

The End of Reality?

By [Edward Curtin](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Global Research, September 18, 2020

In 1888, the year before he went insane, **Friedrich Nietzsche** wrote the following in *Twilight of the Idols*:

We have got rid of the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no! Along with the real world we've done away with the apparent world as well.

So, if you feel you also may be going insane in the present climate of digital screen life, where real is unreal but realer than real, the apparent is cryptic, and up is down, true is false, and what you see you don't, it has a history. One hundred and thirty-two years ago, Nietzsche added that "something extraordinarily nasty and evil is about to make its debut." We know it did, and the bloody butcher's bench known as the twentieth century was the result. Nihilism stepped onto center stage and has been the star of the show ever since, straight through to 2020. Roberto Calasso puts it this way in *Literature and the Gods*:

Here we are, announces Nietzsche, and it would be hard not to hear a mocking ring in his voice. We thought we were living in a world where the fog had lifted, a disenchanted, ascertainable, verifiable world. And instead everything has gone back to being a 'fable' again. How are we to get our bearings ... This is the paralysis, the peculiar uncertainty of modern times, a paralysis that all since have experienced.

Obviously, we haven't gotten our bearings. We are far more adrift today on a stormy electronic sea where the analogical circle of life has been replaced by the digital, and "truths" like numbers click into place continuously to lead us in wrong, algorithm-controlled directions. The trap is almost closed.

Of course, Nietzsche did not have the Internet, but he lived at the dawn of the electric era, when space-time transformations were occurring at a rapid pace. Inventions such as photography, the phonograph, the telephone, electricity, etc. were contracting space and time and a disembodied "reality" was being born. With today's Internet and digital screen life, the baby is full-grown and completely disembodied. It does nothing but look at its image that is looking back into a lifeless void, whose lost gaze can't figure out what it's seeing.

Take, for example, the phonograph, invented by Thomas Edison in 1878. If you could record a person's voice, and if that person died, were you then listening to the voice of a living person or one who was dead? If the person whose voice was recorded was alive and was miles away, you had also compressed earthly space. The phonograph suppressed absence, conjured ghosts, and seemed to overcome time and death as it captured the flow of time in

sound. It allowed a disembodied human voice to inhabit a machine, an early example of downloading.

“Two ruling ambitions in modern technology,” writes John Durham Peters in his wonderful book, *Speaking into the Air*, “appear in the phonograph: the creation of artificial life and the conjuring of the dead.”

Many people started to hear voices, and these people were not called deluded. Soon, with the arrival of cinema, they would see ghosts as well. Today, speaking ghosts are everywhere, hiding in hand-held devices. It’s Halloween all year round as we are surrounded by electronic zombies in a screen culture.

This technological annihilation of space and time that was happening at a frenetic pace was the material background to Nietzsche’s thought. His philosophical and epistemological analyses emerged from German intellectual life of his time as well, where theologians and philosophers were discovering that knowledge was relative and had to be understood *in situ*, i.e., within its historical and social place or context.

Without going into abstruse philosophical issues here, suffice it to say, Nietzsche was suggesting that not only was God dead because people killed him, but that knowledge was a fiction that changed over time and was a human construction. All knowledge, not just science, had to be taken “as if” it were true. This was a consoling mental trick but falsely reassuring, for most people could not accept this, since “knowledge” was a protection racket from pain and insanity. It still is. In other words, not only had people murdered God, but they had slain absolutes as well. This left them in the lurch, not knowing if what they knew and believed were really true, or sort of true – maybe, perhaps. The worm of uncertainty had entered modern thought through modern thought.

While the average person did not delve into these revolutionary ideas, they did, through the inventions that were entering their lives, and the news about Darwin, science, religion, etc., realize, however vaguely, that something very strange and dramatic was under way. Life was passing from substance to shadow because of human ingenuity.

It is similar to what so many feel today: that reality and truth are moving beyond their grasp as technological forces that they voluntarily embrace push everyday life towards some spectral denouement. An inhuman, trans-human, on-line electronic life where everything is a parody of everything that preceded it, like an Andy Warhol copy of a copy of a Campbell’s soup can with a canned mocking laugh track that keeps repeating itself. All this follows from the nineteenth century relativization of knowledge, or what at least was taken as such, for to say all knowledge is relative is an absolute statement. That contradiction goes to the heart of our present dilemma.

