

# The Hearth Student's Journal

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**Editor-In-Chief**

Khiem Bui, The American School '28

## The Hearth Student's Journal

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# Letter from the Editor-In-Chief

*The Hearth Student's Journal, Volume 1, Issue 2, 2025*

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the second issue of *The Hearth Student Journal*.

It has been an incredible experience to plan and manage this project for the past year. We've grown from a tiny group of 8 founding members with a strong belief that age should pose no barrier to research. Now over 30 chapters across 12 countries, join us on this journey.

This issue also marks an important milestone: THSJ's transition from a fledgling publication into a sustained and maturing journal. Our peer-review and editing processes have grown more robust, our submissions more varied, and our community more engaged. As Editor-in-Chief, I have witnessed firsthand the commitment and seriousness with which our contributors treat their craft. It is my hope that THSJ continues to serve as a warm hearth—one that welcomes new writers, sparks difficult conversations, and empowers students to speak thoughtfully into the world they inherit.



If I may leave you with one message through this letter, please know perseverance is one of the greatest virtues of man. Each of our authors, editors, and designers put incredible effort into creating the issue you now hold in your hands, or more likely read from your screen. Greatness is difficult to achieve, yet never can be without effort.

Thank you for reading, for supporting our writers, and for believing in the value of student scholarship. I hope that as you turn these pages, you feel the same sense of possibility that we felt while assembling them.

Happy Writing!

Bui Thien Khiem  
The American School Vietnam '28  
Editor-in-Chief  
*The Hearth Student's Journal*  
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# “Bang bang bang”: How Dahl’s Modifications Subvert Expectations in Little Red Riding Hood

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The Little Red Riding Hood intertextual network is one of the most familiar to children. For adults, too, the story of Little Red Riding Hood evokes a fairytale of a meek little girl who transports food to her grandmother’s house. In the way, she encounters a wolf, who intends to eat both Little Red Riding Hood and her grandma. From this point on, different texts in the network proceed in different ways. For example, in the Brothers Grimm’s “Little Red Cap” both grandma and Little Red Riding Hood escape from the wolf who is killed. In other versions, such as Paul Delarue’s “Story of Grandmother”, grandmother is eaten but Little Red Riding Hood escapes – and in Charles Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood”, the little girl does not have the same fate, as the wolf emerges victorious as he eats both the grandma and the girl. While these texts differ in the endings, they are centrally the same story, and they are all modifications of one another. Thus, we must think of them as an interconnected network, and as “transformations” of one another (Text Book 153). Another such story that is part of this network is Roald Dahl’s “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf”, which is more of a contemporary piece, being published in 1995. The story does share most main elements with other texts in the network, but there are a few modifications that Dahl makes. For example, in the end it is the wolf that dies, not the Little

Red Riding Hood. Ultimately, these modifications shift the usual relationship that Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf have in other stories (and thus, the meaning that these characters carry), and in doing so, using elements of humor and witty prose, Dahl shows that failure to adapt to modernity results in severe consequences.

The wolf in Dahl’s modern version is not suited to deal with a modern Little Red Riding Hood. In older versions, Little Red Riding Hood was a defenseless little girl whose fate was, in most versions, to be eaten by the big bad wolf. These early versions of this tale employ a back-and-forth dialogue between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf (who Little Red Riding Hood assumes to be the grandma). For instance, in Charles Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood”, the young girl asks the wolf posing to be grandma “what big arms...big legs...big ears...big eyes you have!” (The Classic Fairy Tales 13). The wolf provides fitting answers that would not raise suspicion about its true character. However, when Little Red Riding Hood asks “Grandmother, what big teeth you have!”, the wolf responds “The better to eat you with!” and that is the end of Little Red Riding Hood (13). In Roald Dahl’s “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf”, Little Red Riding Hood again asks the wolf about his big eyes and ears (21). However, Little Red Riding Hood then asks the wolf about his “furry coat”. At this point,

the wolf does not know how to react, because he is not prepared for this question. In other texts in this network, Little Red Riding Hood usually inquires about his teeth, so he asks her “Haven’t you forgot to tell me what BIG TEETH I’ve got? No matter...I’m going to eat you anyway” (22). He is preoccupied with attacking Little Red Riding Hood at the appropriate moment, which is usually when Little Red Riding Hood asks about the wolf’s teeth. Thus, he sets up the appropriate moment himself, and he has made the mistake of assuming that Dahl’s Little Red Riding Hood is the same as the other Little Red Riding Hoods that the wolf has encountered in other texts. But Dahl’s little girl is not the same. Instead, it is the wolf who is shot dead with a “bang bang bang” of Little Red Riding Hood’s pistol (22). The wolf’s death occurs because he is expecting a Little Red Riding Hood of the past, the timid little girl who would not carry a gun. But because the modern Red Riding Hood has a gun, she is adequately prepared to deal with the wolf and is thus not afraid of him. This interaction between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf is central to every text in the network, so for Dahl to show a new relationship between the characters, changing this dialogue is an excellent choice. With a modification of this integral dialogue, the menacing wolf of the past has shifted to a manageable wolf of the present, and the cautious Little Red Riding Hood of the past has been changed to a confident Red Riding Hood of the present.

Although there is no explicit moral stated after Dahl’s “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf”, Dahl’s changes to the prose of the classic Little Red Riding Hood tale supply a new meaning for the wolf, and thus imply a new moral. In Perrault’s version, an explicit moral tells little girls, especially those who are “pretty, well-bred, and genteel” that they shouldn’t listen to anyone and it’s not “strange” if they are eaten by a wolf (13). This moral designates the wolf as not just a natural predator, but also a human predator who would want to take advantage of a little girl –

and thus, little girls must be wary of such wolf-like characters. In Dahl’s version, however, the wolf is not allowed to take this role. He is called “Wolfie” by the narrator, which is more of a childish nickname rather than a proper name for a creepy predator (21). This undermines the idea that the wolf is like an all-powerful predator, because it shows that the wolf can be a child, too. He also “wails” because his meal of Grandma is not filling enough, and this destroys the conception of the wolf being a cool, collected predator. Rather, we see his feelings too, which in some sense makes him more vulnerable because we see the more personal side of him, which allows us to appeal to him and exploit him better (21). Once again, this supports the idea that he is given the role of a child, particularly an impatient and impulsive one. Meanwhile, Little Red Riding Hood is not “astonished” to see the wolf posing to be her grandma, as she is in Perrault’s version (13). Instead, Dahl’s Little Red Riding Hood is composed. When she sees the wolf, she “stops and stares” without saying anything at first (21). Then, after the wolf says he’s going to eat Little Red Riding Hood, she “smiles...one eyelid flickers”, and she, without any hesitation, procures her gun and shoots him (22). She knows that she does not have time to think and wonder about her situation, and she must act fast. Because of her promptness, coupled with the wolf’s vulnerability, Little Red Riding Hood is able to take advantage of him, almost as a reversal of the standard roles present in other texts in the intertextual network. Indeed, Little Red Riding Hood turns into a predator of sorts, and the wolf a prey, as she sports a “wolfskin coat” a few weeks after her encounter with the wolf (22). A moral then, for Dahl’s story, would be about Little Red Riding Hood’s preparedness for her encounter with the wolf, considering she carried a pistol, and this preparedness was something that the wolf lacked as he had expected a classic Little Red Riding Hood. In other words, Little Red Riding Hood is modern in the sense that she is prepared for

the wolf to attack her, based on past experience, but the wolf is not modern because he is not prepared for the scenario in which Little Red Riding Hood attacks him.

