Post-Truth and False Self in Philosophy-Psychoanalysis Dynamics

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Abstract: This article explores the psychoanalytic, philosophical, and socio-political dimensions of the post-truth era, highlighting how inauthenticity, hypocrisy, and relational alienation shape individual and collective life. Drawing from Freud, Winnicott, Lacan, Žižek, Baudrillard, and contemporary analyses of culture and politics, it examines how truth becomes destabilized in favor of appearances, simulations, and subjective constructions. The digital sphere amplifies this transformation, producing curated identities, emotional commodification, and the spread of "alternative facts." These dynamics foster loneliness, mistrust, and the erosion of authentic dialogue, even as society appears increasingly interconnected. Psychoanalysis provides a lens to understand these processes, showing how prohibitions on knowing the self, shame, and secrecy intensify alienation and hinder emotional growth. In this context, relationships are often used to deny relationships, violence takes subtle yet pervasive forms, and collective belonging is reshaped through ideological or technological control. By 2025, these patterns have crystallized into a lived social reality where post-truth permeates politics, culture, and personal identity. Yet, within this condition lies potential for renewal: cultivating critical thinking, emotional literacy, and relational ethics may transform fragmentation into resilience. Ultimately, the challenge for contemporary societies is to navigate between truth and simulacrum while sustaining spaces of authentic recognition and connection.
Keywords: Post-Truth Society; Psychoanalysis and Authenticity; Digital Inauthenticity; Emotional Politics; Simulacra and Hyperreality; Relational Ethics in Modern Society

1. INTRODUCTION

The post-truth era reshapes both individual subjectivity and collective life by eroding authenticity, destabilizing truth, and amplifying relational alienation. Drawing on psychoanalytic and philosophical frameworks, it shows how digital hyperreality, emotional commodification, and the proliferation of simulacra undermine self-knowledge, interpersonal trust, and the capacity for genuine recognition. These dynamics generate a

culture in which inauthentic identities, ideological rigidity, and affective manipulation replace meaningful dialogue and shared understanding. The paper ultimately proposes that cultivating critical thinking, emotional literacy, and relational ethics is essential for transforming the fragmentation of post-truth culture into a space of resilience and renewed connection.

2. PSYCHOANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT EMOTION, VEIN AVOIDED IN POST-TRUTH

We live in a world that explores hypocrisy and inauthenticity, examining their impact on relationships, truth, and the perception of reality across personal, social, and digital contexts. This trend is analyzed through both cultural theory and the lens of the "post-truth" phenomenon. The victory of hypocrisy is found embedded in the blood through lies, a fact also underlined by the psychoanalytic critique of the social inauthentic. We should ask ourselves: Why is there so much loneliness, in a place where we are so connected (at least through virtuality, but also through multiple other ways)? Because of hatred, which takes various forms – disgust with reality, arrogance, inauthentic relationships, as Žižek also notes in his reflections on contemporary culture (Zizek, 2008).

Destruction is seen only as a falsification of various forms, while we, as psychoanalysts, often feel in the countertransference an uncertain, confusing state. This experience of uncertainty has been clinically conceptualized in psychoanalysis as part of the encounter with the unspoken and unrepresentable areas of the analysand. Then, the other, the analysand, risks becoming unsupported, if we ourselves face either devaluation or vigilance that takes various forms of control, from the benign domestic to the socially malignant, mechanisms described in the classical psychoanalytic literature (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974).

Problems are not solved by appealing to experience, but rather by canceling it and imposing the belief that we now live in another existence, a perpetual "here and now." This perspective is also supported by constructivist analyses of social reality. The victim is fragile and the appearance of denial of various phenomena in couple relationships cause: confusion, anger, alters the vision of perception, up to myopia and blindness. This perspective is also illustrated in the theory of recognition and power relations in intersubjective dynamics (Burke, 1995). Thus, the relationship is used to deny the relationship and the inauthentic becomes a form of existence by appealing to hypocrisy, a phenomenon already

anticipated in theories about simulacra and hyperreality (Baudrillard, 2019).

