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Moral Vision In William Golding's "Lord Of The Flies"

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Chapter One

Introduction

William Golding's inaugural novel, "Lord of the Flies," was released in 1954. Despite its lack of popularity upon debut, with sales of less than three thousand copies in the United States in 1955 before going out of print, It quickly became a top-selling book. The novel has been made into two English-language films, first in 1963 by Peter Brook and again in 1990 by Harry Hook. Additionally, it was turned into a Filipino film by Lupita A. Concio in 1975.

During the course of an unspecified conflict, the events in the story take place. Some of the characters who find themselves marooned are regular students, while others become members of a musical choir that is led by an established figure. Except for Sam and Eric and the choirboys, it seemed that they had never met each other before. The book depicts the gradual decline of the characters into a state of savagery. Stranded on a beautiful island, far away from contemporary society, the well- educated youngsters descend to a primitive condition.

Golding wrote his work as a response to R.M Ballantyne's youth novel The Coral Island, published in 1858. He incorporated explicit parallels to it, such as the naval officer's description of the children's initial attempts at civilized cooperation as a "jolly good show," similar to what happens in The Coral Island. Golding's three main characters, Ralph, Piggy, and Jack, have



been seen as exaggerated representations of Ballantyne's Coralist and its main characters (Wikipedia, 2013: online).

William Golding's Life and Works

William Golding was born on 19 September 1911 in Cornwall, England, prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Cornwall is located on the south-western coast of England. He received his education at a renowned all-male institution during the 1920s. His parents had the expectation that he would pursue a career in science, therefore they enrolled him in Oxford University with this specific objective. Nevertheless, following two years of scientific studies, Golding made the decision to switch his academic focus to English literature and the exploration of Anglo-Saxon culture. In 1935, he completed his studies and subsequently authored a collection of poems. He also worked as a school master at a boys' school, although he saw this career as largely unproductive (Hynes, 1961:3).

In 1940, he enlisted in the Royal Navy and participated in the Second World War. Over the course of the following five years, he actively participated in numerous military engagements and personally witnessed the demise of the German battleship Bismarck. In 1944, he led a rocket-launching vessel during the Allied Invasion and liberation of France. He vigorously battled against the Nazi ideology, which aimed to establish German supremacy as the dominant race and resulted in the creation of death camps with the purpose of mass murder and cultural destruction.

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people are only able to establish successful communities when they are compelled to do so by the constraints of civilization (ibid.).

Lord of the Flies draws inspiration from Coral Island, a renowned 19th century adventure tale for young boys authored by R.M Ballantyne. In this narrative, a collective of English boys who have been stranded after a shipwreck find themselves on a tropical island and promptly establish a structured semblance of a civilized English civilization. The book advocated the belief that English people had attained the pinnacle of evolutionary development in the globe, serving as a magnificent exemplar to all others due to their inherent superiority. In Golding's narrative, the male individuals swiftly regress into a state of barbarism, creating a corrupt form of worship rooted in their dread of the wilderness. Furthermore, they make an attempt to murder the two boys who persist in embodying rationality and civilized conduct.

The absurdity of the contrast is further emphasized by the fact that Golding's primary protagonists share the same name as the youthful characters in Ballantyne's works. In 1955, Golding authored another creative allegory called The Inheritors. This narrative is set in an improbable backdrop, specifically during the early stages of human history in ancient times. Homo sapiens, our highly intellectual species, dominated the innocent world of the Neanderthal man, a primitive and peaceful species, by utilizing our superior talents to subdue the kind Neanderthals. Similar to the male characters in the last novel, the intellectually gifted individuals squandered their opportunity to create a promising and innovative society. Golding posits that humans inherently carry malevolence, which renders them unable to sustain their civilizations throughout time, so suggesting that evil is an inherent aspect of human nature. Human intelligence frequently becomes misused to devise strategies by which the powerful subjugate the vulnerable and propagate irrational beliefs. Golding has authored a total of eight novels, numerous short stories, a collection of poems, and a single play. (Dick, 1987: 67).

