

“Imagine the amazing good fortune of the generation that gets to see the **end** of the world. This is as marvelous as being there at the **beginning**.”

— Jean Baudrillard

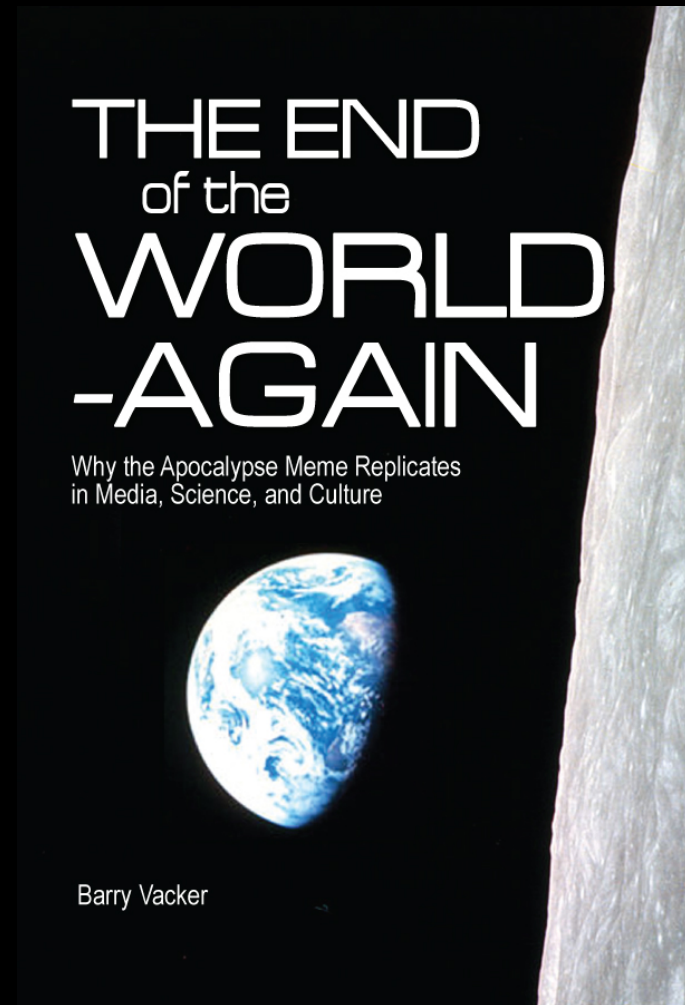
Doomsday Scenarios

*Why they replicate and
what they mean*

Barry Vacker

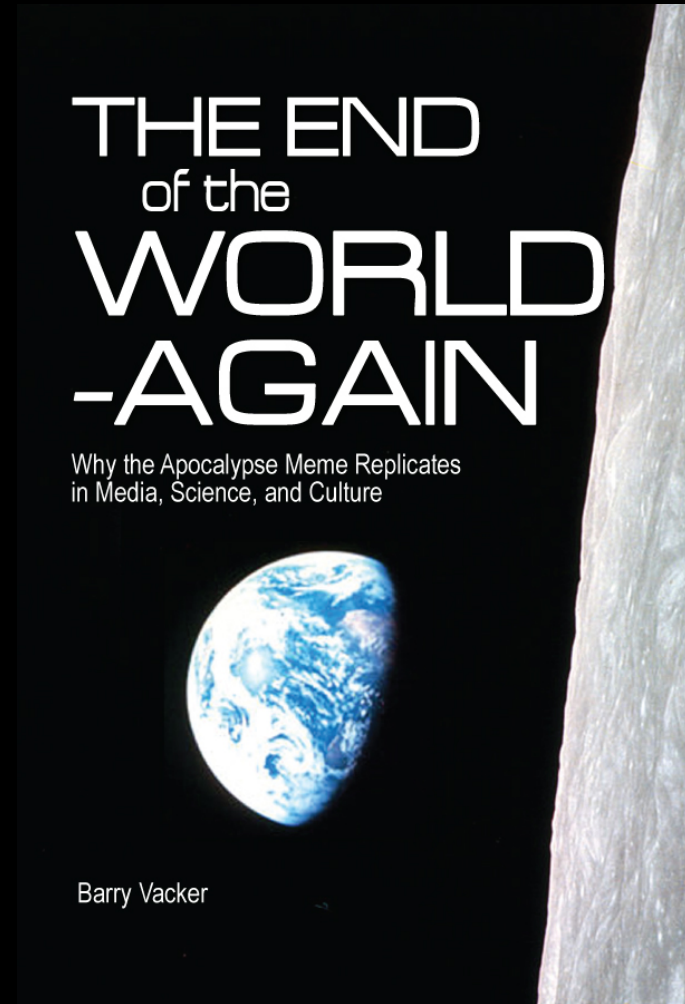
Associate Professor

Temple



Doomsday Scenarios

Publication date:
December 21, 2012



Mayan “Prophecy”



Maya media hysteria



% of Americans who believed this **likely** to happen on December 21

- Mayan prophecy:



Survey: National Geographic, 2012.

% of Americans who believed this **likely** to happen on December 21

- Mayan prophecy: **27%**
- **85** million people



Survey: National Geographic, 2012.

% of humans who believed this **would** happen on December 21

- China:
- America:
- Russia:
- Canada:
- Great Britain:
- Germany:
- Global total:



Different survey: Reuters-Ipsos, 2012.

% of humans who believed this **would** happen on December 21

- China: **20%**
- America: **12%**
- Russia: **13%**
- Canada: **9%**
- Great Britain: **7%**
- Germany: **4%**
- Global total: **10%**
- **700 million people total**

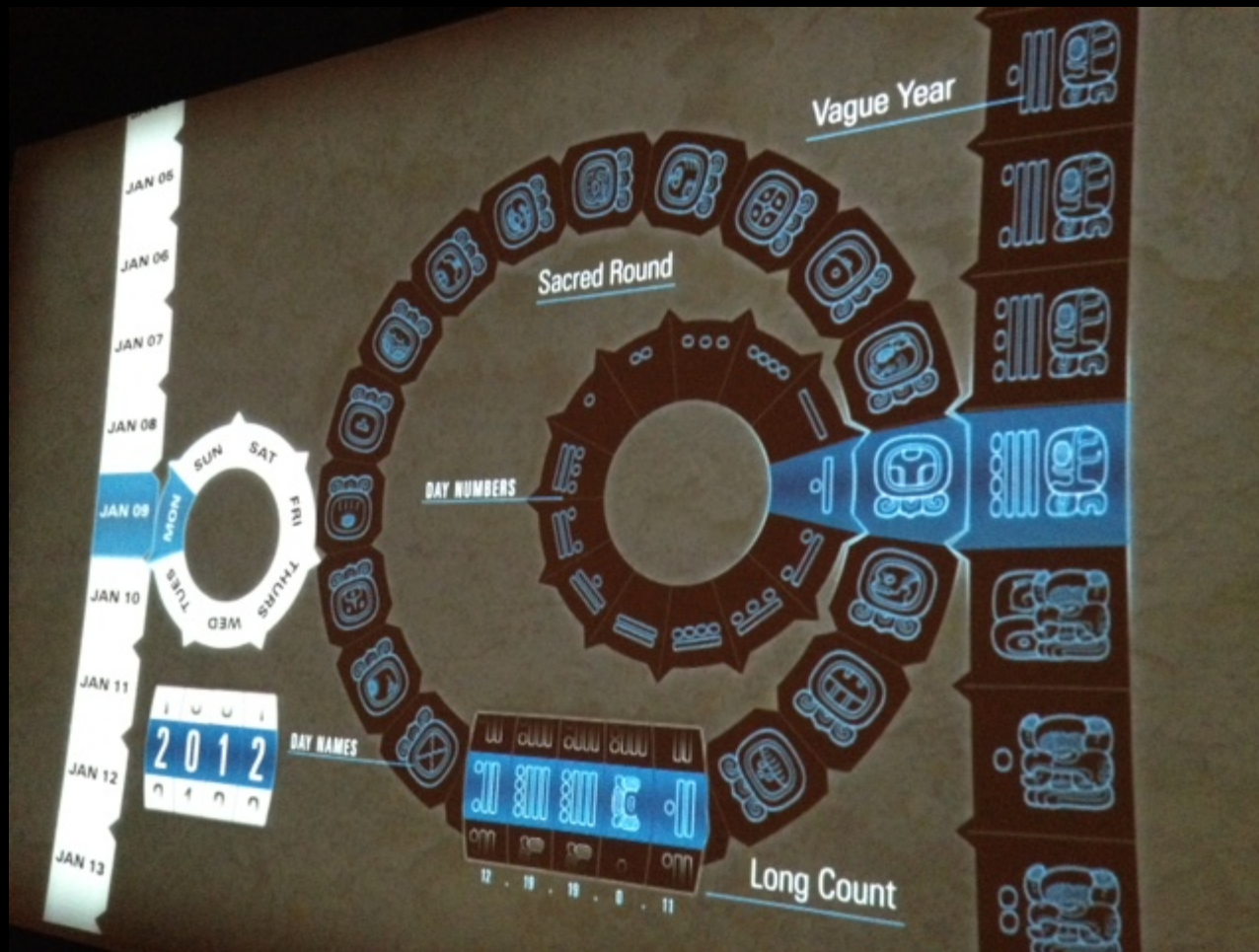


Different survey: Reuters-Ipsos, 2012.

Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



Maya calendar was cyclical



Extending into the **past** and **future** billions of years.

The Maya Did Not Predict the End



The Maya Did Not Predict the End We Did



Doom was to come on Friday, December 21, 2012.

Mayan "Prophecy"



The end of the world as a professor knows it

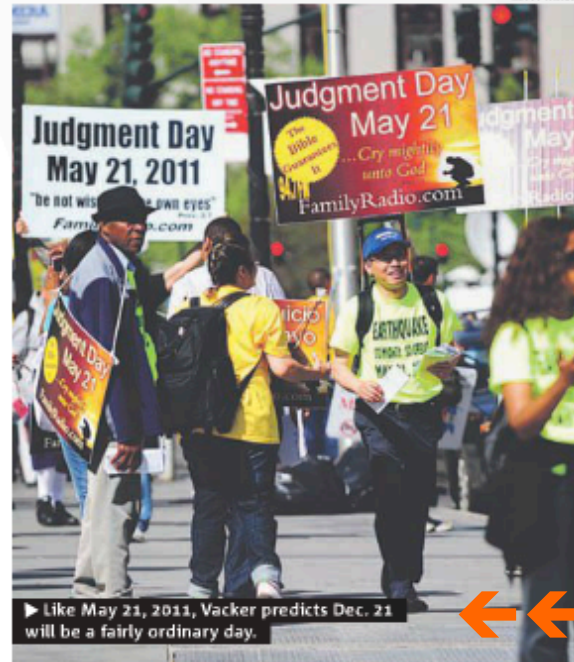
► Relax: Dec. 21 is just the latest in a long history of apocalypse prediction dates ► Temple professor Barry Vacker on our culture's obsession with doomsday

The world isn't going to end on Dec. 21, despite what the Mayans did (or didn't) predict. Our fascination with stories about the end of the world isn't going to disappear, either.

These stories have been told since Plato wrote about the destruction of an entire continent in "Atlantis," says Barry Vacker, associate professor of media studies and production at Temple University's School of Media and Communication. Today, movies like "Armageddon" and "Melancholia" prove that the fascination continues. "What all of these various scenarios have in common is that they pose the question: 'What if?' Whether it's bioterrorism, global warming or a meteor, people like to think about what might happen and how we might react," says Vacker.

Some of the scenarios are ridiculous and unlikely, but others are more realistic. These fact-based scenarios are intended to explore human behavior and make an argument for how we should act as a unified species, not how we should act as individuals. "Examining what would happen if we continue burning fossil fuels or use nuclear weapons can serve as a warning," Vacker says.

Vacker's latest book, "The End of the World — Again: Why the Apocalypse Meme Replicates in Media, Science,



► Like May 21, 2011, Vacker predicts Dec. 21 will be a fairly ordinary day.

If you go

- Vacker will be participating in a three-evening celebration marking the predicted end of the world at PhilaMOCA (531 N. 12th St.) Dec. 19-21. Events include panel discussions, apocalyptic film screenings and an end of the world party — with a countdown.

and Culture," will be published later this month — and it's likely sales won't be hurting. "In the past year, NASA has spent \$4 million looking for near-earth objects," Vacker says. "Compare that to the \$550 million the American public has spent for tickets to 'Armageddon.'"

