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English 12H

23 April 2024

Why the OASIS in Cline's *Ready Player One* should not become a reality

The world is constantly evolving. It took humanity only 66 years from the point that real flight was first achieved, to sending the first people to the Moon over a quarter million miles away; who knows what life may be like in another 66 years from today? Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* is one take of what the future may hold. In this fictional world, everything revolves around the OASIS, the artificial digital world accessible by simply putting on a VR headset and some electric gloves. As glorious as it may sound, things are not all sunshine and rainbows inside. Despite all the great things that may arise from something like this in real life, programmers around the world should not develop an OASIS-like virtual world because it can introduce ethical concerns, problems in the economy, and ruin the social lives of many people.

Developing an OASIS-like virtual world challenges the ethics of the world as it is today - namely heavy addictions and a lack of privacy. When Wade reaches the end prize of the Hunt, James Halliday's avatar says this to him: "As terrifying and painful as reality can be, it's also the only place where you can find true happiness. Because reality is real." (Cline, 364). When reflecting on his own experience with his own creation, the OASIS, James Halliday acknowledges the truth about the OASIS. His need for the OASIS to keep himself feeling "happy" and away from all of his fears is a clear sign of a severe addiction to the online world. If the OASIS really does become a reality, real life people will become just like Halliday - being mentally reliant on the OASIS up until the very end, just to realize it was all a mistake. Another

ethical concern of creating the OASIS in real life is privacy. During an interview for the government, Wade gets told by Nolan Sorrento, ““We know who you are. Wade Owen Watts. Born August twelfth, 2024. Both parents deceased. And we also know where you are. You reside with your aunt, in a trailer park located at 700 Portland Avenue in Oklahoma City. Unit 56-K, to be exact. According to our surveillance team, you were last seen entering your aunt’s trailer three days ago and you haven’t left since. Which means you’re still there right now.”” (Cline, 141-142). Sorrento and his employees all work in the Innovative Online Industries conglomerate, for short known as IOI. IOI acts as the “government” of the OASIS, and it regulates the economy within as well. Unfortunately, for Wade, being a part of OASIS also meant that his private information was very easily accessible, even though he believed that he took many security measures to guarantee his online safety. IOI had access to almost all of his information, even including pictures of him and his close friends later on in the book. Many of Wade’s experiences inside this digital world, and the experiences of others, make it clear that the OASIS is not as secure in terms of privacy as most prefer to believe.

Bringing the OASIS to the real world can also pose problems economically. The IOI, the conglomerate “government” in the OASIS, is extremely corrupt in the book; Wade knows that the OASIS “would become a corporate-run dystopia, an overpriced theme park for wealthy elitists.” (Cline, ) if IOI took over after the Hunt. Wade is concerned for the future of the OASIS, as it would become extremely restricted and oppressed by IOI if they were able to get their hands on it. Like what happens in real life, the IOI gaining control over the OASIS would lead to it being locked behind a paywall, available only to those who can afford the fortune to simply use it as normal, as one would for free before. The issue of elitism in a country like America can also bring about conflict. Ogden Morrow was being interviewed by a reporter on an IOI owned

network, going off about how IOI owns everything in response to Wade, “‘Of course they do!’ Morrow shouted gleefully. ‘They own practically everything! Including you, pretty boy!’” (Cline, 119). The elitist theory states that there is a belief that those with high status, wealth, intellect, and skills are more valuable to society than those lesser, therefore justifying the “elites” deserving influence or authority greater than that of everyone else. IOI attempting to create what is basically a money grab out of the OASIS, feeding off what little most of the population has left, supports an elitist society. Sorrento and the higher-ups of IOI feel that they “deserve” everything the OASIS has to offer. Economically, the OASIS is an extremely dangerous thing, and it would be better to not bring the reality of *Ready Player One* to real life.

Lastly, creating an OASIS-like world in real life can be absolutely detrimental to the social lives of many. For example, even the co-creator of the game, Ogden Morrow, had to abandon his own work: “Morrow wrote in his autobiography that he’d left GSS because ‘we were no longer in the videogame business,’ and because he felt that the OASIS had evolved into something horrible. ‘It had become a self-imposed prison for humanity,’ he wrote. ‘A pleasant place for the world to hide from its problems while human civilization slowly collapses, primarily due to neglect.’” (Cline, 120). Morrow acknowledges here that the OASIS, in a way, was a mistake for humanity. The OASIS, like video games and VR in the real world, is the perfect way for people to run away from all of their real life problems and worries. As time goes on, spending more and more time in the OASIS, isolated from everything that one may know from reality, social relationships will be completely destroyed. Additionally, Wade has his own fair share of the OASIS damaging his social life. Him and Art3mis briefly enter a “relationship” with each other, or so Wade thought - after he said how he felt about her at a party, Art3mis says to Wade, “‘I am not breaking up with you. That would be impossible, because *we are not*

*together.*' There was suddenly venom in her voice. '*We've never even met!*'" (Cline, 187).

Wade's judgment, due to the OASIS, was clouded. Even though Wade and Art3mis had never seen each other, or even met at all, he had the fantasy of a relationship in his head when nothing was there in reality. His lack of real world interaction severely affects his social interactions with those around him, both inside and outside the OASIS unfortunately. Overall, socialization can become extremely weak with access to technology like the OASIS.

*Ready Player One* mentions many topics about what a dystopian future may look like, and it specifically is about the OASIS, the digital world within the real world in the book. Although the OASIS has many benefits such as easier communication with other people, easier access to information, and everything that comes with Internet access, it also has extreme drawbacks. Ethical problems, economic problems, and social problems all arise out of using the OASIS. In conclusion, the real world today would best benefit out of avoiding any system resembling the OASIS, or anything similar. Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* portrays a reality like this very well, and a world like what Cline created in the book must be avoided at all costs.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One*. New York: Broadway Books, 2011