Alternate Reality: Existential Risk

Self-inflicted Demise

technological | enviromental | social

WMDs	science gone wrong	doomsday device	rise of the machines	depleted resources	destroyed environment	spiritual decay	hubris	war
annihilation by WMDs, nuclear winter	man made pandemic, cloning and replicative fading, danger from a new technology, out of control scientific experiment		unregulated autoriomous weapons system	overpopulated planet, depletion of a vital natural resource	depleted ozone layer, total ecological destruction, polluted environment, radioactive space garbage scow	atrophied civilization, slaves to technology reliance on a central computer everyone escapes to a fantasy world...	society corrupted through absolute power, everyone thinking themselves as gods	galaxy-wide holy war, ultimate war, mutual annihilation, retrograde civilization caused by biological warfare
tng5x23 tng6x10 **tos2x26** tng1x11 tos2x25 tos1x16 tos0x01	**tng5x10** tng6x09 **tng3x01** tng1x24 **tng2x18** **tos1x11**	**tas1x14** tng7x05 **tos2x06** tng3x19	**tng3x01** **tng1x21** **tas1x09** **tos2x24** **tos2x08** **tos1x22** **tos1x09**	**tos3x17** **tos3x16** **tos1x05**	tng6x06 tng4x13 tng4x09 tng1x17	**tng1x17** tng1x22 **tng1x15** **tos2x22** **tos2x20** **tos2x09** **tos1x27** **tos1x16** **tos0x01**	**tos3x12** **tos2x22**	**tas1x16** tng3x05 **tas1x14** tos3x02 **tos3x15** tos2x25 **tos2x22** **tos1x23**

Force Majeure

climatological / ecological | astronomical

rising oceans	global warming	ice-age	pandemic	solar activity	dying sun	impact event	space radiation	geological cataclysm	atmospheric dissipation
global flood			botanical plague	sun going supernova, planet scorching solar flare		moon slowly spiraling into a planet, stray astronomical object, collision with a parallel anti-matter universe...	mass radiation poisoning, rise in ambient galactic radiation level	spontaneous planetary break up, volcanic cataclysm	rapid atmospheric dissipation
tas1x13	tng4x23	**tos3x06**	**tas2x04** tos3x19 **tos3x14**	**tos3x23** tng1x05 **tos3x10** tos2x12 **tos3x08**	**tng5x25** tos1x09 **tng4x22**	**tos3x03** tng5x20 tng5x13 tng5x09 tng3x13	tos3x13 tos2x21	tng2x15 tas1x11	**tng5x25** tos1x09 **tng4x22**

Extraterrestrial Threat

xenological

invasion from outer space	alien brought pandemic	world eater
powerful conquering alien race, bug aliens, neural parasites, god-like alien	alien brought pandemic, invasive life form from outer space	giant space amoeba, world eating machine, world eating space cloud
tng4x01 tng3x03 **tng3x26** tos2x10 **tng3x03** tos1x26 **tng1x25** **tos1x29**	**tos1x25** tas1x07	**tas1x03** **tos2x19** **tos2x06**

Earth will not be around forever and will be human-inhabitable for an even shorter time. That must mean humans will eventually disappear from the planet. Perhaps we will evolve and develop the means to escape the surly bonds of Earth. However, given the stakes we must think seriously about more catastrophic possibilities.

Self-inflicted: *Some say we may destroy ourselves. WMDs, biological warfare or hitherto unknown technology may render Earth uninhabitable. We may build sentient machines that rebel and kill us. Perhaps we will overpopulate the planet and destroy the environment. Or is there something else intrinsic to human nature that dooms us as a species?*

Force Majure: *Cataclysmic events outside of our control happen; it is only a matter of time. What is more likely* and what is more severe: climate change, solar flare, asteroid impact or super volcano?* Murphy's law: *Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.*

Extraterrestrial: *Or perhaps the whole question will become moot when the Martians invade?*

** The second row of existential risks is distinguished: Whereas we do not know if we can kill ourselves off even if we try, or whether extraterrestrial life exists (there are no prior examples), we do know for a fact that cataclysmic events that radically change planets, happen from time to time.*

Alternate Reality: Utopia

Utopia by Power and Control

machine controlled utopia

tos1x22 **tos2x12** **tos2x09** tng1x17

Humanity en masse is simply unable to govern itself and make rational decisions. After replacing government with computers that regulate all our daily affairs, human activity has become much more logical and efficient.