It may be unfair to deem Little Red Riding Hood as modern and the wolf as not, as both were acting on their past experiences in other texts in the network. However, Dahl expertly deals with this by also adding a childish character for the wolf. Modern, then, could mean the difference between Dahl's now immature, childish wolf and Dahl's now mature, confident Little Red Riding Hood, who is 'modernized' because she acts older than she really is. It is important to always consider Dahl's text in relation with other texts in the Little Red Riding Hood network, because that is the only way we can draw any useful meaning about the text.

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# Cancel Culture in the Age of Digital Morality: A Philosophical Inquiry

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The concept of cancel culture draws its roots thousands of years, tracing to the notion of “Demnatio Memoriae” where the Roman Statute systematically erased individuals deemed enemies of the state and expunged statues, legacies, and monuments (Johns). Similar practices of this notion are paralleled by monotheistic reforms in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, where successors of Pharaoh Akhenaten utilized posthumous obliteration to deface remnants of his rule, ultimately resulting in the omission of his reign in the kings lists (Spence). Likewise, Puritans in the 16th century utilized public restraint to punish criminals and Roman persecutions of Christians or heretics (Billingham 87).

In the 20th century, the emergence of the homo sovieticus—the incarnation of the new man and the tabula rasa Russian tsarist serves a critical example of cancel culture as a condemnation of memory. One could further draw parallels of this notion with Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution—a, a state-led campaign that systematically purged political dissidents and counterrevolutionary elements, consequently eliminating China’s “Four Olds” (Guardian). This definition of cancel culture draws upon the act of canceling itself, or removing from collective memory. The derivation of the modern concept of cancel culture draws upon these roots, which were catalyzed by radical actions of physical erasure and systematic erosion. However, modern definitions of this term hinge more on

social sanctioning mechanisms, such as deplatforming, boycott, and public condemnation practices. The modern definition of “cancel culture” has evolved considerably; its origins derive from African-American vernacular, where it referred to the decisions of withdrawing support, to recent popularization in social media platforms (Pew Research). Cancel culture, veritably, is an old phenomenon that channels itself in a new modality of the 21st century—the online cyberspace.

In this essay, I will attempt to assess the effective means of pursuing accountability and the implications of stifling free expression and intolerance through cancel culture. By examining the repercussions and ethical frameworks on such accounts, this essay will analyze its consequential effects on society through a comparative analysis of ethical frameworks and contemporary digital cancellations.

One of the crucial questions that arises with the implications of cancel culture on accountability and freedom of expression is what human conduct warrants cancellation, and what necessitates legitimacy in a given context. To attain a consensus, we must concede the following: there is no universally accepted definition of the term “cancel culture” for it is amorphous, it is true that boycotts, in their pure form, do not infringe on people’s right *per se*, however cancel culture could escalate and drive mob behaviors often at the expense of others, freedom of speech

does not equate freedom of consequences, online platforms often amplify the distortion of context, and that accountability is necessary to achieve a democratic society.

How we define the term legitimacy ultimately distinguishes our perceptions of morality and “wrongdoing”, altering justifications and outcomes. Under utilitarian and consequentialist logic, the act of “canceling” harmful actors maximises social wellbeing by preventing future harm. In a society where we are increasingly prone to cancellation, there is a necessity for a system that requires long-term utility, ensuring the greatest good for the greatest number of people. However, just because someone has the right to cancel someone doesn’t justify the morality of the action in itself.

Deontological ethics proposes the notion of respect for all rational beings- if the action is deemed morally unjustified, it is independent of its consequences. But are we to assume that all humans are rational actors? Rationality may be defined as pursuing actions that protect or further one’s self-interest in their own free will, at the expense of other people. Considering this, we must ask ourselves, how does society decide what is moral and who gets the power to enforce those morals? The act of “canceling” is used in solidarity, however, the “cultural” aspect could cause overt fear and intolerance.

Indeed, the implication of culture sanctifies the plausibility of serious harm. (Mendoza)

Aristotle emphasizes habit formation in shaping moral character, where moral virtue is characterized by a trait that develops over repeated virtuous actions (Sachs). He argued that cancel culture “diminishes the fatality of a person to two possibilities”, simplifying complex ethical situations. Tokenization, in the context of cancel culture, attributes individuals to “oversimplified” labels. Canceling someone would warrant alienation, which would adversely affect accountability by instigating recidivism.

Furthermore, free speech philosophy, coined by philosophers John Stuart Mill and Voltaire, advocates for the allowance of freedom of expression regardless of motivations, intentions, and outcomes. Voltaire prominently declared, “I disapprove what you say but defend to the death your right to say it.” Under such frameworks, free speech is deemed sacrosanct, and cancellation would deny the humanity of another person by stifling expression. However, a moral dilemma emerges: whether cancel culture serves as a necessary check on harmful behavior or suppresses the very voices that could drive our society forward.

A study conducted by the Pew Research Institute reveals 14% of adults describing it as a form of censorship, with 38% of its participants believing that it is more likely to punish those that don’t deserve it (Vogels et al). Essentialist perspectives could exacerbate the consequences of cancel culture by increasing censure, leading to harsher judgements. Nietzsche’s underlying philosophy of “herd mentality” emphasizes the role of conformity in avoiding social ostracism (Johnson). He asserts the deviation towards a “mob mentality” through cancel culture, where individuals are impelled to demand retribution. According to Nietzsche, a manifestation of the “death of god” asserts that nihilism leads to a crisis of values, inciting the response of cancel culture to establish new moral standards (Longenecker). Furthermore, the notion of “will to power” reflects the role of power in driving human motivations and actions. The collective action of “canceling” could be perceived as a manifestation of the will to power, where individuals seek to assert dominance over others.

Appiah notes the facets that dub the grounds of dignity, where honor is perceived as a system of esteem, and cancel culture could be interpreted as a form of moral enforcement (Appiah). Censorship is thus ostensibly justified by such codes, where

cancel culture is viewed as a complementary system of collective condemnation in sanctioning offensive or criminal conduct (Koh 114).

In the criminal justice system, cancel culture could fill accountability gaps in two regards: 1) instituting a new mode of democratic participation and 2) shunning individuals that are beyond the criminal justice system's reach (Billingham 93). This amplifies marginalized groups encountering barriers to enforcement and rectifies deficiencies in our criminal justice system. For instance, in 2017 allegations of sexual assault culminated in Weinstein's cancellation, giving rise to the #Me Too Movement, where individuals felt empowered to voice their own experiences; this fulfills the purpose of democratization. However, there is a deep underlying problem of stigmatization.

