

# HENNING POEHL'S Apocalypse

A game for 2 - 6 players 16 years old or more.

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## I. What is this?

In this game, each player assumes the role of a nation, consisting of good (god-faring) and evil (infidel) populations. Each player tries to grow his populations and to prepare for the Apocalypse. As the game progresses, the nations are struck by the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Each player receives victory points for his populations that survive each of the four Apocalyptic Reckonings.

After the final Reckoning of the fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, the good and evil populations of all the nations are counted, to see whether good or evil triumphs. Each player has a secret ethos (good or evil orientation), which decides which victory requirements apply to him.

## II. Game materials

### →60 Population cards (B):

These cards depict on the reverse (black border) faces of good and evil against a „worldly“ background.

On the front (white border) are shown (on 54 of these cards) icons of protection against the Horsemen (NBC mask, helmet, and pig's head) against a „celestial“ background. These icons are distributed in various ways on the left and right sides of the card.

The six remaining cards depict "heavy metal" music in an „underworld“ background on the front.



### →63 Doomsday Scrip cards (K):

The reverse of these cards have a white border and depict an Apocalyptic Scrip (banknote).



The front side has a black border and depict various things:  
36 cards of the Netherworld plane: depicting Chastity / Sex, Job / Drugs, Piety / Gambling, and protective icons against the Apocalyptic horsemen (one icon on each side).  
6 cards of the Earthly plane: particularly good or heinous people.

6 cards of the Heavenly plane: Church hymns  
15 neutral cards: Ethos change or Violence

### →6 Seal cards:

Church Hymns / Heavy Metal

### →6 Ethos Cards:

3 cards for „Good“ and 3 for „Evil“

### →3 x 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

3 Sets with the 4 Horseman of the Apocalypse (Bomb War, Civil War, Exploitation and Death of many kinds).

### →6 x 3 Setup cards:

6 Sets with 3 various Setup cards for the start position of each player.

### →Additional materials required:

A pencil and a sheet of paper.

## III. Prepare to Play

### A) For 2 or 3 players

For two to three players, remove the cards marked in the bottom-middle column with a asterisk (\*) from the Doomsday Scrip deck and the Population deck.

Furthermore, remove two heavy metal cards from the Population deck, and two church hymns from the Doomsday Scrip deck. Otherwise, the game is played as described in the next paragraph.

## B) In general

Each player gets three Setup cards (recognizable from the Sphinx logo on one side), consisting of a Kingdom of Heaven card (*Himmlische Ebene*), a basic Population card (*Irdische Ebene*) and a Kingdom of Hell card (*Höllenebene*) and lays them in front of him. The setup cards that are not needed are removed from the game.

These three cards are designed to be vertically stacked next to each other, so that the basic Population cards lies in the center Earthly plane, with the Heavenly plane immediately above, and the Netherworld immediately below.

The Ethos cards are shuffled and each player is secretly given one. Your ethos card will determine the conditions for winning the game.

Each player must keep his ethos secret. The Ethos cards are not required to play, but are instead hidden back in the box to preserve their identity.

The Population cards are shuffled and each player is dealt two cards face down, which he takes into his hand. The remaining Population cards are stacked in the center of the table in the Drawing Decks (so that the reverse side, containing the heads, is visible).

The Doomsday Scrip cards are shuffled and each player is dealt two face down, which he takes into his hand. The remaining Doomsday Scrip cards are stacked in the center of the table in the Drawing Decks (so that the reverse side, containing the currency, is visible).

Separate the three sets of the four Apocalyptic horsemen. One set is incorporated into the deck of Population cards and another set is incorporated into the deck of Doomsday Scrip cards, both as follows:

### Both decks are constructed as follows:

The fourth Apocalyptic horseman is placed at the bottom, then over it six cards of the corresponding deck are placed face-down. Then follows the third horseman, then another six face-down cards in the Drawing Decks, then the second horseman, and then six more face-down cards.

On top of this is placed the first Apocalyptic horseman, and on top of that is the remaining cards of the relevant card deck.

