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William Golding, Novels of Extreme Situations

Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,
Make sinnes, else equall, in mee more heinous?

John Donne

In solitude there groweth what anyone bringeth
into it — also the brute in one's nature.
Thus is solitude inadvisable unto many.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Chapter thirteen of *Pincher Martin* opens with what is left of Christopher Hadley Martin offering to tell us, in a theatrical tragic pose, what is man. Pincher's question is at the same time his author's. One could not agree more with the statement of two critics, "All the novels ask, fundamentally, the same question 'What is man?'"¹ They seem to be an attempt at stock-taking first, at summing-up what man has made of himself up to now, and then, at seeing and formulating "the whole of the human condition" anew and fearlessly.

The stock-taking assumes the form of a criticism of the self-complacent nineteenth-century conventional view of man as *Homo Sapiens* with an unlimited vista of scientific progress ahead of him, which was believed to bring about, inevitably, the progress of humankind in general, including the moral progress.

This faith in science and inevitable progress was not shared by the twentieth-century men of letters. George Orwell, talking about Joyce, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and some others, said that however different in other respects,

¹ Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Strange Case of Mr. Golding and His Critics", in *The Twentieth Century*, CLXVII (February, 1960), p. 116. The same statement, in essence, is repeated in a recently published book by the same authors. See, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, Ch. VI., p. 256.

All of them are temperamentally hostile to the notion of 'progress'; it is felt that progress not only doesn't happen, but *ought not to happen*.²

With his first two novels William Golding places himself in the same tradition. They are, among other things, written as the antitheses to nineteenth-century views of man. *Lord of the Flies* is antithetical to Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, and *The Inheritors* to Wells's views on history. The statements in the epigraph to *The Inheritors*, taken from Wells's *Outline of History*, are reversed in the novel, and there is little doubt, in Peter Green's words, that Golding had in mind Wells's story *The Grisly Folk* as a basis for his antithesis.³

In using Wells as a point of departure in his antithesis to the views born out of the nineteenth-century intellectual climate Golding again shows his allegiance to what might be loosely called twentieth-century literary tradition. Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell precede him in explicitly and implicitly polemizing with Wells's views.⁴

An impulse to stop taking the heritage of Western cultural history for granted, to call all the inherited values and notions in doubt, even if only to reassert them again, is characteristic of the beginning of the twentieth century. In what stands as a subtitle to Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, *An attempted transvaluation of all values*, this impulse is perhaps given the most telling expression.

Methodical and provisional doubt seems always to have been the sign of a radical change in values. St. Augustine's doubt, Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*, itself the result of doubt, together with Donne's complaint that "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" have undoubtedly been expressed at the turning points of Western culture.

² G. Orwell, "Inside the Whale", in *Selected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 1960, p. 26.

³ P. Green, "The World of William Golding", in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Literature*, 32 (1963), p. 45.

⁴ V. Woolf in *Modern Fiction*, Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Huxley in *Brave New World* and, in a way foreshadowing Golding's, in *Point Counter Point*. Rampion, a character that bears resemblance to D. H. Lawrence, has painted two allegorical pictures which represent two "Outlines of History". One of them represents Wells's view. It is a straight line from a monkey to the scientific giants, Newton, Edison etc., with ever growing figures of H. G. Wells and Sir Alfred Mond closing the ranks. In the other one, representing Rampion's view, the Greek, the Renaissance, and the Elizabethan Man are the giants, and the scientific giants of Wells trail off into monsters with big heads and formless slimy bodies, freaks of nature with hypertrophied intellect and atrophied bodies engaged in the activity of disembowelling one another. Cf. *Point Counter Point*, Penguin Books, London, 1961, Ch. XVI., pp. 213-214.

To answer anew the question "What is man?" becomes a necessity for such sceptical ages. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* could be read as a groping for a definition of a new man. Encouragement given to Faustus,

*Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,
Lord and commander of these elements,*

sounds as a fairly good prediction of what was to come.

That the modern Faustian man is the overreacher has been noticed and described by Camus in *The Rebel* in the chapter called "Moderation and Excess". Camus has tried, as Huxley has, to attract our attention to the realization of the Ancients that any excess, *hubris*, is automatically punished by Nemesis, and that our century has disregarded this truth. Golding's novels, in a sense, represent a criticism of the modern Faustian man, and *Pincher Martin* seems to be this criticism at its strongest.

Coming to a stand to answer the question "What is man?" which begins with a criticism of what man is and has been cannot be labeled as pessimistic.

*Then, as mankind, so is the world's whole frame
Quite out of joint,⁵*

is not the prediction of doomsday. This has been an "insight" of all the moralists before and after John Donne, including Hamlet, and has the meaning of an appeal for change, not of the defeatist statement that everything has gone wrong beyond remedy.

William Golding's questioning "What is man?" falls into this sceptical self-analysing and self-criticising tradition. Inevitably, there are many things that he has in common with his predecessors who began writing in the twenties.

In the same way in which Nietzsche's work provides a perspective for the modern novel, a perspective that makes for its understanding, it can be said of a more systematic philosopher who is not so often associated with literature — Max Scheler. In his own words, he has been concerned with the question "What is man?" more deeply than with any other question. A very short book, written under the sentence of death, so to say, *Man's Place in Nature (Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos)*, is in part an account of the answers given to this question in the cultural history of Europe. Whether this book had any influence on the novelists is not so important simply because they share the cultural heritage of

⁵ J. Donne, *An Anatomy of the World*, The First Anniversary.

Europe, but it might prove very helpful in an analysis of Golding's novels, since it gives very sharp definitions of the traditional answers to this question. And, moreover, the hope expressed in Scheler's preface to his book strikes one as if it were a very faithful report of the implicit intentions behind Golding's novels.

