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The Harm of Large Virtual Worlds as seen in *Ready Player One*

As the modern world moves more and more online, many have begun to feel that it would make more sense to move everything to digital versions. From movies and television to ways of social interaction, most aspects of life have been moved online. This movement leads some to think of the novel *Ready Player One*, as its world, taking place in 2044, has most activities taking place in a virtual game called the Oasis. While some people may see benefits to creating a platform like this in real life, programmers should not develop an Oasis-like virtual world as it lowers activity levels, promotes isolationism, and it has become too much of a necessity in the lives of the characters in the novel.

Firstly, the novel shows how the Oasis promotes unhealthy living and lowers activity levels in those who partake in it. The main character, Wade, is said to be overweight at the beginning of the story and gets very little exercise. The text reads, "Charging the batteries was usually the only physical exercise I got each day. I pedaled until the meter said the batteries had full charge, then sat in my chair and switched on the small electric heater I kept beside it" (Cline 25). By staying within the Oasis most of his life, Wade has become inactive to the point of only getting any exercise when it is required for a few minutes, but then sitting for hours. In a time where a large amount of people are overweight and do not get enough physical activity, an addictive virtual world as presented in the novel would be a terrible idea.

Secondly, the Oasis in the novel promotes isolation from people's family and the rest of the outside world. Wade is seen multiple times in the story spending many hours on the Oasis, even beyond what is required for his schooling. While there is a purpose to this extensive use, finding the keys hidden by the Oasis' developer, there is still a reasonable limit to this. Cline writes, "When I pulled off my visor, it was 6:17 am. I rubbed my bloodshot eyes and glazed around the dark interior of my hideout, trying to wrap my head around everything that had just happened" (114). When Wade had first put on his Oasis visor, it was early the previous morning as to be ready for school, and we know that he was at his school more than thirty minutes early. This means that Wade nearly spent a full twenty-four hours inside of the Oasis, away from anyone in his dark hideout. If this is the day for the average person, this would lead to large amounts of unproductivity. The world today already has to contend with media sources like Youtube and Tiktok stealing the attention of people when they need to be productive.

However, some may disagree with the idea that a virtual world like described would be harmful. In fact some believe that an Oasis-like service would be better for students as it would prevent bullying from occurring and lead to wider acceptance of people. As evidence to this, Cline writes, "Year after year my eyes would scan the lunchroom like a T-1000, searching for a clique that might accept me. But even the other outcasts wanted nothing to do with me" (31). In this passage, Wade recounts his time in public school as an experience as a social outcast because he was poor and overweight. Those believing that an Oasis-like virtual world would be beneficial believe that because everyone is displayed as avatars instead of their real selves, it would stop bullying like that of what Wade experienced in real-life schooling. On the contrary, the bullying would actually be able to continue just as easily. The novel reads, "'Great outfit, slick,' [Todd13] said. 'Where did you snag those sweet threads?' My avatar was wearing a black

T-shirt and blue jeans, one of the free default skins you could select when you created your account” (29-30). Even though they are using avatars instead of them being there in person, bullying still persists over Wade’s lack of ability to buy new clothes apart from the default. Through this, it is clear that there is no innate benefit in moving actions like schooling into a virtual world, as all of the same issues will persist.

Finally, the Oasis is seen to be integral to people’s lives, as it has taken over so many aspects. This continues to force people to stay logged in for many more hours than is healthy to be on a screen for. In the novel, it is seen that many aspects of a person’s life take place in the Oasis. Wade reflects on his inability to get a job by saying, “I applied for dozens of tech support and programming jobs (mostly grunt construction work, coding parts of Oasis malls and office buildings), but it was completely hopeless” (Cline 51). The fact that within this virtual world, there are malls and office buildings shows how actions that would normally be done in the real world, like working or shopping, have been moved into the Oasis. This would cause dramatic change in the world that wouldn’t be for the better, as everyone would be dependent on the one service.

Through lowering activity levels, promoting isolation, and forcing people to be online to live their lives, the Oasis as a concept presented in the novel, would be terrible for humanity. It would only serve to promote issues that already plague the world today like loneliness and inactivity and force people to stare at a screen all day with minimal healthy human interaction. Class issues would also still exist as players with more money would be able to show off more in game, while those with little money would be shamed. The creation of an Oasis-like virtual world would only serve to harm, rather than help society.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One. 1 : Ready Player*. Broadway Paperbacks, 2011.