The digital space itself confers a new social status, which increases the inauthentic. Truth becomes irrelevant and is described as post-truth, a phenomenon recently conceptualized in cognitive and social studies (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). This is what happens in extremist ideologies, whether we refer to nostalgia for the past or attack the discoveries of science, as contemporary political analyses also show. In both situations, we find the absence of symbolization and the desire to do harm, fundamental features of the death drive described by Lacan (Lacan, 2004). Recent psychoanalytic work on digital culture shows that social media and big-data infrastructures intensify unconscious processes of identification, dependency, and aggression, as users become entangled in algorithmically curated feedback loops that mirror—and often amplify—primitive relational dynamics. These studies suggest that online environments not only shape attention and desire, but also reinforce fantasies of idealization and persecution, thereby reshaping subjectivity in precisely the ways we described (Johanssen, 2018).

Self-knowledge implies an active interest, yet when states of mind are attacked by malignant paralysis and access to play or forgetting is lost, this process becomes severely hindered. In such conditions, the individual comes to define their way of functioning differently in relation to other Selfs. Winnicott (Winnicott, 2005) describes this loss of play and spontaneity as a serious form of self-alienation. And very quickly you can become what you don't think about yourself. Then the double connection stands out. We remain present in our own conjugated realities, but in a perverse and/or psychopathic sense, releasing the annulment of the essential in the other, a situation that Kernberg links to pathological narcissistic functioning (Kernberg, 1992).

Not infrequently we encounter the prohibition of knowing, to which is added a disagreement between what and how. Shame, guilt, blame are more or less direct forms and, consequently, more or less decisive, as contemporary studies on moral emotions show (Levinson, 2002). The secret, however, – whether known or unknown – always leads to the thought of sacrifice and pushes the relationship adrift, an idea already formulated in the Freudian psychoanalysis of the unconscious (Freud, 2010). Can something of one's own self become a secret? Certainly, the prohibition of access to knowledge by touching one's own body falls into this category, an idea developed in the analysis of impurity and abjection (Kristeva, 1982). Subsequently, the connection between love and sexuality is lost, shame and self-secrecy are born, as if your body is no longer yours,

a process also visible in the genealogy of power over the body (Foucault, 1978).

The inauthentic is the effort to drive the other crazy, described by Laing as part of the alienating mechanisms in relationships (Laing, 1965). It is not the fear of knowing that stops our self-knowledge, but the prohibition of knowing, as theories of trauma also look like (Caruth, 1996). Both the maturation of the ability to know the truth, but also the fear of it, involve crossing storms in which traitors, alienation, malignant subjugation or fusion, when the core of the being becomes deprived, situations described clinically also by Horney (Horney, 1991; Trifu et al., 2015).

Loneliness demands another, without which we have nothing – neither development nor growth, but only an internalized déjà vu, which can lead to frenzy. At the same time, knowing another is a source of chaos, which involves the ability to cope with mystery and developed emotional experience, as the theory of relational recognition also supports (Burke, 1995). There is a fear that responsibility is endangered.

It is in vain that we have built policies to eliminate violence, as it now takes seemingly indifferent forms while continuing to operate across both personal identity and large-scale institutions. Violence becomes a plot that generates expectations which, paradoxically, come to be applauded. Critical analyses of contemporary violence culture confirm this process (Zizek, 2008). Such as, for example, when "no name" people appear, who create losses for others and feed on such pleasures, even in the situation where they also have to lose. Everything becomes an attack on connection, an attack on the pattern, and experience annihilates experience. In the United States we are talking about brainwashing, in China about the restructuring of thought, two processes of social control described in the current political literature (Stanley, 2017).

What is sought is mystification, and in mystification the experience is concerned. This perspective of reality as a simulacrum has been intensely analyzed in postmodern philosophy (Baudrillard, 2019). The relationship is used to deny the relationship. Perceptions become preconceptions, such as: legionarism, neo-communism, wooden language, anti-vaccination. All those that lead to pseudo-understanding, behind which there is, in fact, a falsification of understanding: transmitting nothing to generate nothing, a process also described in cognitive studies on disinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Reality becomes ugly, paranoid, consumed in the inauthentic, a phenomenon analyzed in psychoanalysis as a victory of hypocrisy (Cuéllar, 2010).