This old feeling of lostness is perhaps best summarized in a few lines from Mathew Arnold’s 19th century poem, “Dover Beach”:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

But that was then. Today, the Joker's sardonic laughter would suffice.

I am sitting outside as I write, sipping a glass of wine before dinner. Although New England fall weather is approaching, a nasty mosquito is buzzing around my head. I hear it. I am in killer mode since these bastards love to bite me. This is real life. If I went into the house and connected to the Internet on the computer screen - news, social media, anything - I would be entering another dimension. Screen life, not real life. The society of the spectacle. No real mosquitoes, no wine, no trees swaying in the evening breeze.

In his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, written between Nietzsche's time and now, Ernest Hemingway, a man who surely lived in the physical world, writes of how Robert Cohn, the boxing champion from Princeton University, wants Jake Barnes, the book's protagonist, to take a trip with him to South America. As they sit and talk in Paris, Barnes says no, and tells Cohn, "All countries look just like the moving pictures."

Whether Hemingway was being ironic or not, or simply visionary, I don't know. For in the 1920s, before passports and widespread tourism, there were many places you could only see if you traveled to them and they would never appear in moving pictures, while today there is almost no place that is not available to view beforehand on the internet or television. So why go anywhere if you've already seen it all on a screen? Why travel to nowhere or to where you have already been? Déjà vu all over again, as Yogi Berra put it and everyone laughed. Now the laugh is on us.

This is neither an argument nor a story. It's real. I am trying to get my bearings in a disorienting situation. Call it a compass, a weather-vane, a prayer. You can call me AI or Ishmael. Call me crazy. Perhaps this writing is just an "as if."

About fifteen years ago, I was teaching at a college where most communication was done via email. I was, as they say, out of the loop since I didn't do email. I was often asked why I didn't, and I would repeatedly reply, like Melville's Bartleby, because "I prefer not to." Finally, in order to keep my job, I succumbed and with the laptop computer they provided me, I went "on-line." There were 6,954.7 emails in my in-box from the past three years. In those three years, I had performed all my duties scrupulously and hadn't missed a beat. Someone showed me how to delete the emails, which I did without reading any, but I had entered the labyrinth. I went electronic. My reality changed. I am still searching for Ariadne's thread.

But I am not yet a machine and refuse the invitation to become one. It's a very insistent invitation, almost an order. Neil Postman (Oh such a rich surname!) sums it up well in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*:

The fundamental metaphorical message of the computer, in short, is that we are machines – thinking machines, to be sure, but machines nonetheless. It is for this reason that the computer is the quintessential, incomparable, near perfect machine for Technopoly. It subordinates the claims of our nature, our biology, our emotions, our spirituality. The computer claims sovereignty over the whole range of human experience, and supports its claim by showing that it ‘thinks’ better than we can...John McCarthy, the inventor of the term ‘artificial intelligence’...claims that ‘even machines as simple as thermostats can be said to have beliefs...What is significant about this response is that it has redefined the meaning of the word ‘belief’ ... rejects the view that humans have internal states of mind that are the foundation of belief and argues instead that ‘belief’ means only what someone or something does ... rejects the idea that the mind is a biological phenomenon ... In other words, what we have here is a case of metaphor gone mad.

Postman wrote that in 1992, before the computer and the internet became ubiquitous and longer before on-line living had become de rigueur – before it was being shoved down our throats as it is today under the cover of COVID-19.

There is little doubt that we are being pushed to embrace what Klaus Schwab, the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), calls [COVID-19:The Great Reset](#), that involves a total acceptance of the electronic, on-line life. On-line learning, on-line news, on-line everything – only an idiot (from Greek, *idiotes*, a private person who pays not attention to public affairs) would fail to see what is being promoted. And who controls the electronic life and internet? Not you, not I, but the powers that be, the intelligence agencies and the power elites. Goodbye body, goodbye blood – “I don’t think we should ever shake hands ever again, to be honest with you,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in support of human estrangement.