The scapegoat of cancel culture derives from deep-rooted societal issues where accountability gaps can only be resolved when such problems are addressed. The act of canceling could prescribe disproportionate sanctions for those sanctioned as morally deserving of the treatment and enhance collateral consequences, heightening lifelong stigma. Philosopher Nussbaum notes the emergence of a "spoiled identity", in which the target is portrayed as irredeemable to return to the community (Jonathan). As such, this could cause individuals to feel pressured to adhere to more extremist norms and appeal to recidivism. Cancel culture at its core reflects the natural tendency to punish people as immutably immoral, which could reveal deeper punitive impulses and foster disintegration by labeling deviance. This perspective posits that society is inclined to condemn character flaws without considering the broader context and potential for change.

Additionally, the Kantian critique asserts that "it is immoral to use an individual as a means to an end" (Billingham 107). Heider's attribution theory explores the

multilayered justification for cancel culture through internal and external attributions (Bantugan).

This framework asserts that dispositional attributions are heavily entwined with the nature of cancel culture, wherein a person's actions are inherently reflective of their personality.

For instance, a person presenting a controversial statement would be immediately accused of bigotry without taking into account the full context of their actions. Likewise, a celebrity that was "canceled" for behavior once deemed acceptable but now offensive due to evolving social standards overlooks external factors such as the social environment. Relativists uphold the belief that moral standards for ethical behavior vary depending on the context, contrasting with moral absolutists.

Moreover, Billingham and Parr note the enforcement of norms through external and internal sanctions. Public criticism plays a communicative role by enhancing awareness of the morally authoritative social norm and serves as a deterrent to reduce future norm violations (Billingham, Parr 10). It is used to neuter the target by removing them from the ability to bring perlocutionary effects.

The proportionality of cancel culture hinges on its role as morally authoritative; violators must comply with it and abide by its consequences. To be culpable, the violator must have acknowledged the repercussions of their actions in breaching the norm. The culpability of a violator affects its liability—there is a proportional relationship between culpability and liability, where culpability increases with the extent to which they take accountability for their actions (Billingham, Parr 10). Under this logic, cancel culture is an effective means of holding individuals accountable. However, a proposition asserts that the consequences of retributive justice are not always proportionate to an individual's capacity for rehabilitation, enforcing punitive impacts. In 2020, a UNC professor who had

previously made reprehensible comments was discovered dead after being encouraged to retire (Greene). This demonstrates the concerns that arise regarding whether public condemnation ethically justifies proportionate outcomes.

Conversely, a constructive approach asserts that cancel culture could cultivate individualism by construing self-interest. This perception views cancel culture as a democratizing process because it allows marginalized individuals to exercise power over the powerful (Noyes).

The democratization of cancel culture is perceived as a means to challenge existing power structures, amplifying public opinion (Schubert). In this context, the legitimacy of cancel culture could be analyzed through the moral intent of the action itself, distinguishing between pure punitive instincts and the prevention of collateral damage.

The framing of modern cancel culture ultimately reflects the continuation of public memory management, as evidenced by the systematic erasures of the Romans and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. However, modern variations of cancel culture engender a lack of centralized authority from state measures, resulting in decentralized and erratic forms. The paradoxical nature of cancel culture reveals both morally corrective and potentially oppressive forces, by holding the powerful accountable and cultivating retributionist means. This is quintessentially portrayed by the tension between deontological and utilitarian imperatives-distinguishing the morality of the action itself as opposed to its consequences.

Cancel culture could function as a moral vigilantism, where individuals feel a moral imperative to rectify perceived injustices. This reinforces Nietzsche's notion of Herd mentality, but could further the risk of disproportionate punishment. As such, the need for moral and epistemic humility is critical to ensure human growth. Nussbaum's concept of narrative imagination stresses our

ability to perceive others as moral agents capable of change and development. To balance accountability and freedom of expression, we must seek a system that provides the greatest good to the greatest number of people. Actions must be executed through holistic means to ensure restorative justice, and mechanisms that address systematic injustices are critical to foster a culture prioritizing transformation over retribution.

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# Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder's Vulnerabilities

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Some say that only through depressive or bipolar disorders do we do self harm and view everything around us negatively. Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder may seem easy to understand and sound simple on the surface as just personality disorders that cause you to be more attentive to certain aspects of life but no one had ever bothered to look deeper into the dire consequences that individuals suffer as a result of having OCPD. For something that is seen as a harmless chore to deal with daily, could be more dangerous underneath if left overlooked. A video game character called "Sunday" from "Honkai Star Rail" who deals with his controlling and perfectionist self had almost risked the entire universe into chaos all because of his obsession with order to the point of even being willing to sacrifice himself in the end to achieve a perfect paradise where happiness is guaranteed. Through this character study of Sunday, it suggests that individuals with OCPD are more prone to self-destructive tendencies and likely to develop pessimistic views due to having high standards and the need to be in control of everything in their lives.

Do you ever wonder why all species coexist perfectly in harmony? Who controls it and who created such a paradise for all species to exist together simultaneously in this universe? Some might answer this question through religion, saying that a powerful higher being enabled our creation, some might say evolution. But for Sunday, he believes in neither of these options. To him, humanity was only able to unite thanks to "order". All laws, justice systems, bureaucracy, morality

that we have forged over the past few centuries, all come from order and have thus shaped our society the moment we were given a chance to survive in this world. His goal is simple, it is to create a paradise, a place with no flaws where people can be happy all the time and where the strong protect the weak instead of the weak trying to catch up to the strong. A world without a god to follow and worship, a world where everyone is equal even if they have different strengths and weaknesses, because in the end, those with enough strength will protect those who lack it, making up the status quo. Sunday stands strongly by this belief in his dialogue from the game where he says that "Society's ideal system should be "seven rest days". Following Sunday, there should be a second, a third, and indeed an infinite procession of Sundays. This should be the new face of the world - idyllic, eternal, peaceful days." (Rail, 2025). This line suggests that he deeply believes in a world where only peace exists under no rule and that he is determined in achieving it by forcing everyone to slumber and have their consciousness remain in a dreamlike scope where their truest desires become true. A world where unfortunate people don't have to fight to be happy within a secure system, a place where the strong govern the weak instead of preying on them.

Background: Sunday's Backstory

Sunday resides in a planet named "Penacony" where you can function normally in a "dream", a place where reality can be constructed within your consciousness. He is an older brother to his younger sister named "Robin" (Rail, 2025). This source suggests

that Sunday and Robin's parents died during their childhood years in a Stellaron Crisis, to a war in simple terms. Afterwards, they were adopted by "Gopher Wood", the head of The Family, or one of the party organisations that act as the government for Penacony. Gopher Wood saw something within both of them and referred to them as "twins of the Order" able to hear its call. In the Hoyolab article that has content directly uploaded from the game, stated that Ena "The Order" is an aeon, a powerful god-like being that had died a long time ago when it was absorbed by the Xipe, the aeon of "Harmony" because of their similar ideologies that consist of followers coexisting together. Except, one is under the laws of order and the other is through harmony (HoYoLAB - Official Community, 2025). Both of the siblings were adopted for the grand plan that Gopher Wood schemed for centuries, which was to bring back Order to life using a Stellaron, a cancerous cell that is powerful but harmful enough to destroy planets if used incorrectly (Rail, 2025).