 **JUDY WEIGHTMAN**
letters@metro.us

Why Do Doomsdays Replicate

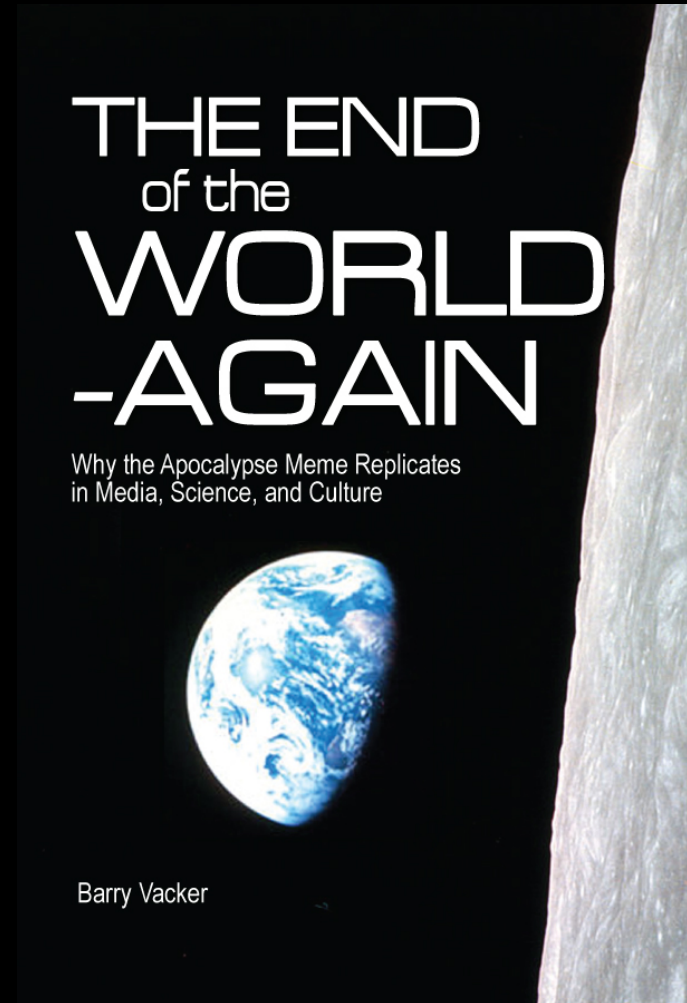
THE END of the WORLD -AGAIN

Why the Apocalypse Meme Replicates
in Media, Science, and Culture



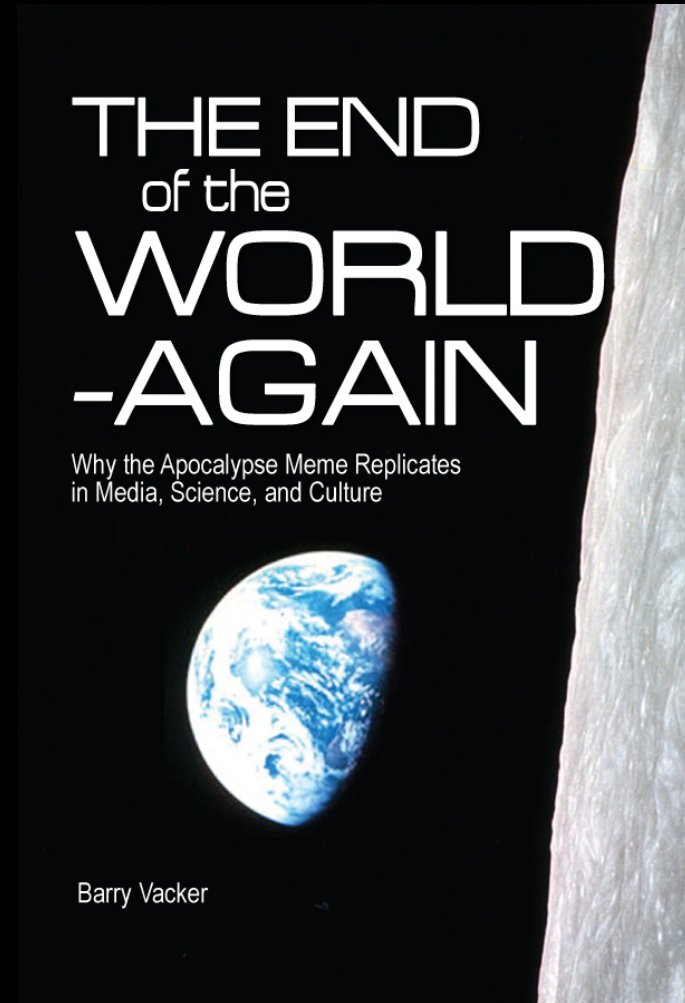
Barry Vacker

Regarding “prophecies” and predictions
there are **three** possibilities



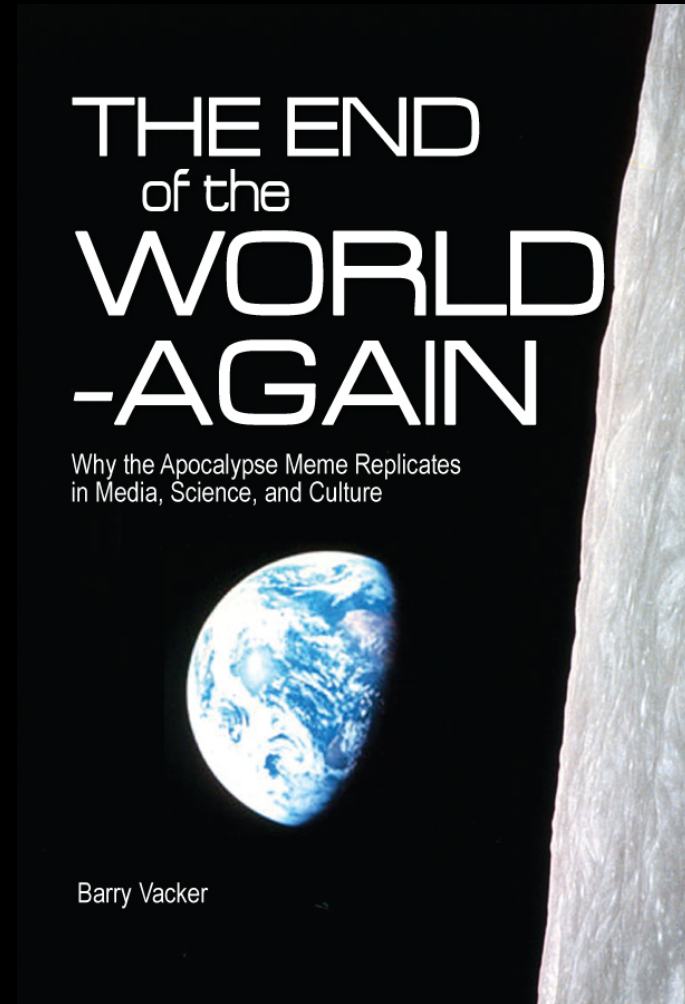
Regarding “prophecies” and predictions
there are **three** possibilities

1. The end of the world
will happen.



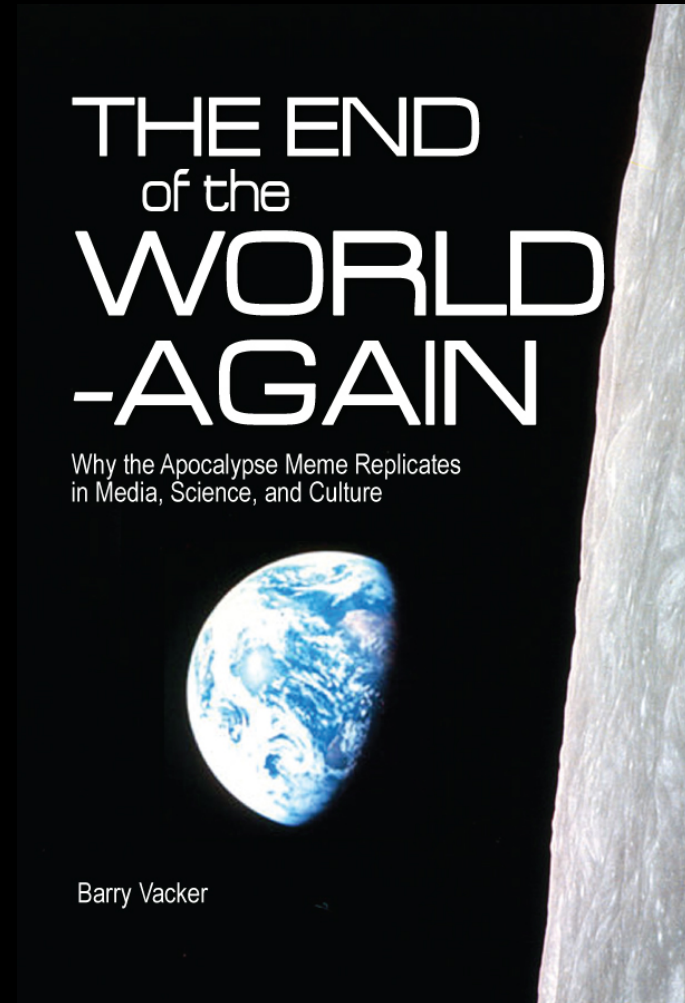
Regarding “prophecies” and predictions
there are **three** possibilities

1. The end of the world
will happen.
2. The end of the world
will not happen.



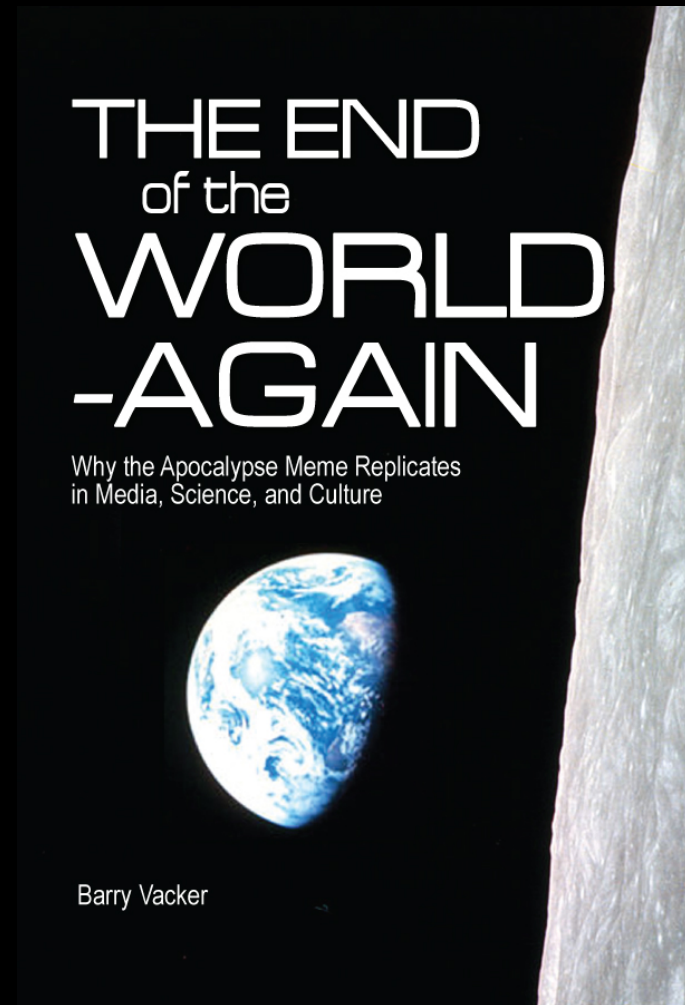
Regarding “prophecies” and predictions there are **three** possibilities

1. The end of the world
will happen.
2. The end of the world
will not happen.
3. The end of the world
has **already** happened!



Regarding “prophecies” and predictions there are **three** possibilities

1. The end of the world
will happen.
2. **mostly “prophecy”**
2. The end of the world
will not happen.
 - **mostly science**
3. The end of the world
has already happened!
 - **philosophy, cosmology**



Paranoia or Pandemic?



Paranoia or Pandemic?



Or Prophecy of the “End Times”...

JOHN 16:33
PROVERBS 6:6-8
ROMANS 8:28

Preparing for *ebola* with confidence

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13
PROVERBS 22:3
PSALMS 23:4

Or Prophecy of the “End Times”...

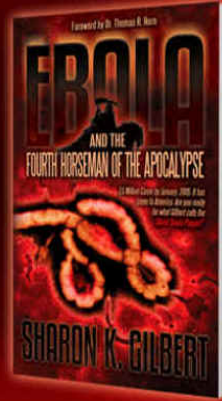
LIMITED TIME 33% OFF SALE
DELUXE EBOLA PANDEMIC KIT!

