

The Basbanes Project

Enlightenment, a path less taken and often ambiguous in its nature, is a long and tedious journey that people often undergo in search of meaning and answers. Though people do not often realize this that they set forth upon this journey, often at times people realize the depth of their being and the extent of the journey taken through traumatic events that forever shape one's life. These journeys are often taken through out life; however, The Lord of the Flies, by William Golding, demonstrates this test in a short period in several young children's lives. As it is often thought of as a small step toward enlightenment, understanding "cause and effect," though simplistic in its nature, is one of the most difficult concepts to fully understand and master.

The concept of "cause and effect" can be examined through different tiers in man's history. First and quite easily examined example of "cause and effect" is the concept's portrayal in man's society. "*We may live here till we die*" (Golding 10) is an excerpt stated by Ralph, one of the children who survived the crash on the island, who jokingly speaks as if the tragic situation that has befallen their group is nothing more than normal. During the first few months of their stay on the island, the children were relaxed and maintained a playful attitude as if the situation they were in was merely a game. Though this was their initial reaction to the island was nonchalant, nearing the resolution of the novel the children undergo several mind altering experiences, thus causing a polar opposite reaction at the conclusion. "*I should have thought a pack of British boys [...] would have been able to put up a better show than that*" (Golding 234) is the ending perception of the naval officer to the children's stay on the island. Where at the beginning the children were united and collected, they had slowly began to part ways. One group had wanted to stay on an island with no authority, to invoke man's inner nature for pleasure, while the other group wanted to return to civilization. This best exemplifies how lack of authority can affect one's perception of morality. It seems rather odd that though often man has been conditioned to a set of moral niceties through education and daily interaction amongst others within a community that, that conditioning could be steadily and quickly broken leading to a more archaic sense

AF29730

of one's self and role in a society. This questions of how far the evolution of man has grown as well as how quickly man can be reduced back to his primitive being.

Through the examination of the regression of one's psyche in a society with lack of authority one can begin to unravel the mysteries of the human psyche. "*Percival Wemy Madison. The Vicarage, Harcourt ST. Anthony, Hants, telephone ...*" (Golding 95) demonstrates a child's attempt as to not forget one's self. Though this may seem extreme and quite difficult to understand living in a society where authority is dissolved, one begins to regress to a primitive state where one is purely driven by the sense of pleasure. Though Percival attempts to maintain him self he slowly and inevitably loses his identity nearing the end of the novel. "*I'm, I'm – but there was no more to come. Percival Wemys Madison sought in his head of an incantation that had faded away*" (Golding 95) is the end result to his journey on the island. In attempt to find a place to belong with either Ralph's group, who are working to be saved, or Jack's tribe, of savage hunters, Percival slowly loses himself. This exemplifies the progression man has made into refining one's psyche and draws a line to the distance between archaic design and modern designs. This has allowed one to gauge the progress one has made between previous generations and current.

Through the lose of one's identity one begins to experience man's true nature. "*After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are the best a everything*" (Golding 44) is the initial thought to their true nature. Ralph had stated this to reassure the boys that they will be fine and will be saved. His example was to convey to the other children that "we" British folk can endure any endeavor brought forth to "us" in forms of tests or otherwise. Though initially the boy's stood firm to this testament, slowly they begin to deter and see examples of savagery among the group. "*You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? [...] I'm the reason why it's no go. I'm the reason why things are the way they are*" (Golding 164) demonstrates the darkness in man's heart. This dialog was spoken by the pig's head on a stake while Simon manifests the "darkness in man's heart" into a physical entity. Through speaking with the "Lord of the Flies" Simon realizes that the beast that the children feared on the island

AF29730

was not a physical being but was the metaphysical darkness humans have lurking in their hearts. The beast was not an animal to be hunted but the animal that drove the children to hunt. It was the voice that they had heard in the back of their mind's that had invoked them to pleasure and lack of moral guidance. The beast on the island was the children and mankind's true nature. Though people often believe man is born with a "blank slate" or morally aligned, only half of this statement is true. While man is born with a "blank slate," when history is examined often do people find where mankind has "failed." As the old adage states a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, man can do immeasurable positive actions that provide for society, but it only takes one negative action to slowly decay and tarnish the reputation man has created.

Though one can perceive a pessimistic outlook on life and it's entirety through the examples above, truly gifted and open minded folk would view the larger picture. As one can infer "cause and effect," though simplistic in its nature, is quite difficult to completely comprehend enlightenment does not traverse in a positive or negative trend. Though Lord of the Flies resolves with a negative trend, one may see that through this examination mankind is fragile as well as gifted. Mankind has potential to become greater than any other being, though often this gift is disregarded and lost to those who can not see. Mankind is gifted with the ability to transcend, a gift that the "gods" do not even have. Although it sounds strange that man has this ability, simply man is given a limitation that select few can transcend. A select few have elevated charismatic feature and can often entertain the populous. Another select few learned and can become valuable assets to society slowly progressing the world forward. Simply "gods," through beliefs, have limitless boundaries; however, man is given strict boundaries. Man is given a hurdle to transcend over and after that hurdle, man receives another hurdle. Endlessly man jumps to gain a higher ground to become stronger and more learned. This is the gift that people often do not understand. Weakness is strength, limitation are limitless, and boundaries are boundless. People have undiscovered potential that can further widen the gap between one another, though we squander it with corrupt actions.

AF29730

Work Cited

Golding, William. The Lord of the Flies. New York: Riverhead Books, 1994.