



How Does Human Evil Thrive

A Comparative Study of *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* from the Perspective of Psychoanalytic Criticism

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Abstract. *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* are two seminal works of post-World War II that explore totalitarianism and human evil. While previous studies explore these themes respectively, few employ psychoanalytic criticism to analyze them together. To fill this gap and find their common concerns, this paper uses Freud's personality theory to analyze the evolution of the main characters' personalities. Specifically, we explore how their id, ego, and superego interact and change over time. We examine the authors' insights towards dual pursuit of materialism and power and characters' alienation to different species. This paper highlights the complexities of human nature and the importance of confronting the destructive forces from a new perspective.

Keywords: Human Evil · Psychoanalytic Criticism · Personality Theory

1 Introduction

World War II had a tremendous impact on the western world and nurtured many novels that explored war, totalitarianism, and human nature. Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are profound representatives among them. Although the writing style, narrative structure, and themes are not identical, these two books share a common deep concern for human nature. By comparing them, we can gain insight into the psychological shifts experienced by individuals after the war, shedding light on the complex nature of humanity.

Orwell and Golding, two prominent British writers of the 20th century, lived through and participated in World War II. Orwell stayed in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma and later fought in the Spanish Civil War. During the war, he worked as a propagandist for the BBC to boost British morale and counter enemy propaganda. Golding served in the Royal Navy and experienced intense combat in the English Channel. They witnessed the formation of totalitarianism, the destruction of civilization, and the violence of war, which influenced the themes exhibited in their compositions. As a result, they were keenly aware of the most profound depths of human depravity growing in particular situations. In order to soothe people's vulnerable hearts, they chose to reveal this truth in the form of an allegory.

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Animal Farm is a fable that tells the story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human owner and establish a socialist society, but as some of the pigs become corrupt and authoritarian, the society turns into a dictatorship. *Lord of the Flies* depicts the plight of a group of British boys who become stranded on a tropical island devoid of adult supervision. Initially, they endeavor to establish a social order similar to the civilized society they left behind. However, as time elapses, their civility deteriorates into barbarism and violence.

Animal Farm and *Lord of the Flies* both explore themes related to power, corruption, and the darker aspects of human nature. They serve as cautionary tales about the consequences of unchecked power and the potential for corruption inherent in human societies.

1.1 Literature Review

The west has regarded *Animal Farm* as a dystopian political allegory after its publication. Orwell also affirmed its dual purpose, saying: “*Animal Farm* was the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.(Orwell, 1969). [11]” The dominant western perspective is centered on political allegory, totalitarianism, anti-utopia, revolution, patriarchy, and the language arts surrounding these themes. Chinese studies also focus on these themes, roughly divided into two main features: political thought and literary art. Nie Sumin (2004) [10] classifies “The political nature of the novel is mainly manifested in its opposition to totalitarianism and anti-utopianism, while its literary and artistic nature is reflected in the fusion of fiction and reality, the combination of depth and intuition, and the subtle depiction.” However, limited previous studies have examined from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Lord of the Flies has garnered significant attention since its release. Golding stated, “The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief.(Friedman, 2008) [8].” L.L. Dickson (1990) [5], for the first time, analyzed the revelation of human evil in it from the personality theory and explored the novel from allegory and symbolism. Western scholarship has approached *Lord of the Flies* from a variety of perspectives, including semiotics, colonialism, psychology, mythology, and archetypal criticism, all seeking to address the central issue of the revelation of human evil. From the 1980s, Chinese studies continued to center on this theme. These studies explored it from philosophy, narrative structure, feminism, and ethics.

In terms of comparative literature, scholars often compare *Animal Farm* with *1984* and *Brave New World*, to explore themes of power and desire. Peter Edgerly (2009) [6] views *1984* as a continuation of *Animal Farm*, argues that “Orwell may be said to stand on its head, replacing Our Freud’s sex drive with Big Brother’s lust for power.” As for *Lord of the Flies*, there are more comparative works including *Heart of Darkness*, *The Inheritors*, and Huxley’s works, continuing to explore human nature. S. J. BOYD (2008) [2] believes that “The overall picture of man’s nature which emerges from *Lord of the Flies* is indeed similar to the one we find in *Heart of Darkness*.” Some argue that “Yet Golding’s attack on English constructions of national identity in opposition to Nazism is obstructed by the fabular and hence indirect form of critique in both *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* (Paul Crawford, 2008) [4].” James Baker (2000) [1] compares *Lord*

of *the Flies* with other works by Huxley to explore the procession of evil. Although both novels touch on themes of human nature and have been compared to Huxley's works, few have put them together and explored their common themes.

