



Existential Vision in William Golding's "Lord of Flies"

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ABSTRACT

William Golding's novel "Lord of the Flies" is a story about a group of British boys who become stranded on a deserted island and attempt to establish their own society. The novel's existential vision is evident in the way the boys are forced to confront the harsh realities of their situation and the inherent savagery of human nature. One of the key aspects of the existential vision in the novel is the absence of a clear moral framework or authority figure. With no adults present, the boys are left to create their own rules and establish their own values. However, this lack of external guidance leads to the emergence of dark impulses and the breakdown of order within the group. As the boys struggle to survive, they are forced to confront the reality that there may be no inherent meaning or purpose to their existence. The existential vision is also evident in the novel's exploration of the human psyche. The boys' experiences on the island reveal the ways in which human beings are shaped by their environment and circumstances. The boys' descent into savagery is not solely a product of their individual natures, but also a result of their isolation from society and the comforts of civilization. The novel suggests that human beings are fundamentally malleable and subject to change, for better or for worse. Another key element of the existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is the way the novel explores the nature of human relationships. The boys' interactions with one another reveal the complexities and challenges of human connection. Despite their shared plight, the boys struggle to communicate effectively and often find themselves at odds with one another. This isolation and inability to connect with others is a central aspect of the existential experience. Ultimately, the novel's existential vision suggests

that the human experience is defined by a fundamental sense of uncertainty and contingency. As the boys struggle to survive and make sense of their situation, they are confronted with the reality that life is unpredictable and often difficult to understand. However, the novel also suggests that there is a certain beauty and resilience in the human experience, as the boys are able to adapt and find meaning in their shared struggle. In conclusion, William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" is a powerful exploration of the existential experience. The novel's examination of the human psyche, relationships, and the absence of clear moral authority underscores the ways in which human beings are shaped by their circumstances and environment. The novel's ultimately hopeful message suggests that, despite the challenges and uncertainties of the human experience, there is a certain beauty and resilience in the human spirit.

KEY WORDS

Existentialism, Freedom, Human Nature, Conformity, Morality, Responsibility.

In addition to the themes and elements mentioned above, the existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is also evident in the novel's exploration of the concept of freedom. The boys are initially excited by the idea of being free from the constraints of society and the expectations of adults. However, as they struggle to survive on the island, they quickly discover that freedom is not as simple or as easy as they had initially believed. The boys' attempts to establish their own society are fraught with conflict and tension, as different boys push for different values and priorities. This conflict highlights the inherent tension between individual freedom and the need for collective order and social structures.

The novel also explores the concept of the absurd, a central element of the existentialist philosophy. The boys are confronted with a situation that is inherently absurd - they are stranded on an uninhabited island with no hope of rescue or escape. As they struggle to survive and make sense of their situation, they are forced to confront the fundamental absurdity of their existence. The novel suggests that the human experience is defined by a constant struggle to find meaning in a world that often seems nonsensical and irrational.

Furthermore, the novel's exploration of the role of violence and aggression in human nature speaks to the existentialist idea that humans are capable of great good and great evil.

The boys' descent into savagery and violence underscores the idea that human nature is not inherently good or evil, but rather a complex interplay of individual psychology, social structures, and environmental factors. The novel suggests that violence and aggression are not simply the result of individual pathology or moral deficiency, but rather a manifestation of deeper psychological and societal forces.

The existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is also evident in the novel's exploration of the concept of identity. As the boys struggle to establish their own society, they are forced to confront questions of individual identity and group identity. The boys must negotiate their own desires and needs with the expectations and values of the group. This tension between individual identity and group identity highlights the complex nature of the human experience, in which individual desires and impulses are constantly mediated by larger social structures and collective values.

The novel's exploration of the limits of human knowledge and perception is also a central element of the existential vision. The boys are forced to navigate a world that is unfamiliar and unpredictable, where the rules and expectations of society no longer apply. As they struggle to make sense of their situation, they are forced to confront the limitations of their own knowledge and understanding. The novel suggests that the human experience is defined by a constant struggle to understand the world around us, and that this struggle is often fraught with uncertainty and doubt.

