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### October 22, 2014: The Panic Over Ebola

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Title: The Panic Over Ebola

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10/22/2014—For awhile, there seemed to be a growing panic in America about Ebola, which now seems to be subsiding. On Monday, David Brooks wrote a column about it in the New York Times, speculating about what contributed to the out-of-proportion response. Brooks pointed to social isolation—Americans mostly don't interact with people unlike themselves—which leads to isolation from elites and decision-makers. (This suggests that poorer, less educated people are the ones who panic, which is probably not true). Then there is anti-globalization. And instant news. And a culture that denies death, rather than dealing with it. The one thing he did not mention is the decline of religion. I don't mean people going to church or not. I mean the absence of a vibrant narrative of fulfilled life. I'm sure people panic at death even if they genuinely expect to go to heaven, so I don't mean that. This leads to the absence of national self-confidence. This is the kind of confidence that goes with a national sense of the place of the nation in a larger scheme of things. (This would not have to be a traditional religious narrative, but in America it has been that in the past) To me, the darkness of this time has to do with the death of meaning. This is the sense that there is no reliable core of things—of the good and the true and the beautiful—that is meaningful inherently and apart from people. There is a reason this is dismissively referred to as the god's eye view. We don't have it.