Flip-side: What about free will and self-fulfillment?

utopia on the back of slave labor

tos3x19

The only thing missing for life to be perfect is more servants: no one would have to work (except the servants) and there would be plenty of time for intellectual pursuits. Servitude being a natural thing for servants, this state is ideal for them as well. In ancient times, when people other than your own people were seen as less than people, this was ofttimes perceived as both right and proper.

Flip-side: There can be disagreement between servants and master as to the fairness of this utopia.

master race controlled utopia

tas1x07

Specialization is good, but we cannot all be rulers. That is why power is now in the hands of an elite race that makes enlightened decisions for the good of everyone. Such ideas reverberate with Nazi ideology in which white "Aryans" are duty-bound to assert their rule over inferior races.

Flip-side: Power corrupts and that master race is bound to become oppressive.

Plato's republic

tos3x12

Most men are stupid and they become even stupider in group so let's just pick the wisest among us and make him the Philosopher King. This ultimate technocracy was proposed by Socrates in "The Republic" (380 BC).

Flip-side: Scientists and philosophers are as mortal, fallible and prone to be corrupted by power as anyone else.

Utopia by Technology

human v. 2.0 utopia

tos1x01 **tos1x24** **tos1x09** **tos2x07**

Out with the old and in with the new. After 100,000 years man has finally received a much needed upgrade and is stronger, wiser and more resilient than nature could ever have made him.

Flip-side: Transhumanist endeavors such as eugenics programs often involve staggering cruelty towards "version 1.0". Also, are we wise enough to start altering ourselves?

neo-luddist utopia

tos1x25 **tng2x18** **tos3x03** **tng4x13** **tos3x20**

Burn the computers, the mills, and maybe a few books with them! Life is back to the idyllic times before industrialization: men plow the fields and women spin yarn, all with the simplest of tools just as nature intended it. The name derives from technophobic English textile artisans, "Luddites", that protested against weaving machines in the early 19th century.

Flip-side: Times before industrialization really weren't that great. People died in hordes from starvation and disease.

Spiritual and Religious Utopia

free love utopia

tng1x08

No more monogamy! Everyone share their love freely with everyone, doing away with jealousy and with it every other evil in the world. Arguably this is an extrapolation of the "Garden of Eden" idea from Judaic and Christian traditions.

Flip-side: Perhaps fornication is just not the solution to all our problems?

kumbayah utopia

tas1x12

All this utopia talk is too complicated. Let's just all agree to be nice to each other and sing "kumbayah!", problem solved!

Flip-side: There is no backside to this utopia, none, none whatsoever; absolutely nothing is stopping us from having it.

noble savage utopia

tos2x09 **tos3x03** **tos2x16**

Civilization is corruption, let's all live like the noble savage instead: in freedom, gentle simplicity and as one with nature. The terminology and the idea are often attributed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau who wrote about such matters in his "Discourse on Inequality" (1754).

Flip-side: Savage life is not all that it is made out to be. If you're not eaten by wolves or lion first, you're apt to perish during the next drought or cold-spell.

kill-all-humans utopia

tng7x01

Let's face it, mankind was a vain and self-destructive blot on the face of the Earth. With him gone Nature is yet again in state of pristine beauty and divine tranquility.

Flip-side: By what measure precisely are we to say that Earth is "better" off without man? Also, it might be hard to convince some of us to go to our graves willingly...

genetic engineering utopia

tng2x18 **tng5x13**

Birth defect, disease and hunger are no more than distasteful memories of a past when we did not yet control the genes around us and in ourselves. Even before DNA was unequivocally discovered, Aldous Huxley described a kind of genetic engineering utopia in his "Brave New World".

Flip-side: Are we wise enough and do we have the right to redesign nature? It may also be a Pandora's box: what if something goes systemically wrong?