If done properly, there are two Drawing Deck decks (one for Population, the other for Scrip), and in the lower part of both of these decks contain the four Horsemen, between which lie six cards. Orient the cards face-up or down so that the border colors of the cards all match, so that the position of the Horseman cards in the deck is not discernable.

The third set of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse is placed in the center of the table. This is to inform the players what they need to protect themselves from each horseman.

A pencil and slip of paper are made available.

## IV. Explanation of the card hand

In this game, the cards can be played various ways.

To make it easier for the players to review the cards, each has a color-coded background and border.

The backs of the Population cards show faces of good and evil surrounded by a black border.

The backs of the Doomsday Scrip cards show a Apocalyptic banknote for the final judgement bordered by white.



The back of these cards are marked so any player can see how many Scrip and Population the other players possess in their hand.



On the front the colors are reversed: the front of a Population card has a white border and usually three icons of protection. The front of a Doomsday Scrip card has a black border and various depictions.

## V. The meaning of Ethos

The players can get a good or a evil ethos.

If several players have a good ethos, then they have a common goal and they win together (if good triumphs).

If several players have a evil ethos, then they do not win together, but only the player with the most victory points wins (if evil triumphs).

See also "Determination of their winner(s)" (X).

*Hint: The game is structured so that, regardless which ethos you have, you will need both good and evil populace. If you produce just good or just evil populace, then your play possibilities will quickly be limited. Moreover, it is often best to keep your opponents guessing about your secret ethos.*

## VI. The course of play

The oldest player chooses who the Startup player is, and this player is provided with a pencil and paper to record victory points.

The game will be played in a number of turns. During an ongoing game you can only play from your hand and not from the Drawing Decks. At the end of a turn, new cards are dealt out, beginning with the Startup player.

The game will be played consecutively in a clockwise direction. On your turn, you can either play one card or pass.

### A) The play of cards

The basic rule for the play of cards is: You must play each card into your own display, or in the display of another player (no discarding).

For instance, you can increase population of an opponent in his Earthly plane or play Chastity in the Netherworld of an opponent. It is only important that all the rules for playing cards be followed. Obviously a player can also exercise Violence against his own people.

With the exception of Ethos change and Violence, all cards are played into one of the three planes. It is easy to recognise to which plane a card is played by its background and usually its border color.

All cards, that can be played into a plane, show two motifs: the left one with a bright background and a right motif with a dark background. The bright side represents the good and the dark side the evil.

These cards are always played so that one half is covered, and only the desired side is visible.

If you create a good populace, then put its card halfway beneath the Setup card, so that only the left image with the white background is visible.

If the dark side is created, proceed vice versa. The card will be played with the left half beneath your Setup card, so that the picture with white background is obscured and only the image with the black background can be seen.



If there is already a card beneath the Setup card, place the new cards accordingly beneath the outermost card of the appropriate side and plane. See the display example on page 6.

## 1.) The Earthly plane

The population dwells on the earthly plane. You must equip this plane first. You can play cards in the Heavenly plane or in the Netherworld only if you have corresponding Population cards in the Earthly plane.

Use the reverse side of a Population card to accomplish a population increase. On this side, you can see two faces. The face against the white background represents a good populace, and the face with horns represents the evil populace.

You must decide which populace (good or evil) you wish to proliferate. If you decide good, the card goes on the left side of the Earthly plane, and if bad, the right side.

When increasing populations, take note that protective icons lie on one side of the Population card or the other, and that these icons become inactive if covered.

Depending on which kind of Population is created, different rules apply:

### a) Increase of the good populace

If you create a good population, then you must also perform a good deed and give one of your opponents a gift card.

Choose any card from your hand and give it secretly to your chosen opponent, who must accept it into his hand.

If you have no card to donate, then you can't create a good person.

### b) Increase of the evil populace

If you create an evil population, then you must also perform an evil deed and steal a card at random from the hand of one of your opponents. There is no possibility for the other players to protect themselves from this evil deed.

### c) Special populations

On the front of some Doomsday Scrip cards are depicted especially good or bad people. You may create these cards only on the appropriate side, and they are immune to changing ethos. Otherwise, these cards follow the usual rules for population increases (good must donate a gift card, evil must steal a card).