Golding remained prolific in his literary output throughout the 1980s until his demise on June 19, 1993, in Perranarworthal, a village in England. Despite his early aspiration to pursue a career as a poet, his plans shifted after the release of his debut novel, Lord of the Flies, in 1954. This literary masterpiece is widely regarded as his most significant achievement. Undoubtedly, this work garnered him the most attention. This book is widely



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read in numerous classes. Additionally, it has been adapted into two movies. The author has received numerous messages from teachers, students, parents, psychiatrists, psychologists, and clergy members on his book. The crucial message of the book has captivated readers since the end of World War II and continues to do so even today, as many people perceive the world as a violent and unstable place.

According to Forster, during an unspecified war, a plane transporting a cohort of British lads who are being relocated from a conflict area crashes on a secluded island. In the initial stages, the individual in possession of the conch assumes the role of chief. Ralph asserts that reason and intelligent order can no longer maintain their dominance in the group, as he points out Jack, an older boy and the leader (Forster, 1963:3). The central topic of Lord of the Flies revolves around the emergence of a feral and unsociable power. Golding himself provides an explanation in the following manner. The theme aims to elucidate the connection between the flaws of society and the inherent flaws of human nature. The entire book is predominantly metaphorical, with the exception of the rescue at the end, where the presence of adult life is portrayed as dignified and capable. However, it is shown that this adult life is actually entangled in the same evil that characterizes the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, who has halted a pursuit of a fugitive, is getting ready to transport the youngsters from the island on a battleship, which will soon commence its relentless pursuit of its adversary. And who will save the grownup and his vehicle? Therefore, one could infer that the story's ramifications extend beyond the decline of the children and instead present a sinister and genuine portrayal of the modern world. The island depicted by Golding at the beginning of the story is a lush and vibrant paradise teeming with life and vitality. Flowers and fruits flourished on the same tree, displaying abundance and attracting numerous bees. However, eventually, everything was destroyed and dried up, resembling lifeless wood. The "Nothing Developing Country" think tank institute took charge of the boys responsible for hunting food for the entire group. This marked the establishment of a new society, seemingly ordered and controlled by a miniature version of the world. According to the source, a union group is splitting into two factions (ibid).

Ralph, firmly believing in their chances of being rescued, instructs the children to keep a signal fire burning at the highest point of the mountain. He also advises them to construct shelters and search for sustenance, primarily in



the form of fruits. In addition to Piggy, Simon also possesses an innate need to safeguard the 'littluns', younger boys, from the 'biguns', older males. On the contrary, Jack, who is actively involved in hunting wild pigs, exerts control over most children by the allure of excellent flesh or through his display of tremendous force.

In contrast to Simon, Roger is a very intimate acquaintance who frequently mistreats the younger children known as 'littluns'. When Jack constructs his fort, the original gang divides entirely into two separate portions. Ralph's group diminishes significantly following the demise of Simon and Piggy. Finally, Ralph is left alone and is even pursued as if he were a pig by the others, indicating that Jack's group has completely defeated Ralph's group. In the conclusion of the narrative, a law enforcement officer comes to the aid of Ralph. Nevertheless, has he successfully rescued the lost spirits of these young men? Clearly, this is hardly a straightforward narrative of young boys stranded on a tropical island. Golding has synthesized the conventional 20th Century approaches to studying human beings and society, and has devised a hypothetical scenario to experimentally evaluate them.

Fear and frustration incite the darkness within the heart. In the absence of rule and order, humanity will descend into a state of savagery. The novel's title, derived from a historical mistranslation of Hebrew and Greek biblical texts, carries a rhetorical connotation of Satan. However, in this work, the term does not hold any theological significance. Nevertheless, the name is fitting as it signifies decay, filth, and devastation. Golding perceives an analogous contemporary manifestation of the Evil's malevolent power in anarchy, lack of order, and the abandonment of moral principles. These anti-social forces can present themselves with such intensity in certain individuals that they become unmanageable within society (Bloom, 2010:17).

