[What Should We Be Worried About?: Real Scenarios That Keep Scientists Up at Night](#) (Edge Question Series), edited by John Brockman, Harper Perennial, New York, 2014, 528 pages, ISBN: 978-0062296238.

[This Idea Must Die: Scientific Theories That Are Blocking Progress](#) (Edge Question Series), edited by John Brockman, Harper Perennial, New York, 2015, 592 pages, ISBN: 978-0062374349.

John Brockman, founder of the Edge Foundation, a web-based think tank, edited both of these books. Each year he asks a large group of people—many of them members of the Edge Foundation—the question for the year. Each book is a collection of short essays that answer the title question from thinkers in many fields. Several are from authors that have been reviewed here in the past, including Sean Carroll, Steven Pinker, Charles Seife, Nicholas Nassim Taleb and Sherry Turkle, so some of the answers may be familiar to you. Each essay is accompanied by a short bio of the author and the title, or titles, of some recent book.

The first book came to me as a recommendation from Amazon. I picked up the second book after hearing an interview with Seth Lloyd and Sean Carroll on *Science Friday* last month.

What Should We Be Worried About is one of the most depressing books I have read in a long time. As if I already didn't lie awake thinking about global warming, financial collapse, human population-thinning disease, or stupidity, now I have about 170 other things to worry about it. Only read this book if your glass is half full or you are current on your selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor prescription. One vignette is slightly humorous. It discusses protecting young ears from the seven words the FCC won't let on the air. However, the author suggests making something taboo makes it all the more interesting, and that's the problem. Make the seven words everyday and no one will care.

The second book, *This Idea Must Die*, is based on the tenet of Planck that an existing paradigm will subside when the last proponent is dead. This is much more upbeat in the sense that the essays present solutions to problems as opposed to just listing problems as in the former book. The ideas that "must die" range far and wide: from the idea of the universe, as opposed to the multiverse, to races, anonymous peer review and bad statistics.

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I just finished volumes one and two of the epic biography of Lyndon Johnson by Robert A. Caro. When I picked up these books I did not think this subject would hold my attention, but both *The Path to Power* and *Means of Ascent* did. The books are not just about Johnson, but provide a detailed look into life in the Texas Hill Country in the early 20th century, as well as Texas and US politics until 1948. I will start *Master of the Senate* this summer.

The Path to Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume I, Robert A. Caro, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1990, 960 pages, ISBN: 978-0679729457

Means of Ascent: The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume II, Robert A. Caro, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1990, 562 pages, 978-0679733713

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