## 2.) The Heavenly plane

In the Heavenly plane, you may only play guardian cards with the heavenly background (as well as a white border) and the church hymns (Warning: some have black borders!). There must always be a Population card under each card in the Heavenly plane!

For a good populace, you must play Heavenly cards before you can play cards in the Netherworld. For evil populations, it is vice versa, you must play cards in the Netherworld, before you can play cards in the Heavenly plane.

On each guardian card of the Heavenly plane, there are three different icons, one on one half and two on the other half, such that when you play it, at least one will be exposed.

It is therefore not possible to use guardian cards in the Heavenly plane to protect your populations from all of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. For full protection, you need Music cards or other guardian cards in the Netherworld.

You may, during your turn, play a card in your hand to replace a played card in the Heavenly plane that is over a good populace (with the exception of the church hymns). The replaced card goes into the discard pile.



Example Display during the Card Dealing

On the Setup cards shown, one good and two evil populace have been played. By the good populace a Heavenly plane has been created, and by the two evil populace a Netherworld has been created. The first evil populace has (subsequently) created a Heavenly plane. The good populace have increased by one, and from that one more Population card has been added. The first evil populace gets a Doomsday Scrip card. The second evil populace gets no Scrip, since it is afflicted with the gambling („*spielesucht*“) card.

## 3.) The Netherworld

In the Netherworld, you may play many different cards with a demonic background (as well as a black border) and heavy metal (Caution: white border!).

On your good side, you may play Industry, Chastity and Piety in the Netherworld. On the evil side, gambling, unbridled-sex and drugs can be played in the Netherworld.

There must always be a Population card over each card in the Netherworld!

For an evil populace, you must play Netherworld cards before you can play cards in the Heavenly plane. For good populations, it is vice versa, you must play cards in the Heavenly plane, before you can play cards in the Netherworld.

Some of the Netherworld cards have abbreviations, interpreted as follows:

- + IB = When dealing Population cards you get an additional card.
- IB = When dealing Population cards you get one card less.
- + IK = When dealing Doomsday Scrip cards you get an additional card.
- IK = When dealing Doomsday Scrip cards you get one card less.

You may, during your turn, play a card in your hand to replace a played card in the Netherworld that is under an evil populace (with the exception of heavy metal). The replaced card goes into the discard pile.

#### 4.) The Music cards

##### a) Church Hymns & Heavy-Metal (Kirchenmusik & Heavy-Metal)

You can lay Music cards onto a populace to protect it from Ethos change or Violence. You can even play outside your turn to protect against an attack. You can use any Music card (church hymns or heavy metal) to fend off any attack, regardless of which players attack and which populace is targeted.

Music cards in the display also help protect your populace from the Horseman of the Apocalypse.



Church hymns can only be played over good populations in the Heavenly plane.



Heavy metal can only be played over evil populations in the Netherworld.

A played Music card may not be exchanged.

To remove it from the display, it must be neutralized (see below).

##### b) Seal cards



The Seal (signet) cards, which you can get after a Reckoning (see VIID), show both hymns and heavy metal on their front.

You play these basically the same as ordinary church hymns and heavy metal cards, except that they are not allowed in your hand, but instead must be played immediately to your display.



If you cannot do this, then you may not accept the card. Seal cards cannot be played outside of your turn, in order to fend off an attack.

*Note: Church hymns have here a white border!*

##### c) Neutralization of displayed Music cards

A church hymns card in your display can be removed from the display only by being replaced by a heavy metal card and vice versa. When it's your turn, play a Music card and indicate the Music card that you wish to neutralize.

Both cards go to the discard pile. If the neutralization of a Music card creates a gap in your array, then move an outer card inward, until the gap is closed again.

You can also remove a Music card by using a Seal Music card. This requires you to play the card immediately after receiving it.

#### 5.) Cards that belong to no plane

There are two special cards, „Ethos change“ and „Violence“, that are not played into a display. These cards have a gray background.

During your turn, you may play these cards to carry out an attack. Only the outermost card (left or right) in your opponent's display can be attacked by these cards.

