# For They Know What They've Done: Desire, Guilt, and the Ethics of Science Fiction in Media

Dennis Harmon II, Akiyo Yoshida

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## Abstract

The genre of science fiction (SF) is accompanied by a core structural problem: knowledge. We explore the concept of knowledge as it exists in the symbolic order. To this end, we discuss the concept of "knowing what we know" within the conscious or symbolic and its relationship with "not knowing what we know" which emerges from the Freudian notion of the unconscious. The core of the narrative structure of SF is that of ignorance of ignorance which we explore through the concept of Lacan's principles related to unconscious desire. In this paper, we analyze the desires and anxieties inherent in the narrative and how they manifest themselves in relation to the Lacan's *ex-istence* and the Real. The subject's desire and anxiety in the narrative is not limited to the characters, but also understanding the author's own symbolic constraints regarding knowledge is also a subject of consideration. We pay particular attention to the structure and representation of utopia in modern SF, and clarify that utopia is a literary expression of the symbolic world and that the boundary with the Real is the limit of utopia.

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## Introduction

The central concept of understanding science fiction as a genre is to look at the limits of understanding and knowledge in the form of "knowing". what we know or believe to know exists in an elaborate structure, which Lacan would call the symbolic, and the symbolic, like the unconscious, takes its form in language (Lacan, 2006; 2017). In 2002, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld became famous for a statement during a briefing about the evidence linking weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups in Iraq. The statement went:

> Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are somethings we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones (Rumsfeld, 2002).

Secretary Rumsfeld missed a key philosophical structure, according to Žižek (2015) which was the fourth term, the unknown knowns: the things that we do not know that we know, the implicit skills or what is the Freudian unconscious (p. 205). The unconscious realm is the key locations of exploration in psychoanalysis. However, in Rumsfeld's statement, for the situation regarding science fiction, the unknown unknowns are often the center point of the discussion of an author, though simulated. Perhaps, the most entertaining part of the Rumsfeld transcript is the line following the quote above, "And so people who have the omniscience that they can say with high certainty that something has not happened, or is not being tried, have capabilities that are—what was the word you used, Pam, earlier?" The points of interest intersect in this line from Rumsfeld's (2002) answer to the reporter: the first is that he orients toward omniscience as a potential quality (here he yields to the higher power connected likely to his Christian upbringing and belief) and the second is his inability to *recall* a term, free associate. The reporter's follow-up inquires if this free associate and Rumsfeld's admission that there are things, he cannot do is an unknown unknown. However, if he recognizes his inability this is a known unknown, a recognized skill in which he is missing the know-how.

In science fiction, the author plays the omniscience entity, in that to develop a compelling story in a framework of surprise and interest for the readers the author must understand their narrative world to a great degree, but this does not necessarily equate to the level the Christian perception of God. Authors are not like the people that crucified Christ as he hung on the cross asking God to forgive them, "for they know not what they do." (King James Bible, 1769/2020, Luke 23:34). Authors of science fiction perhaps are conscious or knowing to some degree, they put their ideas to paper and try to explore a text or construct a narrative, often with a moral or ideological bend to expose a weakness in the modern society, this: they know what

they have done. Their lack of knowledge is in the same place as any Lacanian subject, within the unconscious desire and their own intersubjective lack. We explore knowing, not-knowing, desire, guilt, and ethics in the realm of modern and contemporary science fiction. We posit that this knowing/not-knowing dichotomy rest as core feature of the genre and that is worth exploration. To understand the concepts of science fiction through desire, guilt, and ethics we intend to explore: desire, anxiety, the Real, and the transhuman phenomena. These ideas paint a concise image of the human imagination and allows for mapping of its limitations.

## Science Fiction in Principle

Science fiction's purpose, popularity, and its compelling nature are fundamental aspects to understand the entertainment value of this genre of fiction. We pose the question: what does science fiction teach us about the human condition in the present? Is science fiction an escape valve into Lacan's imaginary, an attempt to circumvent the symbolic through fantasy to push us closer to understanding the subject's experience? Can science fiction provide a window into deeper understanding on the predicament of the human condition?