Sunday's relationship with his sister Robin after the death of their parents was at first just filled with him being overprotective. Him and Robin both shared a dream where they could create a "paradise" where no one has to suffer anymore and are protected by the strong (Rail, 2025). That desire partially came from their own personal experiences where they had to live under extreme conditions during war and where death was inevitable. An innocent dream that was filled with hope, something that Gopher Wood unfortunately took advantage of to involve the siblings into his plan.

It all started with the scene in their childhood when both siblings encountered a bird that had failed its first flight (Rail, 2024). This scene is crucial in understanding why and how Sunday developed his obsession with control and order and why he holds the beliefs that he has currently. This was also the moment Gopher Wood chose a perfect vessel that aligns with his ideals of "The Order" to

proceed with the revival of the fallen Aeon to rewrite rules of the universe. Gopher asked the siblings to share their ideas on what to do with the bird, Robin said she'd rather take care of it until it is strong enough to fly again, while Sunday disagreed and thought it would be better to put it in a cage where it could be safe and cared for its entire life. This is where two ideals clashed and the first sign of a divide happening between his siblings, where one thought freedom should be valued over security and the other the opposite. To Gopher, Sunday was in a position showcasing the most vulnerability as Robin was firm and determined to let the bird experience its second flight again even if it might risk dying, because to her, at least the bird was able to make a choice to its own destiny, while as for Sunday, he was more anxious at the thought of the bird risking itself of dying and wanted to keep it safe even if it might feel restrained. This revealed that Robin resonates with Harmony more and Sunday with the Order, hence, the perfect candidate to resume the legacy of bringing The Order back was chosen (Rail, 2024). This marked the start of Gopher Wood indoctrinating Sunday into being the next head of the family and following the values of The Order by enabling his self-destructive behaviours and worst traits.

As they grew older and Robin left Penacony to spread Harmony across the galaxies, Sunday trained everyday under Gopher Wood to be prepared to take on the role of managing the government, he was able to encounter and witness horrible tragedies and corruptions that come with the people and the system he grew up in. Such as The Family using the Stellarton to harness the power to defy reality by usurping the citizen's dreams and desires, the people risking their lives just to stay in Penacony, poverty, and crime (Rail, 2025). All these factors broke Sunday, the fact that the strong were unaffected because they had power while the weak had to struggle to make ends is what made him realize that in order to build a paradise, he must be the one

to take responsibility to take watch of humanity, not any higher being such as the aeon of Harmony that was taking care of Penacony. Throughout these times, he had to witness multiple people selling their souls and belongings just to live a peaceful life in penacony. He witnessed the worst sides of humanity, his mother dying because of a war, his little sister getting shot, every confession that he listened to was him trying to help by being kind only for it to end in vain. Yet he still wants what he thinks is best for humanity. A world where people didn't struggle to be happy.

And Gopher Wood just stood by without interfering as he witnessed Sunday experiencing the ugly side of life, he did not act like a father to Sunday nor Robin, he always explained things in a methodical way and never expressed a single concern or worry for the two. This is shown during one scene when he delivered the news to Sunday about Robin being shot in the neck, but the way he framed and worked himself made it seem like his sister got shot because she was trying to spread the songs of harmony (Rail, 2025). This was Sunday's last straw, and all Gopher needed to do was to push and guide him to the path that he had planned out for him. Not once did Sunday call Gopher Wood "father", instead he referred to him as "master" (Rail, 2025). Gopher Wood is basically just someone Sunday takes orders from, further making their relationship far more strained than what a normal father and son relationship should look like. And Sunday does not seek affection from him, their relationship is entirely transactional the more Sunday grew, the more he saw his master, the one who adopted him and his sister as just a person who can guide him into achieving his life long plan for humans.

**Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder** is a psychiatric disorder pronounced by extreme perfectionism, orderliness, and self-control that leads to dysfunctions that hinder one's daily life (Rizvi & Torrico,

2023). These behaviors and thought patterns interfere with completing tasks and maintaining relationships. People suffering from this disorder are usually heavily preoccupied with rules, control and orderliness. It is known that people with OCPD believe that their thoughts are correct (Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia, 2022).

A person with OCPD has symptoms of perfectionism that usually begin by early adulthood. This perfectionism may interfere with the person's ability to complete tasks because their standards are so rigid. They may withdraw emotionally when they are not able to control a situation. This can hinder their ability to solve problems and form close relationships. Other signs of OCPD may also include: preoccupation with details, rules, and lists and over-devotion to work (Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia, 2022).

Throughout the game, Sunday displays self-destructive behaviors, obsessions with maintaining everything under his control and organization, and dreaming about too perfect ideas to come to life whilst having OCPD. It's important to note that while OCPD is known for its extreme obsession for control, neatness and perfectionism, because of that, they feel a great responsibility to force their own standards on their outside environment (Watson, 2012), which suggests possible high expectations and stubbornness to manifest that may be distressing for the individual. This concern then turns into a flaw in their eyes and the individual with OCPD feels the need to fix it and mold it into perfection in their own high standard. This causes them to view others' solutions as ineffective or not good enough as their own and due to often dissatisfaction from other people

Sunday is full of pessimism and with the way he viewed humanity after experiencing the dark side of humans and the mistakes that they made from struggling to

live happily in a competitive environment. Although not all people with OCPD have a pessimistic view of the world, pessimism along with other low moods caused by the constant need for control and perfection is associated with this disorder (Grant & Chamberlain, 2019). For example, after his younger sister got shot, he didn't see the point in continuing to support her path on spreading harmony or when he truly believed that only through Order people would be able to achieve happiness instead of following the Harmony, and he never once saw any other solutions that could counter this as good enough (Rail, 2024). This shows that he has a "pessimistic explanatory style" which means how an individual perceives the world through a negative lens. Sunday's stubborn self as his trait from his OCPD, thought that the only way to save humanity was his job to take on as his method was the only valid way to live, that is by putting everyone to sleep so that no one would need to face their weaknesses. Sunday felt weak and vulnerable when he lost his mother and to deal with those hard feelings, he developed the belief where all humans were born weak, which further encouraged the formation of his pessimistic mindset even more. This reveals that Sunday was unable to think of positive outcomes for the world and refused to acknowledge other better ways besides his in aiding humanity's misery because it was outside of his control and standard.