In addition, you may play these cards outside of your turn, to fend off an attack. If used to fend off an attack, both the card used to attack, and the card used to defend, go to the discard pile.

A Population card that has a music card immediately above or below is immune from these attacks. Nor does this music go into the discard pile by protecting populace thusly.

##### a) Violence (Gewalt)



Violence is played against a population to kill them. The player whose turn it is, plays the card and designates the populace (good or evil), that he wants to attack.

Then, any player can fend off this attack outside his turn, by playing an Ethos change or music card.

If Violence is not fended off, then the populace, along with all the cards that are above him in Heavenly plane or below him in Netherworld, go into the discard pile.

##### b) Change of Ethos (Gesinnungswechsel)



An Ethos change card played against a populace will change its ethos, from good to evil or vice versa. Not only does his populace change its ethos, but the corresponding cards in his display also change.

During your turn, you may play this card and designate the populace (good or evil), that you want to attack. Then, any player can fend off the attack outside his turn by discarding a Violence or music card.

If your attack is not fended off, take the populace, along with all the cards that are above it in the Heavenly plane or below it in the Netherworld, and move them with reversed ethos to the display of any player.

*Note: If after the move, a good populace has a Netherworld card with no Heaven card, or an evil populace has a Heaven card with no Netherworld, then discard that illegal card (of Heaven or the Netherworld).*

There must be no gaps. Cards of Heaven or Netherworld (as appropriate) migrate inward to fill gaps in the revised display. A populace moving to your display by an Ethos change does not allow you to give or take a card (unlike other increases of good or evil populace). Only the position changes.

#### B) Passing

If you pass, you cannot perform any more turn-actions until next turn. You can still play cards like Ethos change, Violence and music (since these cards are defensively played outside of your turn.)

The first player to pass is the startup player for the next turn. If all players except for one pass, the turn immediately ends.

*The rule is: A player cannot take his turn twice in a row.*

#### C) Dealing out cards at the end of a turn

If all players pass, the turn ends and each player sequentially receives new cards, starting with the new startup player.

For each good Population card, a player gets a new Population card from the Drawing Deck into his hand, and for each evil Population card, he gets a Doomsday Scrip card from the other Drawing Deck.

There is no limit to the number of cards in your hand.

During the dealing of the cards an Apocalyptic Horseman may appear. Because of the possibility of the appearance of a Horseman, the cards must be dealt one after another to each player (rather than giving a player all the cards he has earned at once).

See also the display example, on page 3.

##### a) Dealing Population cards

First, handle the good populace, starting with the basic Population card of the startup player. Each player in turn lays a Population card (starting with the good side of his basic Population card) over the Heavenly plane, then each player gets a Population card for the next good Population card he has displayed and so on.

If you put your dealt cards perpendicularly over your display,

then it is easy to keep everything straight (as shown in the display example).

The Population cards dealt are modified by the „+1B“, „+1K“ and „-1B“ modifications shown on certain cards in the Netherworld (such as Piety, Job, and Chastity).

The dealing of Population cards continues until all displayed Population cards are resolved, or until an Apocalyptic horseman appears in the Drawing Deck. If a horseman appears, dealing immediately stops and the dealing of the Doomsday Scrip cards begins. The remaining unresolved Population cards remain empty.

### **b) Dealing Doomsday Scrip cards**

After dealing the Population cards, the Doomsday Scrip cards are dealt (regardless if the dealing of Population cards was ended by a horseman or by having all populations resolved).

Start again with the basic Population card of the startup player.

Consecutively, each player is given a Doomsday Scrip card placed over the Heavenly plane of the basic Population and then each player gets a Doomsday Scrip card for the next evil Population card he has displayed and so on.

Also here it is beneficial to distribute your Doomsday Scrip cards across the top of your display (as shown in the display example).

When you are dealt cards, observe the displayed „+1K“, „+1B“ and „-1K“ modifications displayed on some Netherworld cards (such as hallucinogenic drugs, unbridled sex, and addictive gambling).

