

Apollonian and Dionysian Forces in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*¹

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to study evil nature of men which is portrayed through the British school children in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The study further examines how it is important to balance Dionysian and Apollonian drive in order to maintain harmony in the society. Two driving forces of human being are identified by Nietzsche's terms Apollonian and Dionysian. The two concepts defined by Nietzsche have been used as theoretical tools to analyze the text. Jack ignores Apollonian drive because of his mob mentality. He does not like argument and reason made by Ralph and Piggy. He tries to arouse Dionysian drive in school children in order to collect force against Ralph. Irrational part of Jack's heart subverts the positive part of British school children's society. Dionysian drive transforms his heart into emotionless stuff. He kills his own friends. He enjoys gathering boys and misguiding them in the world of illusion. Golding describes the story of a tragic color through the portrayal of the evil in human nature. Two groups of British school going children represent two sides of heart or two parts of the society. The novel argues that proper harmony between two sides or groups leads society to proper direction.

Keywords: Apollonian, Dionysian, transformation

Introduction

The recognition of William Golding came some thirty years after he had published his first novel *Lord of the Flies* in 1954, which made him able to get the Nobel Prize in literature (Meuronen, 2013). He critically depicted the dark aspect of white people in the novel. White people were making discourse through colonization that they would be as perfect as god. They were

supposed to have born in the world in order to teach, rule and make people civilized. But Golding self-criticized the whites in the novel. The novelist lived through both World Wars and took active part in the second one. Golding was a naval officer in the Royal Navy and participated in the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck as well as in the invasion of Normandy (Meuronen, 2013). Since he retired from Navy, he chose writing

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profession. Impact of wars has been reflected in his novels, particularly in *Lord of the Flies*.

Zhu (2020) claimed that *Lord of the Flies* was an important text of British desert island literature (p. 285). He argued that Golding followed the desert island literary tradition, setting up an isolated desert island as the background of the story, with the British boys as the characters, following the inherent plot: the traditional trilogy model of desert island literature i.e. the characters floating on a desert island. This novel was rejected by several publishers and one literary agent. However, it published exploring pain, agony and confusion of persons or society. George and Raju (2015) posited Golding at that generation which had its roots in the post war period—a period of disillusionment and disenchantment (p. 174). It seemed that the experiences of Wars made Golding know how human beings had dark side in heart and so they are cruel to each other for the sake of power. He saw barbarism even in so called civilized society. This novel was highly popular among school children. Thread of World Wars and possibility of barbaric system have been pointed out in the novel (Wilson, 2014). The theme of the novel has been connected with Nietzsche's concepts of Apollonian and Dionysian forces that lie within human beings.

Friedrich Nietzsche has distinguished two drives Apollonian and Dionysian as driving forces of human being. Drawing from

Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, and Jung also studied driving forces. The Id belongs in our unconscious, and carries our primal desires that need to be subdued by the supervening ego, in order to allow for the rational superego, which helps create society's functional, moral human beings, to truly flourish. According to Freud, if Id overcomes the Ego, the people are prone to do mistake (ch. 2). In other words, to live a fulfilling life, the proposed beliefs by Freud and Nietzsche, respectively, the Id needs to be repressed by the superego, while Dionysus has to coexist in harmony with Apollo. British School going students are used in the novel to portray two sides of human heart which help to develop two groups of people in the society. When they landed on an island, everything was fine. There was harmony among them, but with the course of time, they were divided into two groups. The novel deals with the causes of conflict between two groups of school children. The novelist tries to show dark aspect of human heart in the novel which leads society to destruction and chaos.

Review of Literature

The novel *Lord of the Flies* depicts the psyche of adults through the example of small school boys. It has examined how humans are guided by power seeking tendency. Different scholars have analyzed the novel through different perspectives. Giri (2019) studied that the school going boys soon fell away from civilization into barbarism and a loyalty into the devil. When

boys landed in a strange island, they seemed to be innocent. They struggled a lot to exist in the island. They learnt to hunt in order to manage food for their survival. With the course of time, they realized that they needed a leader to guide them. They chose Ralph as a leader to govern in the new society. Their tasks were divided into different groups. They worked following their routine with team-spirit. However, they soon began to lose interest working in team. Giri pointed out how Ralph was hunted by Jack's group across the island; and later Jack set fire to smoke Ralph out of it; somehow Ralph managed to escape. Giri claimed that all the seven deadly sins— lust, pride, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, anger and envy— were present in the island world.