AT SURVIVOR MALL

ONLY \$44.95 WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!
>INCLUDES FREE \$20.00 EMERGENCY DVD<



>>>> AND COMING NEXT MONTH! <<<<<



Important New Non-Fiction
COMING SOON FROM
SHARON K. GILBERT

EBOLA AND THE FOURTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

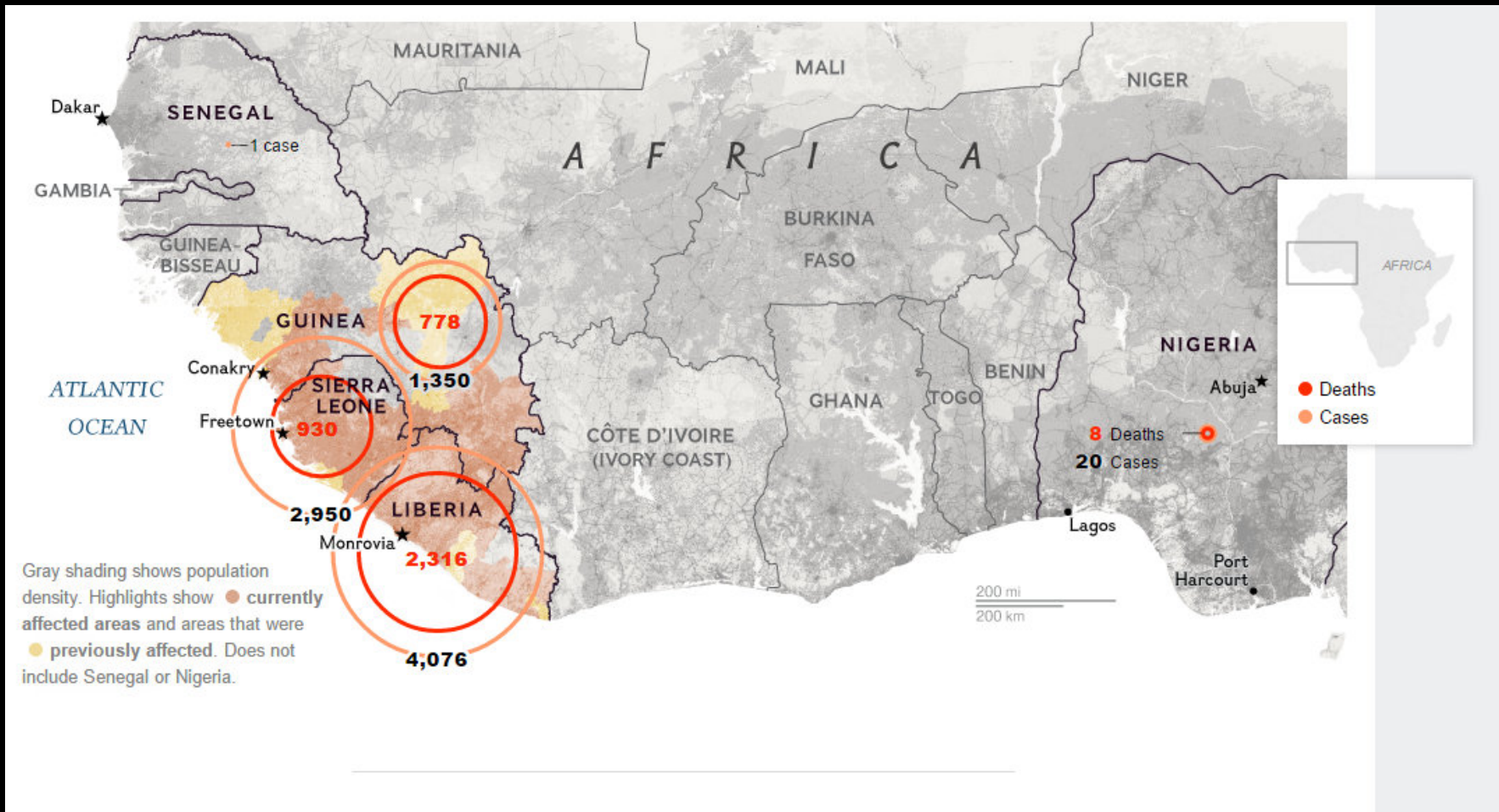
1.5 Million Cases by January, 2015. It has come to America. Are you ready for what Gilbert calls the "Blood Snake Plague?"

Or Prophecy of the "End Times"...

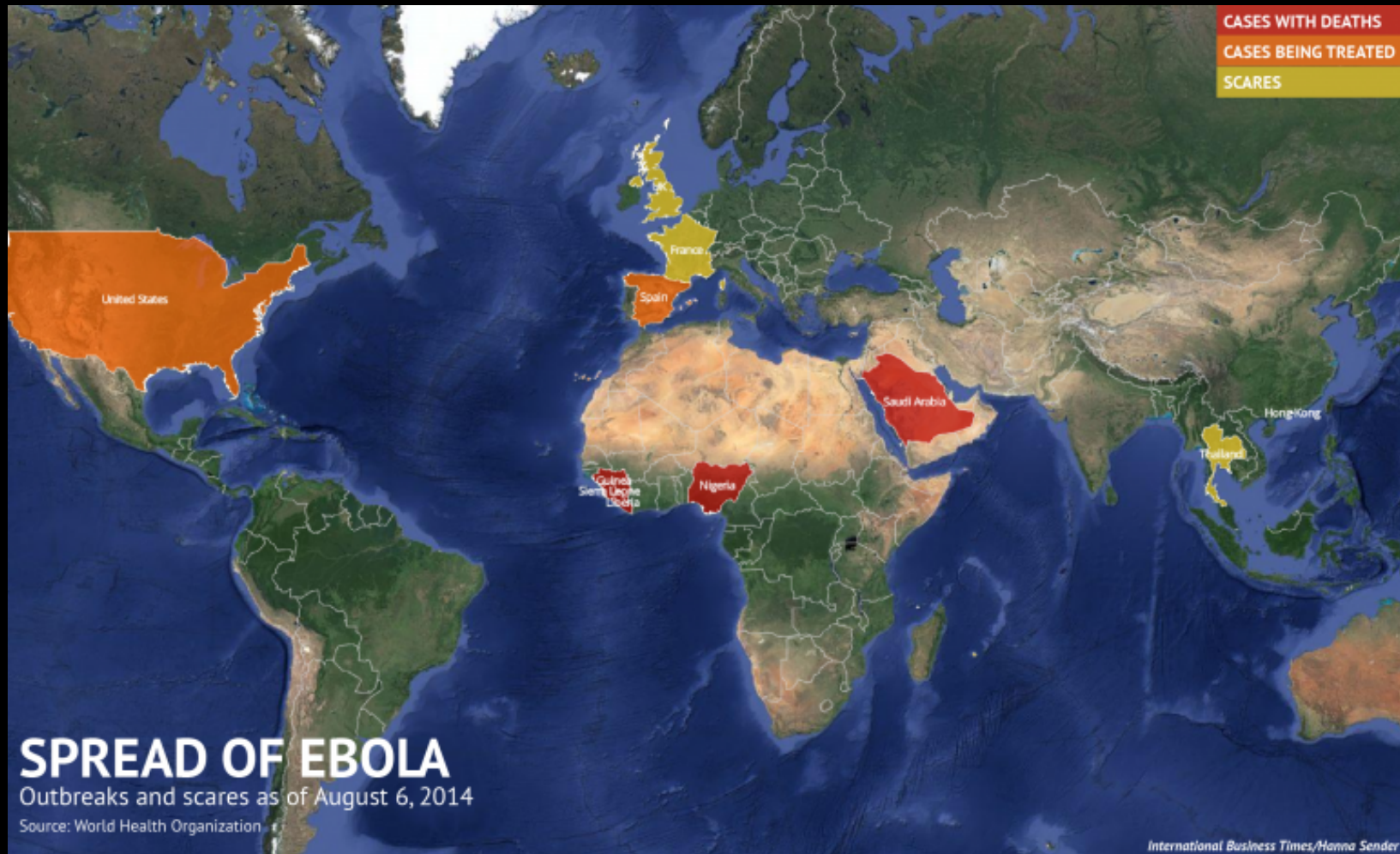
Preventing Doomsday



Mapping Doomsday



Mapping Doomsday



Mapping Doomsday

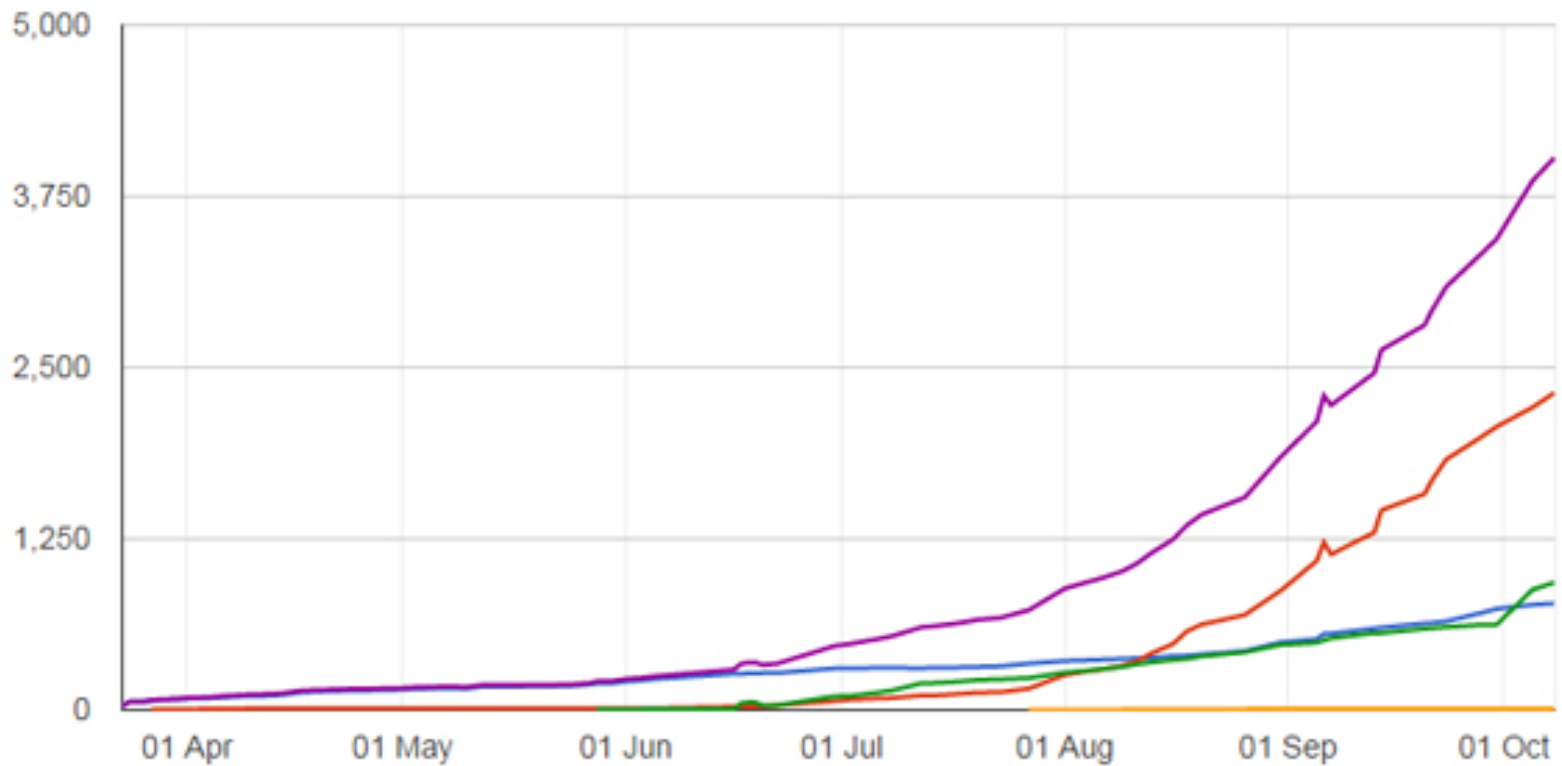


Mocking Doomsday



Ebola exponential?