To sum up, previous studies of *Lord of the Flies* have mainly focused on exploring human evil. *Animal Farm* has been viewed as a political allegory for a long time, while the characters are rarely analyzed using a psychological approach. *Animal Farm* appears to talk about animals, but in fact, it is a powerful allegorical attack on human society (Valerie, 1991) [9]. Thus, we promote animals as human beings to analyze their behavior and personality. Considering the appropriate application of psychoanalysis in *Lord of the Flies*, this paper applies Freud's personality theory by comparing and analyzing the development of the personality structure of the main characters in the two novels. This paper explores how the two novels reveal human evil by taking their post-war era historical background into consideration.

1.2 Introduction to the Theory

In Freudian psychology, "the structure of one's personality is seen as the result of a tripolar struggle between the external world, the Id, the ego, and the superego (James, 1964) [3]." Freud divided the mental activity processes into three mental regions: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id has no conscious component, does not possess rational order, follows the "pleasure principle", and strives to satisfy instinctual needs. The ego is the medium of reason, with the ability to regulate and control, representing constraint and prudence, governed by "reality principle". The superego is the moral examination medium, the conscience, and the self-esteem repository. It represents all moral constraints and embraces the impulse for perfection (Freud, 1960) [7]. The superego can exert control over the id's impulses either directly or through the ego, in order to suppress socially unacceptable desires for pleasure. The id wants to turn us into demons, and the superego tries to make us behave like angels, while only the ego can regulate these two opposing forces and make us normal.

2 A Comparative Analysis of the Personality Development of Napoleon and Jack

Notably, the characters' personality and the development of conflicts between the two novels share many similarities. In response to human evil, Napoleon and Jack are the central figures. Analyzing how they succumb to the id step by step is also a powerful interpretation of society's descent into darkness. They significantly impact the novel's supporting characters, such as Snowball, Simon, and Piggy. The authors' negative portrayal of human nature is evident through their depiction of the characters' gradual descent into darkness.

The process of personality transformation in Napoleon and Jack does not happen overnight. They both yield to the id's pursuit of materials and power. The acquisition of resources serves as the basis for survival, while the pursuit of power represents a higher level of ambition. The two pursuits are complementary. Unfortunately, id's pursuit of them seems to have no upper limit and keeps expanding. Following the id's pleasure principle, Napoleon and Jack employ bloody repression to achieve their goal.

2.1 Initial Immersion in Material Desires

Napoleon's personality structure is similar to Jack's in that both descend from the ego to the id. Napoleon falls in the way of pursuing material and power and achieves a significant transformation from hating, cooperating, and becoming human. In the book, he and Snowball lead the animals in rebellion against Jones's rule, continuing Old Major's legacy, and emerging as leaders. During this period, Napoleon appears to be normal, sharing power equally with Snowball. However, he gradually develops a desire for material possessions, secretly taking away the milk and apples that were meant for all the animals. At that time, Napoleon's greed is silent and insignificant, and cannot even be called evil. It merely satisfies his appetite and takes away rations from the other animals, without attracting much notice.

Jack's descent from ego to id is more straightforward than the complex transformation undergone by Napoleon, but it still shares many similarities with him. On the first arrival on the island, Jack and his choir can even be regarded as representatives of civilization. They are educated and disciplined. Jack maintains restraint when he loses the leadership in election and avoids killing the boar in the first encounter. Afterward, Jack works with the others to fetch firewood and make smoke, volunteering to take on the weighty responsibility of keeping the bonfire. During the assembly, he even handles the conch with care, which serves as a symbol of civilization, suggesting that he is a rational and reasonable individual at this point.

Nevertheless, Jack's desire for food is always powerful, limited only by external constraints. His unfulfilled desires also lead to the first heated conflict between him and Ralph, who argue over whether to build shelters or to hunt. Jack's desire to slaughter wild boars grows stronger and ends in disagreement. Then Jack surrenders to his id when he paints his face, abandoning his ego and losing his sense of shame and self-consciousness. Thus, Jack began to slaughter the first wild boar to satisfy the instinctive desire for survival and appetite.