Mystification induces the illusion of something unshakable, which is

followed by a serene submission. Anything that contradicts the secret is annihilated, Foucault points out in his studies of power and control (Foucault, 1978). Programmed subjugation involves the rapid reorganization of thought, a phenomenon also characterized in theories of trauma (Caruth, 1996). Even if there are confession and the desire to recover, we find ourselves unable to get out of aggressive relationships on our own, as Horney described (Horney, 1991). There are relationships in which the more the other cannot receive, the more the one who gives becomes more and more empty, hitting the wall of indifference, an aspect clinically analyzed in relational theories (Burke, 1995).

Jealousy stiffens the thinking and feeling of the self, which becomes lonelier. This view is found in psychoanalytic theories of borderline and narcissistic functioning (Kernberg, 1992). It can be a personality factor or an existential way, but in either variant it is an attack on a third party, an attack conceived in loneliness and hatred. The invisible limits of abuse through which the predator expresses his narcissism must be sought, an idea already emphasized in existential psychology (Laing, 1965). Jealousy increases malignant patterns through: admiration, amplification of internal nothingness, an attraction-rejection dynamic, and other common forms of perversity, aspects described in detail by Kernberg (Kernberg, 1992).

The malignant family as a group annihilates anything that can sustain an alliance, assuring those who can do so the condition of traitors. In this context, contempt, anger, hatred of reality manifests itself at every step, and reality seems more intense and hostile than the self itself. The double connection implies attribution by command, a mechanism through which one person places another where their own desire wants them. In this dynamic, the subject is unable to recognize their own intentions or to distinguish between what they are capable of doing and what lies beyond their capacity. Such conditions generate identity vertigo and sustain the logic of totalitarian existence, as exemplified by Nazism (Bateson, 1999; Zizek, 2008).

The lie, built to be seductive and to mimic the desire to be like the other, becomes an instrument of domination. In its most serious forms, it no longer seeks only concealment, but the perversity of making the other no longer exist, of annihilating him as a subject. In detention, where the concept of authenticity has no relevance, the truth becomes impossible to speak, as no one is interested in internalizing it . In this paradigm, post-truth does not mean overcoming truth, but degrading it into irrelevance: truth no longer matters, and objectivity is reduced to a subjective construction, an effect of the simulacrum.

This explains the arrogance, illustrated by the phrase "First impression matters!", which is nothing more than a lie meant to fix appearances. Post-truth allows the construction of one's own reality, detached from a common and shared narrative framework. Hence the result of digital taxidermy: the absence of an authentic voice, the confusion of languages, the proliferation of simulacra of the self, inauthentic and relative identities, nourished by the cult of personality (Appadurai, 1996; Baudrillard, 2019). Recent analyses of post-truth identities show that online infrastructures of meaning bind subjects to affectively charged narratives rather than evidence, creating digital echo-systems where emotions such as outrage, resentment, and admiration shape what is taken as "truth." These studies demonstrate that algorithmic curation privileges narratives that confirm preexisting desires and fears, making group belonging, symbolic allegiance, and ressentiment more decisive than factual accuracy in the formation of self and community (Ait Hadi & Bendahan, 2025; Gili & Maddalena, 2022). In this space, the punishment falls not on those who maintain the cult, but on the one transformed into an object.

When truth is reduced to conformity with theory, falsehood becomes confirmation of inauthenticity. Social philosophy shows that hatred of reality generates "alternative facts", and these constructions lead either to existential drift or to collective psychosis (Honneth, 1996; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). What is then founded are no longer living relationships, but negative bonds—the annihilation of affiliations, the alienation of the world, the triumph of the lack of relationships—in which the only common connection becomes the realization that we no longer have connections. Outside everything is gray and empty, and the individual retreats into a simulacrum of self-sufficiency (Baudrillard, 2019).

As the world becomes something that can be offered only in relation to profit, the inability to feel the resonance of others becomes more pronounced. In such a society, perversion, abuse, loot and lies become dominant, even valued – "Lying puts me on wheels" – turning falsehood into a survival strategy (Stanley, 2017). However, totalitarian lies should not be confused with post-truth: under repression, people do not identify with what is imposed on them, while globalization rather brings the logic of post-truth, by accelerating belonging and identity (Appadurai, 1996). The question is whether a people can ever say to itself, "We have decided to live in post-truth." This would imply a spiritual mechanism through which a space of tolerance is created between truth and falsehood, the place of moral laxity where the question resounds: "Who am I to judge this?"