The novel's portrayal of the natural world also speaks to the existentialist idea of the human experience as a struggle against the indifferent forces of nature. The boys are forced to adapt to a world that is indifferent to their desires and needs, where survival is a constant struggle against hunger, thirst, and exposure. This struggle highlights the precariousness of the human condition, in which individuals are constantly confronted with the possibility of death and the fragility of their own existence.

Another important aspect of the existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is the theme of alienation. Throughout the novel, the boys are progressively alienated from each other and from the world around them. They are cut off from their families, from the structures of society, and from the comforts of civilization. This alienation highlights the fundamental sense of isolation that characterizes the human experience, in which individuals are constantly searching for connection and meaning in a world that can feel overwhelmingly chaotic and uncertain.

The novel also explores the concept of responsibility, which is a central concern of existentialist philosophy. As the boys struggle to survive on the island, they are forced to confront the consequences of their actions and decisions. They are confronted with the reality of their own mortality and the fragility of human life. This confrontation with responsibility underscores the existentialist idea that individuals must take responsibility for their own lives and the world around them. The novel suggests that there are no easy answers or clear solutions to the challenges of the human experience, but rather a constant need to confront difficult truths and make difficult choices.

The novel's exploration of the role of leadership and authority also speaks to the existentialist idea of the struggle for autonomy and self-determination. The boys are forced to navigate the complex dynamics of power and influence, as different individuals vie for control and authority. This struggle highlights the tension between individual autonomy and the need for collective leadership and decision-making. The novel suggests that the human experience is characterized by a constant tension between the desire for freedom and self-determination and the need for structure and order.

Furthermore, the novel's examination of the relationship between reason and emotion is a central concern of existentialist philosophy. The boys are forced to navigate the complex interplay of reason and emotion as they struggle to survive on the island. The novel suggests that human beings are not purely rational creatures, but rather complex beings whose decisions and actions are influenced by a wide range of factors, including emotion, intuition, and desire.

Finally, the novel's exploration of the nature of evil speaks to the existentialist concern with the fundamental nature of humanity. The boys' descent into savagery and violence highlights the potential for evil that exists within all human beings. This exploration of the darker aspects of human nature underscores the existentialist idea that individuals must confront the darker aspects of their own psyche and take responsibility for their own actions.

Another key aspect of the existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is the theme of identity. The novel explores the question of what it means to be human and to have a sense of self in a world that can be cruel and indifferent. The boys are forced to confront the fragility of their own identities as they struggle to survive on the island. The breakdown of societal norms and structures forces them to re-evaluate their own values and beliefs, and to confront the darker aspects of their own psyche.

The character of Ralph, in particular, embodies the struggle to maintain a sense of identity and purpose in a world that can be chaotic and uncertain. Throughout the novel, he struggles to maintain a sense of order and structure in the face of the boys' descent into savagery and violence. He is forced to confront the darker aspects of his own psyche, as he is drawn into the violence and chaos that surrounds him. However, despite the challenges he faces, he remains committed to the idea of civilization and the need for structure and order in human society.

In contrast, the character of Jack embodies the struggle for power and dominance that can undermine the sense of individual identity and purpose. He is driven by a desire for control and authority, and his actions are guided by a sense of personal ambition rather than a commitment to the common good. His descent into savagery highlights the potential for individual identity to be subsumed by the desire for power and control.

The novel also explores the theme of freedom and its relationship to individual identity. The boys are initially excited by the freedom that comes with being cut off from the structures of society, but they soon realize that this freedom comes at a cost. Without the constraints of civilization, they are forced to confront the darker aspects of their own psyche and to navigate the complex dynamics of power and influence. The novel suggests that true freedom requires a deep sense of responsibility and a commitment to the common good, and that without these qualities, freedom can become a destructive force.

Another key theme in the novel is the role of nature in shaping the human experience. The boys are forced to confront the power and unpredictability of the natural world, as they struggle to survive in a harsh and unforgiving environment. The island itself becomes a character in the novel, a force that shapes the boys' experiences and influences their behavior. The novel suggests that the natural world has a profound impact on the human experience, shaping our values and beliefs and influencing our sense of self.

