

Jill Lepore THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ARTIFICIAL STATE

Narrated by the Author

"Much in history is headlong but few grand transformations have been more precipitate or more heedless than the rise of ... the Artificial State," writes Jill Lepore in this passionate account of how rule by machine has ravaged the world.

Inspired by Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which argued in 1951 that the machinery of modern life was reshaping the very fundamentals of human existence, Lepore, profoundly disturbed by the technology revolution and by the soulless inundation of artificial intelligence, unfurls a new history for our own twenty-first century.

Building on an essay in *The New Yorker* in 2024, Lepore's clarion call traces our increasing dependence on and strangulation by data. Political campaigns, awash in an avalanche of fake bots, have been reduced to attention-mining algorithms, while multinational media corporations dictate public discourse, and the era of the liberal nation-state seems to be coming to a rapid end, replaced by billionaire technocrats reliant on autocracy and the tools of AI.

With Orwellian overtones, *The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State* demonstrates how technology has corroded global democracy, leading to the destruction of both human community and capacity for self-government, creating a new form of

AI government, a digital citizen's assembly, where AI will recommend the course of action to humans in place of human-run legislatures. Especially sobering with this proliferation of "dizzying, ever-changing schemes, prophecies, and predictions" is that the Artificial State has come at the expense of the natural world, leading to catastrophic loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

Deliberately alarming, *The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State*, despite its abundance of dire facts, is not a funeral dirge; rather, it's an inspiring wake-up call, written in Lepore's typically elegiac prose, which demonstrates that nothing about the Artificial State was inevitable, for it is a "government without consent, even government without humans." It can, Lepore asserts, be dismantled. Other heinous systems, like feudalism, fascism, and slavery, have also been dismantled, but disassembly requires identifying the parts, tracing the sources. It requires telling a new history. This is the purpose of *The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State*.

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