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Lord of the Flies unit test

Question picked: 1

Freud’s beliefs about human nature is very pessimistic. He states that humans do not possess kindness naturally and can only cooperate at the expense of a scapegoat. He states that due to the inherent selfishness that people possess, “civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration”, citing the feudal nature and constant conflict of Europe. This summarizes his beliefs into a few main points being, aggression is innate and not caused, society actively works to keep human’s from dividing, there is a constant struggle between these forces of “eros and death”. Freud holds radically different beliefs than the romantics such as Rousseau, criticizing the idea of the communism, saying that property is not the only contributor to human cruelty. This stems from the fundamentally differing view on human nature that the two groups possess. Romantic thinkers, believing that the human’s in their undisturbed state are guided by compassion, surely conclude that by restoring this natural state we can attain the same level of compassion. While Freud, differing in his opinion, holds a different premise. Ones which lead to the logical conclusion of society’s role in protecting us from our own savage nature. These are beliefs which Golding echoes in his novel.

Golding’s entire story follows Freud very closely, with ideas very clearly intended to refute thinker’s like Rousseau. Starting out on a paradise untouched by man, it is made obvious that the island parallels a natural state away form society. As time passes, the story takes a turn away from Rousseau and shows how swiftly this paradise is destroyed. Golding demonstrates how mankind, away from the restraining forces of civilization, descends into conflict and death. Particularly exemplary of this idea is the character of roger. Starting out as a withdrawn and shy boy, he quickly reveals his sadistic tendencies. It is gradual at first, throwing stones around a small child, not intending to hurt, but soon it escalates into torture and slaughter. This behavior, enabled by the lack of an authority, is not unique to him. Less dramatically and perhaps slightly counterintuitively, Jack’s gradual development into a primitive blood thirsty animal, is motivated by the desire to establish a society. One under his rule. This does not contradict Freud’s Idea as it may first seem at face value as, his society is only maintained though the fear of an external “beast”. This scapegoating is the only reason a society was successfully established and maintained. The desire for Jack to establish a society can be explained as the desire to “exploit [their] capacity for work without [their] consent”, or more simply, to gain power.

With Golding and Freud’s thinking, thoroughly explored, this give the ability to compare them to more modern philosophies about human nature and the results of several experiments on the subject. Showing seemingly contradictory results are two events that model, the premise of Golding’s book to a certain extent. One, an accident where a group of boys, became stranded on an Island for more than a year, showed how the boys cooperate excellently and were able to weather the greatest difficulties to support each other. The other, an experiment conducted by Stanford Professor Phillip Zimbardo, showed seemingly normal people become sadistic monsters when given the opportunity to rule over another group. The volunteers were split into two groups. The first group, the guards were given control over the second, the prisoners. They were instructed to simulate a prison for two weeks. The key different here is humanization. One can observe how the island boys “made a pact never to quarrel” and developed a very deep and meaningful bond, while the prisoners in the experiment(the group of volunteers chosen to act as prisoners) were “stripped naked, deloused, had all their personal possessions removed and locked away, and were only given prison clothes and bedding”. The boys viewed each other as human, and thus felt an obligation to treat each other as such. The experiment prison guards were told to dehumanize the prisoners and thus, stopped thinking of them as human. This is echoed in Golding’s novel when Jack puts on his mask allowing for cruel and heartless acts. The baseline is that it is never as simple as human nature being good and evil, the behavior being displayed is highly dependent on the situation.