

Eco-ethical Consciousness in the Desert Island Novel

Lord of the Flies

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Taking *Lord of the Flies*, a classic of desert island novels, as an example, the thesis aims to explore the ecological and ethical wholeness of man and nature implied in the work, and how the ecological and ethical imbalance between man and nature will inevitably lead to the imbalance of human spiritual ecology, highlighting the writer's deep ecological and ethical concern.

Keywords: *Lord of the Flies*, Golding, ecologic, ethic

Introduction

The contemporary British novelist Golding is known for his profound insights into human nature, and in 1983, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his masterpiece *Lord of the Flies*. The novel has been translated into more than 30 languages, reprinted nearly 40 times, and has been made into a movie twice.

Lord of the Flies tells the story of a group of children who accidentally arrive on a deserted island, and when they first arrive on the deserted island, they can still rely on the rules of civilized society to work together but later they destroy the original paradise environment at will, and then a brutal factional struggle breaks out, and in order to chase power, the children are forced to fight each other. The novel cleverly explores the serious theme of the eco-ethical relationship between man and nature, man and society, and man and himself through the mindset and behavior of a young and innocent child.

Since its release, the novel has been highly praised by global critics who have interpreted it from different critical perspectives. In her article "William Golding and *Lord of the Flies*", Luo Shaodan (1984) analyzed the evil of human nature. Yu (1996) analyzed from a feminist perspective that "men are more likely to reveal their nature in a purely male world where women are absent, and this is an important reason for the absence of women in *Lord of the Flies*" (p. 32). The Chinese scholar Lu Shuyuan more comprehensively divides the gist of ecocriticism into three levels: natural ecology, social ecology, and spiritual ecology (2000, p. 146). Few articles have so far analyzed the ecological ethical and moral concerns that authors embody in their novels. Eco-ethics is an ethics about the relationship between human beings and nature, which emerged after the 1970s as a result of society's deep reflection on global ecological problems. Eco-ethics requires humans to extend their moral concern from interpersonal interests to non-human beings or the natural environment, so that the relationship between humans and nature is given true moral meaning and moral value (Tian, 2015, p. 225). This thesis will explore the

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ecological ethical wholeness of man and nature implied in the work from the perspective of ecological ethics and the fact that the ecological ethical imbalance between humans and nature inevitably leads to the imbalance of human spiritual ecology, highlighting the writer's deep concern for ecological ethics.

The Ecological Wholeness of Human and Nature

Modern western ethics insists on anthropocentric values, opposing human and nature, considering nature as "other", believing that man can legislate for nature, and emphasizing the rationality and legitimacy of man's conquest of nature. Man must conquer, rule, and dominate nature for his own existence and for social and economic development. Golding opposes this view of man in opposition to nature, respects the intrinsic value of nature, and has a strong sense of ecological ethics.

Golding respects the intrinsic value of nature and identifies with the ecological wholeness of man and nature. In the novel, Golding places the fate of the children who are stranded on the island into an organic whole in which man and nature are intertwined. Nine of the 12 chapters of the novel are named after natural objects, natural phenomena, and the interaction between man and nature—"The Sound of the Shell", "Fire on the Mountain", "Huts from Water", and "Beast From Air". Moreover, Golding believes that the richness and diversity of life forms are intrinsically valuable and that natural beings are not alien forces to human beings, but their companions. Before the arrival of the children, the ecosystem on the island functioned organically in a self-organizing mode, not only creating a variety of forms of life, but also making it possible for these beings to flourish and reproduce. Golding, in the words of Ralph, exclaims that "a place that existed in the imagination but was never fully realized has finally leaped into a living reality here" (2015, p. 11). The wild fruits readily available on the island, the firewood at hand, the lingering beaches, the conchs that gather the children.

The novel concludes by pointing out that man's self-centered destructive behavior toward nature can also bring disaster to man himself. "What a fool! What a fool! The fire must have reached the wild fruit groves—what will they eat tomorrow?" (Golding, 2015, p. 279) Golding's perception of the ecological wholeness between man and nature is not only a philosophical level of reflection but also a reflection on the moral relationship between man and nature-based on modernity, reflecting his deep concern for ecological ethics.