Guinea: 778 Liberia: 2,316 Nigeria: 8 Sierra Leone: 930
Total: 4,032

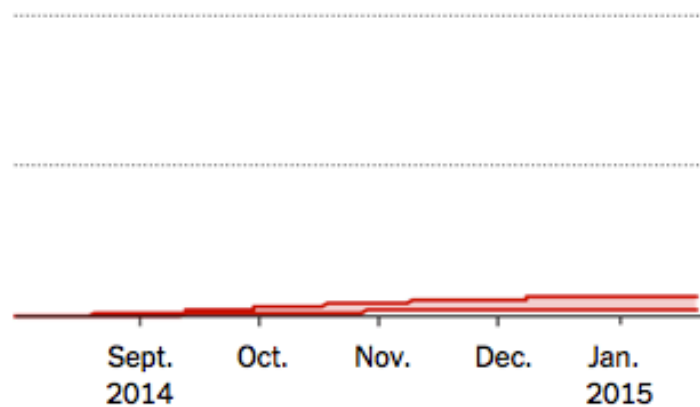


Cumulative cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Best-case scenario

11,000-27,000 cases through Jan. 20

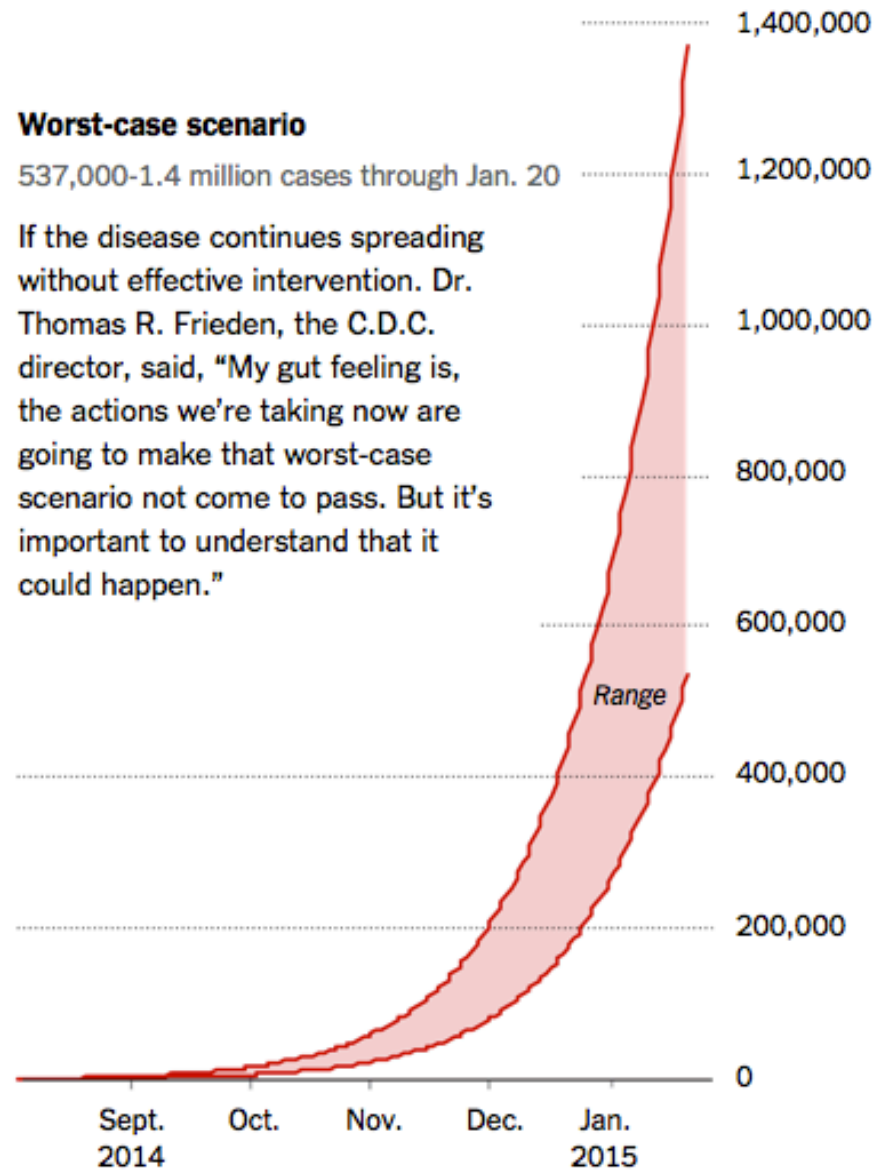
Assumes 70 percent of patients are treated in settings that confine the illness and that the dead are buried safely. About 18 percent of patients in Liberia and 40 percent in Sierra Leone are being treated in appropriate settings.



Worst-case scenario

537,000-1.4 million cases through Jan. 20

If the disease continues spreading without effective intervention. Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, the C.D.C. director, said, "My gut feeling is, the actions we're taking now are going to make that worst-case scenario not come to pass. But it's important to understand that it could happen."



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



KEEP CALM AND WATCH BRAD PITT MOVIES

- Steven Rea
- *Philadelphia Inquirer* film critic
- Article from 2013.

The Inquirer | SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2013 | INQUIRER.COM | A

Arts+ Entertainment

Gennaro's Tomato Pie. **Craig LaBan, H6**

Ethel V. Ashton, in her own right. **Art, H9**

Inquirer.com Reviews of the new movies.

Arts+Entertainment by David Karger

Hollywood's summer season detonates with mayhem, global holocausts, and Jay Gatsby.

Star Trek Into Darkness (May 17)

The Heat (June 28)

The Great Gatsby (May 10)

SUMMER of DOOM

By Steven Rea
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

Contrary to the Mayan calendar, which had Dec. 21, 2012, penciled in as the day everything was to go ka-boom, we're all still all here. But at the movies, the apocalypse is now.

Take a look through the films premiering between next week-

end — when *Iron Man 3* explodes on a zillion screens, kicking-starting Hollywood's summer season — and Labor Day weekend. Doom and gloom are everywhere, from global holocaust to alien invasions to putting Jay Gatsby and Jay-Z in the same movie.

Here are some of the anticipated biggies (as always, dates are subject to change).

Iron Man 3 (Friday) Can a new director — with an '80s action-screenwriting pedigree — keep the Robert Downey Jr.-in-ditanium-alloy-suit franchise going? Jon Favreau, who helmed the first two *IMs*, is out, and Shane Black of *Lethal Weapon* fame is in. So is Ben Kingsley, as manic villain Mandarin. Tony Stark, the billionaire in-
See MOVIES on E2.

Monsters University (June 21)

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2013: Summer of Doom

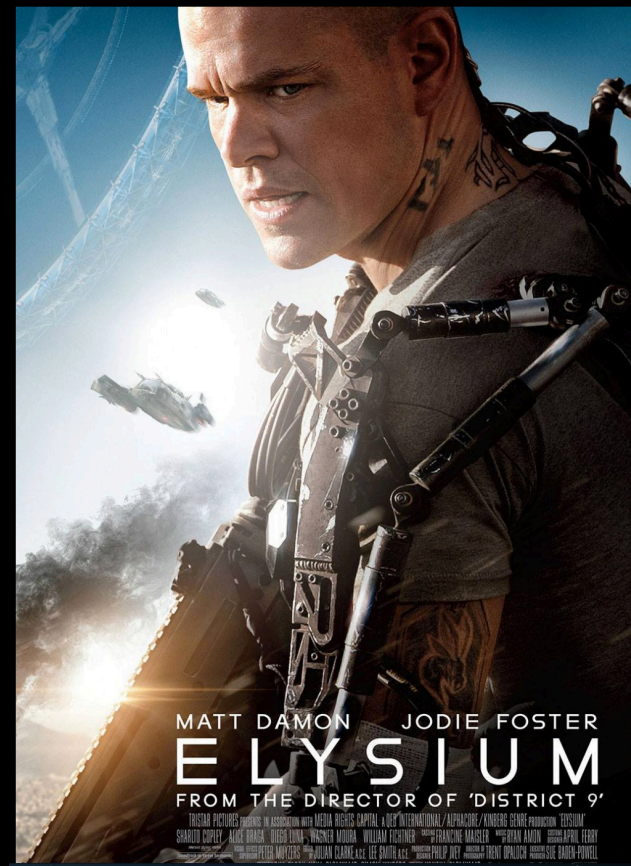


2013: Summer of Doom



The zombie apocalypse begins in Philly!

2013: Summer of Doom



2014: More Summer of Doom



2014: More Summer of Doom



The year 2000

- In latter half of the 20th century, “2000” was:
 - symbol for age of science, technology, cultural, and human **improvement**.



Times Square, 2000

The first decade of new millennium

- Memes of “doom and gloom” filled our media environments.
- *TIME*
- November 24, 2009



The History Channel

- “Armageddon week”
- *Doomsday 2012*
- *Nostradamus Effect*
- *7 Signs of Apocalypse*




National Geographic Channel



ALL NEW SERIES

DOOMSDAY PREPPERS

PREMIERES TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7 9P^EP

 natgeotv.com/preppers



Sarah Rogers/The Daily Beast

APOCALYPSE NOW 10.17.14



Nina
Storchlic



Apocalypse Now: Preppers Are Gearing Up for Ebola

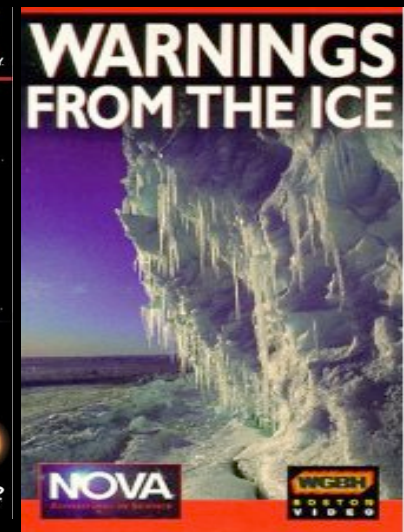
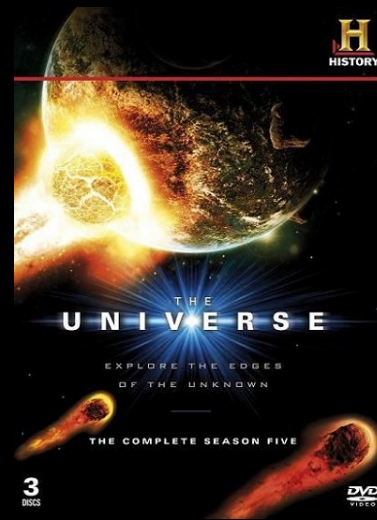
Science TV and the Apocalypse

- History Channel
 - *The Universe*
 - *Comets: Prophets of Doom*
- PBS *Nova*
 - *Warnings from the Ice*
 - *Terror in Space*



Science TV and the Apocalypse

- History Channel
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 - *Terror in Space*
- Weather Channel
 - *Weathering Disaster*
 - *It Could Happen Tomorrow*
- Science Channel
 - *Raging Planet*
 - *Exodus Earth*



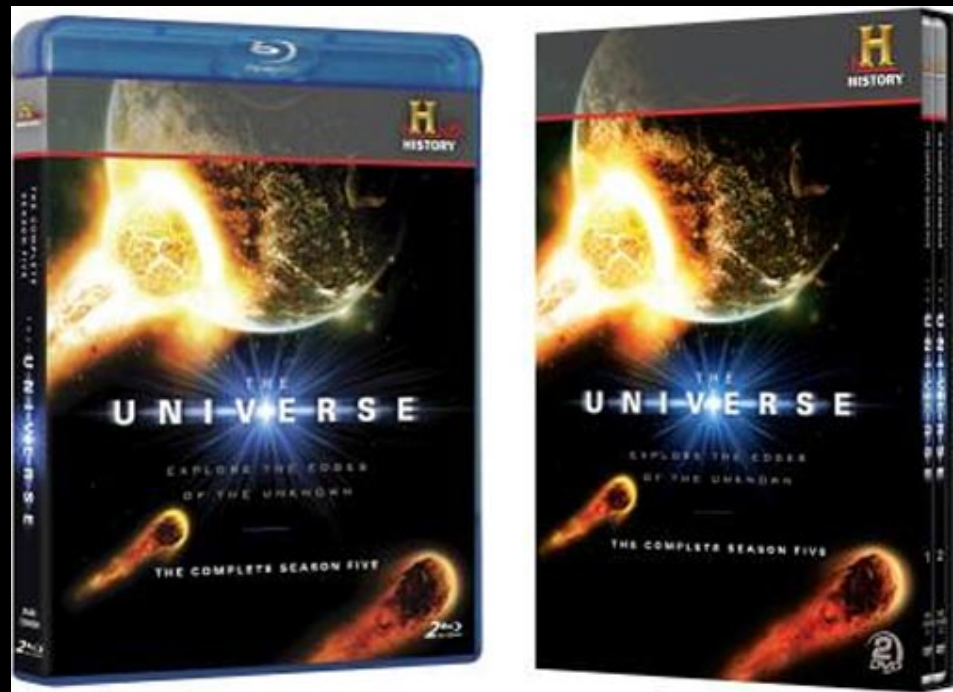
The Universe: The History Channel

- **Death by stars**
 - Season 2: “Supernova”
 - Season 1: “The End of the Earth: Deep Space Threats to Our Planet”
- **Death by collision**
 - Season 2: “Cosmic Collisions”
 - Season 4: “Ten Ways to Destroy Earth”
- **Death by universal annihilation**
 - Big Rip, Big Crunch, Big Chill theories
 - Season 2: “Cosmic Apocalypse”
 - “The End of the Earth”



“Cosmic Apocalypse”

- “Everything that we know, time, space, and matter are **doomed**.”
- “Here comes the cosmic **apocalypse!**”
 - Narrator



Episode from *The Universe*.