The dealing of Doomsday Scrip cards continues until all displayed evil Population cards are resolved, or until an Apocalyptic horseman appears. The dealing of Scrip cards ends immediately if an Apocalyptic horseman appears. All Population cards, which hitherto have not been resolved, remain empty.

## **VII. The Horsemen of the Apocalypse**

If an Apocalyptic horseman appears in one or both of the two Drawing Decks, a Horseman Reckoning is performed after the cards are dealt.

*Note: The effects of any of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse may always be examined by any player. The effects of the Reckoning are applied to the good before the evil populace.*

### **A) Population reduction**

A protective icon is shown on the reverse side of the first three Horseman. This icon guards the entirety of the good or evil populace.

If your good population is facing the Reckoning, then all your relevant protective icons (regardless of plane) and your church hymns laid out for the good are combined. This sum gives the number of good Population cards protected, (other than your Basic Population card, which is always automatically protected). Excess population is eliminated from the outside in.

Eliminated populace are initially laid next to your display (because they count against your victory points). Any cards over the eliminated populace in the Heavenly plane, or below in the Netherworld, go into their respective discard pile.

Since cards are always reduced from outside to inside, it's possible that a card protecting against the Horseman will be moved to the discard pile, when the populace it corresponds to is eliminated. This has no significance for the Reckoning of the Horseman, since it is removed only after it has served its purpose against the Horseman.

After the good are reckoned, then reckon the evil in the same

way, except that now you add heavy metal cards to your protection.

Excess protective icons that are not needed by the good populace, are transferred from the good to the evil populace. However, the converse is not true; transfer of protective icons not needed by the evil populace is not possible.

*Note: You may only transfer protection to your own display. Your basic Population card cannot die from the onslaught of the horsemen and needs no protective icon.*

### **Example A:**

You need protective NBC masks to survive the first Horseman. Annelie counts the number of masks and church hymns which she has played on her good populace. She has three masks and one church hymn. Thus, four (3 + 1) good populace are protected.

Since she has six good populace, she loses two. The two outermost populace (far left) are outside the protection from the Reckoning and are removed from her display. Any played cards she has above or below the eliminated population also go to the discard pile. Now her evil populations are handled the same way.

### **Example B:**

You need survival helmets to survive the second Horseman.

Kurt has three good populace. He has three helmets (including two in the Netherworld) and two church hymns.

He loses none of his good populace, since they have more protection than population. The two surplus protection units are transferred to his evil population.

Kurt owns three evil population, for whom he has no protection displayed. Nevertheless, only one of the three die, since two are protected by the transferred protection.

## **B) The Reckoning**

After the decimation of an Apocalyptic Horseman, a Reckoning is performed. Count your Population cards (good and evil) in your display. Subtract from this sum the number of populace killed by the horseman. This is your victory points recorded.

### **Example C – The Reckoning after the first Apocalyptic Horseman:**

After the decimation of the first Horseman, Paul has 4 good and 3 evil populace in his display.

That makes a total combined  $4 + 3 = 7$  population.

Paul lost two population in the decimation, so he nets  $7 - 2 = 5$  victory points (VP). Paul should write down 5 VP.

Once you have been reckoned, place your dead on the discard pile.

## **C) Creating new Drawing Decks after a Reckoning**

After the ride of each of the first three Horsemen of the Apocalypse, new Drawing Decks are created. To do this, separate all discarded cards into two groups (Population and Scrip). Then remove the cards from each of the two Drawing Decks the lie over the next Horseman, and shuffle them together with the cards of the corresponding discard pile. These two shuffled decks are placed face-down over their corresponding Drawing Deck. This forms the two new Drawing Decks for the next turn.

*Note: Should a Drawing Deck still contain a current Horseman, it should be removed and set aside.*

## **D) Rewards after the Reckoning**

The player receiving the highest victory points during a scoring turn is awarded the card of the current Horseman of the

Apocalypse. If two or three players are tied for the highest points, then each one gets a card of the Horseman of the Apocalypse. If more than three players are tied for the highest points, then nobody gets a Horseman card.

This awarded card brings victory points for the final Reckoning, and makes it easier to survive the fourth Horseman.