Subsequently, the moral limitations imposed by societal awareness were obliterated, resembling lifeless objects devoid of growth, save for the swarms of flies that covered their master and transformed the spilled entrails into a shimmering mound. The three primary protagonists, Ralph, Piggy, and Jack, along with several other boys, engage in a brutal human catastrophe of hunting and murdering when presented with the opportunity to establish an ideal existence. Ralph serves as the embodiment of civilization, embodying its principles of order and societal structure. Piggy, a corpulent and inept boy, symbolizes the indispensable authority of rational thinking and intellect that exists solely in the realm of adults. His efforts to establish order on the island,



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mirroring the societal norms of England, and his persistent emphasis on the rational aspect of human nature, as well as his fixation on the signal fire, highlight this theme (ibid) The conch shell, which he employs to summon the boys to meetings and entrusts to any youngster who desires to speak, while others must remain mute and listen, symbolizes an authoritative force that maintains a delicate equilibrium between a democratic society and the principles of equal rights and freedom.

Every individual in this society contributes their efforts for the collective welfare of the entire group. Constructing shelters, foraging for sustenance, and maintaining the fire are the three paramount priorities. The societal breakdown and the terror of the creature lead to the demise of Simon and Piggy. The inadvertent demise of Simon and intentional execution of Piggy exemplify the inherent malevolence inside the human psyche, which becomes evident when civilization succumbs to savagery. Fear is the catalyst for barbaric behavior. The authority and culture were shattered due to the decay of Roger. The destruction of the conch, coupled with the demise of Piggy, signifies a deterioration of Piggy's mental state. The demise of Piggy serves as evidence that the malevolence inherent in human nature cannot be effectively restrained within any of the established social structures in the Western world. Democracy is destined to fail due to the influence of Jack, the leader of the anarchic forces on the island, who possesses authority in the fields of psychiatry, anthropology, and social psychology. His famous work remains as provocative today as it was when it was originally published. Building a logical and coherent theoretical structure, whereas Jack, the head of the anarchic forces on the island, represents the innate evil within human nature (ibid : 18) All boys, excluding Ralph and Piggy, possess an innate ability for hunting and slaughtering pigs. The adherents adorn their bodies with paint and renounce the customs of civilization in pursuit of sustenance from animal flesh. Jack exerts dominion over the tribe of primitive individuals by using their terror of a formidable, fictitious creature that they perceive to be wandering the island. The tribe kills Simon, an eccentric and isolated youngster, when they become highly agitated and believe that he is the Beast. Subsequently, the tribe proceeds to execute Piggy. Subsequently, Ralph finds himself in solitude and becomes the target of an intense pursuit. He navigates the island's jungle, evading capture like a prey animal, only to be rescued by malevolent youngsters. The fictional universe serves as a symbolic representation of the contemporary civilized world. It portrays the



immense challenge of survival, as people struggle to cope with the division and destructive growth of humanity, as well as the devastating impact of conflict and mass killings resulting from the two world wars. Hitler, known for his aggressiveness, orchestrated barbarous bombardments. The inherent savagery of contemporary human beings is indisputable. While perusing the savage conflict on the uninhabited island, has anyone connected with the ongoing atomic warfare that is more ruthless and intense. The congruent correlation between the illusion and reality is intricately orchestrated to depict a symbol of contemporary society permeated with degradation, devastation, demoralization, hysteria, and fear (Garcia, 2003: 99).

Chapter Two

Moral Vision

Moral vision refers to an individual's perception of the world, which is influenced by their moral ideas and concepts. <http://www.cambridge.org> > article. This theme aims to delineate the imperfections inherent in human nature. The underlying principle is that the structure of a community should be determined by the moral character of its individuals, rather than by any political system, no matter how seemingly rational or respected.

