

Lord of the flies anthropology

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Thomas Hobbes was one of the most controversial philosophers of all time. He argued that the, " Life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 77). Clearly he didn't think that humanity was a good group of beings. In the Lord of the Flies by William Golding, one character, Jack Merridew, displays many characteristics of Hobbes' philosophy on man. Time after time, Golding subtly refers to Hobbes' philosophy through Jack and his reactions with other characters in the book. After Golding introduces the boys, they want to elect a chief, and already, Golding is using Hobbes' anthropology.

In Hobbes' Leviathan, he states, " And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies" (Hobbes 76). The two main contenders for the chief position are Ralph and Jack. Jack fervently believes that he should be chief, and he says, "'I ought to be chief,' said Jack with simple arrogance, 'because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp'" (Golding 15). Fortunately, Ralph is elected chief, and Jack is disappointed. This simple election creates the dispute between the two boys for the whole book.

Ralph and Jack cannot share the position, and both cannot enjoy it, so Jack begins to have an aversion to Ralph. Hobbes' philosophy basically predicted that this would occur. They both wanted a thing, leadership, and one got it, making them both enemies. This enmity that Jack has eventually pushes him to the point of wanting to kill Ralph in order to lead the island without opposition. This craving for murder also demonstrates another philosophical point by Hobbes. Far later in the book, Jack's relations with Ralph once again clearly display one of Hobbes' points.

In Leviathan, Hobbes writes, " In all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are... in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another" (76). After Jack splits from the tribe in order to make a new one, he immediately sees the other tribe as a threat. He even literally has his weapons pointed at Ralph in one scene specifically, in which the two leaders are dueling. The narrator narrates, " Jack made a rush and stabbed at Ralph's chest with spear. Ralph sensed the position of the weapon from the glimpse he caught of Jack's arm and put the hrust aside with his own butt" (Golding 159). Even though Hobbes may have intended this to be figurative without the actual leaders fighting, but their armies doing their work, this seems to fit the same kind of description. Hobbes really means that kings, or in this case chiefs, are always looking to fight each other, always ready for battle, always looking to rid themselves of their opponents. In the same way, Jack is always looking to fight Ralph, always ready for battle against Ralph, always looking to rid himself of Ralph. Golding ultimately connects Jack to Hobbes through Jack's lack of mercy and justice.

An unknown author composed a summary of Hobbes' argument pertaining to this subject, and wrote " The state of nature... was founded upon a savage egoism which drove man to seek a maximum of pleasure without hindrance from a norm of justice or mercy toward other men. Every man was continually engaged in war against all other men" (Paragraph 9). Throughout the book, Jack fastidiously tries to not offer mercy or due justice to people. In one instance, Ralph pleads for mercy upon the twins, Sam and Eric. The narrator says, "'Grab them! ' No one moved. Jack shouted angrily. I said '

grab them!’ ‘ Their spears were taken from them. ‘ Tie them up! ‘ Ralph cried out hopelessly against the black and green mask. ‘ Jack! ’” (Golding 161). The key word of this scene is “ hopelessly. ” This simple word makes Ralph’s plea seem impossible; henceforth, Jack is not giving mercy at any cost. Jack wants the twins to leave Ralph and join his tribe. This essentially gives him pleasure because he knows that Ralph is hopeless. Whatever plea Ralph makes will not be granted because it will hinder his pleasure. Justice will not be served because it will hinder his pleasure.

Mercy will not be served because it will hinder his pleasure. Hobbes directly says that people will not give justice or mercy when it will hinder his own pleasure. For Jack, to offer mercy is to rid himself of pleasure; therefore, he will not give the mercy according to Hobbes’ philosophy. Golding clearly thought of Hobbes’ philosophy when he was contriving Jack. Jack displays almost all of the qualities that a human being should display according to Hobbes. First, his enmity toward Ralph is solely based on a thing that he can’t have, which is what Hobbes predicted would happen.

Second, he and Ralph, because they are both opposing leaders, have weapons pointed at each other, symbolizing how opposing leaders always quarrel with each other according to Hobbes. Third, his lack of mercy and justice for those who deserve it is nonexistent because it will hinder his pleasure according to Hobbes. In conclusion, in almost every act that Jack does, he relates back to Hobbes’ philosophy pertaining to human nature.

Works Cited “ The Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. ” 1998. The Radical Academy. 15 March 2010. < [http://www. radicalacademy. com/philthomashobbes. htm](http://www.radicalacademy.com/philthomashobbes.htm)>.

<https://assignbuster.com/lord-of-the-flies-anthropology/>

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. TheHarvardClassics. 1904-14.

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