Suvin's (1979) concept of cognitive estrangement represents the starting point for analysis of science fiction (SF from this point forward). Spiegel (2008) said the concept of estrangement is vague pointing toward the German *Verfremdung* which has three English meanings: estrangement, defamiliaraization, and alienation (p. 369). Spiegel (2008) attempted to develop a clearer classification for Suvin's concepts of estrangement. He divided the processes as follows: *naturalization* or the act of normalizing something that is alien, *defamiliarization* would function as the opposite to make the familiar strange, *diegetic estrangement* operates as estrangement at the story level, and finally *estrangement*, itself, is the effect on the audience (p. 376). These represent the literary tools of the SF author, that allow them to create a world that can both be naturalized (understood by the audience through common reference point) and defamiliarized (to create an atmosphere of the unknown, a core component of the genre). In a sense, the knowing aspect of the subjective experience, the familiarity of SF operates to undermine the narrative to some degree, but without a symbolic quilting point of the signifying structures of the fiction and its message for the audience, there would be no true entry point into the fiction itself. Often, in the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994), when the *Enterprise* meets new aliens or civilizations the Captain, Jean-Luc Picard often greets them with the extended hand of the "human" greeting, this represents a signification waypoint for the audience, and the reaction of the "aliens" range from confusion, amusement, to "having studied the customs of Earth," providing the balance between the natural/familiar and the alien/un(de)familiar.

Authors build natural and alien from the bedrock of the SF literary narrative structure, all additional content around the moral teachings, the aim, or ideology emerges in the discourse and interactions of the characters and story. Jameson (2007)

said regarding SF is, "in general, affirming as it does that even our wildest imaginings are all collages of experience, constructs made up of bits and pieces of the here and now..." (p. xiii). This statement resonates in the author's restrictions as participants in the symbolic order, within the ideological framework of the signified field of experience. In short, though SF attempts to create fantastic worlds, in many cases rousing the imaginations and interests of millions, the signifiers and signified of the narrative structure itself is representative of the very mundane yet forever enigmatic human experience. This is the known and unknown: knowing, being the narrative structure creating the story and providing a message to the audience, and the unknowing the unconscious and ideological baggage hidden within the experiences and messages of the storyteller.

We have two fundamental notions interplaying: the conscious and unconscious processes of the author. This pushes into the field of ideology, desire, ethics, and other notions such as gaze (the audience, critics, publishers, etc.). We explore some notions from the perspective of SF. The first step to exploring the author is to understand the fundamental notion of desire.

## Desire: Feeling the Lack

In Lacan's (2019) *Seminar VI*, he asked the question where the subject first encounters desire. The answer according to him is that the subject's first rendezvous with desire occurs initially through the Other's desire (p. 15). Bogdan (2019) divided desire into two distinguishing characteristics, as described in Lacan (2014): the object-cause and the object of desire. This dichotomy of desire represents the origin and the feeling of desire. The object-cause resides within an Althusserian ideological imprinting, meaning desire emerges from narratives, influences, and experiences of others that are impressed on the subject.

