

wars of this century are proof enough, but constant reminders are necessary and many thinkers have not had the courage to carry the blame as far as to each individual human soul. Golding offers no solution to the problem he presents; human nature is what it is and there is no easy or fast way to change it. At the same time, knowledge of a problem is a great step in arriving at a solution. William Golding, through the medium of his striking novel, has made a major contribution to human self-awareness. It is only through paying heed to the warnings of Golding and men like him that the human race will ever be able to evolve to a more mature and higher state of being.

behavior which Golding provides through his narration of the group's activities. Admittedly, it is at first difficult to conceive of each of the boys as a type, representing only a single aspect of personality, but it is possible to do so, and the fablelike style of the novel assists in doing this. Furthermore, many aspects of the story that appear confusing fall neatly into place through this kind of analysis. One may claim that the group of boys demonstrates the functioning of a single human being during a period of extreme stress, and shows the dangers possible and the capacity for self-harm if the more primitive and brutal urges are allowed to gain control of human activity. The ending of the novel hints that under such circumstances it is even possible for a human organism to follow a course of action that will eventually result in its own destruction, either totally or as a healthily functioning entity.

An additional interpretation of *Lord of the Flies* is simply that, in the guise of an exciting and enthralling adventure story, Golding has written what constitutes a harsh attack on contemporary Western society and its institutions. His story, it is said, examines the various ways of organizing and governing a group that have been developed, and shows the defects of each. It is possible to see represented several prominent philosophical and sociological views in the boys, and their attempted solutions to their problems. Golding's attack is made more horrifying and biting by its placing of the guilt for faulty governmental and social institutions squarely upon the shoulders of each and all of the boys, activists and non-activists alike.

It is interesting to note that it is relatively easy to correlate the various interpretations of *Lord of the Flies*; all critics recognize that Golding is dealing with the immense capacity for evil that man seems to possess, and the thin veneer of civilization that in too many cases is made to substitute for morality and reason. To a large degree the critics tend to view Golding's novel through their own theological or philosophical or psychological preconceptions, but they all acknowledge that the same general problem exists nonetheless. The human race has time and again been shown that Golding's vision is an accurate one; the great

lesson that it is only through conformity to the moral standards of civilized behavior, deficient though these may be at present, that any hope exists for mankind to achieve a higher and more desirable ethical state.

It is not possible to say which of the two views of the nature of civilization and human evil is correct. It is even possible that both are, at least to some extent. One thing is certain though; if one accepts Golding's view that evil is inherent in man's nature, it is not necessary to give up hope for man's eventual moral improvement. Hope does exist in the novel, for along with Jack and the savages, there is a Ralph and there is a Simon, although in these particular circumstances they are not dominant.

One of the most prevalent interpretations of Golding's work is based upon the tremendous advances in the behavioral sciences and psychoanalysis that have been made in the past century. According to the critics of this group, all the episodes and characterizations in *Lord of the Flies* are illustrative of the general principles of human psychology and contribute to an enhanced and fuller knowledge of the mental and emotional operation of the human organism. In addition, these critics find it possible by this method to identify each of the boys in the novel as representing a different aspect or factor in the human psyche — for instance, Jack as passion, Ralph as reason, and so forth — and thus to view the entire group of boys as actually being psychological component parts of a single large organism, the group. These critics identify the ignorance and evil which seems to drive the boys with the Freudian id, which is defined as an unconscious, amoral force within the human mind whose function is to insure the survival of the being within which it exists, by any means possible. This basic drive is a powerful one and is not concerned with questions of morality or ethics. It is devoted only to the maintenance of its own life and equilibrium, and there is often an internal struggle with serious consequences within the individual human being between the force of the id and the demands caused by living in society.

The critics who subscribe to this interpretation point out the valuable lessons about the nature and background of human

Another interpretation is derived from the ideas of a school of thought which has had a prominent place in intellectual history for many centuries. This group holds the principle that civilization and a complex, formalized society have a corrupting influence upon the individual human being. In its most extreme form, this theory postulates an original, pristine and uncomplicated state in which man lived "naturally" and this was rational, innocent, and pure—Rousseau's "noble savage." Even where the exponents of this theory remain more moderate in their anthropological views, nonetheless they continue to believe that much evil and most human vices are due to a repressive and overly demanding way of life, caused by adherence to the false conventions and values of civilization. The perfectibility of man is possible, according to this school, but can be achieved only when humanity is able to overcome the encroachments of civilized life which have, except in a few rare cases, succeeded in destroying the essentially good and human qualities of most people.

In our own time this doctrine has retained some influence and some forms of it have attained a new currency. The so-called "beat" writers attacked conventional society because of its repressive qualities, indicating at least some basic agreement with this concept. A better example is J. D. Salinger's important novel, *Catcher in the Rye*, in which evil, hypocrisy, and corruption are attributed to the world of adults, a world which is completely and hopelessly "civilized," while honesty, idealism, and innocence are found only in the unspoiled world of childhood and adolescence.