In this equation, truth enthralls you in terror, while post-truth provides

pseudo-bliss (McIntyre, 2018). Post-liberal democracies invented in the West and taken over by Russia or China turn authenticity into a devalued commodity. Hypocrisy falsifies the experience both in oneself and in the other, and moral philosophy highlights the difference between authentic and inauthentic, between understanding, misunderstanding and pseudo-understanding.

Because of this, psychoanalysis lives today in troubled waters. In a post-truth regime, desire, anxiety and self-knowledge mix, and emotion – shame, guilt – is avoided or transformed into a social product (Ahmed, 2015; Han, 2017). Psychoanalysis, based on the reinforcement of the need for truth and knowledge, becomes destabilized when truth is reduced to functionality, to what the eye sees and takes as real (Frosh, 2019; Han, 2017; McIntyre, 2018). In this space, where lies, dissimulation and simulacrum dominate, the question arises: who is the predator and who is the prey? The other becomes edible prey, but also a possible common deck partner. The need for a meaningful narrative, paradoxically, turns out to be greater than the need for truth (Han, 2017).

In the allegory of music-psychoanalysis it is not difficult to move between symptom and harmony, if we think of rhythm, vibration and harmony, of silence that can take on many meanings in psychoanalysis, silence understood both as a space of the unconscious and as a sound pause that structures the discourse (Dolar, 2006; Lacan, 2004). Entering oneself in the absence of the present implies a labor of mourning that has a sound, cathartic crying, like that of mourners, which transforms absence into symbolic presence (Grassi, 2021). Just as fingerprints are, so are voices. They are part of the field of our analysis, what happens in a labor carried out over years being a polyphony of affects and unconscious representations (Dolar, 2006; Han, 2017).

In fact, we are born in the polyphony of the mother's voice, an early experience in which the sonority of the mother's body constitutes the first affective matrix. There are subjects who also feel the heart of the maternal body, an experience that shows how deeply rhythm and vibration are imprinted in the psychic body. It is important how sound is perceived by the walls of the uterus, as this primary resonance shapes how we later build relationships (Ahmed, 2015). The unconscious sonority is not only a symbolic voice, but also a bodily echo that organizes desire (Dolar, 2006). The deaf are those who cannot hear sound details, and this lack of perception becomes a limitation of access to the nuances of the unconscious. Consequently: How do we hear what is not heard? In Winnicott's view (Winnicott, 2005), psychoanalysis transcends the content

of words and works with what happens between them, with the sonority between signs. We must hear, unconsciously substantiating what connects meanings and what gives consistency to presence. Ancient tragedies are a dialogue between the protagonist and the ancient choir, a game of voices and resonances that anticipate the psychoanalytic space (Han, 2017). Similarly, the analyst hears the music woven by words and aligns with the patient's unconscious. First, the patient speaks in several voices for his analyst, later he learns to speak for himself, internalizing this polyphony (Fink, 1999).

3. TO BE OR NOT TO BE CHOSEN

There is a wanted father, who is an ideal father and a lot of destructiveness. Hearing versus listening underlines how our construction of reality is fragile, constantly attacked by demons. Descartes depreciates the perception of reality, speaking of illusion as a screen meant to prevent direct access to reality (Descartes, 2017). In the same vein, Plato brings the allegory of the cave, in which shadows become reality for those deprived of light (Griffith & Ferrari, 2000). We come to Marx's Manifesto, which shows that reality may not be what we think it is, or that it may not exist as such (Marx, 2017). Consequently, reality always presupposes a contesting demon. Post-modernist thinkers challenge the great classical authorities and shift the emphasis to simultaneous reality, as a mark of transition and plurality of meanings (Lyotard, 1984). Winnicott (Winnicott, 2005) speaks of a space for visions, including the vision of the working group, which was at that time a postmodernist theory, in the midst of modernism. In fact, Freud also prefigures it in the dream of the bearded doctor, who wonders whether or not the emeritus doctor will be elected (Freud, 2010).