The first important notion is that the subject's first recognition of desire is in the Other (Lacan, 2019: p. 13). Bogdan (2019) said that these two dichotomies of desire the object-cause and object of, cannot intersect. Lacan (2019) situated desire within, "a synchronic treasure trove or battery of unconscious signifiers for each subject, and a message in which the response to "*Che vuoi?*" is announced" (p. 35). The question of "what do you want?" (*Che vuoi*) originates from the position of the other and is the signal of lack. Lacan's schema designated desire as "d" as seen in *Figure 1*. In the schema, desire is situated above the Other (*Autre*) and below symbolic castration (the barred subject in relation to discourse). This location indicates the subject's inability to know their desire within the symbolic framework and the unknowing reinforces below the Other where the location of the desire takes the form of the *objet petit a* (i(a)).
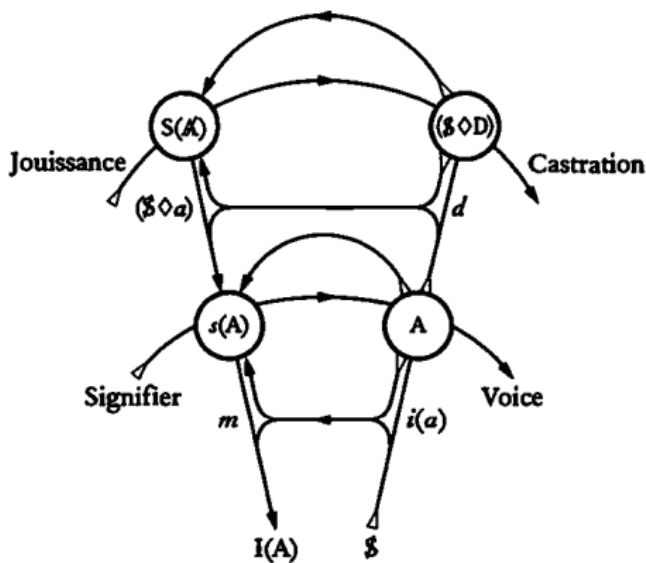
*Figure 1.* Lacan's graph of desire

The second important notion in the structure of lack and desire is the recognition of the incompleteness of narrative. This incompleteness forms on the subject's, the authors, own limitations to understand their desire which results in the projecting fantasy or images of their fantasy into the symbolic realm. These coded transmissions of their fictional world never fully reconcile with any Real and intrinsically influenced by ideology of the world of the subject. In these narrative stories we can traverse the Lacanian graph of desire on all levels with the narrative, the author's voice operating at the signifier to voice level, the surplus interpretation occurs at the lower-level understanding from the barred subject to the *objet petit a*, upward into the *d* which represents desire. Further still, we can hold the text or the film as a stand-alone universe, its "God" as fallible as the Christian God found in the book of Job. The fallibility or the weakness of God arises from the transference of the omnipotent entity limiting itself through contract or written word. In short, when God's laws or the description of God in text manifets, God is symbolically castrated as a form of the Other, through this castration we can witness our own lack.

This lack is the subject's own "hole," its relationship with nothing and the core area of the *sinthome* or symptom (Lacan, 2016). The subject in the Freudian sense experiences primordial repression. This repression is not repression of unconscious determinations but instead the void's opening and subsequent filling with repressed contents (Žižek, 2020: 370). Žižek (2020) said primordial repression, "the fundamental fantasy is thus not an ahistorical bar; on the contrary, it grounds (or, rather, it opens up the space for) a specific mode of historicity" (p.371). The concept of historicity is important in the construction of fiction and belief, in that the text is a product of its "time." McGowan (2017) said, "historicism operates under a

continuist hypothesis in which the story between the breaks transpire without interruption" (p. 92). This view of literature as coda of a historical period and then additional codes for culture dominate the Foucauldian school of analysis. McGowan (2017) posited that history and culture are products of failure in contrast to successes, "culture results not from success but from failure to integrate trauma into the narrative that it constructs about the universe" (p. 93). This contrasts with the conceptual understanding of reality in a historicist analysis which sees history and events as progressive, though this progressive ideology in-itself is the gradual destruction of history. This historicist view of literature links well with the narrative and ideological structure often pressed into the concepts of utopia, though in most film and books it is the anti-historicist view of "failure" that leads to the truest outcomes of progress.

## Exploring the Limits of Utopia

*The Structural Premise of Utopia*

We can posit three fundamental premises of utopia. First, utopia needs to be defined by some boundary. Second, the existing norms and values must be sublated for a utopia to be conceived. Lastly, utopia is conditioned by humanism.