Such negative thoughts on humans stemmed from his past experiences and the fact that he needed to be the one to make decisions due to the environment that forcefully raised him to be in charge of an important position. This led to Sunday enforcing his order and beliefs about the world through "projection", which is a psychological defense mechanism where one attributes their feelings or thoughts onto another group or a person (Pessimistic – the Gift of OCPD, 2019). Sunday felt weak and vulnerable when he lost his mother and to deal

with those hard feelings, he developed the belief where all humans were born weak, which fueled his pessimistic mindset even more. Additionally, Sunday was "projecting" from his personal experiences, because he was always surrounded by awful tragedies and greedy people who would take advantage of him and his people, which resulted in assuming that everyone was suffering and having the same issue that he went through. And to make things worse, his foster father barely spared any love for him as well which influenced him to have this mindset even further. Which was to bear not a single expectation for love from anyone. For others not to suffer the same way that he did, he resorted to governing the people to feel control in his life and avoid the impending feeling of doom that always haunted him inside. However, he's still boundless in compassion for everyone around him which explains his thought process very well, because having pessimistic views is not equivalent to bad desires. Despite wanting the best for everyone and having good intentions, Sunday's pessimism unfortunately prevents him from seeing any good unless it is within his control. He just sees no way where a perfect paradise can be achieved unless he can be the one to make the decisions Sunday undoubtedly is one of those characters who cares about others so much that it warps his perception on life, and makes him willing to take away others' free will if it means they'll be happy and not suffer.

Furthermore, with this meta-analysis research which aims to understand how Cluster C Personality Disorders coincide with concepts in evidence-based treatment approaches for Personality Disorders, strengthens the point where OCPD individuals are prone to succumbing to pessimism. The study used "EMS" to reveal the connection between which Cluster C disorders were linked to the traits they endured with their corresponding disorder. "EMS" in the study were defined as "dysfunctional, enduring, and

pervasive patterns of information processing. They encompass explicit beliefs and memories at the conscious level as well as implicit knowledge, emotions, bodily sensations, and attention preferences about the self, others, and the world." (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2023). In the meta analysis, the results showed that the "EMS of Negativity/Pessimism presumably captures the belief commonly found in OCPD that the slightest flaw or mistake could prove catastrophic" (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2023). This indicates that those who have OCPD take a single flaw to heart in a drastic manner, leading to projecting their feelings onto others to deal with the burden of the disappointment and anger at themselves and developing a pessimistic explanatory style. Furthermore it underscores how most individuals with OCPD turn to pessimism the moment their own overwhelming expectations don't meet the requirement, creating a positive feedback loop chain that brings difficulty in escaping the cycle of endless negative emotions stemming from not meeting their needs.

Through Sunday's complex character that functions with OCPD, it proves that people with OCPD could also have a hard time dealing with the disappointment that they get either from plans that don't go their way, from people or even from themselves. Chasing extreme perfection and refusing to allow others in only leads to displeasure and a feeling of being never enough, exposing vulnerability to developing a pessimistic mind. All because they can't let go of the idea of things around them being imperfect and not in their power and causes them to retrieve into pessimism, which resurfaces an insight on how some individuals with OCPD might be living or have lived with this kind of pessimism.

Since Sunday has OCPD, and along with his pessimistic views, there were some occasions where he would resort to psychological self harm to establish control over himself and his situation in order to

achieve the perfect paradise for everyone to be happy. There was a time when he and his sister went off in different directions, he didn't handle it well. Clearly since their mother died, she was really important to him, and her optimism gave him hope and kept him grounded. But with her gone, which represents leaving the nest, he became more pessimistic. He was sad and lonely during his childhood, yet he still was given a lot of power even in those darkest times by Gopher Wood. He had to face a lot of darkness and tough decisions, all alone without anyone stepping in, just enabling and tolerating him instead. No one was looking out for his mental well-being, just applying more pressure on him. This wasn't the happiness that he and Robin dreamed of as children because the actual world was messy and complicated. Then, his worst nightmare came true to him, a reminder of the time when his mother had died. His sister Robin got her near-death experience while she was out bringing hope to a war-torn planet and it was a major turning point. Now, keeping her and everyone safe in a cage felt appealing and even necessary. And Gopher Wood convinces him that he alone has the power to bring an end to all this suffering by sacrificing himself to save humanity from its own demise: to not do it would only increase everyone's suffering. And because he thought this would keep Robin safe and bring happiness to all, how it'd make her happy and accomplish their dreams, he got more obsessed with the idea of being the one in control because of lacking it in the past events where he could have saved the ones he loved which led him to be driven mad just to attain that peace for everyone by his own doing alone. This is also where his sense of righteousness, a symptom of OCPD plays into the role of needing to "be the one" to puppeteer people as it would make him happy and feel reassured if his loved ones were able to be always seen under his supervision and cage forever, with no risk of failing. This way, Sunday would not have to see anyone else

suffer because he can keep everyone safe and content in the eternal dream, and thus, shaping his morality and philosophical ideas greatly as he ascended to adulthood over the years.

An obvious self destructive sign Sunday exhibited was when he said that he was willing to go to great lengths to achieve a paradise for humanity, and that if it requires him to sacrifice himself, he'd be willing to without a second thought. He talked about how someone must have the duty in order to maintain the paradise by being the one awake for others to dream on happily and that the cost is an eternal sacrifice of a person, referring to himself (Rail, 2024). But if only one person would have to take that job, then that meant that Sunday would be isolated forever, away from his friends and loved ones just to provide joy to all. Yet he insisted on using himself, believing it was his destiny to be the bridge that opens a path of a possibility where humans would be able to have guaranteed joy even if it is superficial as it would be under his protection. Sunday strongly stayed strongly focused on this path because he was not a well-adjusted person as Gopher Wood wanted him that way -- the easier to manipulate him into the role he needed him to play. In that depressed state, it was easy for his thoughts to tend to the extreme and to end up in a feedback loop, especially when someone he trusted actively encouraged it. This phenomena where one is stuck in an seemingly endless loop due is called "reciprocal determinism", a psychological theory suggesting that your behaviour, personal factors and environmental factors all are interconnected and influence each other as a result (American psychological association, 2018). In that case, through this concept, Sunday's beliefs and values were shaped by the environment he grew up in and hence, influenced the way he acts now. Being indoctrinated from Gopher Wood of the Order's values and already being the next in line to become the head of his clan made Sunday view those that were not in a

position of power like him, weak. This evoked a sense of passion and empathy for those struggling in vain to be happy just like him, leading him to have the urge to create a safe spot. This showed that his actions to save humanity were inherently caused by what he deeply believed in with ambition and the environment, that is his foster father pressing him to do his duties and making him follow the Order all played a part in keeping Sunday in a cycle of uncertainty, worry and road to achieving perfection.