Peter Koenig, one of the most astute investigators of this propaganda effort, puts it [this](#) way:

The panacea of the future will be crowned by the Pearl of the Fourth Industrialization – Artificial intelligence (AI). It will be made possible by a 5G electromagnetic field, allowing the Internet of Things (IoT). Schwab and Malleret [Schwab’s co-author] won’t say, beware, there is opposition. 5G could still be blocked. The 5G existence and further development is necessary for surveillance and control of humanity, by digitizing everything, including human identity and money.

It will be so simple, no more cash, just electronic, digital money – that is way beyond the control of the owner, the truthful earner of the money, as it can be accessed by the Global Government and withheld and / or used for pressuring misbehaving citizens into obeying the norms imposed from above. You don’t behave according to our norms, no money to buy food, shelter and health services, we let you starve. No more travel. No more attending public events. You’ll be put gradually in your own solitary confinement. The dictatorial and tyrannical global commandeering by digital control of everything is the essence of the 4th Age of Industrialization – highly promoted by the WEF’s Great Reset.

Like everything, of course, this push to place life under the aegis of cyberspace has a history, one that defies the machine and attempts to convince people that they too are

machines without existential freedom. Thus the ongoing meme pumped out for the past three decades has been that we are controlled by our brains and that the brain is a computer and vice versa. Brain research has received massive government funding. Drugs have been offered as the solution to every human problem. So-called diseases and disorders have been created through the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and matched to pharmaceutical drugs (or the revers) for scandalous profits. And the mind has been reduced to a figment of deluded imaginations. People are machines; that's the story, marvelous machines. They have no freedom.

If one wishes an example of techno-fascism, there is one from the art world. Back in the 1920s and 1930s there was an art movement known as Futurism. Its leader proponent was an Italian Fascist, friend of Mussolini, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. The futurists claimed that all life revolves around the machine, that the machine was god, that it was beyond human control and had to be obeyed. They extolled war and speed and claimed that humans were no more significant than stones. Patriotism, militarism, strength, method, and the kingdom of experts were their blueprint for a corporate fascist state. The human eye and mind would be re-educated to automatically obey the machine's dictates.

Now we have cyberspace, digital machines, and the internet, an exponential extension of the machine world of the 1930s and the rise of Mussolini, Fascism, and Hitler. That this online world is being pushed as the new and future normal by trans-national elite forces should not be surprising. If human communication becomes primarily digitally controlled on-line and on screens, those who control the machines will have achieved the most powerful means of mind control ever invented. That will be MKULTRA on a vast scale. Surveillance will be complete.

Yes, there are places on the internet where truth is and will be told, such as this site where you are reading this; but as we can see from today's growing censorship across the web, those power elites and intelligence forces who control the companies that do their bidding will narrow the options for dissenting voices. Such censorship starts slowly, and then when one looks again, it is a fait accompli. The frog in the pan of slowly heating cold water never realizes it is being killed until it is too late. Free speech is now being strangled. Censorship is widespread.

The purpose of so much internet propaganda is to confuse, obsess, depress, and then repress the population. The overlords accomplish this by the "peculiar linking together of opposites - knowledge with ignorance, cynicism with fanaticism - [which] is one of the chief distinguishing marks of Oceanic society," writes Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "The official ideology abounds with contradictions even where there is no practical reason for them." One look into one's life will suffice to see how the overlords have set people against each other. It's a classic tactic. Divide and conquer. Trump vs. Biden, Democrats vs. Republicans, whites vs. blacks, liberals vs. conservatives. Pure mind games. Contradictions every day to create social disorientation. Orwell describes Doublethink as follows:

Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The Party intellectual knows in which direction his memories must be altered; he therefore knows he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of doublethink he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated. The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt...To

tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies – all this is indispensably necessary...**If one is to rule, and to continue ruling, one must be able to dislocate the sense of reality.**
[author's emphasis]

Nietzsche said that along with the real world we have done away with the apparent as well. Digital online life has accomplished that. It has allowed the rulers – through the media who are the magicians who serve them – to create counterfeit news and doctored videos at will, to present diametrically opposed points of view within the same paragraph, and to push breaking news items so fast that no one half-way sane could keep up with their magic shows. Nietzsche obviously didn't foresee this technology, but he sensed the madness that the relativity of knowledge and the technology of his day would usher in.

