



(Super)Heroism as a Response to the Awareness of Death: Existential Lessons From The Amazing Spider-Man 2

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Abstract

This paper explores existential themes as presented in the 2014 film *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. An initial argument is presented in support of the claim that contemporary audiences are drawn towards superheroes for the same reasons people have historically been compelled by traditional religious beliefs – a desire to transcend death. By presenting visual confirmation that the laws of the natural world (particularly gravity) can be exceeded, the superhero film in general and the Spider-Man character specifically offers hope that the most frightening of these laws (death) can also be overcome. However, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* also offers a warning about the potential dangers of denying mortality. The film illustrates tensions between the needs for comforting narratives about unwavering cosmic heroism and challenging narratives about the quest for purpose in a turbulent and ephemeral world.

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