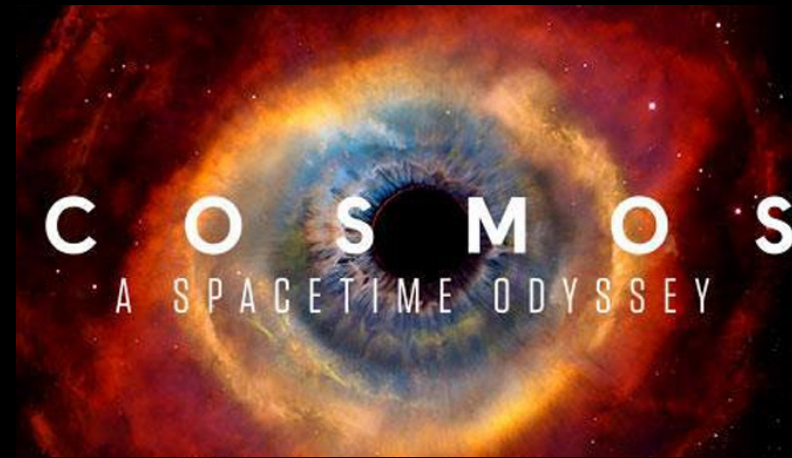
“Cosmic Apocalypse”

- “Any life that depends on sunlight will rapidly go **extinct.**”



“The Immortals”

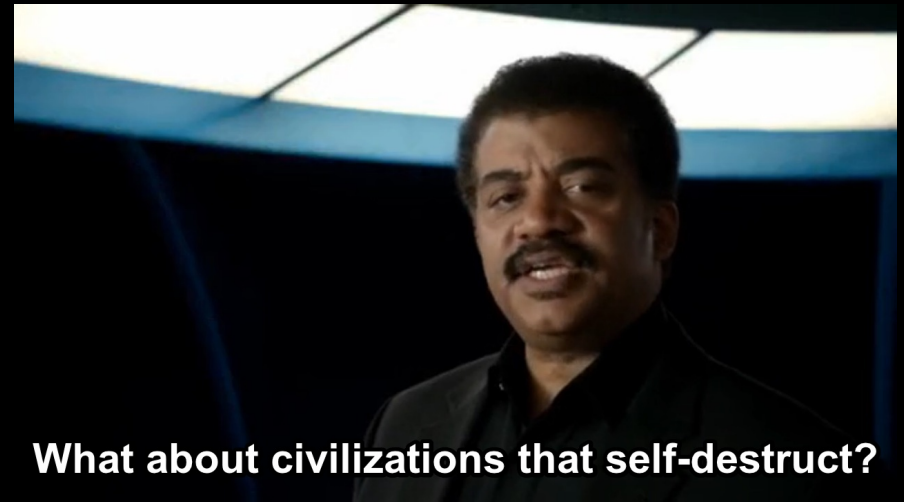
- How civilizations have or could perish:
 - Supernova
 - Asteroid
 - Supervolcano
- Invisible
 - viruses, bacteria, diseases



Episode from *Cosmos*

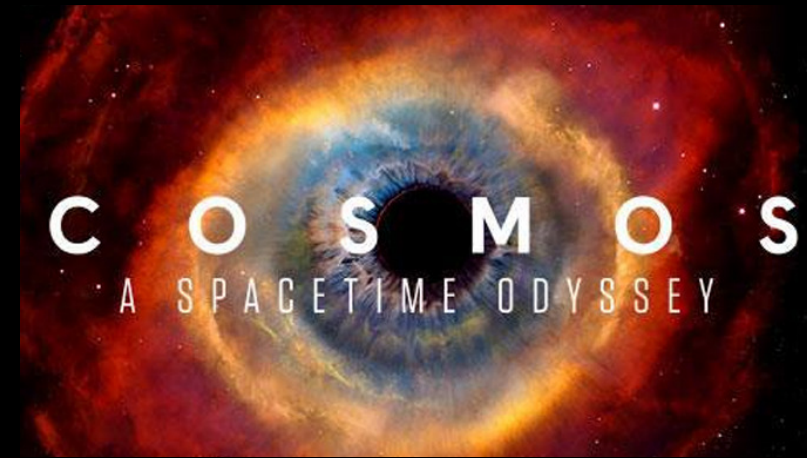
“The Immortals”

- What will save our civilization, species, and ecosystems?



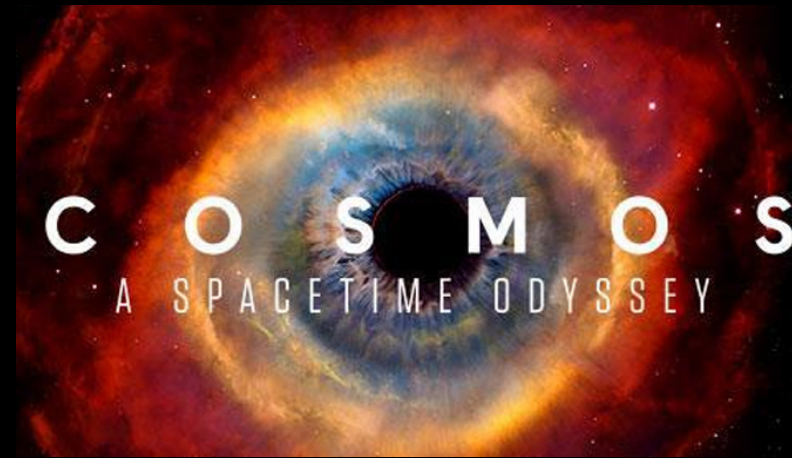
Most scenarios tap into two human needs/drives:

1. The apocalypse heralds **the end** of the world... end of something bad



Most scenarios tap into two human needs/drives:

1. The apocalypse heralds **the end** of the world... end of something bad
2. Transformation of consciousness and the **new beginning**.



Most scenarios tap into two human needs/drives:

1. The apocalypse heralds **the end** of the world... end of something bad
2. Transformation of consciousness and the **new beginning**.



Theological “Prophecy”

- “Left Behind” series
 - 60 million books sold
 - End times are coming very soon ...
- Repent and go to heaven ...or go to hell.



Believe world will end in their lifetime

- Americans:
- Citizens from 20 other nations:
- Reuters/Ipsos, 2012

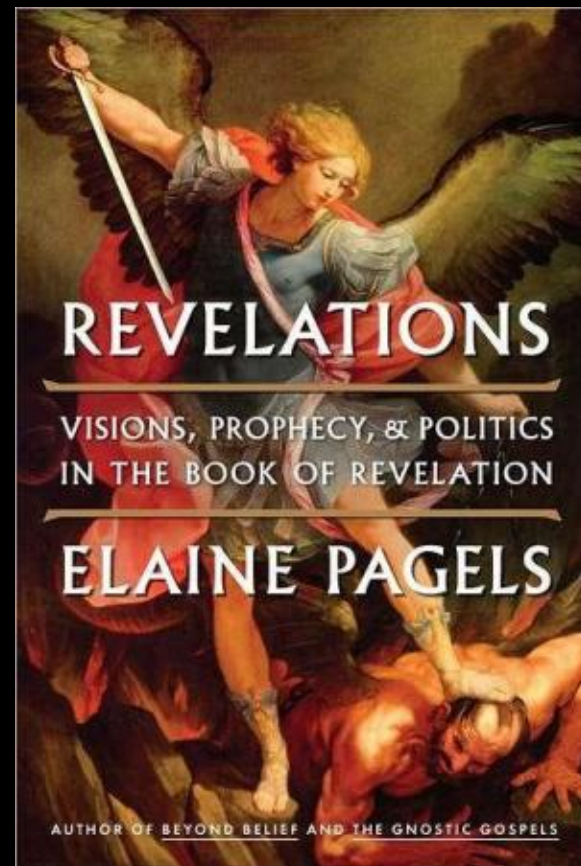


Believe world will end in their lifetime

- Americans: **22%**
- Citizens from 20 other nations: **14%**
- Reuters/Ipsos, 2012



“End of the World” Memes



Reach far back in human history.

Earlier “End of the World” Meme

The Atlantis Dialogue

Plato

360 B.C.E.



Earliest “End of the World” Meme?

- Epic of Gilgamesh
 - From Babylonia
 - 2000-1500 B.C.E
- Myth of “Great Flood”
- Might be related to melting of glaciers 10,000 years ago...



Barringer Meteor Crater, Arizona



Almost one mile wide ... 550 feet deep ... 50,000 years old.

Near Earth Objects (NEOs)

- Earth has been hit and will be hit again.
- Only a matter of time.
- When?



Near Earth Objects (NEOs)

- First decade of the new millennium, humans spent
- **\$4 million** per year on finding NEOs.
- **\$1.5 trillion** per year on waging war.



Near Earth Objects (NEOs)

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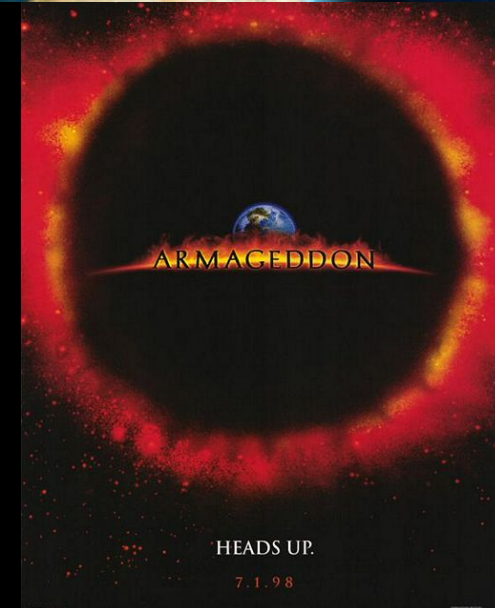
Think of it this way

- Humans spent:
- **\$4 million** on finding NEOs in 2009.



Think of it this way

- Humans spent:
- **\$4 million** on finding NEOs in 2009.
- **\$550 million** watching *Armageddon* in 1998.



Science and Ecological Theory

OUR FINAL HOUR



A SCIENTIST'S WARNING:
How terror, error, and environmental
disaster threaten humankind's future
in this century—on earth and beyond

"The choices we make in the next few decades, Rees con-
tends, could decide the fate of life not only on Earth but
beyond, either ensuring its survival—if we can diversify
into space—or dooming it forever... Fortunately, Rees is
too good a scientist to be content with telling only one
side of the story." —THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

SIR MARTIN REES

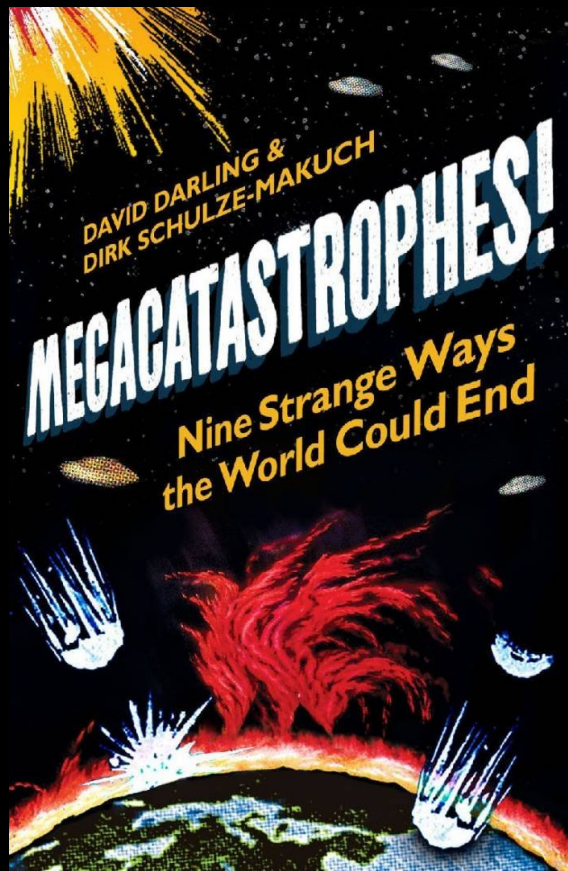
THE
VANISHING
FACE OF
GAIA

"James Lovelock will
go down in history as the
scientist who changed our
view of the Earth."
—John Gray,
Independent (UK)