Although Ralph was a democratic man, Jack and his followers destroyed Ralph's conch and tried to kill him. Jack's followers were not ready to listen to anyone except Jack. They were hypnotized (Spitz, 1970). Piggy grabbed a conch and handed over it to the Ralph. Conch was the symbol of order and authority. Although Piggy was intelligent, he became ready to accept Ralph as leader because he had good looking personality. Ralph was supposed to blow that conch and other kids would gather in the island by hearing the sound of the conch (Martin, 1969). There was the conflict between these two from the very beginning of the novel.

Singh (1997) pointed out that only the world of men had been dealt with in the novel but not the world of women. She claimed that the nature of male was always power seeking. Animalistic features of men have been explored in the novel. The school going kids were ready to kill their friends in the name of gaining power. Disagreements, misunderstanding and conflict split the students apart like; Jack leads a group of boys who enjoyed being guided by emotion, whereas Ralph led a group of boys who gave more priority to reason over feelings (George & Raju, 2015). Actually, Jack wanted to be the chief of his group, but Ralph was elected as the chief. So, Jack developed jealousy towards Ralph. He kept on making plots to hurt Ralph.

Kruger (1999) claimed that most of the characters of the novel had symbolic meaning associated with Christian myth. Lord of the flies was the symbol of devil. It was believed that the evil force wanted the boys to be anarchist, wild and violent. The majority of readers understood that the downfall of civilization was a result of the inherent evil nature of man alone (Ebeling, 2018). He further concluded that economy and social environment could play important role in shaping the children's way of thinking and way of behavior. These ways, the novel has been analyzed from different perspectives. However, driving forces of characters in the novel have not been studied yet. So, I want to study two driving forces

namely Apollonian and Dionysian used in the novel and their effects on the characters.

Methods

It is a qualitative research based on secondary data. This methodology helps collect qualitative information (Cohen et al., 2007). The secondary data were obtained through online library, research articles, books and website in order to study how Dionysian drive changes people into barbaric beings. Nietzsche's concepts of Dionysian and Apollonian have been used as theoretical tool to study two internal driving forces of British school going children. The ancient Greek people concluded that the outcome of tragedy was a struggle between two forces, principles, or drives. Nietzsche named each of these principles after an ancient Greek deity "Apollo" and "Dionysus" (chap. xi). Apollo embodies drive towards perfection, self-control, morality, ethics, and dignity; while Dionysiac is the drive towards destruction, disorder, and pleasure-seeking tendency. Nietzsche argued that although they are opposite to each other, there is a need of proper coexistence of them for positive vibes in the society. Dominance of Jack over Ralph has been described in this paper as the dominance of Dionysian force over the Apollonian one. The paper analyzes how the novel depicts such imbalance of two driving forces causing disorder in the society.

Discussion

Two Natures of Human Beings

Ralph and Jack were guided by two different driving forces, namely Apollonian and Dionysian, in the novel *Lord of the Flies*. Therefore, they had quite different nature and way of understanding the world. When they arrived in the island, everyone seemed to have mutual understanding. They struggled a lot in order to exist in the island. They searched food together and tried to solve any kind of problems they encounter in the island. But later on, their driving forces changed their behavior. We human being have both devil and angel character which needed to be balanced in order to run society smoothly. George and Raju (2015) argued that the confrontation between the representation of order and the forces of chaos took place when Ralph, accompanied by Piggy and the twins, Samneric, visited the castle rock, the stronghold of Jack.