At this moment, both Napoleon and Jack take the first step towards their ids - the pursuit of foods. However, what the id drives are more than satisfied with trivial foods. The endless pursuit of power and material goods emerges, driving them to ignore the constraints of real conditions and leading them further along a distorted path.

2.2 Inflated Material Desires and Pursuing for Power

Napoleon's desire for power becomes increasingly evident as the story unfolds. Following the revolution, the two leaders of Animal Farm frequently argue over various issues, resulting in ongoing disagreements. Although there is no evidence suggesting that Napoleon has been preparing for the expulsion of Snowball and the usurpation of power, some details confirm Napoleon's ambition, as the puppies are taken away by him and raised as his hunters. To consolidate his authority, Napoleon always allows Squealer to handle disputes with other animals. Napoleon's desire for more materials and power finally breaks out in a heated argument over the construction of the windmill. Then he unleashes his long-bred dog, drives Snowball away, and achieves his dictatorship. However, it turns out the windmill is just an excuse. In just a few months, Napoleon announces the restart of the windmill program and slanders Snowball as a traitor. Snowball's story

did not end with his departure. Ironically, Napoleon portrays Snowball as a scapegoat, an excuse for all the failures and intrigues in *Animal Farm*. Napoleon's tampering of the seven commandments contributed to the downfall of Old Major and Snowball's legacy.

After that, Napoleon becomes even more rampant and does not conceal his desire in any circumstances. He leads all the pigs to live in the farmhouse and begins to sleep in a bed, symbolizing his quest for material comfort and his abandonment of the principles of Animalism. After the first taste of alcohol, Napoleon is overwhelmed and hoards the wine for himself. Napoleon has no upper limit on the expansion of his greed. He brutalizes animals, forces hens to give up their eggs, slaughters protesting animals, and outlaws "The Beast of England". These actions blatantly violate the animalism that "Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy". When the farm's products are no longer sufficient to meet Napoleon's needs, he hires humans as his agents and enters into exchanges with them for food and wine. Napoleon orders Squealer to repeatedly modify the Seven Commandments, distorting the animals' memories and consolidating his own dominance. For example, he adds the qualifier "without cause" to the commandment "No animal shall kill any other animal." Yet, these changes are only the beginning of Napoleon's insatiable desires.

Jack, similarly, is hungry for food and power. Meanwhile, the children on the island become increasingly anxious as messages about various beasts circulate, making the island less peaceful and intensifying the conflict between Jack and Ralph. While Ralph prioritizes repairing shelters, drinking clean water, and building toilets, Jack uses hunting and killing wild animals as an excuse. Occasional hunting already satisfies children's needs, but their conflict is not about food but contains Jack's long-standing resentment. Jack expands his mass base quickly by painting his face and playing the hunting game (predicts the final hunting). Soon, he manages to gather people outside the choir under his leadership, effectively usurping Ralph's authority.

Ruling children with food is a symbol of the instinct that drives people. By hunting the sow and sacrificing it to the "beast from air", the darkness within Jack continues to swell and burst. This is how the Lord of the Flies emerges, its deathly stare signaling the inescapable presence of human evil. In a frenzied celebratory dance, Jack's dual desires of food and power are within his grasp. Finally, Simon's death pushes Jack into darkness and the abyss of killing completely. At that moment, Jack gives in to his id and loses his rationality. Although Simon understands that the "beast" is only a projection of the children's fears, he could not have foreseen that he would become the scapegoat for externalizing those fears. Simon's death marks the beginning of the other children's descent into their own ids, which results in their gradual descent into group madness.

Overall, both Simon and Snowball are tragic scapegoats who are misunderstood, antagonized, and even killed despite their ambitions to rescue others. Simon's fate also highlights the novel's central theme of the loss of innocence and humanity. The authors use the general symbol of the scapegoat and juxtapose Snowball with Simon to illustrate how the id shatters the superego on its way to seizing power, ultimately consuming the reasonable man. In addition, the ego retreats in the wave of desire, exemplified by how Napoleon and Jack become tools of the id.

2.3 Unrestrained Id, Twisted Humanity

Napoleon and Jack have descended into madness, pursuing their desires for material wealth and power at all costs. Napoleon's obsession with materials and his desire to become more human have driven him to extreme measures, such as sending his faithful follower, Boxer, to the slaughterhouse in exchange for money to buy wine. This situation also contributes to the formation of Napoleon's strong patriarchy (Daphne Patai, 2009) [12]. Despite the decreased food production, Napoleon continues to breed dozens of cubs and built a school to educate them. In terms of power, Napoleon declares himself the sole president of the Animal Farm and transforms the system to sustain his rule through the exploitation and oppression of other animals. The animals' former retirement system becomes nothing but a distant dream, and their lives remains miserable.