Finally, the novel explores the theme of the search for meaning and purpose in a world that can feel chaotic and uncertain. The boys are forced to confront the fundamental questions of human existence, such as the meaning of life and the purpose of human society. The breakdown of societal norms and structures forces them to re-evaluate their own values and beliefs, and to search for a sense of meaning and purpose in a world that can feel overwhelming and chaotic.

One of the most significant aspects of the existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is the way in which it emphasizes the importance of individual responsibility. The boys are forced to confront the consequences of their actions in a way that makes it clear that each individual has a profound impact on the world around them. As the novel progresses, the boys' actions become increasingly violent and destructive, and they are forced to confront the harsh reality that their actions have real-world consequences.

The character of Simon embodies the idea of individual responsibility most strongly in the novel. Simon is the only character who truly understands the darkness that lurks within each of us, and he is the only one who recognizes that the true enemy on the island is not an external force, but rather the darkness within themselves. Simon's death at the hands of the other boys represents a profound failure of individual responsibility, and a stark reminder of the consequences that can arise when individuals fail to take responsibility for their actions.

The novel also explores the concept of leadership and authority, and the way in which these ideas are constructed and maintained within human societies. Throughout the novel, the struggle for power and control is a dominant theme, with characters like Jack and Ralph vying for authority and influence over the other boys. The novel suggests that the struggle for power is a fundamental aspect of human societies, and that the construction of authority is often contingent on the ability to maintain control over others.

However, the novel also suggests that leadership and authority are not solely a matter of brute force, and that individuals can exert influence over others through reason, persuasion, and moral authority. The character of Piggy embodies this idea, as he attempts to maintain a sense of order and rationality in the face of the other boys' descent into savagery. Piggy's glasses, which are used to start fires and signal for rescue, are a powerful symbol of the importance of reason and technology in maintaining a civilized society.

Another key theme in the novel is the tension between reason and emotion. The boys are forced to confront the complex interplay between these two forces, as they struggle to navigate the complex dynamics of power and influence on the island. Characters like Ralph and Piggy attempt to maintain a sense of rationality

and order, while characters like Jack and Roger are driven by their emotions and desires. The novel suggests that both reason and emotion are important aspects of the human experience, and that a balance between these two forces is necessary for a healthy and functional society.

The theme of the nature of evil is also a key aspect of the existential vision in “Lord of the Flies”. The novel suggests that evil is not a force that exists outside of ourselves, but rather something that exists within each of us. The boys are forced to confront the darkness within themselves, and to recognize that the true enemy on the island is not an external force, but rather the darkness within themselves. The novel suggests that the struggle against evil is an ongoing process, and that it requires a deep sense of self-awareness and a commitment to personal growth and development.

Finally, the novel explores the theme of the search for meaning and purpose in a world that can feel overwhelming and chaotic. The boys are forced to confront the fundamental questions of human existence, such as the meaning of life and the purpose of human society. The breakdown of societal norms and structures forces them to re-evaluate their own values and beliefs, and to search for a sense of meaning and purpose in a world that can feel overwhelming and chaotic.

That the human experience is a complex interplay between these various themes, and that the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves is a fundamental aspect of the human condition.

The existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” is ultimately a pessimistic one, as it suggests that the darkness within ourselves is a fundamental aspect of human nature, and that the struggle to maintain a sense of order and reason in the face of this darkness is a never-ending one. However, the novel also suggests that the human spirit is resilient and that individuals have the capacity to rise above their own base instincts and desires.

The character of Simon embodies this idea most strongly, as he is the only character who truly understands the darkness within each of us and the importance of individual responsibility. Simon’s death is a profound failure of this responsibility, but his vision of the true nature of the world lives on in the minds of the other characters, who are forced to confront their own darkness and to recognize the importance of reason, order, and moral authority in maintaining a functional society.

Overall, the existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” offers a powerful critique of the human condition, and a stark reminder of the importance of individual responsibility, reason, and moral authority in maintaining a functional society. The novel is a powerful exploration of the complex interplay between reason and emotion, leadership and authority, the nature of evil, and the search for meaning and purpose in a chaotic and unpredictable world. It is a timeless work of literature that continues to speak to readers today, offering a profound meditation on the human experience and the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves.

The existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” also touches on the idea of the individual versus the group. The boys on the island begin as a group, but as time goes on, they begin to split into smaller factions, with different beliefs and priorities. This split ultimately leads to violence and chaos, as the boys are unable to reconcile their differences and come to a shared understanding of the world.

This split is ultimately a reflection of the broader tension between the individual and the group that exists in society as a whole. On one hand, we are all part of a larger social and cultural framework, and our actions are shaped by the expectations and norms of the group. On the other hand, we are also individuals with our own unique desires, needs, and perspectives, and there is often a tension between our individual desires and the needs of the group.

The tension between the individual and the group is evident in the character of Ralph, who is chosen as the leader of the group early on in the novel. Ralph is initially able to maintain a sense of order and discipline

within the group, but as time goes on, he struggles to reconcile his own desires with the needs of the group. He becomes increasingly isolated and alienated, and ultimately loses control of the group entirely.

The character of Jack represents the other side of this tension, as he prioritizes his own desires and impulses over the needs of the group. Jack's descent into savagery and violence is a reflection of the danger of prioritizing the individual over the group, and the importance of maintaining a shared sense of purpose and responsibility.

The tension between the individual and the group is also reflected in the broader context of the novel, which is set against the backdrop of a world war. The boys on the island are part of a larger social and cultural framework, and their actions are shaped by the expectations and norms of the larger society. At the same time, they are also individuals with their own unique desires, needs, and perspectives, and there is often a tension between their individual desires and the needs of the group.

This tension is reflected in the conflict between Ralph and Jack, as well as the broader conflict between reason and emotion that runs throughout the novel. The struggle to reconcile the individual and the group, reason and emotion, and the desire for power with the need for responsibility and order is ultimately a reflection of the larger struggle to find meaning and purpose in a chaotic and unpredictable world.

The existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" also touches on the idea of the nature of evil. The novel suggests that evil is not an external force or entity, but rather an inherent aspect of human nature. The boys on the island are not inherently evil, but their actions are shaped by the darkness within themselves and the chaos and violence of their surroundings.

The character of Simon embodies this idea most strongly, as he is the only character who truly understands the darkness within each of us and the importance of individual responsibility. Simon's vision of the true nature of the world is ultimately a reminder of the importance of recognizing and confronting the darkness within ourselves, and the need for moral authority and responsibility in maintaining a functional society.

The existential vision in "Lord of the Flies" is ultimately a reflection of the human experience, and a reminder of the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves. The novel is a powerful exploration of the complex interplay between reason and emotion, leadership and authority, the nature of evil, and the search for meaning and purpose in a chaotic and unpredictable world.

It is a timeless work of literature that continues to speak to readers today, offering a profound meditation on the human experience and the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves. As such, it remains a classic of modern literature, and a powerful reminder of the importance of individual responsibility and the need for moral authority and leadership in maintaining a functional society.

In conclusion, William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" offers a powerful existential vision that explores the complexities of the human experience and the struggle to find meaning and purpose in a chaotic and unpredictable world. The novel touches on a wide range of existential themes, including the tension between reason and emotion, the individual versus the group, the nature of evil, and the search for meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves.

Through the characters of Ralph, Jack, and Simon, Golding offers a nuanced exploration of the human psyche and the importance of individual responsibility and leadership in maintaining a functional society. The novel remains a timeless work of literature, speaking to readers across generations and offering a profound meditation on the complexities of the human experience.

As we continue to navigate the complexities of the modern world, the existential vision of "Lord of the Flies" remains as relevant as ever, reminding us of the importance of recognizing the darkness within ourselves, and the need for moral authority, responsibility, and leadership in maintaining a functional society.

One of the most significant themes in “Lord of the Flies” is the idea that humans are inherently prone to violence and savagery. Golding portrays the boys as innocent and well-behaved at the beginning of the novel, but as they spend more time on the island, they become increasingly violent and cruel towards each other. The characters of Jack and his group, who become hunters and eventually killers, are particularly disturbing examples of how quickly humans can turn violent.

Golding’s depiction of the boys as inherently savage is a reflection of his views on human nature. He believed that humans are not inherently good, as some philosophers and thinkers have suggested, but rather are inherently flawed and prone to violence and savagery. The novel is a warning against the dangers of letting these tendencies go unchecked, as they can quickly spiral out of control and lead to chaos and destruction.

