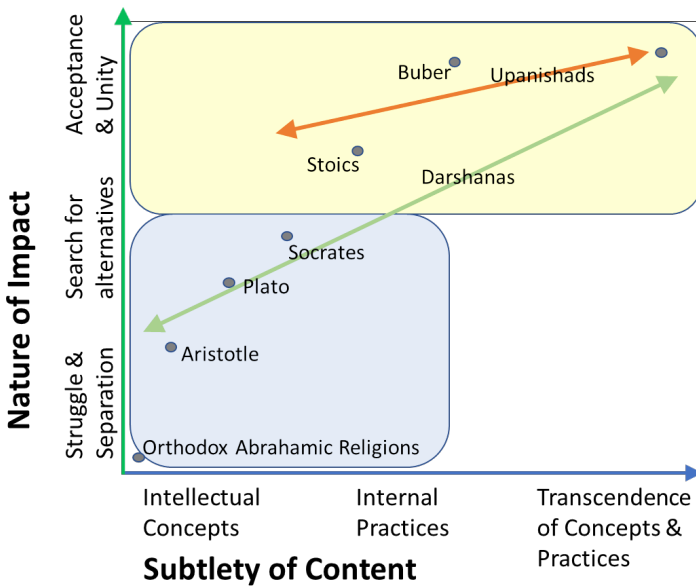
In the remainder of this section, we marginally extend our investigation to explore why different design choices were made.

Initially, the earliest philosophers in India and Europe looked to the external world to understand the nature of reality and to obtain answers to other existential questions, but when they did not find all the answers, they turned inwards. However, in this turn inwards, not all were able to access the same depth. In ancient Greece, the Stoics – who progressed most in Europe – found a certain degree of happiness by cultivating 'essential virtues of the mind' while others lacked inward progress; but in India, serious seekers had gone beyond the mind to enter a state of effectively infinite awareness and bliss, independent of and unaffected by any kind of circumstance, whose subtlety accommodated everything else. After identifying with this state of awareness in a regular and continuous manner, these seekers arrived at some broad conceptualisations about the gnoseology, epistemology, ontology and and axiology related to penetrating and inhabiting this state of awareness.

Second, by activating these conceptualisations and the axiology connecting these conceptualisations, Indian philosophers were able to go beyond what is reasonable to the conventional rational human mind in pursuit of inclusivity and to accommodate diversity – for instance, the inclusion and harmonisation of opposite qualities and outcomes. The Stoics had advanced to a mind-inherent level of happiness, and therefore could be accommodating of diversity only to a narrower or lesser extent. The non-Stoic philosophers accommodated even less: they were limited by the conventional rational mind when it came to being inclusive and accommodating.

Third, the combination of these two reasons mentioned above had a direct impact on the type of logic that was used in formulating and adjusting philosophical theory. Toulmin, in various works (1958; 1984; 2002; Toulmin & Jonsen, 2002) contrasts the implications of using Aristotelian syllogistic logic with the practical style of the Nyāya-sūtra. The former was more committed to conventional understanding and knowing of the nature of reality as compared to the latter's practical style of committing to reason to accommodate other viewpoints by changing and adjusting philosophical hypotheses. Using the syllogistic style led to increased use of generalised, stereotypical, simplified representations of reality which pushed rationality towards establishing the validity of premises rather than their truth, whereas the more practical Indian style used prototypes which could be debated and refined to link closer to the truth of the infinite nature of reality – this is seen in the Indian commentarial tradition. (The propositional style of of Aristotelian logic.)

Consequently, Indian philosophers used more abstract formulations in their theory building to accommodate opposing points of view, thus imitating the nature of the internal eternal reality they had uncovered. In our view the differing commitments made to (a) the perceived nature of reality which determines aesthetic judgments, (b) the ethics-driven sentiment of inclusivity and (c) the logic-driven principles of reason for generating philosophical hypotheses determined the design choices made for dialogues – which goes deeper than those (Ganeri 2004; Kapoor 1995) who believe that Nyāya-sūtra alone is fundamental to Indian history and even democracy.

The persistence of these patterns through the centuries permits Sen (2005) to argue that Indian traditions have a long history of accommodation and tolerance. One of his central claims is that dialogue is a means through which India has maintained its tolerance of diversity and, indeed, has celebrated the 'richness of variation' as it manifests in its secularism, pluralism, and multiculturalism, without rejecting religion.

On the other hand, in the West and in the Islamic world, the historical design choices made and the consequent persistent salience of the differences among the Abrahamic religions and their schisms has yet to render or even point to an atmosphere of mutual respect towards each other, let alone towards the rest of humanity. In the last century, secular humanism has recognised the importance of unconditional acceptance and respect for all. Oakeshott (1959, 10) writes

> In a conversation...there is no 'truth' to be discovered, no proposition to be proved, no conclusion sought. [The participants] are not concerned to inform, to persuade, or to refute one another...[Rather] thoughts of different species take wing and play round one another, responding to each other's movements and provoking one another to fresh exertions. Nobody asks where they have come from or on what authority they are present: nobody cares what will become of them when they have played their part.

Subsequently, Rorty (1979) reduces philosophy to model conversation arguing that

> To see keeping a conversation going as a sufficient aim of philosophy, to see wisdom as consisting in the ability to sustain a conversation, is to see human beings as generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately.

Yet, the question that remains is, how important, practical, relevant, and effective will such a model of philosophical dialogue be without the individual internal journey to verify that which sustains all such phenomena? Can that which sustains all

phenomena continue to be ignored while hoping to sustain such highly desired outcomes?

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