After Freud's vision of the development of the psyche, the concepts of environment and intersubjectivity appear. From the interaction between the baby and the caregiver, relational psychoanalysis develops, centered on the space between two subjects (Mitchell, 1988). Anna Freud does not understand the Winnicottian vision, its critical spirit, the desire for the development of the mind and the openness to other new and original theories (Kahr, 2018).

In Winnicott's view, between the baby and the mother we find moments in a together. Hunger causes the baby to hallucinate that the breast is coming. When the breast really comes, he considers that what he hallucinated really happens and introjects this fact. Consequently, the next

time he will hallucinate more. The constancy of the baby's mother is the initial click (Winnicott, 1992). Subsequently, the mother can also attach to another baby, and the baby can attach to someone else. It's a problem of adaptability. Any father can be a good father to the baby of a woman with whom he once interacted. Our adoption fantasy far exceeds the number of babies, as we easily and gladly adopt pets.

The continuous internal hallucination comes from the sensory. Everything we think the world represents is, in fact, a user interface. The promotors of the ideas of relationship, such as Winnicott, speak of the interchangeable core of each of us – Winnicott's singular, idiomatic people (Winnicott, 1992). For Winnicott, perceptions are hallucinatory representations. Our conscious life is not on the surface, but is hidden under a common transitional space, seen as a psychic impedance adapter. Hence the second with which the psyche always lags behind reality; always in the après-coup, in the retroactive resumption of experiences (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974).

In psychology, stimulus is based on illusion. In the same way, Winnicott believes that the phantasm precedes reality. We acquire the phantasm, the substance, through what we take from conventional reality. In some cases, imperfect adaptations to the environment occur (where there are interferences). The first step would be to learn how to fantasize correctly. Breast hallucination is just a prototype.

After Descartes and Didier Anzieu, Freud is the heir to the philosophical tradition (Assoun, 2006), which additionally brings the unconscious and challenges the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis. We notice an irrational anger, in the sense of not submitting to reason. For Freud, the unconscious has its own logic, not reducible to conscious rationality (Freud, 2010). In college, he reads a lot, then denies philosophy, then returns to it. Together with Marta, he writes the first book, in order to understand his own concepts and to keep them as a refuge in old age. In 1896, it is the moment when he converts from medicine to psychology.

4. METAPHOR AS A CONCLUSION

If we dance, idealization begins, a dense eroticism, something permanent, like the first syllable. Aggressive, with anguish, longing and passion, in a holiday that flows chronologically, in the rebuilding of the fantasy. Our constituent, the silence of the masked ball in mimesis. We admire the courtship labor, the refined seduction. Interferences are

attacked by nostalgia, the alliance that stands up to reason and the waltz born in the opening. The primary scene and a narcissistic gestalt, in which the half of a tree is something that should be done. The enlightened resources will give new concepts, one psyche for multiple bodies, when any regression becomes permitted. Reverence and the Skin-Self are the repairs of the serpent of Eden. Errors are not accepted! Better to feed our freedom beyond the mask and hear more clearly all the lullaby whispered in our ears. And all the quarrels that will come... There are days when we see darkness, we wander around the world, we want to be citizens of the interior, even if we know that we are going to have enigmatic masters.

5. DISCUSSION

In 2025, society stands at a critical juncture where the ideas explored throughout this work—post-truth, inauthenticity, relational alienation, and the psychoanalytic struggle for self-knowledge—have become strikingly visible in everyday life. The last decades have demonstrated how truth, once a shared compass for democratic dialogue, is now constantly contested by narratives shaped through digital media, political manipulation, and cultural fragmentation. This post-truth condition is no longer an abstract philosophical concern; it is a lived reality that influences how communities develop, how individuals perceive themselves, and how collective futures are imagined.

One of the defining traits of 2025 societies is the intensification of connectivity coupled with profound loneliness. Digital infrastructures have expanded global networks, yet the bonds they generate often remain superficial, echoing Žižek's concerns about the paradox of connection without intimacy. In this environment, inauthenticity becomes not only a social strategy but also a survival mechanism, where carefully curated identities on social platforms replace genuine encounters. This reflects Winnicott's warning that the loss of play and spontaneity leads to alienation: people appear connected, but their inner selves drift further into isolation.