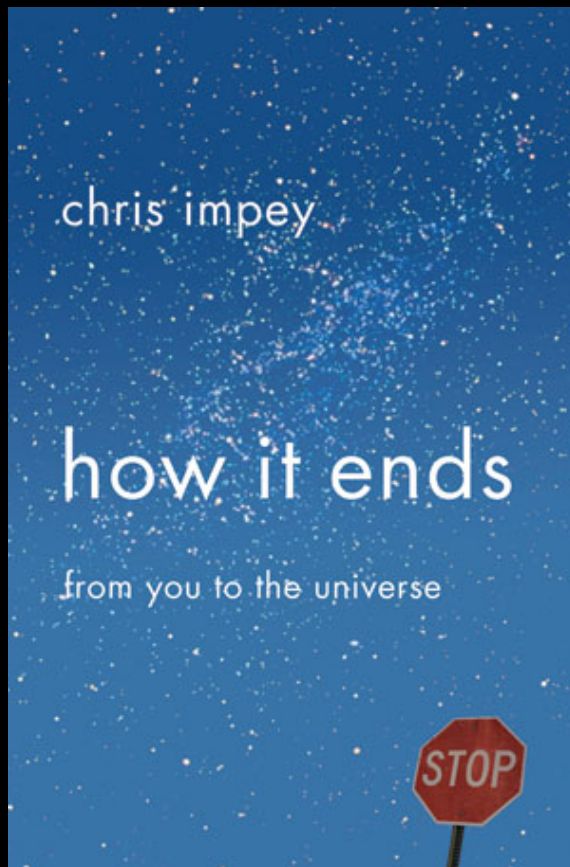


JAMES LOVELOCK

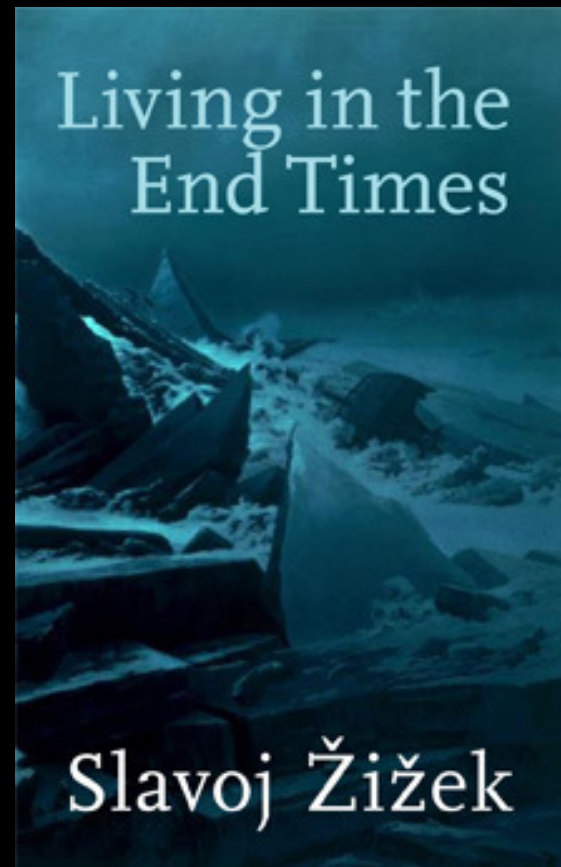
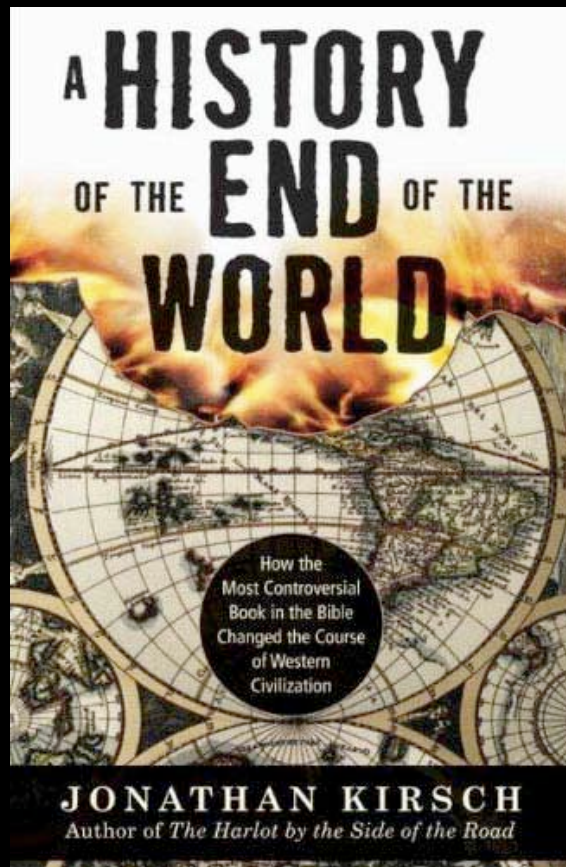
Technology and Science



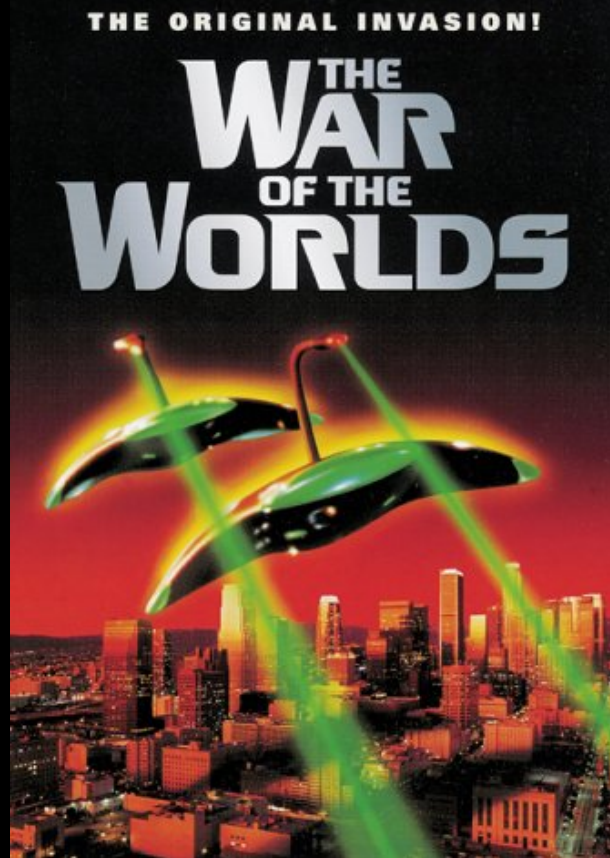
The End in the “Future”



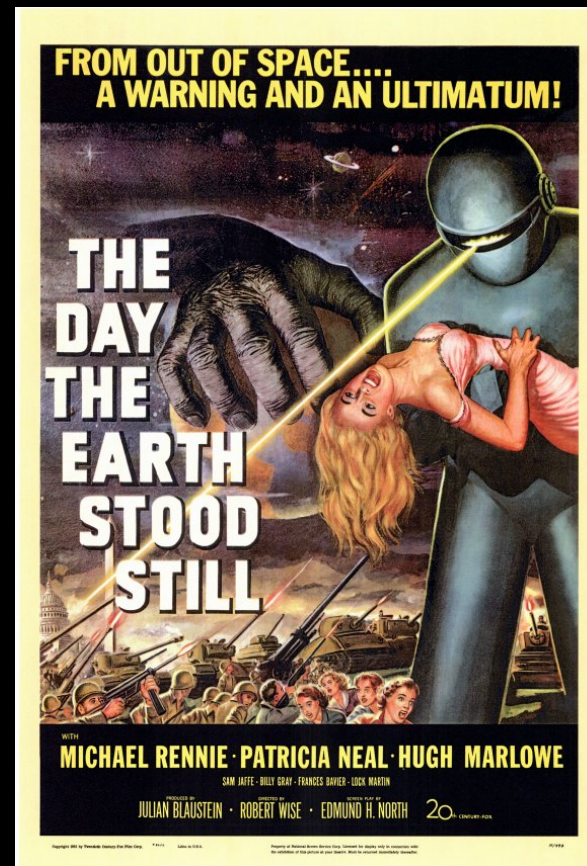
Cultural Theory



Extraterrestrial apocalypse

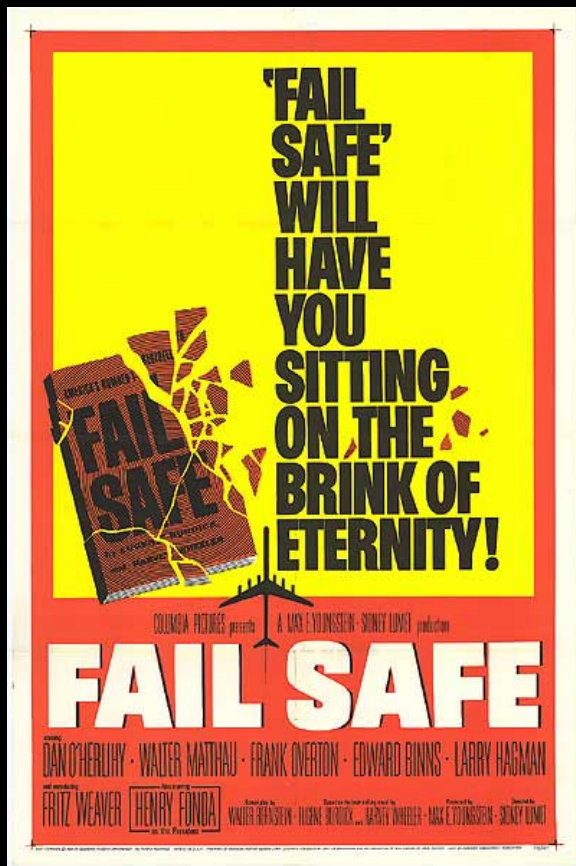


1953



1951

Nuclear apocalypse



1964



1962

Can 007 Prevent the Nuclear Apocalypse?



1964



1965

Adjusted for Ticket Price Inflation

| Rank | Title (click to view) | Studio | Adjusted Gross | Unadjusted Gross | Release |
|------|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------------|------------------|----------|
| 1 | Thunderball | UA | \$610,368,000 | \$63,595,658 | 12/21/65 |
| 2 | Goldfinger | UA | \$541,008,000 | \$51,081,062 | 12/22/64 |
| 3 | Skyfall | Sony | \$308,519,200 | \$304,360,277 | 11/9/12 |
| 4 | You Only Live Twice | UA | \$292,976,600 | \$43,084,787 | 6/13/67 |

Nuclear apocalypse

- 2012
- Documentary about the danger of nuclear weapons today.



Techno-cultural apocalypse

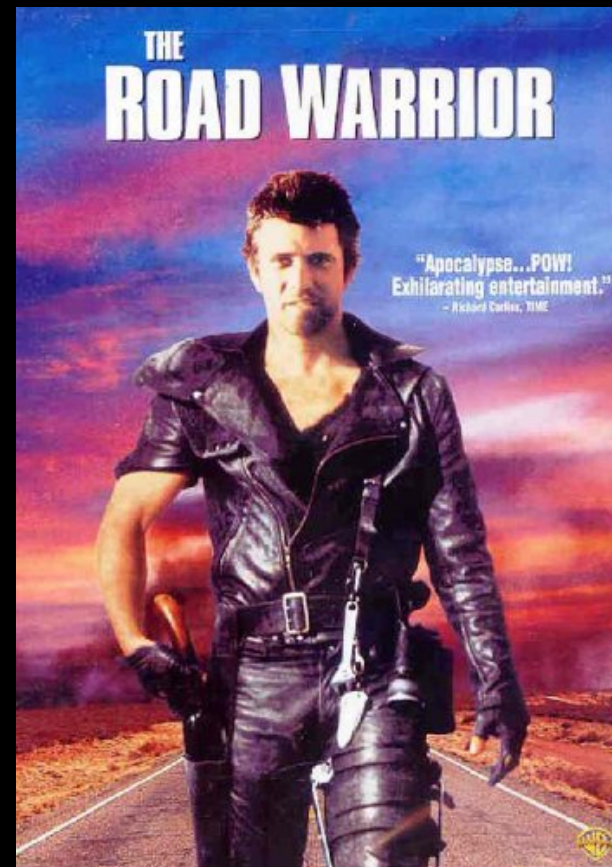
**"ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FILMS
GODARD HAS EVER MADE."
-THE NEW YORK TIMES**