Piggy was the most intelligent boy in the group. Although he was physically weak in comparison to other kids, he had very sharp mind. He should have been the leader but he understood his condition and identity in the children's society. He gave the conch to Ralph and appealed him to rule them. "He laid the conch against his lips, took a deep breath and blew once more. . . . blare more penetrating than before. Piggy was shouting something, his face pleased, his glasses flashing" (Golding, 1954, p. 10). The handover of conch to Ralph symbolized the

group accepting him as the ruler in school going children's society. Ralph was given authority to rule that society. He had rights to gather kids blowing the conch. Piggy, Ralph and twin brothers were driven by Apollonian forces. So, they believed in argument and democratic process; whereas, Jack and his team believed in violence. Jack represented evil and dark side of human nature; whereas, Ralph stood for reason. Jack enjoyed hurting others and killing animals. The Dionysiac force was the drive towards the transgression of limits, the dissolution of boundaries, and the destruction of individuality (Nietzsche, ch. xi). Jack became excited in making group and challenging the system made in Ralph's leadership.

According to Greek and Roman myths, Dionysus was the god of wine and ritual madness. Dionysian force thus represented ecstasy, pleasure, dance and alcohol; whereas, Apollonian stood for dream and reason. Jack was often driven by Dionysian force who enjoyed killing animals and creating chaos in the society; whereas, Ralph guided by Apollonian driving force believed in reason and argument. Jack and his boys wanted to control the island using physical forces; whereas, Ralph and his team believed in democratic process. Jack and his boys broke down the fragile shell given to Ralph. They believed that they could control other boys making them fearful. The narrator describes the scene:

He snatched his knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy. He looked round fiercely, daring them to contradict. Then they broke out into the sunlight and for a while they were busy finding and devouring food as they moved down the scar toward the platform and the meeting. (p. 23)

Roger, Jack's henchman, let fall a huge rock which strikes hard and drives Piggy to his violent death with the talisman in his hands exploding into pieces. The evil of Roger was incomprehensible, in part because he was a vague character, about whose background the novel described virtually nothing. But Golding seems to have been determined that human beings should confront the Roger within them. There was no escape from the pain of being human, no prospect of erecting unrealistic political systems where all would go well. The readers had very unpleasant feeling that they were being hunted by Jack and Roger. The readers feared and loathed their extravagance and insatiable evil.

The conflict between peaceful, civilized cum violent and dictatorship has gone on all over the novel. The group battling nature of human beings has been explored in the novel. Physical appearance was not cause of conflict. Ralph was physically attractive; whereas, piggy was not so. However, they were good friends to each other because both

of them were guided by Apollonian force. On the other hand, Jack was physically attractive like Ralph but they were always opposite to each other. Jack was guided by Dionysian force that reflected ugly inside of Jack. Ralph was governed by Apollonian force which made him a good leader. Some lines of the novel reflected Jack's driving forces: "Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (p. 135). Now out of the terror rose another desire, thick, urgent, blind. "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (p. 136). The above lines clearly depict dark side of Jack. Jack represented the entire white people who were colonizing the world in the name of civilization. Golding seems to have been pointing out dark side of his community, particularly the white community. The Apollonian culture represents humanity's tendency toward order, pattern, and rationalism, while the Dionysian culture represents humanity's simultaneous urge toward chaos and emotional intuition. The novel showed it through Jack and Ralph as characters.

Nietzsche argued that Apollonian festivals were closer to Greek god of music. The muses of the arts of semblance grew pale and wane when faced with an art which in its intoxication spoke the truth and wisdom; whereas, Dionysiac festival associated with its more seductive, magical and pleasure-seeking tendency (p. 27). Jack enjoyed drinking and dancing instead of talking about reason and logic. Jack spoke:

"Give me a drink." Henry brought him a shell and he drank, watching Piggy and lord of the flies. . . . Power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape. (Golding, 1954, p. 133)

Ralph seriously made plan to come out of the situation they had been but Jack did not feel his responsibility to support Ralph for solving the problem. He just wanted to dance and made other boys feel relax. Jack leapt on to the sand. "Do our dance! Come on! Dance!" (Golding, 1954, p. 135). These examples also show the opposite forces working within Jack and Ralph.