However, this positive feedback loop that some people with OCPD find themselves is dangerous as it triggers openings that leave you vulnerable to different kinds of self-destruction methods, for example: having the excessive need to overwork yourself as a form of chasing after perfection that acts as a goal. Sunday, despite being strict and goal oriented on achieving the paradise on the outside, it definitely prevented him from having any genuine social relationships with others because he was so busy with committing to making this lifelong goal come true. What even made it worse was that when his sister Robin left, he closed himself within others reach and frowned himself further with paperwork when he finally became the head of his clan. This made it difficult for him to spare any time to hang out with anyone and he lived his whole life in solitude. Deep down, Sunday truly wished he was able to have some happiness for himself as well and spend more time with his one and only sister but he unfortunately was forced to push away his longing so that he could focus on attaining his goal faster. He'd reason his way through, denying himself an ounce of rest in favor of prioritizing in his duties, essentially devoting himself to this one goal which is another symptom that those diagnosed with OCPD have to deal with. This is an example of "rationalisation", a form of self defense mechanism to justify your actions, behaviour or situation. In this context, Sunday always rationalized his lack of social interactions and

healthy bonds by busying himself with “bigger” plans, believing that overworking himself was fine as long as in the end his hard work pays off the moment he gets to see his own fantasy come to reality with his own two eyes. Excessive work and devotion to a certain goal is a norm for people who have OCPD. But, here’s where that becomes harmful if one becomes too obsessed with their goal to the point all they think of is obtaining that perfectly. Because of the lack of interactions with the outside world, serving his duties as the head of a clan and having only one goal in mind and on top of that living with OCPD, Sunday would only work day and night and he’d normalize it through rationalizing this bad habit, therefore neglecting his health for a grander scale of plan. It’s more common for OCPD individuals to abandon others and even their own health if it is what it takes to be in control, acquire perfection in the highest standard possible. And this counts as an act of self-destruction psychologically because Sunday was torturing himself by loading needless work for himself to do just to reach his main goal of getting a paradise to happen. He was coping through loneliness, doubt and disappointment due to his high standards by wallowing himself in work, revealing that his coping method was a “problem-focused coping” where he avoids facing his emotions and instead chooses to work to “de-stress”.

Additionally, this meta-analysis research that investigated the links to how OCD and OCPD were associated with mood instability, depression and suicidal outcomes, enhances the argument that individuals that suffer with OCPD are easy to fall to self-destructive behaviours. The methods mostly included collecting qualitative data by interviewing the participants diagnosed with OCPD by trained interviewers and then classified to find the p value. The results of this research study showed that OCPD traits were associated with suicidal thoughts and non-suicidal self-injury, with suicidal thoughts

having the  $p < 0.001$ , self harm without intent to kill having the  $p = 0.01$  and suicide attempt having the  $p = 0.02$  (Bowen et al., 2019). The self harm without intent to kill, suicide attempt and suicidal thoughts are all statistically significant because their p values are all below 0.05, meaning that the results did not occur due to random chance, a valid proof that OCPD do harbour intrusive thoughts where they are prone to engage in self-destructive behaviours such as self harm and having suicidal thoughts and attempting suicide.

Through this study, it shows that even though Sunday loved humanity deeply with all his heart, his endless strive for perfection which represents him spending all his life away to make a paradise for them to be happy, his intense cry for order to unite all humans and to become the one who would guide humanity to happiness, all took a toll on his mental health to the point where he was fine with sacrificing himself to make his belief and goal come to fruition, that is by overworking himself to death and being the one to stay sober in reality while everyone gets to sleep with their dreams coming true in that new world where it defies all laws of physics and reality. To guarantee that happens, Sunday would wipe out every distraction and obstacle in his way with his stubborn self, as it was easy for him to be stuck in that pattern of thinking and living in a cyclical life because he can’t just ignore his impulses that call for flawlessness and order from having OCPD. For all his life, he truly thought that he must be the sun and the moon to humanity, the only hope for all mankind, his OCPD made him develop a “convergent thinking” where he only focused on one single best solution and failed to make him realize the fact that he didn’t have to do this alone and that humanity is not so weak as he believed. All humans have free will and they would eventually find their own happiness through strife but this optimistic view was clouded unfortunately by his desire to control others’ destinies, giving a

glimpse to how OCPD can mess with your life in different ways to the point of warping your perception of the world and others.

In conclusion, the reason why pessimism and self-harming behaviours or thoughts manifest more in people who have OCPD is because their symptoms cause them to have extreme desires and needs that are hard to deal with if not fulfilled. For example, needing everything to be in order and perfect, believing that their morality and beliefs are right and should be enforced on others or they would feel distressed and needing to be in control of theirs and others reality. All of these wants lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms and pessimistic views of the surroundings and some people with OCPD like Sunday, just have no choice but to deal with the pain of not completing their daily fixation through self-harm or automatically be met with their intrusive thoughts from overthinking as a result of needing order, control and perfection.

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# Justice and Fairness

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Justice is sorely lacking in our world. In every situation, it is possible to pick out instances of injustice, of cruelty, and of a shocking lack of empathy. In striving for justice, all individuals have the capacity to create lasting change in our world. In order to become more just, and in general, better people, it is necessary to first comprehend what exactly justice is. Anywhere one looks, it is possible to find different definitions of justice; for instance, The Bible states that "All humans are equal before God and have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness no matter who you are" ("Justice"). But sociologists Burgess and Maiese believe that "there are four different types of justice: distributive (determining who gets what), procedural (determining how fairly people are treated), retributive (based on punishment for wrong-doing) and restorative (which tries to restore relationships to 'rightness')" (Maiese and Burgess). How can people then ascertain a true, right, or fair definition of justice? There must be a single definition or truth of justice, how else can we as a species ever agree on what is right and wrong, and thus how to apply that to proper punishment and administration of justice? In essence, justice is perpetually surrounding men throughout all times in life, but is both challenging and controversial to define. Justice must be unique to oneself, as true and fair as possible, and based upon fact.

Some argue that what is fair is what is just, and what is just is what is fair. Justice in itself is intrinsically tied to fairness, and most definitions that one might find make reference to the other. However, I would posit that what is fair might not always be what is just. In order to truly determine this though, first one

must explore what precisely fairness is, and what it means for us.

Fairness, at its core, is impartiality and equality, both under the law and in opportunity. However, looking at the dictionary definition of justice, Oxford states that it is "impartial and just treatment or behavior without favoritism or discrimination" ("Fairness"). One could say that this is a complete form of fairness, but it neglects to mention one crucial aspect of fairness, resolution of conflict. For instance, most would say that an eye-for-an-eye approach to life and conflict is not just, nor merciful, nor right. However, that in and of itself is what is exactly fair. As Evelyn Nam of Harvard Business School states, "I do unto you what you do unto me" (Nam) and thus we are even, and things are fair. Conflict is essential to our understanding of fairness, and is often what people first think of when they hear the word. Hank Green's Crash Course even opens their video on justice with an example of fairness in conflict by stating "When there's a fight on the playground, or you get a grade you think you don't deserve, we find ourselves talking about what's fair. And that is talking about justice" (CrashCourse 0:18–0:24). Therefore, fairness should instead be defined as "the impartial and equal treatment of others, and resolution of conflicts through equivalent consequence". This however, is not justice. For instance, would it be right to condemn two criminals to the same sentence if they committed the same crime? It would be fair to both parties if one were to do so, however that would neglect the intricacies of the situation. If one was an unwitting accomplice, or intellectually disabled, what is just or right does not correspond to what is fair. This might not seem important to what justice is or what one

does in their everyday lives, but fairness is an elusive concept that all seem to be born with a desire to achieve. Its relation to justice and how people go about being just or good is quite simple. Fairness is something that all strive for, but is not only impossible to truly achieve, but would actually work against our best interests, the natural order of the world, and what is just. So now that the world knows that justice is not what is fair, but rather something more complex that takes into account intricacies within situations, let's continue to develop our understanding of the two.

