

Mikaela Morelli
EN30S
November 1, 2012
Ms. Smith

The Corruption of Power on Human Nature

A society can flourish or fall apart, depending on the structure of the powers within. Power in the wrong hands can be misused and result in conflict and tragedy, as shown in the novel Lord of the Flies by William Golding. Within the novel, decisions were made by the boy who wielded the most power at that time. A main part of the story focuses on the continuous struggle for power between Ralph and Jack. This conflict greatly affects the whole storyline and outcome for the boys. Golding displays how democratic, authoritarian and brute powers exist during the fall of civilization.

Democracy, a transient power in this novel, was used to attempt to lead the boys' society. Ralph was the character who wielded this power. His calming, charismatic and intelligent characteristics make his capacity for leadership evident from the start of the story. When the boys first gathered together on the island, they ignored Jack's demands and elected Ralph to be their leader, "Ralph! Ralph!" "Let him be chief with the trumpet-thing." Ralph raised a hand for silence. "All right. Who wants Jack for chief?" With a dreary obedience the choir raised their hands. "Who wants me?" Every hand outside the choir except Piggy's was raised immediately. Then Piggy too, raised his hand grudgingly into the air."(21), demonstrating the democratic power in their group, at first. The group also listened to the conch, and anyone who held it could speak. Ralph tried to work together with the group to make everybody happy, while still being productive. Everyone was given the freedom of speech, and not forced to do anything. He

Vague diction
choice

believed that all the boys would do their part to help the group survive and be rescued. Unfortunately, the boys soon took advantage of his naive attitude. While Ralph and Simon worked with little result on the shelters, the rest of the boys enjoyed themselves leisurely, “Meetings. Don’t we love meetings? Everyday. Twice a day. We talk.” He got on one elbow. “I bet if I blew the conch this minute, they’d come running. Then we’d be, you know, very solemn, and someone would say we ought to build a jet, or a submarine, or a TV set. When the meeting was over they’d work for five minutes, then wander off or go hunting.”(46), proving how gradually the boys respect for Ralph’s authority was fading away. The ineffectiveness of Ralph’s organization was due to the boys’ irresponsibility. They did not have insight on the importance of rescue like Ralph did. Jack especially had completely different priorities from Ralph. He thought hunting for meat was the most vital job of all, and even ignored Ralph’s wishes to keep the fire going, “There was a ship. Out there. You said you’d keep the fire going and you let it out!”(64), proving that the disagreement in priorities was going to cause them a lot of trouble. Since Ralph was still considered chief at the time, he disciplined Jack, embarrassing him in front of the group. When Jack became further infuriated with Ralph’s democracy, he decided to create his own authoritarian group.

The second group of power which evolved in this novel was made and controlled by Jack’s authoritative direction. Jack was the dictator of his group. He ruled his group by allowing the boys to live in fear of him. From the very beginning of this novel, Jack tried to force his will on to the other boys, but at first the other boys were more drawn to Ralph, and therefore made him leader. Jack, however, then created his own tribe, with promises of hunting, meat, and a lot more pleasurable activities. Most of the boys were negligent, so they had no concerns for any important affairs other than having fun. There were many benefits to leading a group like this.

Ralph had a very strict demeanor. Every one obeyed him without a second thought, therefore all tasks were accomplished without argument, and the hunting was done effectively. Unfortunately there were also cons to his authoritarian power. The boys did not ever question Jack's decisions, even when beating Wilfred, "He's going to beat Wilfred." "What for?" Robert shook his head doubtfully. "I don't know. He didn't say. He got angry and made us tie Wilfred up. He's been"- he giggled excitedly- "he's been tied up for hours, waiting-"(145), because they dreaded punishment. This shows that Jack was a cruel and violent leader, who enjoyed the fact that others feared him. The boys did not listen to Jack out of respect, but out of fear. He had denounced all the former rules and order, and made the only rules to obey what he has said. The freedom of speech the boys once had was gone. He also provoked them to follow in his footsteps and join in his obsession; hunting. Jack has an overwhelming urge to hunt and kill other living creatures. His group took the lives of Piggy and Simon, destroying the only pure goodness and intellect left on the island. He felt no remorse in killing them at all, only drawn to kill again. Jack became power-mad. His sanity was truly waning, and the savage inside of him had taken control, provoking him to now lead his group with a brute force.

With his ~~now~~ ^{unnecessary} brute power, Jack caused the remaining boys, with the exception of Ralph, to become savage. This power is indiscriminate. Each boy saw the other as just another savage. They did not think or question their urge to kill, only act upon it. Jack's group of boys was now almost animals. They relished the feeling of hunting, so when given the chance to kill Ralph, they did not have any second thoughts. The savages hunted him throughout the whole island by using signals, just as an animal would, "The ululation rose behind him and spread along, a series of short sharp cries, the sighting call. A brown figure showed up at his right and fell away. They were all running, all crying out madly."(182), which shows just how primitive the boys had

become. Within just a short time on the island, they turned into completely different people. The brute force controlling these boys, had compelled them to purposely hunt down and kill Ralph. Yet the reality of how bad things have become was still not evident to these boys.

A democratic society is the hopeful ideal, however the shift in rule on the island from democracy to authoritarian to brute power demonstrated that governance is no easy task. The boys had to govern themselves, and experienced conflict over who would be in charge, and what that control would look like. This discord over power is one of the major themes in the novel Lord of the Flies, as Golding shows how, in human nature, the desire for power often causes major conflict. In this story eventually all rules were lost, as the power of brute force became the dominant power. Hopefully his portrayal of how the power of brute force corrupted the island society, and resulted in the disintegration of civilization, will not be what happens to the real civilizations in the world we live in.

But it has - might be interesting to comment on how dictatorship has ruined countries or thrown them int civil war!

Work Cited

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. England: The Putnam Publishing Group, 1954. Print.