The player with the most displayed Population cards at the end of a scoring turn, gets a Seal card, whose music he must use right away. He puts it in a position of his choice on a display, or uses it to neutralize a Music card already played.

If two or three players are tied for the most Population, then each of these players gets a Seal card. But if more than three have the most Population, then nobody gets a Seal card.

## VIII. The Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse



The fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse is Death in its various forms.

Here it is no longer enough to have one icon for protection, rather all three icons of protection or music

are needed to protect each population.

If you have acquired the card of another Apocalyptic horseman, then you have proven your ability to shield your populace against that affliction, and may use its protective icon to protect all your populace from the fourth Horseman. If you acquire all three cards of the first three Horseman, you need not fear the fourth Horseman, because you are completely protected.

## IX. The end of the game

The game ends after the scoring of the fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse has been recorded. Then the winner is determined.

## X. Determination of the winner(s)

After the ride of the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, add together the victory points that you have acquired during the game. You also win victory points according to the Horseman cards you have won. The number of points awarded depends on the Horseman number (also indicated on the card by the number of skulls):

1st Apocalyptic horseman = 1 VP

2nd Apocalyptic horseman = 2 VP

3rd Apocalyptic horseman = 4 VP

4th Apocalyptic horseman = 7 VP

Now sum together all good populaces in the displays of all players. Do the same for all the evil populaces. Finally, all players reveal their ethos card.

### A) The good players all win collectively...

if the players collectively have more good populace displayed than evil, and a player with good ethos has more victory points than a player with evil ethos.

### B) Neither good nor evil wins, ...

if the players collectively have more good populace displayed than evil, and no player with good ethos has more victory points than a player with evil ethos. Nobody wins.

### C) Evil triumphs if, ...

if the players collectively do not have more good populace displayed than evil. The evil player with the most victory points wins alone.

**Special Case:** In a two or three player game, it may happen that all players have the same Ethos. If so, the player with the most victory points wins, regardless of Ethos. However, in no case can a good player win if most of the combined populace are evil, and vice versa.

## XI. Optional rules

In a game with only a few players, the forces of good and evil can be quite unevenly distributed.

To balance these forces, the number of Ethos cards assigned to the players can be optionally reduced. Player goals thus become easier to recognise quickly, and there will be fewer opportunities to bluff.

### A) Two players

Select a good and evil Ethos card from the deck, and give one randomly to each player.

*Note: The two-player game of Good versus Evil is the hardest game to play (fundamentally more difficult than if both players have the same Ethos). The Good player cannot make the smallest mistake against the Evil one. For this reason, this variant should be played only with experienced players.*

### B) Three or four players

Select two good and two evil Ethos cards from the deck, shuffle, and give one secretly to each player.

## XII. Credits

I thank all the playtesters for their criticisms and ideas on the development of this game, particularly: Frank Gartner, Tina Large, Marlies Noormann, Uta Hillen, Wolfgang Hoen Katja Kornmacher, Volker Fog, Thomas Neu, Martin Roth and Antonia Rudolph. There are others not mentioned for space reasons.

## XIII. Impressum



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*Note: Understanding the German text on the cards is not necessary to play.*

*The text on the Horseman cards is inspired by the Bible:*

*(1st rider) „And I saw, and beheld a white rocket: and he that sat on him had brought destruction from afar; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

*Only those with NBC (nuclear-biological-chemical) guardians or music can withstand the foreign war.“;*

*(2nd rider) „And there went out a red dog: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

*Only those with helmets or music can withstand the civil war.“;*

*(3rd rider) „And I saw, and beheld the oppressed. And he that sat on him had inflation in his hand, And I heard his voice say „A pound of wheat for 1000 € and three pounds of grain for 6000 €.“*

*Only those with pigs or music can withstand the exploitation.“;*

*(4th rider) „And I looked, and beheld a dead horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and famine followed him. And power was given unto him to kill with various ways and means. To kill with weapons, and with hunger, and with death to the wild beasts of the earth.*

*Only those with all the guardians or music survive the multifarious death.“*