

An Invitation: Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

*In lieu of writing reviews of their own books – with the exception of Walt Whitman, who did that with *Leaves of Grass* – writers often write introductions or prefaces. The purpose of such introductions is to give the prospective readers a sense of what to expect in the pages that follow, as if the author knew exactly what he was writing when he was writing it, as if he weren't waylaid by words along the way, or could possibly know what a reader may experience when reading them. In a way, I too have done that, even while knowing that all writing, if it is any good, is a leap into the relative dark, both for the writer and the reader. We can't know beforehand how either will affect us. What changes us in life and in books is always surprising.*

Who knows?

The following is the Introduction to my new book, [Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies](#). I offer it here as an invitation to consider joining me in the book so we may seek together. Sort of like Whitman's invitation:

Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,/ To jump off in the midst of the sea, and
rise again and nod to me and shout, and /laughingly dash with your hair.

Introduction

In putting together this selection of essays, I was reminded of what Albert Camus once wrote:

"A man's work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened."



While I do not claim that all these essays are art, they are my efforts to say in the most eloquent way I can what really has mattered to me in recent years, not just politically but personally, since they are entwined. Upon reflection, I see that what matters to me now is what mattered to me when I was young. Although the issues have changed in certain ways as they must, I have not—unless, or because, my wanderings through life with all its changes have paradoxically meant, in Nietzsche’s words, that I have been becoming who I am.

This seems true to me, and the essaying of the words that follow are part of that becoming. Ortega y Gasset once said that “whether he be an original or a plagiarist, man is the novelist of himself.” I agree. While a book of essays is not a novel, if read in its entirety, it does tell a story that reveals the times and the man who tells them; it expresses two stories simultaneously. And each story, if told well, always has a double dimension, the old and the new. Every life and every event is disclosed in an historical context, now and then and all the time in between.

While hoping I am an original, I know that I have learned and borrowed from many others. My greater hope is that what I say here is said in a way no other could, that it bears my original stamp. That it is novel. For I am convinced that we cannot grasp the unique nature of our current era simply by repeating straightforward political analyses. That approach is necessary but not enough. For it leaves out the hidden heart of a world that seems to be spinning madly toward some kind of denouement. It omits all the little thoughts, secrets, fears, and desires of so many people who wish to speak but can’t find the words to express their thoughts.

From a young age, I have been obsessed with truth, death, and freedom. As I recall, those words have been synonymous for God for many thinkers. So I suppose you could say that I have always been intoxicated with God or for God, or maybe God has been intoxicated with me. I don’t know, nor do I care to: knowledge overrated. I know what I feel. My concerns have been those of many writers throughout the ages—poets, rebels, journalists, philosophers, passionate writers of every stripe, desperados for truth and a peaceful world of love and kindness. Those I have admired the most, believers or unbelievers—it is often hard to tell the difference, nor does it matter—were those who dismissed categories, distinctions, or labels, but who wrote freely because for them to write freely was to live freely and not to be caged by anyone’s restrictions as to what they should be saying or how they were saying it. For them truth was their God, and through the weaving of words down a page they were always seeking to disclose what was hidden from common sight. They used language to open up cracks in the consensus reality that the great poet and writer Kenneth Rexroth called the “social lie”:

“Since all society is organized in the interest of exploiting classes and since if men knew this they would cease to work and society would fall apart, it has always been necessary, at least since the urban revolutions, for societies to be governed ideologically by a system of fraud.”

Indeed, we live in the era of massive fraud where the trans-national wealthy elites, led by the American war and propaganda machine, continue to try to convince the gullible that they are saviors of humanity even as they lie and cheat and murder by the millions.

So what follows are my efforts to unearth the fraud, while celebrating the beauty of life and telling little stories here and there that I hope exemplify its comedy and tragedy. I am always experimenting every time I sit down to write. Not consciously, since I let inspiration guide me. Often, as I think is evident in many pieces, thoughts come to me when walking, and from those initial thoughts comes the path I follow, not knowing exactly where I am headed. Some of these essays are highly intellectual and structured; some, straightforwardly political; others are meanderings that seek to express essential truths I sense in the telling.

The process feels physical to me. It has a feel and smell. A rhythm. Like a song. Like a dawdling walk in the woods or by a flowing river. If I call them all essays, it is to indicate that they are my attempts, my experiments, my experience (Latin: *exigere*: trial, attempt, try) to disclose to myself and anyone who might read them what is going on in the world that I find important and worth investigating. To use my artistic and sociological imagination to connect the dots between the personal and the social and in so doing to say something worth sharing with others.