Knowledge kills action; action requires one to be shrouded in a veil of illusion. Ralph and Piggy's group was delay in every action. They always evaluated consequences of their action. But Jack did not have deeper knowledge and did not think about any consequences of his action. Like Hamlet, Ralph was delayed in action which sometimes caused tragedy in life. Ralph warned everybody to be alert because they were in new island. They had to find out right way out from the island. In the beginning, he could control the mass and deliver his speech: "We're on an island. We've been on the mountain top and seen water all round. We saw no houses, no smoke, no footprints, no boats, no people. We're on an uninhabited island with no other people on it" (p. 24). Ralph seemed to have been more helpful and

a better team leader than Jack. However, he lacked quality to control mass for long time. The boys left his group and joined into Jack's team. The following scene from *Lord of the Flies* further highlighted their differences in nature:

The space under the palm trees was full of noise and movement. Ralph was on his feet too, shouting for quiet, but no one heard him. All at once the crowd swayed toward the island and was gone— following Jack. Even the tiny children went and did their best among the leaves and broken branches. Ralph was left, holding the conch, with no one but Piggy. (p. 30)

This scene showed how Dionysian forces get victory over the Apollonian one.

Jealousy of Jack

Rivalry between Jack and Ralph began since Ralph was elected as the leader of the team. The school children followed democratic process in selecting their leader. All of them used their reason choosing Ralph as their leader, but Jack was too jealous in Ralph's progress. The following scene described Jack's jealousy:

This toy of voting was almost as pleasing as the conch. Jack started to protest but the clamor changed from the general wish for a chief to an election by acclaim of Ralph himself. None of the boys could have found good reason for this; what intelligence had been shown was

traceable to Piggy while the most obvious leader was Jack. But there was stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch. (Golding, 1954, p. 80)

The intelligent boy, Piggy was clever enough to make Ralph the leader of their group.

Actually, Piggy did not like Jack and his group. They didn't respect him. They always insulted him. They often physically exploited him and they even broke down Piggy's eye glasses. Jack was Dionysian man who had double nature as Nietzsche explained both "cruel, savage demon and mild, gentle ruler" (p. 52). Nietzsche pointed out that "Dionysiac drive arouses anger, feeling of hatred and pleasure-seeking tendency" (p. 27). Jack had these qualities. Jack called them back to the center and at him. "Frightened?" "Course I'm frightened. Who wouldn't be?" He turned to the twins, yearning but hopeless. "I suppose you aren't pulling our legs?" (Golding, 1954, p. 88). Jack's dominating nature is the next proof of his Dionysian nature.

Jack stood up as with the bloodied knife in his hand. The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense. Jack transferred the knife to his left hand and smudged blood over his

forehead as he pushed down the plastered hair. Jack believed in physical force. The savage boys were ready to do anything for Jack's sake. At the end, Ralph runs through jungle fleeing Jack and his uncivilized boys. The novel showed how Jack was irrational and Ralph was argumentative. Jack was mostly driven by Dionysian force so he believed in chaos; whereas, Ralph was driven by Apollonian force so he believed in logic. The novel showed conflict of two driving forces in the novel. If there were proper marriage between two forces, society would go ahead in proper direction.

Conclusion

Jack and Ralph are two major characters of the novel. They represent two sides of human heart. Belief systems of Jack and Ralph have been determined by their driving forces. Jack is driven by Dionysian force; so, he believes in violence. On the other hand, Ralph is driven by Apollonian force; so, he is more democratic. However, Ralph seems to be weaker than Jack. Therefore, system fails in the children's society. The novel depicts how people like Jack dominate the society and how people

like Ralph are dominated in the society. When society is dominated by Dionysian men, chaos and disorder prevail there. People guided by Dionysian drive often ignore their responsibility in maintaining harmony in the society. The conflict between two groups of school going boys led by Jack and Ralph is an example of conflict between two driving forces. Jack and his friends are dominated by Dionysian driving forces while Ralph and Piggy are guided by Apollonian force.

Piggy and Ralph use their creative mind to run life in the island. Piggy makes Ralph know how other boys can be invited by blowing conch even if they are far from each other. They further make plan to light fire so that other rescue team can come to help them having seen smoke in the sky. But Jack slowly and gradually became brutal. He always goes against the system and misguides other boys as well. He becomes so cruel that he enjoys killing his own friends. He cannot suppress his Dionysian drive and flourish Apollonian drive. If he could balance his two driving forces, he would be true leader and establish system in British school children's society.

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