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Prompt: Elitism as a shield against the degradation of the human mind

The Abortion of the Human Mind

The concentration of literary knowledge and artistic freedom to the elite class of a society serves as a mirror, reflecting inequality and inequity in the distribution of education, wealth, and freedom. Specifically, wealth and freedom form the basic prerequisite for the pursuit of higher education, artistic expression, and literary freedom, which all merge in conjunction to bolster both the development and preservation of these myriad pursuits. Yet, these pursuits are not vain pursuits. They purify the soul and carve its divine beauty in a chaste act of self-actualization. The soul descends upon the Earth in a sacred sacrifice; the sacrifice of one's originality, one's essence. Like Eurydice's descent into the underworld, the soul descends into the plane of reality from a higher plane, the Aristotolean Plane of Forms. Likewise, the soul faces supreme trials through corrosion. Influence from the natural world and from soul's alike and dislike latch onto the descended soul. Oscar Wilde, through the character of Henry Wotton, postulates, "Influence is inherently immoral, because it is the act of giving a portion of one's soul to another soul". The mixing of soul thus exemplifies the ultimate corruption of one's soul, mutilating it often beyond grace and salvation.

Elitism is an intrinsically unethical system. As Kiekegaard conjectures in *Fear and Trembling*, Problema I, ethics is the study of how the universal standards apply to the particular individual, and how the individual is duty-bound to navigate the universal which applies to all in a cold act of indifferent fairness through equality. Elitism, amplifies the purification of the soul's of each society's elite individuals, at the expense of the masses who are denied the same opportunity. Feudilism, monarchy, and imperialism cement themselves as means to an end. The means being the soul's of the masses, while the end is the soul of the elites. In this way, the soul of elites are valued beyond the soul of the non-elites. The universal standard of valuing each soul for their sacred origin and undiscovered potential thus, fails to apply to the individual: the individual who's souls are less valued, the commoner, the slave, and the proletariat. A core idea integral to Kantian ethics, in immense simplification, is the idea that the individual human must themselves always be an end, and never as a means to an end. This fundamental microcasm that encapsulates the crux of Kantian ethics, thus, diametrically opposes any both elitist philosophy in theory and elitist societies in practice. Therefore, both Kant and Kiekegaard strongly reject the idea of elitism in their disparity for purifying certain souls at the expense of others.

"If Elitism is inherently unethical, could it not be used in ethical ways?", asks the innocuous, consequentialist. The end may not justify the means, but is certainly able to forgive the means, if the means was done beautifully. Could not elitism be an effective shield, a bubble, to preserve cultural niches in art and literature? Could not, this, be

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extended as a protection against the retardation of the human mind? Here a clarification must be drawn. Retardation is used as it is scientifically intended, as a systemic and obvious decline in all aspects of one's psyche, including memory, self-control, and other aspects of intelligence. Before touching on the issue of retardation, the issue of humanity must be explored.

What separates humans from animals? Can a human be inhumane? Can an inhuman be humane? "Man's curse is the ability to reason; and so, man must bear the overwhelming burden of suicide for all their waking hours", states a paraphrased Albert Camus. Is reasoning the only aspect that separates man from animals? Not so; the soul, above all, distinguishes humans from their counterparts. This soul, empowers individuals with the capacity to reason, grow, and develop. However, just as self-actualization purifies the soul, conversely, self-indulgence perverts the soul. Debauchery, addictions, and impulsivity reduces the human condition of sobriety into a temporary state of primal animalism. This temporary state could devolve into a permanent state if an individual's debauchery intensifies. The human tendency to self-sabotage is displayed most illuminatingly in Osamu Dazai's "No Longer Human", where the protagonist spirals into a habit of indulgent drinking, abuse of substances, and psychological self-harm by inadvertently hurting everyone he cares about. His soul is so fragmented, that the driving impulse for life is to create a devastating travesty on the beautiful canvas that is the human soul.

In contemporary 21st century society, in an economic system defined by elitism, the temptation to retardate one's mind, and thus, limit one's soul from ever truly becoming free, is everpresent. Late stage capitalism encourages the abortion of one's mind to prevent individuals from rebelling; it profits off of human-animalistic behaviour by controlling and predicting individual behaviours; it exploits the working class to support a system that is constructed upon an almost-slave labor in its primary and secondary sectors of the economy. In this process, it not only shatters hope of a beautiful future, but also, masks the vivacity of the human soul in an iron cage of societal pressures and expectations, media hypocrisy, and political dishonesty. How can elitism possibly serve as a shield to preserve the human mind?

The question therefore, must be raised. Who's mind is elitism protecting? Is it the mind of the wealthy banker, or the child who just got home from a 14 hour work day slaving away at a chocolate plantation? Does elitism serve as a shield, at least for the elites? Capitalism preaches indulgence. When money can buy everything, all is commodified; and thus, all is forgiven. In essence, money replaces the power of beauty as a salvation force. Can individuals, truly value their soul, in a world where all is commodified? Can they truly value their soul in a world where other people's souls are commodified? The answer lies in nuance. While the elites could choose a life of purification to their soul, the motivation is not intrinsic to the elitist system. The elites

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merely have the physical resources to start their ever-approximating asymptotic journey towards perfection. Elitism creates a bubble where art and traditions are preserved for generations; the masses may not have the taste to understand the nuances of art, preferring what is obvious and relatable to their lives. However, is this shielding the human mind from retardation? Not so, it is merely a system that rewards preservation, for good or for evil.

Returning to Eurydice, Eurydice captures an intimately fragile part of the human psyche. The beauty in both the physical and the metaphysical; beauty in form and in soul. His existence serves as a reminder of individualism in the pursuit of one's perfect soul, and the inevitable loneliness that accompanies him. In a way, his partner turning to stone gazing at the underworld which he conquered in quiet courage, in unquenching determination, displays the vast distance that stands between his cultivation of the soul and hers. Like Eurydice, above all, the human mind, the human soul must be valued above all. The abortion of one's mind, a metaphysical lobotomy, thus, serves as the grimmest reminder of the vulnerability of the human soul in the face of a perverse and corrupt world.