Our understanding of truth, righteousness, and fairness often comes from religious sources, which can glean insights into what exactly justice is. Christianity, being the largest religion in the world, has arguably the most widely propagated form of justice and judgement around. The Bible states that all humans deserve to be treated with dignity and fairness, regardless of the situation. It draws connections between justice and fairness, and prompts everyone to not only do what is just, but also what is fair. The Bible's interpretation of justice and fairness then, is that they are separate but conjoined. Justice and mercy are to be applied when necessary, but all should strive to be fair whenever possible. Thus, what is right is to do justice, but impossibly to also be fair in all things. This is despite the fact that justice can never be truly fair. It is a confusing paradox, but one that all must reconcile ourselves to. Fairness and justice are two sides of the same coin; one cannot have one without the other, but having both at the same time is impossible. Similarly, it is impossible to know the full truth and determine justice. Justice, especially in a courtroom, is often found within a vacuum. One is apart from the outside world, considering only the information that is in front of one. This information will always be incomplete, there is no way to ensure that one knows all the facts, or even to certainly know

that the facts one does have truly are facts. However, as Dr. Donald DeMarco states, "To deny truth is like sitting down to a sumptuous meal and denying the existence of food. Truth both surrounds and nourishes us. It is also indispensable for justice" (DeMarco). True justice depends on truth, on what is known to be correct. Without truth, the literal reality of a situation, how could one determine what is just or right? As the world exists in the absence of absolute truth, it is therefore impossible to achieve perfect justice; just as it is impossible to achieve both justice and fairness.

Because perfect justice is unattainable, it is imperative to determine what is right, and how one may apply that to their everyday lives. Knowingly or not, everyone uses justice in decision making every day. People utilize it to formulate opinions, resolve conflict, and most importantly to be the best individuals they can be. Opinions at their core are what we believe about the world. As Plato says, they are the "medium between knowledge and ignorance" (Plato 64). This definition is incredibly fitting, as the way that opinions generally come about is through someone learning something, and making an educated guess based upon that information. If you know for certain that what you believe is true, then it ceases to be an opinion and becomes a fact, but if you base your opinion on no information then you are just making a guess or have a preconceived notion. So, in effect, all decisions about justice are opinions. As stated earlier, justice must be made in absence of total truth or fact, meaning that it is within the medium of knowledge and ignorance of the matter at hand. Thus, justice must be an individual, according to the experiences and understanding of the person making the judgements about the situation.

So, it is known that justice cannot be fair, cannot be true, and must be individual.

How then is it possible to achieve justice or even to do what is right in our lives? Well one source of right vs. wrong and what is just is simply religion, what others tell us is right. However, this can cause as many problems and create as many questions as it answers. For instance, religions such as Christianity tell us that in order to be just, we must be fair, but justice and fairness cannot exist in concert with each other, meaning that this explanation is flawed. Then we might look to the works of psychologists and philosophers for answers; however, these too are inherently assuming that justice is what is fair, or that justice is to be as close to fair as possible. All of these definitions are incorrect because put simply, justice cannot be one thing. Justice is not just a spectrum, it is not just fairness and righteousness and mercy, it is fundamentally the way that we respond to conflict; the way that we make our decisions whether consciously or not. Justice cannot be defined because justice depends on who you are, what you believe, what you know and what you don't.

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# How Curiosity Motivates Human Exploration

David Nguyen, The American School Vietnam '27

From the ocean's depths to the vast expanse of space, humans have always been driven by a simple yet insatiable thirst for discovery. This unquenchable thirst has often pushed individuals to give up everything, from the voyages of Columbus to the exploration of the Mariana Trench into the unknown. However, a question remains: what motivates men to face the risks of pursuing the unknown? This question is brought into the movie "The Right Stuff" as it portrays the lives of the Mercury 7 astronauts and flying ace Chuck Yeager and JFK's speech at Rice University in 1962. It explores the topics of the motivations that drive people through the daring pursuit of these characters, pushing them to their human limits. From this, it reveals that at the heart of these pursuits lies the force that drives all human pursuits: that men are motivated by their innate curiosity.

Early in the movie, after a test pilot died trying to break the sound barrier, the recruiters asked for a new test pilot for their new X-1 fighter plane. They crept up to Yeager with their faces filled with creases and an anxious tone, with their eyes constantly moving up and down, and asked, "Do you think you want to have a go at it?" Yeager then responded, "Might," without any hesitation and a slight smirk as he made direct eye contact with a confident expression. The recruiters then stuttered, trying to ask, "How much?" as they tried to laugh it off. Yeager then responded in a joking manner, "How much do you have?" Making their recruiter's face go blank as he immediately cuts the air with a serious tone while lifting his hand and saying, "I'm joking; the Air Force is already

paying me, isn't that right, sir?" From the sudden change of mood, it shows his seriousness and preparedness for the next mission. By saying "might" in an almost satirical tone, it shows that he is perhaps amused and delighted by the offer, suggesting that he's eager to take on this opportunity. However, the mission of breaking the sound barrier is perhaps a deadly one, as a previous pilot has died trying to prepare for this mission, showing just how brutal this can be. Therefore, it is expected that most test pilots, when presented with the offer, would have partially or completely backed away, as the nature of such missions is usually very risky. His actions present an oddity as he responded to this offer with little to no hesitation, suggesting that he had already made up his mind about wanting to be a test pilot on this mission, taking on this opportunity. His playful response suggested that he is excited and intrigued by the mysteries behind it, wanting to know the outcome of his attempts at breaking the sound barrier rather than the risks that it poses. From that, it implies that he is playing around with the idea of taking the job of being a Bell X-1 test pilot, showing that he views this as an opportunity rather than a certain death sentence as other pilots would have perhaps seen. Along with that, he then later said, "already paying," which shows that he acknowledges that the Air Force has already compensated him enough and that he is already satisfied and content with the pay that he's received. From that, it shows that he is not simply being motivated by greed. Consequently, it implies that he is intrinsically motivated and not by foreign and extrinsic

factors, but rather by his exploratory and thrill-seeking mindset, as evident from his immediate response with no hesitation. Since most people who seek to take on this mission would desire a hefty and large payout because of the mission's nature of it having lots of risks associated with it. However, Yeager's words, along with his determined response, show that he's serious about this issue, as it reinforces the idea of him not taking up the mission for its supposedly large monetary payout. Along with his previous immediate response with little to no hesitation, it can be seen that Yeager is drawn to the fact of breaking the sound barrier itself and the potential outcome that it might serve. Therefore, it can be seen that Yeager is motivated by his innate curiosity as he draws himself into this supposed death trap, only wishing to know the outcome of his attempts. Thus, it shows that men are motivated by their innate curiosity.