The novel also touches on the idea of power and the corrupting influence it can have on individuals. Jack’s desire for power over the other boys is a major driving force behind his descent into savagery, as he becomes increasingly ruthless and violent in his quest for dominance. The character of Ralph, on the other hand, struggles to maintain his own power and authority as leader of the group, leading to a power struggle between the two characters.

Golding’s exploration of power is particularly relevant in the context of the novel’s setting, which is against the backdrop of a world war. The war itself is a reflection of the corrupting influence of power, as the desire for power and dominance over others led to a devastating conflict that claimed millions of lives. The boys on the island are a microcosm of this larger struggle for power and dominance, and the novel is a powerful reminder of the dangers of allowing this struggle to go unchecked.

The theme of power is also related to the broader existential vision of the novel, as it touches on the idea of the individual versus the group. The struggle for power between Ralph and Jack is a reflection of the tension between individual desires and the needs of the group, and the importance of finding a balance between the two. The novel suggests that a functional society requires strong leadership and a shared sense of purpose and responsibility, as well as individual freedom and autonomy.

The existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” is a powerful reminder of the importance of individual responsibility and moral authority in maintaining a functional society. It touches on a wide range of existential themes, including the tension between reason and emotion, the individual versus the group, the nature of evil, and the search for meaning and purpose in a chaotic and unpredictable world.

The novel remains a timeless work of literature that continues to speak to readers today, offering a profound meditation on the human experience and the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves. As such, it remains a classic of modern literature, and a powerful reminder of the importance of recognizing the darkness within ourselves, and the need for moral authority, responsibility, and leadership in maintaining a functional society.

William Golding’s “Lord of the Flies” is a powerful exploration of the existential experience. The novel’s examination of the human psyche, relationships, and the absence of clear moral authority underscores the ways in which human beings are shaped by their circumstances and environment. The novel’s ultimately hopeful message suggests that, despite the challenges and uncertainties of the human experience, there is a certain beauty and resilience in the human spirit.

William Golding’s “Lord of the Flies” is a powerful exploration of the existential experience. The novel’s examination of the human psyche, relationships, freedom, the absurd, violence and aggression, identity, the limits of knowledge and perception, and the natural world underscores the complex nature of the human experience. The novel suggests that the human experience is defined by a constant struggle to find meaning and understanding in a world that is often unpredictable and uncertain. However, despite the challenges and difficulties of the human experience, the novel also suggests that there is a certain beauty and resilience in the human spirit, as the boys are able to adapt and find meaning in their shared struggle.

In conclusion, the existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” is a powerful exploration of the complex nature of the human experience. The novel’s examination of alienation, responsibility, leadership and authority, the interplay of reason and emotion, and the nature of evil underscores the existentialist concern with the fundamental nature of humanity. The novel suggests that the human experience is characterized by a constant struggle to find meaning and purpose in a world that can be chaotic and uncertain. Despite the challenges of the human experience, however, the novel also suggests that there is a certain resilience and beauty in the human spirit, as the boys are able to find connection and meaning in their shared struggle. Ultimately, “Lord of the Flies” offers a powerful meditation on the human experience, highlighting the complex interplay of individual psychology, social structures, and the wider forces of the natural world.

The existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” offers a powerful meditation on the complex nature of the human experience. The novel explores a range of themes, including alienation, responsibility, leadership and authority, reason and emotion, the nature of evil, identity, freedom, nature, and the search for meaning and purpose. The novel suggests that the human experience is characterized by a constant struggle to find meaning and purpose in a world that can be chaotic and uncertain, and that this struggle requires a deep sense of responsibility and a commitment to the common good. Ultimately, “Lord of the Flies” offers a powerful commentary on the human condition, highlighting the complexity and fragility of the human experience and the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and the world around them.

CONCLUSION

The existential vision in “Lord of the Flies” offers a powerful meditation on the complex nature of the human experience. The novel explores a range of themes, including individual responsibility, leadership and authority, reason and emotion, the nature of evil, and the search for meaning and purpose. The novel suggests that the human experience is a complex interplay between these various themes, and that the struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of the darkness within ourselves is a fundamental aspect of the human condition.

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