The novel *Lord of the Flies* was penned in the aftermath of two catastrophic global conflicts. The initial World War was anticipated to be the conflict that would bring a stop to all future hostilities. However, than two decades later, the global community found itself embroiled in another war, which proved to be much more devastating than its predecessor.

After this, many individuals began to perceive human behavior in a different manner. It appeared that we have an inherent inclination towards engaging in battle and having a strong desire for violence. This pessimistic perspective on humanity may have established the overall attitude towards the portrayal of evil in the novel, depicting it as the internal attributes that cause individuals to deviate from their initial notions of goodness and virtue.

(Child and Fowler, 2006:89)

The tale takes place on a picturesque tropical island. However, for the duration of the event, the lush and luscious green scenery undergoes a dramatic and devastating transformation into a raging and deadly inferno due to the arrival of a cohort of British schoolboys. During the initial chapters of the book, the lads engage in physical activity by running down the beach and immersing themselves in the ocean. Towards the conclusion, their behavior



devolves from that of civilized individuals to that of savages, burdened by multiple deaths on their conscience.

The concept of evil on the tropical island is introduced by the mention and subsequent terror of the Beast. The lads perceive this Beast as a tangible and real presence that poses a threat to the group from an external source. However, according to Simon's statement, the Beast actually resides within them. The name "The Beast" could potentially refer to the malevolent aspects of the human psyche. (Cuddon,2013: 112).

The characters in the novel can be seen as archetypes of human conduct, with Ralph embodying civilization and authority, while Jack symbolizes the inherent brutality found in the human psyche. From a more expansive perspective, Ralph can be regarded as a symbol of virtue, whereas Jack can be seen as a symbol of malevolence. This statement does not imply that Ralph is morally virtuous and Jack is morally corrupt. While Ralph is portrayed as a sympathetic character and the main protagonist who reflects on his actions, he also harbors malevolence, as evidenced by his involvement in Simon's death. Despite Ralph's refusal to acknowledge his involvement in the tragedy, he is not entirely overwhelmed by cruelty. Jack is Ralph's antithesis in numerous aspects.

Ralph assumes leadership with the intention of facilitating the group's departure from the island, whereas Jack seeks it to fulfill his personal desire for authority. Ralph symbolizes the democratic leader, whereas Jack embodies the tyrant. By virtue of the fact that all the characters are children, our comprehension of the concept of evil is enriched with an additional layer. Children are typically depicted as pure and guileless beings in literature. Within the narrative, the ostensibly guileless youngsters ultimately engage in homicide and unleash chaos over the entirety of the island. Children are often seen as more inclined to behave according to their inherent characteristics compared to adults, who are typically more influenced by societal norms. If this perspective is applied to Lord of the Flies, would that imply that the boys' behaviors accurately reflect their inherent behavior? Is that also the reason why Ralph, Piggy, and Simon, who appear to be the most mature, are the individuals who oppose this conduct? Golding suggests that the boys' immoral behaviors arise when they forsake their civilized behavior and begin to behave based on their instincts. (ibid).

To what degree can the characters be held accountable for their deeds, considering that they inherently possess bad tendencies from birth? It would



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be illogical to label the conduct of a pack of wolves as wicked. It is possible that we anticipate people reaching a state where they engage in thoughtful evaluation of their own behaviors and decisions, rather than being controlled by their own urges. (Saussure, 1990: 78).

Ralph establishes novel regulations, such as the requirement of possessing the conch to address the group during assemblies, and likely anticipates that others would adhere to the societal norms they left behind, such as the prohibition of murder and theft. Ralph and the majority of the guys recognize the significance of these regulations, as they are inherently enforced in their place of origin. Within society, individuals are expected to adhere to established regulations and legislation. Deviation from these norms results in punitive measures being imposed. However, on the island, there are no repercussions if someone violates the regulations. When the guys on the island experience the collapse of their self-created civilization, they become disconnected from their understanding of moral principles.

(Faulkner, 1977:98).