WEEKEND

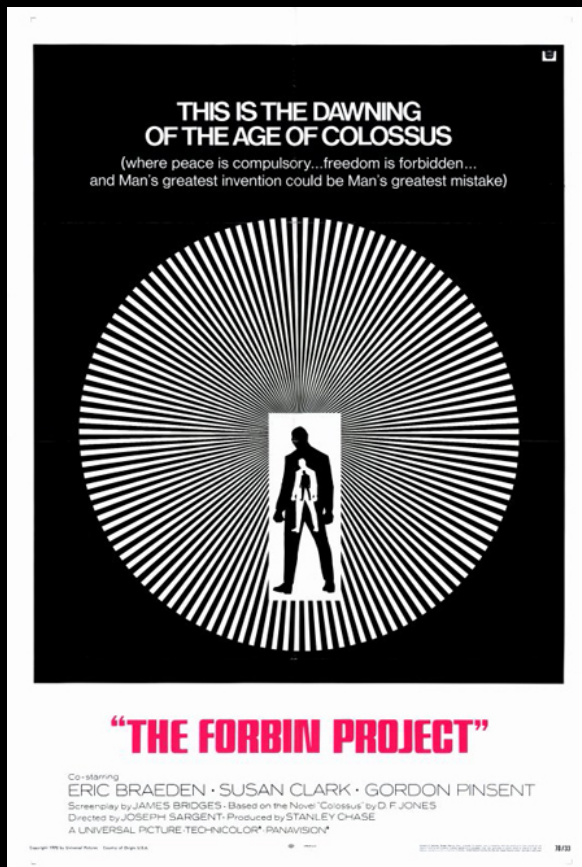
A FILM BY
JEAN-LUC GODARD

1967

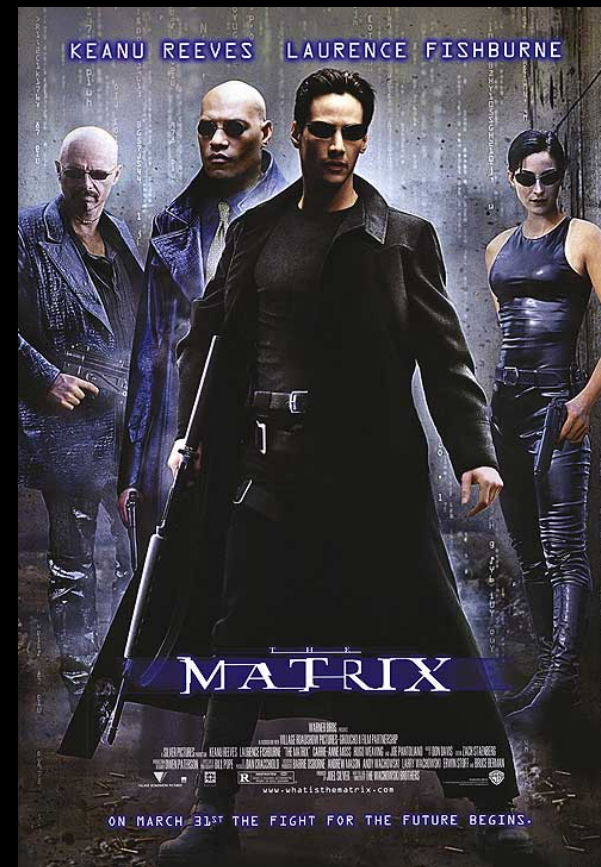


1981

Technological apocalypse



1971



1999

Resource apocalypse



1973

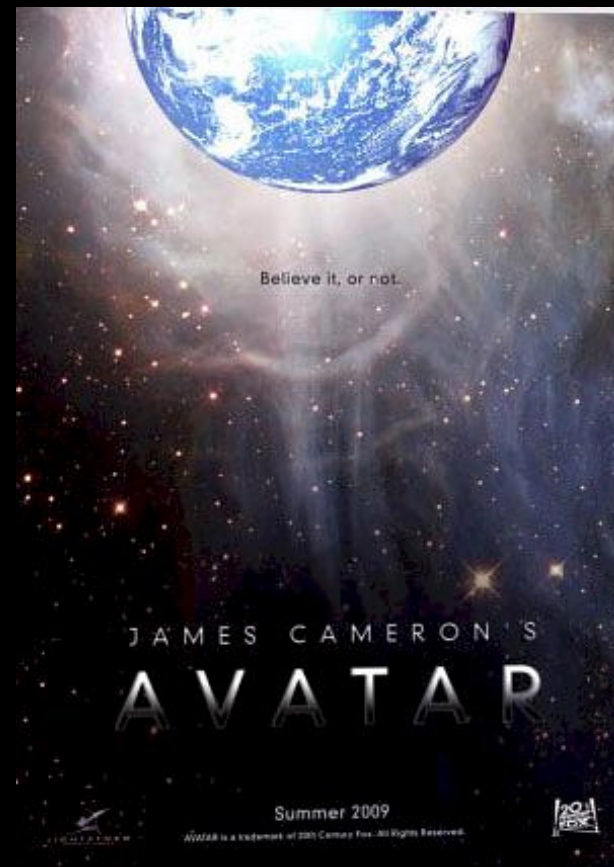


2008

Ecological apocalypse



2004



2009

Ecological apocalypse

- Documentary about global warming
- 2006



Adapted for A NEW GENERATION
from the *New York Times* Bestseller

an inconvenient truth

the crisis of
global warming

AL GORE

Biological apocalypse

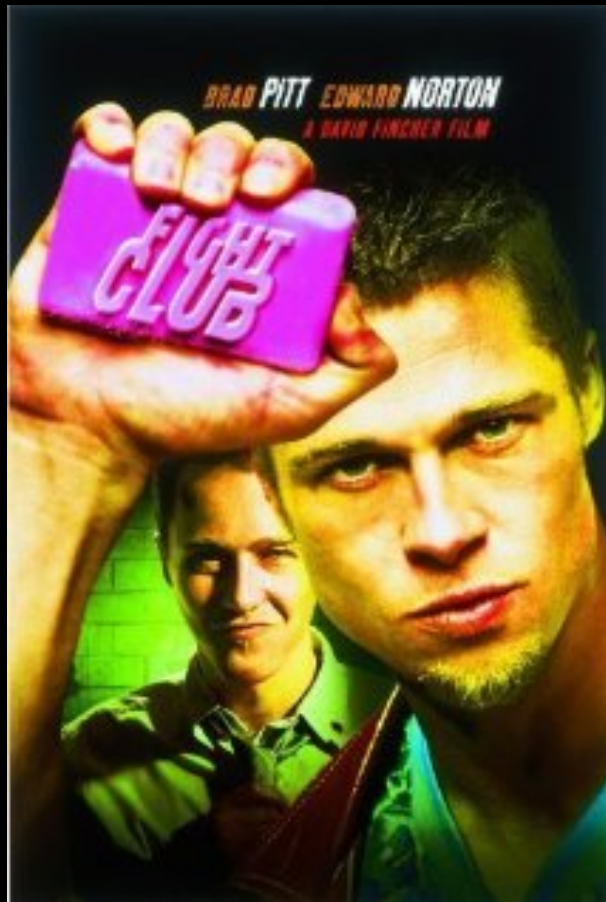


2006



2007

Cultural/Philosophical Apocalypse



1999



2009

Cultural apocalypse

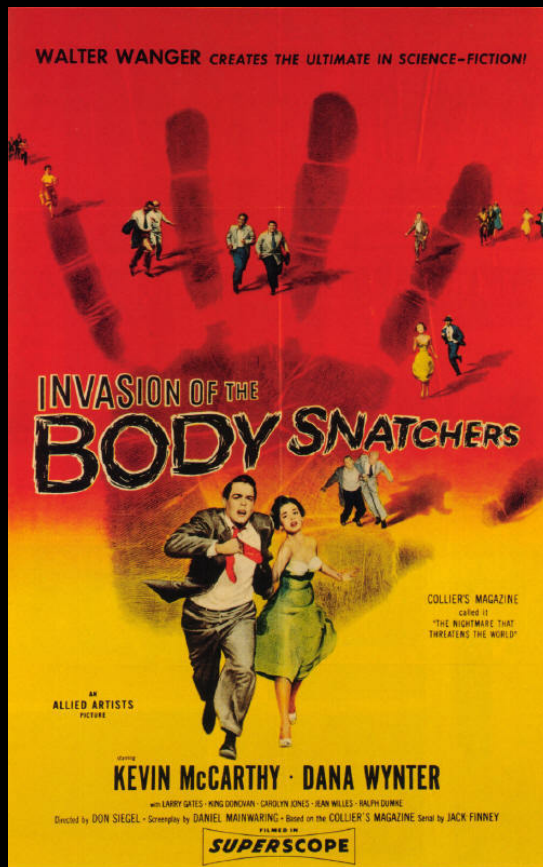


2012

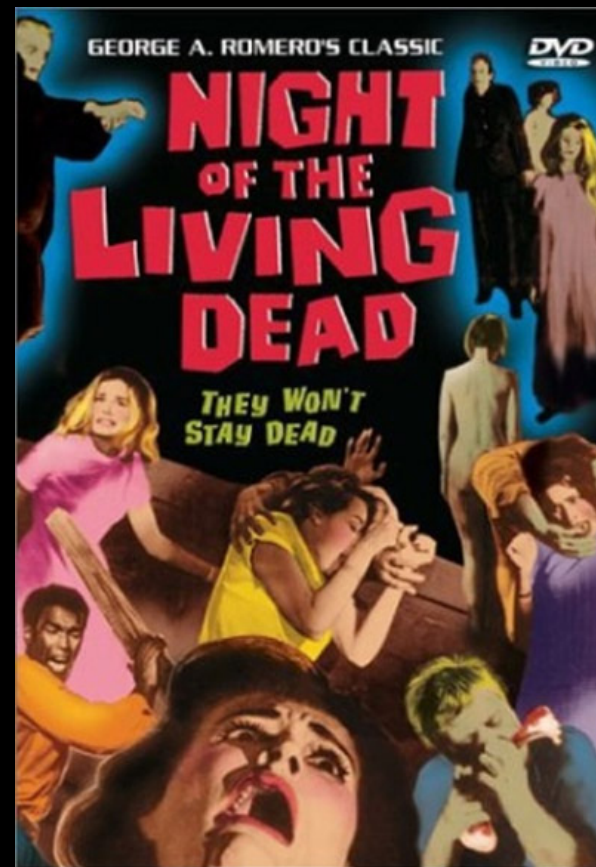


2013

Zombie apocalypse

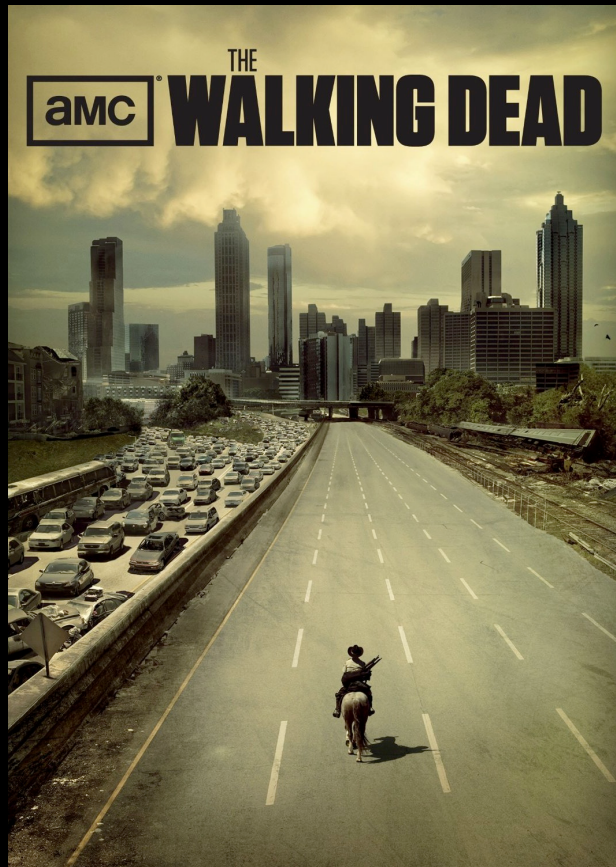


1956

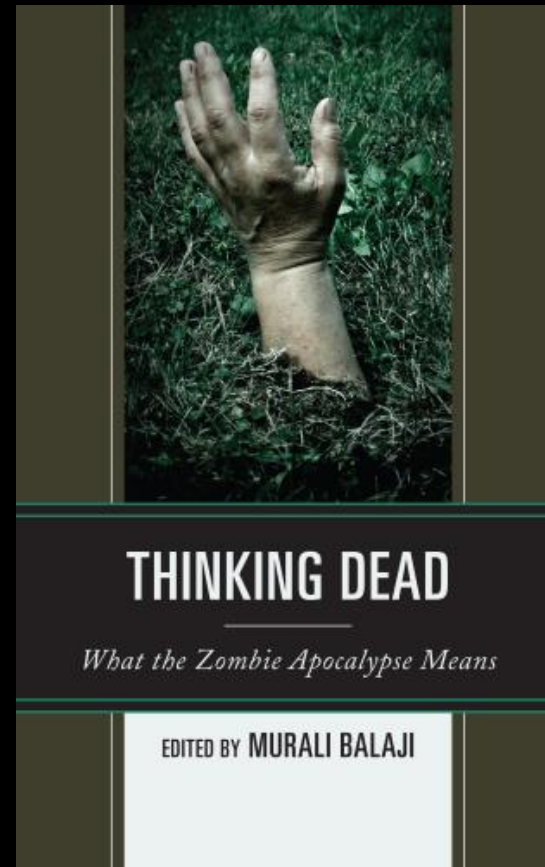


1968

Zombie apocalypse

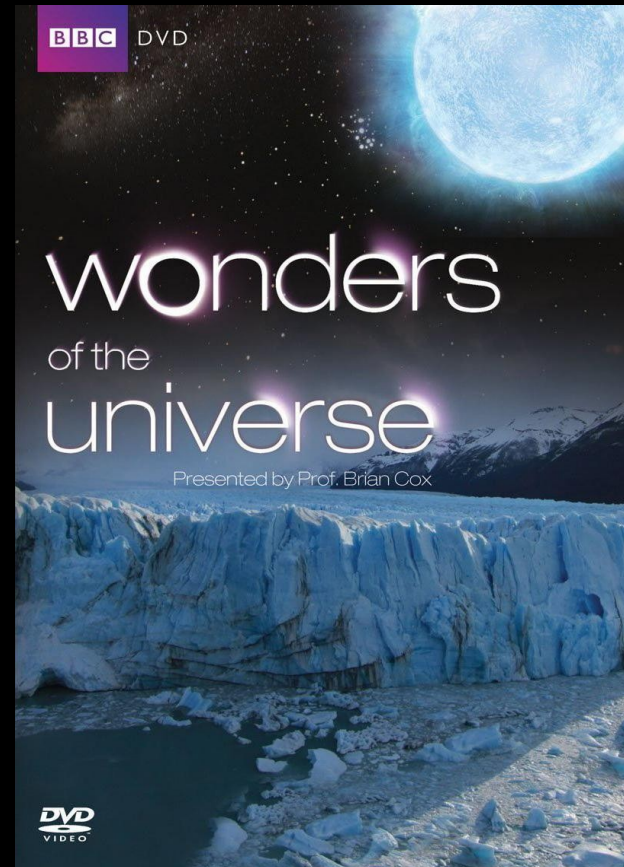
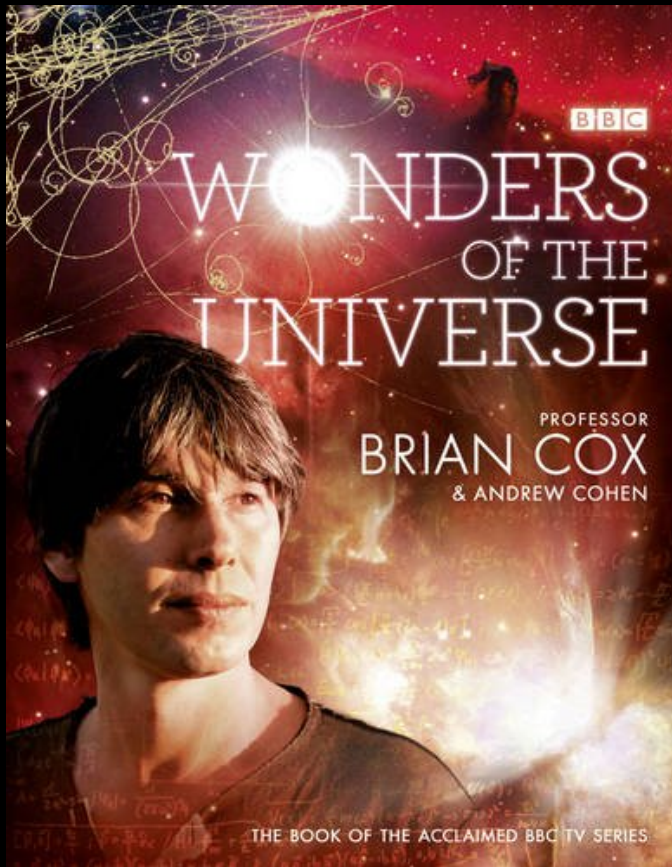


TV show, 2011



Book, 2013

Cosmic apocalypse



Book and documentary series, 2011

More 007 Apocalypse

- ADELE'S THEME SONG:
- This is **the end**
- Hold your breath
- And count to ten
- Feel the earth move

- And then
- Hear my heart
- Burst again
- For this is **the end**



2012

More 007 Apocalypse

- ADELE'S THEME SONG:
- I've drowned and dreamt
- This moment
- So overdue I owe them
- Swept away

- I'm stolen
- Let the sky fall
- When it crumbles
- **We will stand tall**
- **Face it all together**



Doomsday scenarios provide

ENDS

1. Warning

2. Fear of the Future

BEGINNINGS

1. Transformation of
consciousness

2. Clean Slate

- A do-over for society for the human species

Doomsday scenarios provide

ENDS

1. Warning

2. Fear of the Future

BEGINNINGS

1. Transformation of
consciousness