In this process, Squealer plays a crucial role, representing the force of the ego seeking to rationalize actions in the external world. Squealer is able to skillfully disguise each of Napoleon's self-interested actions. However, his willingness to deceive and manipulate other animals highlights his lack of solid morality, reflecting the danger of succumbing to the id. Squealer's descent into id is the beginning of the decadence of the entire Animal Farm. More chillingly, Napoleon begins to walk through the farm, wearing Jones' clothes and padding his feet. Other farmers are invited to visit, and the line between pigs and people begins to blur. In the drunken night, the pigs become human, and Animal Farm gradually returns to Manor Farm as if several revolutions have not taken place. Napoleon bows to materials, power, and the once-hated humans, eventually losing his ego. The transformation of the animals symbolizes how human nature can be distorted gradually under certain circumstances and eventually become unrecognizable.

After Simon's death, Jack becomes increasingly callous, and he manages to gather almost everyone except Piggy and the twins under his cruel control. In order to roast food, Jack chooses to abandon courtesy and steal the fire. In the quarrel between Ralph and Jack, the latter and his followers kill their former friend Piggy and crush the conch. They completely abandon civilization and rationality during the massacre. Roger, who represents the dark side of instinct and id, is even more savage and ruthless than Jack. With bloody hands, he loses his humanity, and his sharpened spear serves as a symbol of the impending slaughter. Roger embodies the most primitive and instinctive aspects of one's personality. Their complementary relationship drives each other towards decadence. Under their oppressive rule, they seize Piggy's glasses and extinguish the fire of reason. They also crush Piggy's conch, signifying that the voice of civilization has nowhere to turn. In the end, savagery and brute force prevail, and human nature is overcome.

Piggy's death ignites Jack's bestial nature, causing him to become a bloodthirsty beast who tortures the twins and authorizes their attempt to kill Ralph. He loses the ability to think rationally and sets the whole forest on fire in his madness, indulging in the insanity of the id. However, Golding still retains a faint hope for humanity. As a naval officer appears on the scene, the arrival of civilization is bound to strip Jack's bestiality and awaken his ego.

3 Conclusion

From ego, Napoleon and Jack follow similar paths towards material desires and power, and they gradually regress towards the id. They employ various means to achieve their desires, initially to satisfy their survival needs, and later to pursue excessive materialism. They defeat their competitors or consolidate their power through food manipulation and authoritarian rule. Although they pursue materialism and power in different contexts, they still possess individual differences, such as Napoleon's obsession with becoming human and Jack's paranoia about killing. The two characters lose their personalities and eventually become alienated from their own species. However, Napoleon becomes a prisoner of the id and is unable to extricate himself, while Jack is forced to find his ego, reflecting the author's pessimistic view of human evil. The authors either retain a glimmer of hope or lose it completely, but their responses to that era and their revelations of human evil are equally thought-provoking.

By placing the two novels together, from the perspective of personality theory, we can clearly see that the authors make a bitter mockery and lament the reversal of human nature. From different perspectives, *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* offer a scathing critique of the perversion of human nature, exemplified respectively by the animalization of humans under Napoleon's leadership and the dehumanization of characters led by Jack. These novels also serve as indictments of human nature during World War II, which exposed the callousness, narrow-mindedness, and primal instincts of people in times of war. During extreme circumstances, society is pervaded with the atmosphere of pursuing materials and power, and individuals and groups gradually shifts from the ego to the id, absorbing the remaining egos and superegos.

Each one of us has the potential to become Napoleon or Jack, capable of succumbing to the forces of the id and giving in to our baser instincts. Humans, after the collapse of civilization, can turn into beasts like wild boars, while animals can demonstrate evil in a moral society by following human rules. The novels by Orwell and Golding, which are based on their experiences during World War II, provide profound insights into the nature of human beings. The frailty of human nature cannot withstand scrutiny, and the temptation of evil in human nature is difficult to resist. These insights form the perspective of psychoanalytic criticism into the darkness of human nature offer us numerous inspirations to reflect.

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