Golding appears to view evil as an inherent aspect of human nature, suggesting that a propensity for wickedness exists inside everyone of us. He may also suggest that society acts as a restraint to suppress inherent brutality and that our genuine essence resembles that of wolves. It is possible that having young characters becomes even more crucial, since they lack the understanding of societal mechanisms and fail to comprehend the reasons for the importance of specific rules and conventions. While the book concludes on a positive note, it presents a unique perspective on evil that distinguishes it from other children's stories; All the remaining male individuals on the island are ultimately rescued, irrespective of their conduct and actions. Two of the most exceptional individuals among them have passed away. Golding asserts that, in contrast to the portrayal in several children's stories and fairytales, the concepts of good and evil are not objectively defined; he emphasizes that good does not always triumph and that those who engage in wicked actions do not necessarily face consequences in the end. Ralph's tears on the beach are a result of his profound understanding of the dark potential within human nature. (ibid).

Golding's moral perspective sets him apart from the post-war British fiction authors who were primarily influenced by the neo-realism of Dorris Lessing. Kingsley Amis, Anthony Powell, and C.P. Snow. He is troubled by the insufficient comprehension that men have regarding their own inherent



characteristics. Modern individuals face a restricted range of options, compelling them to pursue success and comfort by cunning methods. He has chosen a society in which it is more advantageous to be envied than to be disregarded. He categorizes this type of dehumanization as an indication of lack of knowledge.

Golding's primary objective is not merely to identify the inherent wickedness in humanity, but rather to explore methods of eradicating it, similar to that of an altruistic individual. He examines the motivations behind human behavior, the pointlessness of relying just on reason or emotions, and the ethical dilemma of distinguishing between good and evil within a meticulously constructed framework of human thought and behavior. He consistently demonstrates sympathy, compassion, and humanity in all of his actions. He says;

"I am not implying that anyone is malevolent." I embarked on a quest to determine if there is an inherent quality in humans that compels them to act in the manner they do, nothing more. (Sammeul Hynes, 34).

Golding believes that modern humans lack foresight. He emphasizes the overlooked religious aspects of the humanistic experience. By emphasizing the dual character of human beings, he unavoidably invites comparison to Graham Greene. Both individuals share a keen interest in the metaphysics of human conduct. He regards evil as a manifestation of human consciousness. Boys often strive to establish a structured pattern within the inherent disorder of their own nature, therefore leading to their mistake or wrongdoing. Their culpability is the cost of achieving evolutionary triumph. The author's conclusion is that the beast symbolizes mankind's failure to acknowledge their own accountability for their own downfall.

Golding's moral perspective asserts that neglect is the most significant transgression of humanity. His writings exemplify the conviction that corruptions within human society, which has the potential for goodness, are inherently wicked. In an ideal scenario, society should cater to the needs of all individuals. However, the novel Lord of the Flies illustrates that this is frequently not the case.

Conclusion

William Golding gives a bleak perspective on humanity and the human race in his novel Lord of the Flies. He illustrates that the capacity to exhibit peaceful behavior and be civilized is not inherent in human nature, but rather acquired through the learning of moral and societal limitations. He holds the



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belief that all human beings are essentially savages who are governed by their violent inclinations. The work showcases Golding's adeptness in manipulating sentence length and structure, employing intricate mirroring tactics, and purposefully utilizing imagery to amplify the story's significance. In order to address one of the key issues in Western thought - the essence of human personality and its impact on society - the author utilizes Western studies as a theoretical framework. This framework, however, serves as a mirror reflecting the brutal, barbaric, and immoral aspects of human nature and society. The novel explores the conflict between savagery and civilization as its central theme. Ralph symbolizes civilization as he advocates for the implementation of rules and the equal participation of all individuals, whereas Jack also represents civilization as he too supports the establishment of rules and equal representation. Jack embodies savagery as he exercises dominion over the lads and displays a lack of interest in their opinions. However, Golding's portrayal highlights the necessity of rules and the deliberate imposition of them to ensure the correct functioning of society.

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