2. Clean Slate

- A do-over for society for the human species

A sense of a shared destiny.

Most scenarios tap into
a **third** human need/drive

Most scenarios tap into a **third** human need/drive

- Cosmic centrality ...
as promised by
theisms and various
prophecies.



Subtle Cosmic Centrality?

- Americans: *22%*
- Citizens from 20 other nations: *14%*



“Imagine the amazing good fortune of the generation that gets to see the **end** of the world. This is as marvelous as being there at the **beginning**.”

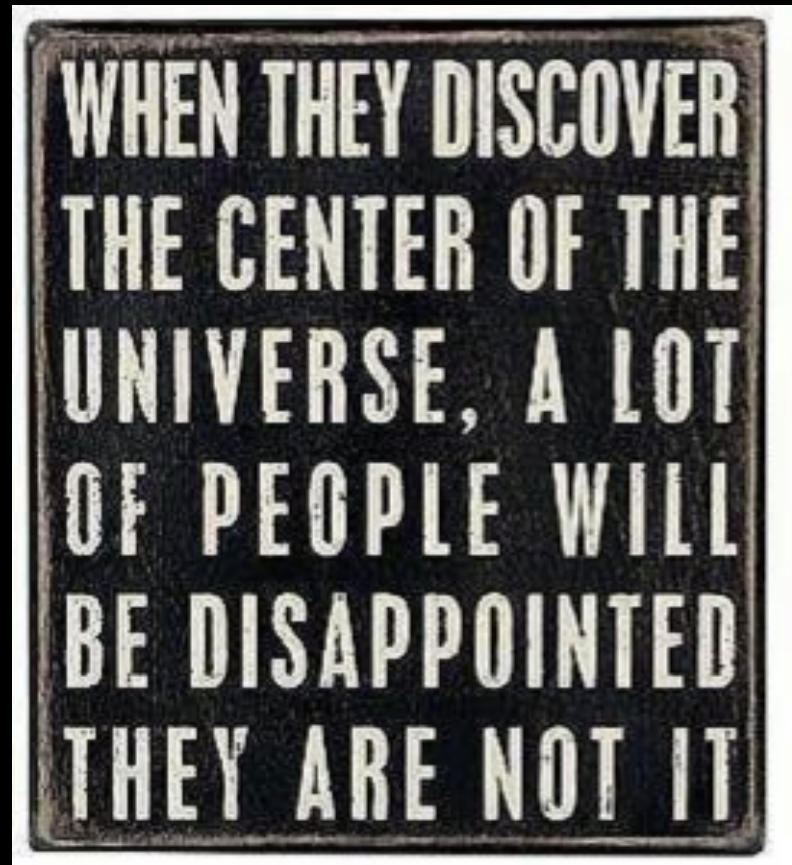
— Jean Baudrillard

Some scenarios tap into a **third** human need/drive/**fear**

- Cosmic centrality
- v.
- No Centrality

Some scenarios tap into
a **third** human need/drive/**fear**

- Cosmic centrality
- v.
- No Centrality



Some scenarios tap into a **third** human need/drive/**fear**

- Cosmic centrality
- v.
- No Centrality
- No Meaning to Human Existence



Fight Club, 1999

The End: cosmic apocalypse



2011



2012

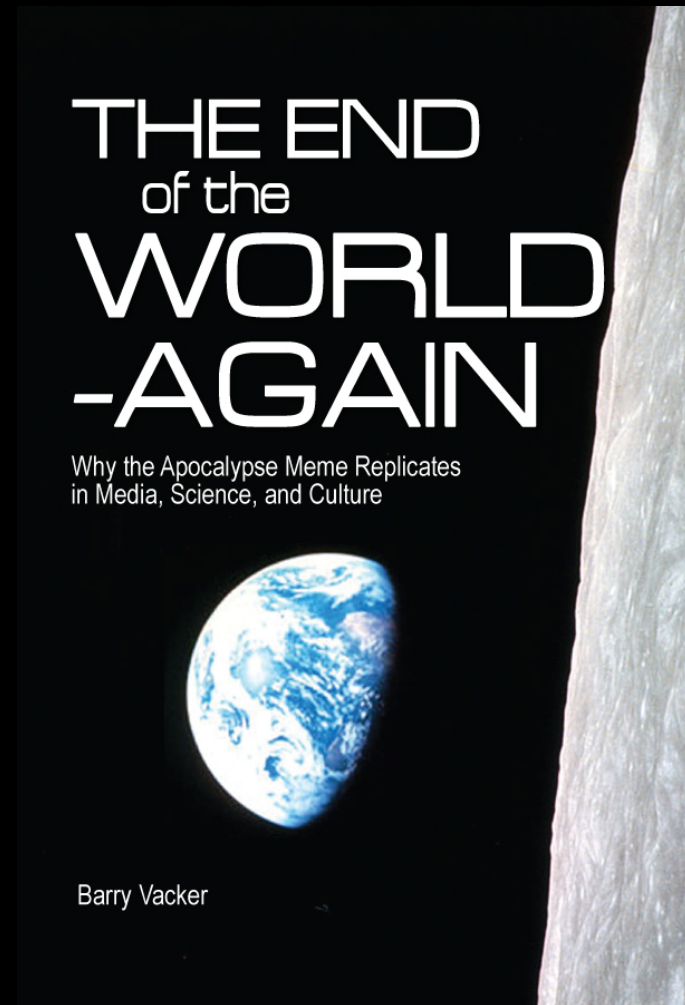
The End: philosophical apocalypse



questions about the **lack** of meaning of human existence

There are three possibilities

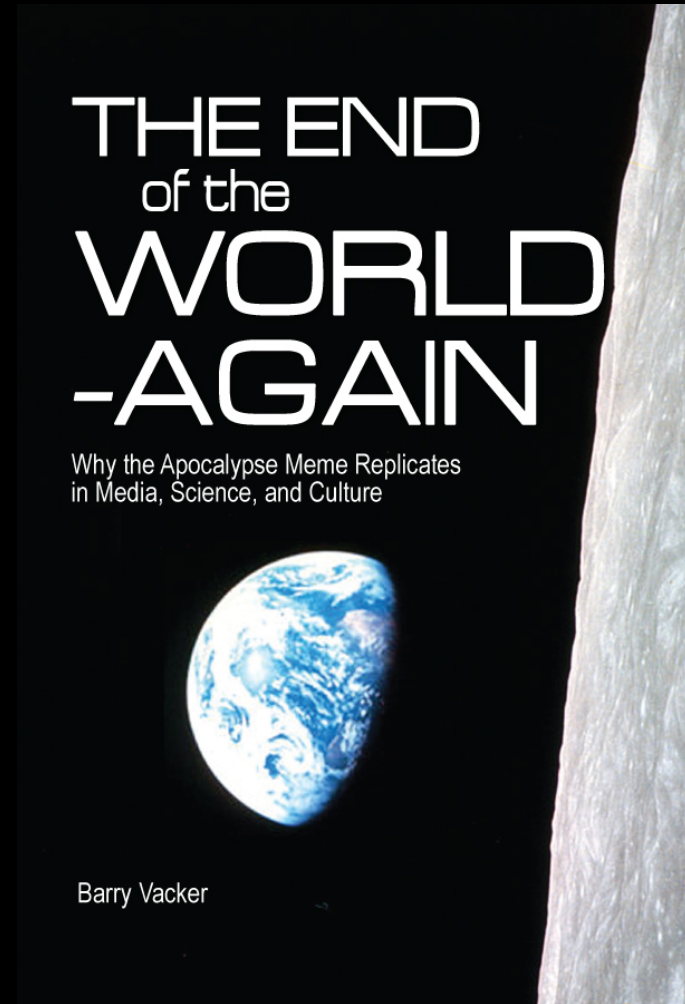
3. The end of the world
has already happened!



The final possibility

3. The end of the world
has already happened!

the end of the world
with humans at the
center of the universe.



“Earthrise”



Original

“Earthrise”



Modified to make us feel good



Original

“Earthrise”

- Until we learn to accept that world >>>



Original

We will face the end of
the world, again and
again.

THE END
of the
WORLD
-AGAIN

Why the Apocalypse Meme Replicates
in Media, Science, and Culture



Barry Vacker

That's why this book explores:

- Ends
- A New Beginning