The boundary to define a utopia can be geographical, social, symbolic, or all of them. Thomas More's (1516) *Utopia*, for instance, was a secluded island cut off from the rest of the world (at More's time it meant Europe) by the sea. It was a primitive communist city-state which was defined by its communal form and ideology. It was also an allegory of an ideal community which symbolized "a good place" and "a non-place."

Lewis Mumford (1965) argued that all the classic utopias in literature from Plato's (c. 375 BC) *The Republic* to Edward Bellamy's (1888) *Looking Backward* were envisioned as cities because the actual prototypal city had been a "utopia." The city in early civilization was created by a king who succeeded in combining military power and religious authority to bring about a community which could operate as a giant "machine." The archetypal city-as-the-machine was also "a symbolic representation of the universe itself" (p. 282), where a specific function or a duty was allotted to each member by the divine order. Conversely, the city promised plenitude for all by its managed economy, yet it necessitated suppression of autonomy of its subjects. Thus, Mumford (1965) concluded: "The price of utopia, if I read the record correctly, was total submission to a central authority, forced labor, lifetime specialization, inflexible regimentation, one-way communication, and readiness for war" (p. 285).

This is one reason why a utopian vision can easily end up producing a dystopia and why imagining a utopia where every member can achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment seems impossible in modern times. It seems inconceivable especially in modern times since, as Raymond Williams (1978) pointed

out, under the modern conditions and in modern realist fictions, self-realization and self-fulfillment "are not to be found in relationship or in society, but in breakaway, in escape" from the systems that bind the subject (p. 210). The modern subject will need to suppress a significant part of their individuality to adapt to a utopian society. Otherwise, the utopia will come across to them as the dystopia.

Ernst Bloch, one of the most prominent defenders of utopianism in the 20th century, saw utopia as a positive function in history "not just to express desire, but to reach forward and be the catalyst of a better future" (Levitas, 1990: 14). Bloch reiterated that to will and make a better future, in contrast to merely dreaming and desiring it, requires a special kind of knowledge. What is needed is knowledge "which is not only contemplative, but rather one which goes with process, which is actively and partisanly in league with the good which is working its way through, i.e., what is humanly worthy in process" (Bloch, 1986: 198). This type of utopianism, "immanent" or "iconoclastic" utopianism (Anderson, 2006; Jacoby, 2005), focuses on the subversive function of utopia rather than its content, and can be distinguished from classical "blueprint" utopianism which entails a detailed delineation of an ideal society and an accountable history of it.

Whether a conception of utopia encompasses a comprehensive picture and explanation of its elements or not, it requisitely involves sublation of the existing norms and values. It operates in the same way as what Karl Popper (2020) called "historicist moral theory" of Marx and Engels. An urge for a utopia issues from a sense of "injustice" in the present situations and a zeal for "justice" in the future. The idea of "justice" and "injustice" itself, however, is an effect of the process that has brought about the present situations.

> To illustrate this point, there are always at least two ideas of 'justice' (or of 'freedom' or of 'equality'), and these two ideas differ very widely indeed. The one is the idea of 'justice' as the ruling class understands it, the other, the same idea as the oppressed class understands it. These ideas are, of course, products of the class situation, but at the same time they play an important part in the class struggle—they have to provide both sides with that good conscience which they need in order to carry on their fight (Popper, 2020: No. 9192).

Accordingly, the abstraction of "justice" and "injustice" is never transcendent to the history, it is intrinsically and functionally part of the process of history.

Nonetheless, utopia has a propensity to be unaware of the true origin of its premise. Once a utopia is established, it theoretically ought to have purged itself from any "injustice," and become a "just" society. The idea of "justice" in that society, however, was a product of former struggle between the social reality that contained "injustice" and the effort to redress it. When all the injustices are gone, claims for "justice" no longer make any sense. What happens in a utopia is that no one can

demand or desire for "justice" and, therefore, there will be no more dialectical change towards justice in its history. The utopian subject loses the sense of "justice" and/or "injustice," instead they now only have the sense of "repletion" and/or "void."

The Oxford English Dictionary defines utopia as "An imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence in which everything is perfect, esp. in respect of social structure, laws, and politics." This definition, as well as the general idea of utopia, implies that it is humanity that receive benefits from a utopian order. In the age of the Anthropocene, this assumption calls for a radical critique since some of the efforts to achieve improvements in human lives have been detrimental to the environment, whose fitness in turn is the prerequisite for human survival. Kim Stanley Robinson (2016) argued that now utopia must signify more than a blueprint or project for a better future where things will be the way they ought to be, we need to regard utopia as "a necessary survival strategy" (p. 9).

> Things seemed to slowly get better, for some people in some places anyway; in any case, we would keep trying things and probably muddle through. This is no longer the case. Now the future is a kind of attenuating peninsula: As we move out on it, one side drops off to catastrophe; the other side, nowhere near as steep, moves down into various kinds of utopian futures. In other words, we have come to a moment of utopia or catastrophe; there is no middle ground; mediocrity will no longer succeed. So utopia is no longer a nice idea but, rather, a survival necessity (p. 10).

We can now see that the limits of utopia are both internal and external. The irony of utopia consists in the fact that while it is conceived as a "perfect society" which needs no more ameliorations whatsoever, since it is intended for the good of humanity, but the human subject is essentially a dialectical being, its norms and values must be sublated once again if its inhabitants are to remain "human." That is, that utopia is a fossilization of society frozen at the end of history in perfection, which in effect decrees its content or subjects are not human as we know them. In effect, the dialectical subject of humanity cannot populate a utopia. Further, humanity owes a great deal of its survival to inhuman beings, including the environment, the systems, and the history.

*Crossing Over the Limit of Utopia: E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops"*

"The Machine Stops" is a utopian/dystopian short story published in 1909 by E. M. Forster, an English novelist and critic known for *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924), which critique the modern bourgeois ethos and explore the possibility of reestablishing spiritual and mystical affinity between humanity and the earth. In "The Machine Stops," Forster portrayed a hypothetical future society where the whole population on earth live in standardized cells managed by a centralized life-administration system called "the Machine." Each cell accommodates one individual and provides its occupant with everything they need to live a comfortable, appeasing,

and cultivated life. The people communicate through a device which transmits the communicators' voice and images, which also allows them to give and attend lectures, and they rarely meet each other in person. They hardly ever leave or change the settings controlled by the Machine; they believe that the atmosphere on earth is contaminated and they cannot sustain life outdoors. The Machine society boasts that it has conquered the anomalies of the nature, except that it achieved the conquest by severing all ties with the natural environment. It is the Symbolic realm technologically insulated from the Real.

The Machine society secures quarantine from the Real by distancing itself from "first-hand" knowledge as well. After the protagonist Kuno attempted to connect to the outside world where he believes the surviving "homeless" people and deceased ancestors are beckoning him, the Machine immediately retrieved him with a "mending apparatus." Although restored safely, within society this action infused a vague uneasiness, and an avid proponent of the Machine counsels the people to shun "first-hand ideas."

> First-hand ideas do not really exist. They are but the physical impressions produced by love and fear, and on this gross foundation who could erect a philosophy? Let your ideas be second-hand, and if possible tenth-hand, for then they will be far removed from that disturbing element – direct observation. Do not learn anything about this subject of mine – the French Revolution. Learn instead what I think that Enicharmon thought Urizen thought Gutch thought Ho-Yung thought Chi-Bo-Sing thought Lafcadio Hearn thought Carlyle thought Mirabeau said about the French Revolution (Forster, 2020: 41).

Forster's utopian society not only rid itself of want, anxiety, and vexations, but it also obliterated the residue of human irrationality. The adherents of the Machine acclaim its virtue saying that it "feeds us and clothes us and houses us; through it we speak to one another, through it we see one another, in it we have our being. The Machine is the friend of ideas and the enemy of superstition: The Machine is omnipotent, eternal" (p. 43). Here, the Machine as the Other takes the position that language has in human interactions. Thence, we can interpret the collapse of the Machine society, the stopping of the Machine at the end of the story, as the breakdown of the Symbolic. Kuno was the only person who somehow knew that the Machine was stopping, and the only person who craved for contact with the Real. Caporaletti (1997) pointed out that "Kuno is the only anomaly in the uniformity that reigns absolute in the world of the Machine, and from him alone a dialectical conflict could emerge" (p. 36), but due to the absence of an antagonist, the latent dialectical development is subdued until the final destruction of the whole human race. The dialectical advance, however, occurs in a larger scale than Caporaletti envisages. In this story, the idea of survival being the imperative for utopia, that is, realization of ultimate human happiness, is sublated. Kuno accepts the truth that deaths, sufferings, and tears are signs of humanity. Therefore, human suffering,

contradictorily, is a prerequisite of happiness, if it is meant to be "human" happiness.

*Knowledge and Jouissance*

What is at stake with knowledge? The power of knowledge in discourse is key to understanding the narrative and author's implications of the utopian structure. Kuno represents a subject seeking knowledge, dissatisfied with the symbolic structure he exists within and is driven to discover more beyond the walls of his "Eden." How does this operate in the narrative structure of SF story telling? To understand knowledge, we must consider two concepts. First, the author's own knowledge is a limitation that creates the constricted recognition of their work within the frame of their ideological circumstances. Second, at the layer of discourse the castration of the narrative's Big Other, namely the author's own impotence, creates the symbolic structure of the story and provides an avenue of analysis. The Machine's power is limited by the author's own field of understanding.

The next logical destination in the realm of knowing is not the author then, but the knowledge of the characters and their positions in the four discourses, *Figure 2*. The discourses represent: university knowledge, the master, the hysteric, and the analysist. Lacan begins the work with the Master's Discourse and moves through to the Hysteric. The Master represents the governing and policy structure, the place holding $S_1$ represents the suture point of the dialogue and the desire is knowledge which is represented by $S_2$ which is the battery of signifiers connected to the signified that reside in the "belly of the Other" likened to the Trojan Horse (Lacan, 1991: 33).
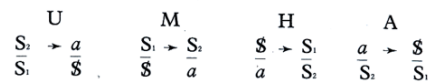
$$\overset{\textstyle U}{\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}} \qquad \overset{\textstyle M}{\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}} \qquad \overset{\textstyle H}{\frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}} \qquad \overset{\textstyle A}{\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}}$$

*Figure 2.* Lacan's Four Discourses

Knowledge represents one of the key components in Lacan's (1991) analysis of the Master's Discourse in *Seminar 17*. Knowledge is the ultimate end and desire of the Master though and the master ultimately acquires it through the relationship with the Slave, or in the Marxian turn of the relationship between the Capitalist and the Proletariat. Lacan's concept originates from Hegel's (1977) own Master-Slave dialectic from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel (1977) discussed desire and the role of self-consciousness through the mutual need of the Master-Slave relationship. Hegel (1977) famously said, "Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (p. 110). In the case of knowledge and the Master's Discourse the question arises as to the role of knowledge. Lacan's (1991) spin on the Master-Slave dialectic moves knowledge to the Master's position: "The slave knows many things, but what he knows even better still is what the master wants, even if the master does not know it himself, which is the usual case, for otherwise he would not be a master" (p. 32). The slave recognizes their position, to some extent, and understands the

master's desire even though the master does not know their desire themselves, and further does not fully appreciate or understand their need/desire for the slave. The master has, "defrauded the slave of his knowledge and turned it into the master's knowledge" (Lacan, 1991: 34). The final enigma Lacan (1991) provided was that the all-knowing moves to the place of the master, but this is not something to illuminate knowledge, instead it obscures the issue of truth (p. 32). Lacan's (1991) statement of truth is the core breaking point of many SF utopian visions, truth is in fact the enigma: "It can be put like this: How can we know without knowing?" (p. 36).

This knowing without knowing, knowledge that is not part of the symbolic frame or field of vision that "itches" at many protagonists' minds that the order they exist in is not "real" per se, but a structure or illusion for the benefit of other. This recognition of the lack in other can in fact bar the subject (castrate), Lacan often uses the $ to indicate a subject that is appropriate symbolically castrated. Often in SF narratives the protagonist takes the position of H, the hysteric, in Lacan's four discourses, they recognize that the world is "wrong" in some way and endeavor to discover the issues or causes for the slippage in their sense of reality.

*The Giver, as the Garden*

*The Giver* (2014) is a SF film that is set in a society that has survived an event that resulted in the destruction of the old-world society referred to as "The Ruin." The film is set in a world free from conflict, suffering, and pain which the society accomplished through management of the "communities" and daily injections of an unspecified drug. The film also indicates that though the society has given up pain, suffering, and conflict it has also surrendered more liberal freedoms such as emotion, love, individuality, and joy. The story centers around Jonas an 18-year-old and his two best friends Asher and Fiona, and the opening scenes begin with their trepidation and anticipation for their graduation day where the "elders" assign them the jobs they will do for the rest of their life. Though Fiona and Asher are given "normal" work and tasks in their community, Jonas is tasked with a different job which links the narrative to the prototypical "chosen-one" story structures and serves as the catalyst for the call to adventure. Jonas is to become the receiver of knowledge.

## Knowing, Not-Knowing, and Utopia (Dystopia)

*The Giver and the Four Discourses*

Jonas as the receiver of knowledge, in *The Giver*, is tasked with maintaining the history of human society prior to "the ruin," and represents the vessel that holds the memory of human emotions and suffering of the era before the post-apocalyptic utopian society. Knowledge becomes the key MacGuffin of the narrative and story structure with the trope of "knowledge will set you free." However, another layer of philosophy enters to explain the limits of utopia and how the utopian project cannot exist as a static end-point phenomenon from the Hegelian perspective. Without pain,

subjects will misrecognize pleasure, and without conflict subjects will ultimately misrecognize peace. Though, an over simplified didactic, the relationships between pain and pleasure, peace and war are indicators of how one is dialectically reliant on the other through a system of mutual recognition. Much as the subject does not learn of their desire until they witness or experience desire in the Other. We can organize the relationship of the characters into Lacan's discourses at different layers and times in the film the first and shown in Figure 3.
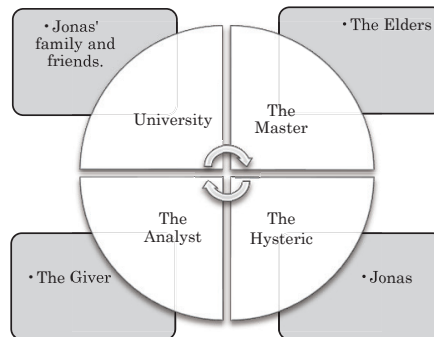


*Figure 3.* The Four Discourses and Characters

Jonas becomes the hysteric at the beginning of the film, tasked with receiving knowledge and in effect desire itself from the Giver. In this relationship, the Giver takes on the role as the analyst to explore the concepts of the hysteric's desire and to orient the subject to the task at hand, which will isolate and remove him from the big Other. The Elders take on the role as the Master representing the name-of-the-father and the symbolic order, they actively are ignorant and resistant to the hysteric's job not fully understanding, fearing it, and wishing to control it. The friends and family exist in the symbolic order without complaint and represent the university knowledge. As the film moves forward the relationship between knowing, not-knowing, and *jouissance* takes form through feeling and sexual tension between Jonas and Fiona. These instances start with Jonas beginning to "see" color and move through a host of emerging desires castrating him from the existing order and forcing him into a new symbolic experience. Jonas' realizations of color and of sexual desire mark him as entering a new symbolic order, this knowledge effectively cuts him from the world he knew before. The parallel between *The Giver* and the story of Eden is unmistakable. Jonas is in effect taking the position of Eve, as the Giver provides him with the knowledge of good and evil through their experiences and memory transfer. The Giver doubles both as the snake and an analyst guiding Jonas into a world of "sin" as seen in *Figure 4*. This Biblical reference reveals itself further with the use of the apple by Jonas to avoid his daily injection, and with his "temptation" of Fiona to do the same.

*Figure 4.* Jonas explaining the apple to Fiona

Knowledge represents one of the fundamental objects of desire as *The Giver* unfolds. The position of desire and the unconscious is another facet to examine the Giver's role as the analyst. Landman (2017) said, "the desire of the analyst is what drives the treatment and struggles against resistance—it is a kind of pure desire resembling a function or limit rather than an ideal" (p. 58). The Giver's pure pursuit is knowledge for everyone, which is the map as an object of the Giver's desire. The map outlines the location of a boundary that Jonas must cross to unlock the knowledge he has learned for all members of the community. This relationship is key, as Landman (2017) stated that the desire of the analysand (the subject, patient) is lacking and lost to its on demands often fixated on objects and influenced by the discourse of the Other, which in the film is reflected in Jonas' family life (his mOther) and relationship with his friends. The mother takes on the representation of the law, through her role, gender reversing the-name-of-the-father to her absolute authority given to her in the community. Jonas through his training struggles and strains against these relationships but finds his fixation through a child named Gabriel which comes to embody the pure object of desire or *objet a*. Gabriel is a child destined to be euthanized in the current society and pushes Jonas into action in part for the child. This allows him to set aside his own matrix of desire, the sexual desire for Fiona, and proceed with the Giver's original mission. What Jonas' true desire is, is not of relevance, "fulfilling a determined desire, such as becoming involved in a love relationship or choosing a career, can be completely at odds with the subject's indeterminate desire and sooner or later he realizes the path he had chosen has nothing to do with his desire, and instead leads to an impasse" (Landman, 2017: 58).

Gabriel as the object of desire is the most important figure in Jonas' character arc or Fiona's. With the *objet a*, Jonas can abort his failed attempt to function as the analysist for Fiona and proceed with achieving the goals of the Giver. Jonas was ill suited to move from the role of hysteric to analyst due to his own desire being incomplete, the narrative illuminates this through his developing romantic involvement with Fiona. Gabriel allows Fiona to put aside her own trepidation and confusion, which aids Jonas in his escape with the child. The Giver

effectively banishes Jonas from "Eden" who takes Gabriel and moves to complete his quest receiving help from his other friend Asher. The film stops short of explaining the aftermath of the awakening of knowledge in the community, though likely for the best considering the destruction of the symbolic as an event is dramatic and would be violent or despair inducing for those completely invested in the previous societal structure.

## Conclusion

The human subject's dialectical nature subverts the journey to utopia. Utopia is a dream, an end point that the society at large should continuously aim for, but the tragedy of this drive will be that like Moses being barred from the promised land, once humans reach the walls of this potential utopian experience, they will not be the ones crossing the line into paradise. In Arthur C. Clarke's (1953) *Childhood's End*, an alien entity arrives on Earth and transforms human society into an "apparent" utopia, but the mission is not to give humanity utopia but to push them to their next stage of evolution to join the *true* utopia. In the story, Jan sneaks aboard an alien vessel and due to the laws of physics experiences time dilation, he returns 80 years later to find humanity gone. Jan learns the ultimate lesson of SF and utopia, humankind is not eligible, but what may emerge from our own evolutionary path, the children of our species might have this opportunity. This tragedy flows into the nature of knowing and not knowing, the knowledge Jan learns comes at the ultimate price, the end of his existence, the last man to witness the successors of our species entering utopia once again crossing the forbidden boundary back into Eden.

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