

Philosophy and Religion:
Escapism – I

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1 Introduction

In this entry I would like to express some thoughts on escapism through common media, such as films and books. In the second section, I will indicate how and why I think escapism is in essence, an engagement with the arts, and in the subsequent section I will give a religious/Christian interpretation, as I think there is at least some value in looking at things through such a lens.

2 Reconciling the Arts and Escapism

I think it is rather easy to associate escapism with the arts, in the sense that escapism requires an art of some form. Therefore escapism is essentially dependant on the arts. However, I think there is more to it. I will say that by engaging in escapism, you also engage in the same creative process as those who made the arts that escapism depends on. For example, one who escapes through reading Harry Potter, in my mind, does not simply read the book, but creates the described world in their mind, just as much as J.K. Rowling created the world in her mind. The difference here however, is that J.K Rowling created the world in her mind from scratch, and so engaged in the creative process far more directly, and from the grounds of reality upwards. The reader in this case, engages with the creative process with a leg-up given by the book, but none the less engages with the process, since they have to construct the new world in their mind, and not only that, but they also often wonder about new plots, creating new events and wondering about them, which is also a creative process.

To all intents and purposes, my use of the word ‘escapism’ may be swapped with ‘entertainment’, however it may be good to note that I use ‘escapism’ because I feel it is the highest form of entertainment. I shall keep this rather short, but I feel I have said enough to show that escapism is at the very least a form of art with ideas, and does therefore inherit the same requirement of the escapee to engage in the creative process.

3 A Religious Interpretation of Escapism

Here I would like to share some lines of thought on escapism by looking through the lens of Christianity. The only way I am able to get something constructive through this lens is because I have reasoned that escapism is in itself a type of creative process, so most of what I will say applies to all kinds of creativity in the arts as well.

In the first instances of the description of God's actions in Genesis, we can say that God is essentially creative in nature since he created the Universe and mankind. You could say that God is even the primal creative force, and so I also think that when God creates mankind "In the image of God", we, sharing in God's image, possess that inherent quality of creativity as well, and I think I need not prove that humanity is creative, for it is blatantly obvious.

The previous paragraph sheds light on a new topic of grappling with the narrative of "creation" in Genesis, which I plan to write about in a later entry, but without further ado I shall continue the main topic.

So when we engage in the arts, and the creative process in any way what so ever, we are engaging in a rather divine action. We very well may be getting closer to God in the process. However, escapism holds a bit of a peculiar position in this narrative. Since we are in essence the pinnacle of God's creation, this universe and all within it could be said to have been made for us, and so engaging in excessive escapism could be said to be running away from God's gift of creation for us, running away from our gift of existence in this reality, and so denying God. Escapism itself, by being a creative process, is not necessarily "running from our existence in this reality" if we keep in mind the creative processes and even apply what we find back to reality. By engaging in excessive escapism, with the primary aim to run from your existence in this reality, and run from your responsibilities, could be said to be a great divergence from "walking with God", or in more simple terms, diverging from the right path. Yet, I would say, there are few things that allow us to get closer to God other than the arts, escapism included, because by engaging in these things with the right mind, you are engaging with a divine process of creation.

The implication of this religious/Christian narrative, is that there needs to be an attitude to escapism that promotes neither an excess of it, nor a scarcity of it, which is exactly what I would think a non-religious viewpoint might be on

escapism, which is rather interesting. This is why I think looking at escapism through this lens is constructive, not only in outlining the importance and great goodness of the creative process by describing it as divine, but also in underscoring the potential danger of engaging with escapism without the drive to be creative, but purely to run from reality.

4 Conclusion

This is the first entry on escapism, and maybe there is not much more to warrant a future entry in this series, but we shall see. I hope this gives some insight and food for thought into the nature and practice of escapism.

Thank you for reading.

END