Equally significant is the rise of what might be called the "emotional economy of politics." Shame, guilt, and fear—once personal experiences—are now commodified and circulated as social products, shaping opinions and influencing elections. Recent work on information politics and emotional governance shows that shame, guilt, and fear are not merely by-products of post-truth communication but are deliberately mobilized as

political instruments that shape perception and behavior. These studies reveal how affect-laden messaging normalizes far-right discourses by framing emotional vulnerability as a threat and by rewarding reactive, impulsive responses over reflective judgment. As a result, polarization intensifies, and the very conditions necessary for thoughtful dialogue, mutual recognition, and democratic deliberation are progressively eroded (Bowsher, 2024; Wodak, 2021). The psychoanalytic insight that prohibitions on knowing, or even acknowledging, one's own desires generate paralysis is mirrored in broader society, where censorship, polarization, and ideological rigidity curtail authentic dialogue. Now, the struggle is not simply about fact versus fiction, but about the erosion of our capacity to discern, reflect, and recognize the other.

Globalization and technological acceleration further complicate this landscape. The expansion of artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, and surveillance economies has magnified the simulacrum effect described by Baudrillard: images, narratives, and "alternative facts" increasingly stand in for lived experience. The "digital taxidermy" of selfhood, where identities are preserved as static, consumable representations, diminishes the fluidity of personal growth. At the same time, societies seek belonging through rigid ideologies, whether nationalist, populist, or technocratic, that promise certainty in a world where truth feels irrelevant.

Yet, within this post-truth society, there is also potential for transformation. The very anxieties produced by inauthenticity and alienation create a renewed demand for meaning, recognition, and authentic connection. Psychoanalysis reminds us that self-knowledge is never achieved in isolation but always in relation to others. If 2025 is to be more than a year of deepened fragmentation, it must become a moment where societies invest in spaces of dialogue, education, and relational ethics that restore the capacity to listen—not only to facts, but to the silences, resonances, and unspoken dimensions of human experience.

Thus, the development of society can be read as a mirror of the tensions articulated in this study: between truth and falsehood, authenticity and hypocrisy, connection and alienation. The path forward lies not in denying the reality of post-truth but in cultivating resilience within it: fostering critical thinking, emotional literacy, and the courage to recognize both the fragility and the necessity of truth. Only by embracing this paradoxical space—where subjective narratives coexist with the search for shared meaning—can societies hope to transform the post-truth condition into an opportunity for renewal rather than decline.

In current reality, truth is no longer a shared compass but a contested

narrative shaped by digital media, politics, and cultural fragmentation, while individuals experience deeper loneliness and alienation despite global connectivity. Curated digital identities increasingly replace authentic relationships, and emotions such as shame, guilt, and fear have become social products that fuel polarization and undermine genuine dialogue and recognition. Yet, even as post-truth erodes authenticity, it also opens a space to rebuild meaning through critical thinking, emotional literacy, and relational ethics.

6. CONCLUSION

The analyses developed throughout this article show that post-truth is not merely a cultural trend, but a deeper philosophical–psychological structure that reshapes how individuals experience reality, truth, and relationality. By integrating psychoanalytic concepts with critical social theory, we demonstrated that inauthenticity, emotional paralysis, and the erosion of symbolic grounding are central mechanisms through which post-truth organizes subjectivity. The proliferation of simulacra, curated identities, and ideological distortions further reveals how truth becomes subordinated to appearance, fantasy, and affective manipulation. These dynamics, while amplified by digital technologies, originate in internal conflicts—shame, denial, trauma, and the prohibition of knowing—that undermine the capacity for authentic recognition. As a result, post-truth emerges as both an external social condition and an internal psychic defense, binding individuals to narratives that maintain alienation while concealing its sources. Yet, by uncovering these mechanisms, philosophical and psychoanalytic inquiry provides tools to reclaim meaning, restore relational depth, and resist the seductive ease of inauthentic constructions. Ultimately, recognizing the intertwined psychological and philosophical foundations of post-truth is the first step toward cultivating a culture capable of truthfulness, resilience, and genuine connection.

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