Amid the movie, Yeager was trying to overcome the speed limit or the "demon" at what was suspected to be Mach 2.5. He was tucked inside his Bell X-1A as it screeched and clashed with the thick air battling against it, creating a booming swoosh surrounding his aircraft. The speedometer slowly begins to inch up as he attentively stares at it with his determined eyes while wearing a bulky white helmet. He then starts to shake as it progressively gets worse and worse with every inch that he gets closer to Mach 2.5. His 2 arms clutch hard into the yaw, trying to control the shakiness that he's experiencing like that of a horse galloping its way through muddy and uneven terrain. The scene then constantly switches in perspective from his cockpit to the back of his plane to the layers of cloud that he is piercing through. The scene then switches to the bomber pilot, as after Yeager exclaims that he had already broken the Mach 2.1, the pilot says, "Hey Chuck, you got him, buddy; you can ease it on back." However, Yeager keeps pushing the control stick forward, saying, "I want to see where

that demon lives," disregarding what his friend said. As each prolonged second passed, the "demon" started to reveal itself more and more in front of his eyes, as well as the dangers posed by the increasing shakiness of his aircraft. A remarkable spinning black vortex appears with rays of light unable to shine through the dark mysteries that it is hiding. Yeager then closes his eyes as the airplane begins to drop uncontrollably from the sky. In this scene, even when the bomber pilot exclaims, "You got him" and advises that he can "ease it" now, he still decides to push on with his aircraft, seemingly trying to get to the "demon." By saying the word "demon," it suggests that he's trying to explore the epitome of the absolute human limits as he willingly enters the supposed point of no return. As he's likely fascinated and intrigued by the mysteries being withheld by it, this makes him compelled to explore it. The demon in this context was a metaphor for the limits of human understanding, as it represents the unknown and the barrier of knowledge that has not been crossed before. Rather than fearing it, Yeager seeks it as a challenge, even though he has crossed the Mach 2.1 record of Scott Crossfield. Despite him now being able to revert all the attention to him as he has now set a new world record and despite knowing how dangerous it was to encounter or even surpass the "demon" seen from his drop moments later, Yeager still pushes on to what is to be seen as the impending doom of the dark and mysterious "demon." As humans in their deepest forms are innately and purely driven by their instinctual curiosity that drives them to explore and to take risks that could be hazardous or even life-threatening. It makes it so that Yeager's reckless charge into the demon was not simply a suicidal attempt but an inextinguishable thirst to explore what's in the unknown, as it is fundamental to all human experiences. Therefore, Yeager's pursuit of wanting to "see that demon" was not from his recklessness nor his drive for ego, but rather from his fundamental

humanistic desires to explore what is unknown, showing that men are motivated by their innate curiosity.

Additionally, later in the movie, when Glenn was manning Friendship 7, he was planning to be the first American astronaut to orbit through space. While he's in orbit, a warning goes off indicating that the heat shield of Friendship 7 is potentially loose and could cause Glenn to burn up in the atmosphere if the heat shield detaches from the spacecraft. As the control center is trying to figure out a way to effectively communicate with Glenn about this problem, Glenn then said, "I see something strange out here." As a seemingly endless stream of specks of orange and brightly lit particles started to surround and move around his window view, he yelled with a surprised tone, "Oh my goodness gracious, what the heck is that? It was all over the sky." His voice echoed through the control center as sounds of warning signs continued to beep and beep at an intense frequency, with rolling eyes from the German scientist and Shepard scratching his head as if he were trying to look for answers. However, unbeknownst to him, he continues to enthusiastically describe his observations of the foreign particles following his spacecraft out of the window as he says, "I'm in a mass of some very small particles that are brilliantly lit up like they're luminescent. I've never seen anything like it as they swirl around the capsule, and they're brilliantly lighted... like fireflies." In this scene, a juxtaposition arises between the stressed-out control center and the innocent and childlike behavior of Glenn as he is mesmerized by the wonders that are out there on the window. By being "fixated" on those specks of particles, it shows that he is examining as well as gazing at them, exhibiting his amusement and perception and showing his eagerness to engage and explore what is still largely unknown. As his reports from such fixation indicate, he is not being controlled by his professional and rational

assessment of the foreign particles but rather by his unfiltered reaction, full of awe, from his surprised and high-pitched tone to his usage of unprofessional language such as "What the heck is that?" This shows his enthusiasm, and his momentary disregard for the mission is made apparent from his mesmerizing reports back to the control center. An astronaut like Glenn, a patriotic college graduate who put his country above anything else, should describe his findings in coherent scientific terms. However, what was shown was an excited and more poetic response; it shows that Glenn is completely enthralled and hooked by the particles. It makes it so that his fixation on the particles is not from a perspective of continuing the mission but rather from his intrinsic nature of wanting to discover the unknown, as it points to his fascination of wanting to know what was beyond space. From that, it shows why he was so hooked on the particles. Because he's being motivated by his innate curiosity, it led him to become an astronaut and to disregard the mission entirely. Therefore, Glenn's fixated observation of the particles was momentarily not because of his patriotic sense of duty trying to focus on the mission. But rather it was from the innate curiosity within him as it grabs his attention away from the mission. Thus, it shows that men are motivated by their innate curiosity.

Furthermore, during John F. Kennedy's famous speech at Rice University in 1962, he hoped to gain public support for the space program by appealing to their curiosity. In his speech, JFK said, "But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas?" When he said "Why," he was trying to get them to examine their motives and justification as he tries to be somewhat provocative and encourages exploratory behaviors and thinking from the audience. He wants the audience to think critically rather than giving

them the answer himself. It seeks to get an inquiry and interest from the audience in their rationale for supporting the space program. This usage of a rhetorical question here seeks to allude to classic human endeavor as it appeals to the human desire for an explanation. Since humans are naturally curious creatures, he frames the explorations as a mere extension of human's natural and fundamental curiosity to explore the unknown and to overcome those challenges set by nature. He wants them to realize from this question that there was no other reason that humans set foot to explore new frontiers and to develop new technologies that could potentially end their lives in a swift blaze. Rather, it's simply their innate curiosity and is settled within the human species as a whole with that of the adventures of countless explorers. Henceforth, it makes sense that Kennedy's question of why was not an expensive program but an inspiring venture trying to get into the deepest humanistic desires and curiosity that have led to success throughout history. Also, it further demands and strategically draws a parallel between the space race and past human achievements, such as the exploration of the Atlantic or the sumitting of the highest mountain in the world. Along with these thought-provoking questions, he juxtaposed the moon to past historical examples, further highlighting that all of those past explorations were not merely caused by political maneuvers but rather by their intrinsic motivations from the inside. Thus, this implementation of rhetorical questions amplifies the appeal to the curiosity that humans have in their instincts, showing that men are motivated by their curiosity. Therefore, JFK's usage of rhetorical questions as well as the repetition of the word "why" appeals to the audience's sense of curiosity, implying that men are being motivated by their innate curiosity.

With that, the movie shows that one's innate curiosity compels them to take on and explore the unknown. From Chuck Yeager's

fearless pursuit of the sound barrier to Glenn's utter fascination with the specks of particles outside the spacecraft to JFK's profound questions. It shows that the reason why men are willing to take on dangerous and deadly tasks is as complex and faceted as we think they are, but it is simply through their innate curiosity. Both the movie *The Right Stuff* and JFK's speech at Rice University in 1962 give us a comprehensive understanding of what men really are. They all show the true potential of men's curiosity and how much it could drive them to take on challenges.