Golding's work has been shown to attack this point of view bitterly, for his book demonstrated repeatedly that human beings are capable of intense evil, as a result of their own natures and not because of any outside factors. Furthermore, his book suggests, civilization, far from being a corrupting influence, is the only thing that restrains mankind from a life of utter barbarity and degradation. This is not to claim that civilization in Golding's view is anything near perfect; after all, the boys are marooned as the result of a nuclear war and are rescued by a warship engaged in its own savage manhunt. Nevertheless, the novel teaches the

those that have always been subjects of concern for the religious man—the nature of good and evil, guilt and responsibility, and the meaning of death and free will. It is claimed that through the isolation of the novel's characters in space and time, and through their placement in a primitive situation where the immediate problem is that of survival, Golding is enabled to deal with the issue of salvation in the broadest sense, at the same time that he ostensibly concerns himself with the more superficial question of the preservation of life. Some critics of this group are oriented in behalf of a particular sectarian belief, while others consider this theme to be a modern manifestation of very ancient mythological concepts that pervade the human unconscious and supersede any particularistic doctrine.

According to this interpretation, the "beast" is the most important symbol in the novel. Furthermore, the beast is, in reality, human (symbolized by the parachutist), as was sensed by the mystic Simon, and it represents the capacity for evil that is present in all human beings. In other words, the boys fear what is in fact themselves for they have created the subject of their fears. The castaways, even when they are led by Jack, are capable of sustaining their lives on a physical basis, but they live in fear and without grace, and so finally degenerate into the most degraded form of inhuman savagery. This indicates that the individual human soul, regardless of its capacity for temporal achievement, is unable on its own to free itself from the captivity of its own ignorance and fear, and to overcome its inherent attachment to evil. The implication is that salvation can be achieved only through faith and reliance upon outside help and guidance, be this conceived of as a deity or some abstract natural force. The attitude of the novelist in regard to the outcome of this struggle is uncertain, and may be assumed to be optimistic or pessimistic, depending upon how one interprets the miraculous rescue in the last few paragraphs. It is relevant to this, however, to note that the dualism in man's nature is also present in the universe, so that the fact that the officer and cutter may represent destructive elements in society does not necessarily mean that they are forces for evil.

[second world] war, most Europeans believed that man could be perfected by perfecting society. We all saw a hell of a lot in the war that can't be accounted for except on the basis of original evil. . . . The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system, however apparently logical or respectable. The whole book is symbolic in nature except the rescue at the end where adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, having interrupted a man-hunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cutter which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cutter?"]

Since that time, the author has been questioned further about his aim in writing this novel. Although [he admits that his book has profound psychological and philosophical overtones,] he declines to discuss these in detail and expresses amusement and impatience with the complex analyses that have been propounded. He continues to expand upon his earlier, general statements. For example, in an interview with a reporter from the *New York World-Telegram and Sun* printed on December 3, 1963, [Golding insisted that the novel's primary purpose is to serve as a warning of man's potential for brutality to his fellow man. He said, "I learned during World War II just how brutal people can be to each other. Not just Germans or Japanese, but everyone. I tried to point that out. . . . Some have said that the brutality of the novel is impossible. It's not. Look at any newspaper. . . ." It will be seen that Golding's general statements fully express the mood and purpose of his book.] The efforts of scholars have been devoted to a detailed examination of his methods and to the complete ramifications of his thought.

Several critics with a religious bent have analyzed Golding's tale to be a fable based upon the concept of original sin. They write that Golding's concern is not so much with man in relation to society as with man in relation to the universe and himself—in essence, the problem of the human soul and salvation. These writers find that the central problems dealt with in the novel are

more important and meaningful ideas about the novel that have been developed in recent years.

It will be useful before turning to the theories voiced by the literary critics to examine the statements made about the novel by Golding himself. Certain limiting qualifications must be made, however, about an author's analysis of his own work. [As an artist and a creative writer, Golding is naturally most concerned with his work as an artistic and conceptual unity] His remarks will not deal with intricate details of symbolism and meaning, and may even contradict or weaken some of the findings of critics. This should not automatically be used as a means to question or discredit the results of investigations conducted by literary scholars. [The writer originally conceived of his work as a whole, and must continue doing so by virtue of his artistry. Literature is not usually the product of a conscious and premeditated plan to achieve certain specific effects, for artists do not consciously and artificially create symbols and "X" number of levels of meaning. The writer's creation is as much intuitive and emotional as it is premeditated and intellectual. The fact that Golding may not restate or even acknowledge some of the discoveries or theories of literary critics does not indicate that these ideas are therefore incorrect. This has often been the relationship between writers and their critics. Furthermore, the question that must be dealt with is often not what the author meant, or thinks he has meant, but what he has actually achieved. To the extent that a writer has written as the result of a natural and indefinable artistic inspiration, he may be fallible in his afterstatement about the nature and worth of his art. At the same time, it should always be remembered that the writer is closer to his work than anyone else, and that his understanding of it is an essential contribution to any complete analysis. With these remarks always kept in mind, it is possible to examine what Golding has said about *Lord of the Flies*.

[Shortly after the novel's publication, the author wrote in a publicity questionnaire for Coward-McCann, his American publisher, that "the theme [of the book] is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. Before the

ANALYZING *LORD OF THE FLIES*

[*Lord of the Flies* is one of those uncommon books which is susceptible to several levels of interpretation and analysis. It has this characteristic because it deals honestly and profoundly with human beings under stress, and because its author has a sympathetic and intense vision of the problems facing modern man, the varied reactions of different types of people under similar conditions, and the internal tension experienced by human beings forced to face new and difficult situations. Through its portrayals of human beings and human problems, this novel illustrates important general principles of human behavior and human relations.] This outline will attempt to sketch some of the