The Imbalance of Human Spiritual Ecology

In order to survive, people began to compete with each other, and the relationship between human beings became tenser. As a result, the spiritual life of individuals was inevitably suppressed, which in turn led to the alienation of the human spiritual dimension and the eventual collapse of human civilization. Anthropocentrism and infinite expansion of human desires, like a pair of demons that always go hand in hand, not only directly lead to a serious ecological crisis of nature, but also spread the ecological crisis among people, classes, races, nations, and cultures and religions, thus leading to the imbalance of the whole social ecology.

In the novel *Lord of the Flies*, the children's destruction of the natural ecology on the desert island directly leads to the alienation of human relationships. The desire for power and domination leads the children from civilization to savagery, from unity to division, and from harmony to fratricide, and all this quickly leads to the imbalance of the social ecology on the desert island, and ultimately to the degradation of humanity and the alienation of the human spirit. As they are separated from the constraints of modern civilization and morality, they begin to pursue instinct and absolute freedom, and eventually degenerate themselves and lose their

rationality, degenerating into savages. They are hostile to each other, destroying each other and killing each other. Jack's growing desire for power led everyone to wage war with paint on their faces, the last line of civilization was broken, and they finally got rid of the sense of shame and self-consciousness, bloodthirsty, brutal beast gradually emerged. The loss of humanity and the loss of ethics and morals have completely alienated these children into animals.

Here, the writer Golding's eco-ethical view is clear: The perversion of human nature deepens the disharmony of natural and social ecology, while the alienation of civilization and the destruction of order will eventually lead to the destruction of human beings themselves. Only by returning to nature, integrating into nature, and respecting nature can we finally return to harmony with nature and restore balance to our imbalanced ecology.

Golding's Ethical Thoughts

Golding lived at a time when faith was in full crisis in the 20th century. The two world wars that broke out between different countries, nations, and parties were so long-lasting and devastating that they left serious wounds on humanity, while World War II caused profound harm especially in spirituality and faith, and the modern war made people more clearly aware of the fragility of life.

Lord of the Flies was published at a time when the Cold War was raging between East and West, and the shadow of nuclear war was looming over the world, with people fearing that the eventual detonation of nuclear power would lead to the ecological tragedy of human extinction. In order to satisfy their material desires, greedy human beings exploited and exploited nature without restraint, by any means and without any consequences, resulting in the destruction of the structure and function of ecosystems in many regions of the world, thus threatening the survival and development of human beings. The industrial revolution, especially the century after the second industrial revolution, was characterized by rapid economic development, a world population boom, frequent wars and turmoil, and unrest, and man's unrestrained demand for natural resources, leading to various ecological imbalances such as degradation of forests and grasslands, increased soil erosion, increased land desertification, depletion and pollution of freshwater resources, serious deterioration of the atmosphere, and frequent geological disasters and extreme weather.

The brutal World War II and the economic crisis of capitalist society made Golding deeply aware of the great disaster brought to mankind by the "evil" of human nature, but he did not become pessimistic and miserable. Golding still believes that the evil nature of human beings can be improved by civilized means. Golding aims to advocate goodness and morality in human society through his representation of *Lord of the Flies'* human nature of evil. At the end of the essay, a naval battleship discovers the fires on the island and quickly comes to the rescue of the children, implying that human beings can survive and continue, rational civilization can be restored, an orderly society can be rebuilt, and ecological ethics can be returned.

Conclusion

The uncontrolled exploitation and seizure of nature by human beings have brought terrible negative effects, such as the gradual disappearance of forests, serious soil erosion, climate warming, and the hidden danger of nuclear energy use, and human beings have begun to face many environmental and ecological crises. This paper explores the rational connotation of *Lord of the Flies* from the perspective of ecological ethics, revealing to people that the anthropocentric ecological view of attempting to conquer and dominate nature will definitely lead to the

imbalance of natural ecology, eventually resulting in a sick social ecological form and a deformed spiritual ecology, and making human beings eat their own evil consequences. We must think rationally in terms of the overall interests of the ecosystem, re-examine the relationship between human beings and nature, and restrain our behavior.

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