The popular 1990s term “Information Superhighway,” meaning the internet and all digital telecommunications, was the perfect term to describe this lunacy. Get on that highway and go as fast as you can while trying to catch the meaning of all the information flashing past you as you speed to nowhere. For not only does censorship, propaganda, disinformation, mixed messages, and contradictions line the road you are traveling, but contextless information overload is so heavy that even if you were stopped in a traffic jam, there is too much information to comprehend. And if you think this Superhighway is a freeway, think again, for the cost is high. No one puts out their hand and asks you to pay up; but the more you travel down this road you'll notice you are missing a bit of flesh here and some blood there. And without a speed pass, you are considered road kill.

To make matters much worse, they say we need 5G to go much faster.

Paul Virilio, who has devoted himself to the study of speed (dromology), puts it this way in *Open Sky*:

The speed of the new optoelectronic and electroacoustic milieu becomes the final **void** (the void of the quick), a vacuum that no longer depends on the interval between places or things and so on the world's very extension, but on the interface of an instantaneous transmission of remote appearances, on a geographic and geometric retention in which all volume, all relief vanishes.

And yet I don't have a simple answer to the internet dilemma. You are reading it on-line and I am posting it there. It is very convenient and quick. And yet...and yet....

Can we just walk away from it? Maybe. Perhaps like those few who, in Ursula K. Le Guin's excruciating story, “[The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas](#),” we may decide the price for our conveniences and so-called happiness is too high and that there are hidden victims that this techno-scientific “progress” creates beneath its veneer of efficiency. Others, us, our children, all children, who are reaching out not for speed and machines, but for the human touch that the on-line propagandists hope to destroy. In Le Guin's story, the price nearly all

the citizens of Omelas are willing to pay for their happiness and comfort is the imprisonment of a single child. Perhaps we should consider what we are doing to all the world's children and their futures.

My friend Gary recently sent me this letter. I believe it sums up what many people feel. There is a vast hunger for reality and truth. The analog life. How to live it – the question hangs in the air as the artificial intelligence/digital controllers try to reduce us to machines.

Although apparently it isn't clear if Twain ever said this, it's still a great quote: ("If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you do, you're misinformed.") To which "amen" is the only appropriate response.

I continue to daily stay abreast of events through the web, and these days much of what passed for "progressive media" simply regurgitates the covid madness as if it had been delivered on stone tablets – rather than by the same MSM that lie to us daily about literally ANYTHING of any importance.

There are days I wonder "why" I continue to bother to follow the unfolding madness as if it made some "difference." I could certainly play guitar more, and I might even get it together to write a few pieces on the nature of our collective madness, for which I have studiously assembled copious notes. I really don't need any more information or examples – I think I have things covered on that front.

Instead I find myself daily doing the little dance we're all familiar with – uncomfortable with being "uninformed" – yet at almost every turn finding myself being routinely – "misinformed" – and so having to sift through the endless debris to have any chance at developing any coherent understanding of the world.

So yes, I totally get the draw of just saying to hell with the internet. After years of shifting through the endless propaganda operations our generation has been subject too, I have no doubt you and I see through most the nonsense for what it is before we even have the proof in hand. Once the rose-colored glasses of 'American exceptionalism' are off, one can almost sense and see through the lies in real time even as they are being uttered.

Reading Gary's words reminded me of those of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton's definition of the Unspeakable:

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...

Yes, real time, real life – as we do our little dances.

Can we do our little dances and preserve reality? I'm not sure.

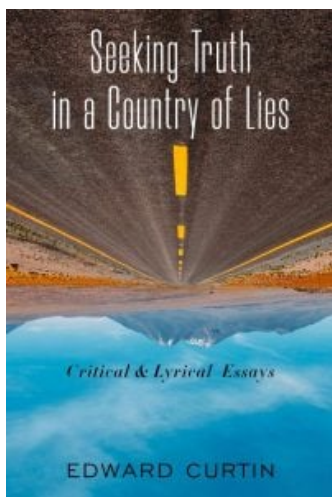
*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

This article was originally published on the author's [blog site](#).

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/>



Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies

Author: Edward Curtin

ISBN: 9781949762266

Published: 2020

Options: EBOOK – Epub and Kindle, paper, PDF

[Click here to order.](#)

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Edward Curtin](#), Global Research, 2020

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Edward Curtin](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance

a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca