

The definition of justice in david finchers se7en research paper

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



The serial killer-thriller *Se7en*, released in 1995, depicts the search for a serial killer who is strategically murdering people according to the Seven Deadly Sins of man. Over the course of the film, the two protagonists, the detectives Mills and Somerset, wrestle with their own sense of right and wrong, while the serial killer John Doe unerringly goes about his own quest for justice in the world. There are many connections made between the way Somerset and John Doe look at their surroundings, as they are revealed to be different sides of the same coin.

There is a great deal of value theory examination occurring within the film - the value of human life. John Doe sees human life as inconsequential in order to pursue the greater spiritual goal - communicating his message to the world. Mills and Somerset both value human life, but Mills sees justification in the killing of someone who might 'deserve it,' such as a criminal.

Somerset is, within the confines of the film, one of the only individuals who exists without corruption. Mills, while having his heart in the right place and attempting to take care of his wife, played by Gwyneth Paltrow, is extremely headstrong, quick to action and impatient. Somerset, on the other hand, is quiet, fastidious, and understanding. Somerset, being extremely close to retirement, is nonetheless dedicated to the pursuit of justice. All the same, however, he allows himself to be steadfast in his work - not rushing forward, always taking the time to examine the scenario and gain as many details as possible. It is not enough for Somerset to solve the case; he must understand why the killer did it - this insight allows him to get into the head of the killer as their search continues.

Terrible people roam the streets and are allowed to be successful, and John Doe seeks to remedy that with his 'works of art,' his elaborate message killings. The justice he is trying to exact goes way beyond the seven people he plans to murder - he is hoping that his project will send a message to the rest of the world that they are succumbing to these vices and that, in order to create a just world, they have to overcome them and curb their depravity. Doe's murders are almost medieval, primal, visceral; the sheer grotesquery of the images that he sets up are intentional, as he means to shock an increasingly desensitized audience into paying attention. Doe says of this, "Wanting people to listen, you can't just tap them on the shoulder anymore. You have to hit them with a sledgehammer, and then you'll notice you've got their strict attention." This is the reason why he creates such elaborate tableaux of sin for each victim - only by creating such disgusting imagery will he get the people's attention and allow them to wake up from their materialistic lives. This, at least, is Doe's intention - it is how he dispenses justice.

According to Doe, the glutton deserved death because he ate too much; the lawyer deserved death because he worked to allow guilty men to roam free for money; the vain woman deserved death because she cared more about looking good than being a good person; the lust victim was a prostitute who sold her body, and so on. All of these people deserved individual justice, and his work was meant to exact more far-reaching justice on the population of the world (or an increasingly hedonistic America, at least).

Mills has his own sense of justice, and it is quick and vengeful; in the end of the film, he is guilty of 'wrath,' as John Doe allows Mills to shoot him and take revenge for his murder of his wife and unborn child. He finally succumbs to everything that John Doe is trying to say about the world at large; that it is ugly, unmerciful, and unforgiving. In this sense, he fails to exact justice and succumbs to revenge. (Murray 2010)

Mills' impatience and temper are exactly what bring him to his downfall - according to Plato and Aristotle, his spirit would "cloud his normal thinking, his reason." (Blumstein 2009) He simply cannot hold himself back from his own anger, subverting the expectations of the audience and falling victim to John Doe after all. In very few movies does the protagonist shooting the bad guy feel like a defeat; however, in *Se7en*, it was exactly what John Doe wanted, as it finished his project and gave Doe a seventh victim, a seventh sin to hold up to the face of the world for confrontation.

The three main characters of *Se7en* have their own unique views on justice, and they are all compared to each other in order to present a morally gray world that is largely devoid of such just people. Somerset cares about understanding the unjust and coming to some common ground with them, providing an empathetic, rehabilitative view of justice. Mills cares about exacting revenge on terrible people who wrong him personally; if Mills had his way, he would exact Dirty Harry-style justice on any lowlife that came across his path. John Doe, however, carries his opinions on his sleeve and presents a very morally black-and-white view of humanity. As soon as someone commits these deadly sins, they are deserving of the harshest

justice - a slow, painful punishment that fits the crime.

These three are interconnected more than they would care to admit to each other - Mills particularly does not like the comparison to Doe that is presented in the film - leading Se7en to offer a treatise on what justice should be in an increasingly depraved world. As Somerset says at the end of the film, "'The world is a fine place and worth fighting for.' I agree with the second part." According to him, it doesn't matter whether the world is great or wonderful; it should still be protected and safeguarded. David Fincher and screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker create a nihilistic world that has no hope in sight (most of the movie sees the city engulfed in rain), but each of the three main characters have their respective ethos to rely on. The biggest question, as Blackburn would ask, is which of their worlds is the correct one, which viewpoint the more accurate?

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