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Interview with John from The Bulletin and The Doomsday Clock: 9/11

Our Questions:

1. Why is it a clock? The clock is one of the most powerful visual symbols. However, it may not be the best representation. They are currently always discussing possible new representations as we are already two minutes to midnight.
2. Is midnight the end of the clock? Yes, different than a normal clock, it does not go past then. Midnight means the end.
3. Is it an international position? The Bulletin is by design an international committee, but how international is it? There is an intention to not approach these issues from an American-centric view. John notes a lack of South American and African scholars because these continents are not major nuclear powers. There is no use of “we” when authors write or decisions are made. People would assume they are Americans then.
4. Is it just human doomsday or multi species doomsday? It is just human doomsday that is considered within the clock. Once we are gone, there is no more contemplation on the end. It all revolves around human existence.
5. How long is 2 min? Two minutes now requires a new representation of the clock moving forward or backwards now. Since two minutes encapsulates the rest of time itself, 30 seconds would be a huge factor of time and, thus, requiring a possible new visualization.

Notes and other groups questions:

1947- doomsday clock conception

Originally they didn't anticipate the clock's hands to move.

Anytime something struck the faculty of the bulletin, hands were moved

How does this clock change our perception of the present moment?- The clock is considered for resetting every January. At least one day in the year that existential threats dominate human consciousness (kind of like a doomsday holiday)

Are there trends or patterns that affect the clock?-

When the Soviet Union Dissolved, the clock moved back and was reset to 17 minutes. Mainly focusing on major world powers and their actions, not exactly a pattern to follow. Climate change has been added even though it was on a different timescale.

How do they differentiate between rhetoric and actual nuclear threats?

It's really just up to the experts and the critique of other experts. The Rhetoric and the Real bleed into each other.

Who is the primary audience of the Bulletin? It's for government employees and officials who can directly respond to these topics and threats. The other audience is world citizens and ordinary people because public officials pay attention when enough of their citizens want something to be done.

It's neither arbitrary or scientific to calculate the time on the doomsday clock. It's a very effective metaphor. It translates information and data into an easy to understand symbol.

Are there other ways of symbolically conveying doomsday? Since we are so close to midnight maybe we need other methods of visualizing doom.