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The OASIS's Effects on Society

The story *Ready Player One* written by Ernest Cline takes place in a world where virtual reality glasses had been made and became extremely popular. These glasses lead to a virtual simulation called the OASIS, a massive multiplayer online virtual reality video game where the creator had hidden his fortune within a secret in the game. Due to the game's immense popularity, it had affected society drastically, however it did not serve to help Cline's society. Instead, it had hindered any positive developments that could have occurred outside of the game.

People within the society Cline had created have used the OASIS as a means of escaping real life and ignoring real world issues. When introduced, the world is displayed as heavily impacted by various man-made global issues such as climate change and economic recession. If it were real, there would be many people who would do their best to avoid the reality of their situation. In the case of Cline's society, the easiest way of doing so would be to use the OASIS; "Maybe it isn't a good idea to tell a newly arrived human being that he's been born into a world of chaos, pain, and poverty just in time to watch everything fall to pieces... Luckily, I had access to the OASIS, which was like having an escape hatch into a better reality" (Cline 18). Wade talks about how he had discovered the reality of his own world, and how he had retreated into the OASIS as a way to ignore it. He talks about how he had learned to socialize, communicate, do math, and various other things that he learned as a child. He grew to feel more in place within the OASIS than he did outside of it. He practically lived in the OASIS, especially after his mother

died; “The year after my mom died, I spent a lot of time wallowing in self-pity and despair. I tried to look on the bright side... I was still better off than most of the kids in Africa. And Asia. And North America, too... I had the OASIS. My life wasn’t so bad” (Cline 19). Wade had used the OASIS to get away from the thoughts of his mother, along with his aunt. He had used an old van in the junkyard as a place where he could use his OASIS without having to interact with real people. Even later in the story, he still ignored real life. He had rented an apartment, hiding in his room with the windows painted over and the door replaced with a high security door. While Wade justified the door with the fact that the company IOI wanted to kill him, he claims that he would be done with the real world until the egg had been found. In the few segments that the reader gets of the real world, the reader understands that Wade does his best to avoid reality.

Due to people using the OASIS as an escape from reality, they blatantly care more about it than they do their own government and situation. This is exemplified when the OASIS elections occur, and Wade explains to the reader how elections work; “Now that I was eighteen, I could vote, in both the OASIS elections and the elections for U.S. government officials. I didn’t bother with the latter, because I didn’t see the point. The once-great country into which I’d been born now resembled its former self in name only. It didn’t matter who was in charge... I did take the time to vote in the OASIS elections, however, because their outcomes actually affected me” (Cline 201). Wade clearly does not care who gets elected for any United States government official position and even claims that due to the ability to vote from home, the only people who get elected are influencers and celebrities. This suggests that many people had given up on their government and came to care only for the OASIS’s government, as people would generally consider celebrities unfit to hold a government position. Later on, Wade purposefully goes into debt of twenty thousand dollars to IOI, and is forced to go into an indentured servant program;

“Under current federal law, you are now eligible for mandatory indenturement” (Cline 270). This statement implies that once a person goes into enough debt, companies are able to take that person into indentured servitude. In the United States, the constitution states that people are unable to go into indentured servitude. Although the story only lightly mentions the federal government within the United States, it is heavily implied that people have stopped caring about who works within the government and that legislation is only passed for the economic benefit of some people.

The overreliance on the OASIS has reduced the general public's want and need to monitor crime within the real world. Crime is common both in real life and in Ready Player One, however in real life there are police officers who enforce laws and prevent crimes. While not perfect, it's a far better cry from what system there is within the world of Ready Player One. Within the story, crimes and deaths are not investigated often, either due to negligence or corruption. One example of this is when Wade was threatened by IOI, who then destroyed his home after he refused their offer; “It seemed that the Sixers had also planted a large amount of drug manufacturing equipment and chemicals at the scene, to make it look like a meth lab in one of the trailers had exploded...The cops didn't bother to investigate further” (Cline 162). Wade had refused IOI's offer thrice, with IOI threatening to kill him on the third rejection. Luckily for Wade, he was not at home, allowing him to survive the explosion. However, this event shows the reader that either IOI is skilled in framing events such as this one as an accident, the police are corrupt and paid off by IOI, or that the police are not as competent as they are in the real world, with the last of these options appearing to be the most likely. This is due to another event that occurs later in the story, when Daito is killed and IOI frames it as an accident. Even if he had killed himself, the police would more than likely have investigated his death and his motive.

Instead the police had essentially ignored crime when it seemed like a cut and dry case. Earlier on, prior to the explosion, Wade mentions how the crime rate was high within the stacks. This implies that the police are either not vigilant or do not care about the well being of the citizens within the stacks. The police in the story of *Ready Player One* appear lazy or incompetent when investigating crimes, letting criminals get away.

The existence of the OASIS had hindered the positive development of Clines society, with many using it as an escape while not caring about the real world. Along with this, crime within the real world had gotten worse due to officers being negligent with any investigations.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest *Ready Player One* New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2011