Whatever my ostensible starting point—a major event, a book, an experience—you can usually be sure that by the time you have read to the end of the piece, I will have branched off down by-ways that lead to other trails that eventually reconnect to the main path. Or so I hope. While I usually see how the roads all lead back to one, sometimes I only intuit it and the reader is left to do the reconnoitering alone. I think this is good. For while these essays are set in ink within the covers of a book, verbal tenses and ink can be misleading. They suggest that the author’s quest is over, that what motivated the initial words is past, that the case is closed and the reader and writer are dead-heads satisfied with their knowingness. For me, that is far from true. The paradox of having written these essays is that I have tried to do so in language that evokes in the reader the exhilaration I felt in writing them, and that such aliveness will be carried into the world as rebellion against war and injustice.

I have arranged the essays in no particular order, except to begin and end with a few that tell you something about me. I think it is always good to have some deeper sense of who the author is whose words you are reading, beyond the brief notices on the back of books.

These essays cover a wide variety of topics: propaganda, wars, government assassinations, work, nature, time, the CIA, silence, poetry, digital dementia, etc. They range far and wide, as I try to connect the scattered dots to draw a coherent picture of our world today. Since I write with no particular goal in mind except truth as I see it, perhaps readers would be best served by randomly choosing a piece and seeing where it might lead them. As with living, I suspect that reading is best done somewhat randomly in the hope that one experiences a sense of liberation in the process. I have scattered some satirical pieces throughout to add a bit of levity to serious matters and hope the reader will not mistake their “authors” for the

real me. But if so, that would add to the humor, something we need to survive.

Three authors whom I hold in high esteem and whose names I mention numerous times in this book are John Berger, Albert Camus, and James W. Douglass.

Berger is often described as a Marxist art critic, but such an appellation is misleading, for he was much more than that. While always situating his analyses in historical and cultural contexts, and never forgetting the class structure that underlies the cruel capitalistic order, he was acutely aware that consumerism and therefore global capitalism as well as philosophical materialism rested upon a “materialist fantasy” that denied the spiritual power of evil and the spiritual power of good to respond. As a counter-weight, Berger always made sure to cling close to human reality and include what he called “enclaves of the beyond” in his writing. These were often the marginalized hiding places of hope where the spiritual faith in human love and solidarity was nourished and sustained despite the world’s evil.

Albert Camus was very similar in many ways. An avowed atheist with a spiritual core, he was an artistic anarchist with a passionate spiritual hunger and an austere and moral Don Juan. He could not be pigeonholed. This drove many crazy. His allegiance was to truth, not ideologies. He tried to fight injustice while extolling life’s beauty and the human search for happiness. He grasped the essence of the ever-recurring plague that evil does inflict upon the world. He was preoccupied with death, freedom, and an absent God, but never gave up hope and insisted that rebellion was the only honorable course. Yet the fight against the plague must go on; that was Camus’ message. If not, you will be destroyed by your own complicity in evil.

James W. Douglass, although a writer of a more overt spiritual sensibility, continues to write brilliantly about “the unspeakable” that has been used to cover-up the U.S. government’s assassinations of its greatest anti-war leaders: JFK, Malcom X, MLK, and RFK. The unspeakable is a term coined by the Trappist monk Thomas Merton in the mid-1960s. He meant it to point to a systemic evil that permeates American society that defies speech: “It is the void that contradicts everything that is spoken even before the words are said; the void that gets into the language of public and official declarations at the very moment when they are pronounced, and makes them ring dead with the hollowness of the abyss. It is the void out of which Eichmann drew the punctilious exactitude of his obedience” It is, in other words, the plague that is us when we live in the nest of the unspeakable as obedient servants of the American Empire. Douglass makes the plague manifest in order to give us hope, and in speaking the unspeakable, he shows us both the radical evil and the redemptive courage that we are all capable of.

I mention these three brilliant writers here to say how grateful I am for their work. There are many others, of course, whom you will encounter in the course of reading these essays. For even when we write alone, even when we think we walk alone, we are always following in others’ footsteps.

As Camus says in one of his short stories, it is hard to distinguish between solitary and solidary.

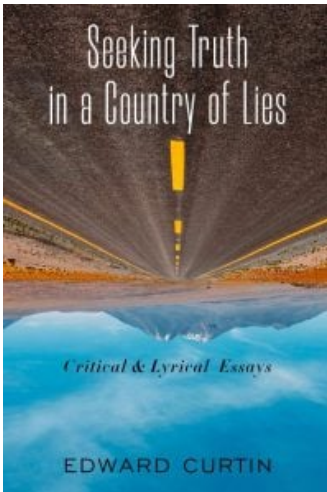
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Distinguished author and sociologist Edward Curtin is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization. He is the author of the new book: <https://www.claritypress.com/product/seeking-truth-in-a-country-of-lies/>



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