...man is more of a problem to himself at the present time than ever before in all recorded history. At the very moment when man admits that he knows less than ever about himself, and when he is not frightened by any possible answer to his question, there seems to have arisen a new courage of truthfulness — a courage to raise this essential question without any commitment to any tradition, whether theological, philosophical or scientific, that has prevailed up to now. At the same time, he is developing a new kind of self-consciousness and insight into his own nature based on the vast accumulation of knowledge in the human sciences.⁶

One should say, by way of comment, that both Scheler's and Golding's answers inevitably hark back to theological and philosophical tradition just as they make use of the knowledge accumulated in the human sciences.

It would not be amiss perhaps to pause and reflect on the statement that man is not frightened by the possible answers to his question. Again it is Nietzsche who has given a kind of a new definition of truth. The more unendurable a thought is, the more truthful. This is given as a new criterion of truth.⁷ The value of a man is measured according to how much of the truth he can endure, and he is a superman if he can endure the idea of the eternal recurrence. He has got the courage to know the most devastating truth of the condition of man and yet to be able to go on living with it.

With twentieth-century novelists the courage to know the frightening truth is transformed into the courage to tell it. This impulse to say what the condition of man really is seems to have been a reaction against the conventional nineteenth-century view of man, which was shaken by the first world war.

Mere tics and tropisms, lunatic and unavowable cravings — these play as much part in human life as the organized and recognized sentiments. And imaginative literature suppresses the fact. Propagates an enormous lie about the nature of men and women. Rightly no doubt. Because if human beings were shown what

⁶ M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, p. 4.

⁷ These ideas appear first in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where it is stated that we need art to save us and help us to endure the truth, and is then most intensely formulated in the *Will to Power*, in Nietzsche's comment on the pessimism of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

they're really like, they'd either kill one another as vermin or hang themselves.⁸

In a letter to Huxley concerning *Point Counter Point*, D. H. Lawrence writes:

I have read *Point Counter Point* with a heart sinking through my boot-soles and a rising admiration. I do think you've shown the truth, perhaps the last truth, about you and your generation, with really fine courage. It seems to me it would take ten times the courage to write *P. Counter P.* that it took to write *Lady C.*: and if the public knew *what* it was reading, it would throw a hundred stones at you, to one at me.⁹

It is the courage to tell the unendurable truth that is admired here. Although William Golding belongs to another generation he is linked to Huxley in the insistence on the darker sides of human nature. And this insistence is only an attempt to push men into self-knowledge which they want to keep off.

This will to force self-knowledge on men links the novelist's intentions with Freud's. Such a novelist does not have to be under the influence of Freudian theories, nevertheless he writes under the assumption that man is unwilling to attain self-knowledge, that he should be forced into it almost by violence and that this self-knowledge, which cannot be attained on the level of rational discourse, will automatically produce a change in man's being for the better, that it is of remedial nature, all of which are the assumptions underlying Freud's treatment of neurotic patients. Indeed, the violence needed to force self-knowledge on man is a measure of his resistance to it. Once he stops resisting his being is already changed.

To tell "the whole truth" about man, to formulate "the whole of the human condition", and still not to do it in the abstract by philosophical reflection, but in the form of a novel, play, fable or myth, requires a reconciliation of two mutually exclusive procedures. In Sartre's words,

It is to create a literature which unites and reconciles the metaphysical absolute and the relativity of the historical fact, and which I shall call, for want of a better name, the literature of great circumstances.¹⁰

⁸ A. Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1938, pp. 521—522.

⁹ *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Ed. by H. T. Moore, Heinemann, London, 1965, p. 1096.

¹⁰ J. P. Sartre, "Situation of the Writer in 1947", in *What is Literature?*, Harper and Row, New York, 1965, pp. 216—217.; N. B. Such literature has inevitably some of the features of the morality play since the characters in the novels, plays, fables, myths are not simply twentieth-century people, but each is a twentieth-century Everyman, the idea of the whole of the human condition.

Ways of creating such literature may vary from writer to writer, but one single distinctive characteristic remains, the will to force the reader into the understanding of his own situation. Again, it is Sartre who formulates this view most clearly.

We did not want to delight our public with its superiority to a dead world — we wanted to take it by the throat. Let every character be a trap, let the reader be caught in it, and let him be tossed from one consciousness to another as from one absolute and irremediable universe to another similarly absolute; let him be uncertain of the very uncertainty of the heroes, disturbed by their disturbance, flooded with their present, docile beneath the weight of their future, invested with their perceptions and feelings as by insurmountable cliffs. In short, let him feel that every one of their moods and every movement of their minds encloses all mankind and is, in its time and place, in the womb of history and, despite the perpetual juggling of the present by the future, a descent without recourse toward Evil or an ascent toward Good which no future will be able to contest.¹¹

William Golding has set himself similar objectives, and is aware of the dangers of truthfulness. In an essay written to elucidate some points of his own book, *Lord of the Flies*, he explains that he assumes the role of the fabulist in that book.

The fabulist is a moralist. He cannot make a story without a human lesson tucked away in it. . . . If the moral is terrible enough he will be regarded as inhuman; and if the edge of his parable cuts deep enough, he will be crucified.¹²

But it is only for the best, one is tempted to remark, a proof that the message has been understood.

There is one particular reason why Golding's moral might seem terrible. Again, the clue is given in *Fable*. The author discloses that before the second world war he believed in the perfectibility of social man, "that a correct structure of society produces goodwill", and that a reform of society therefore must bring about the disappearance of all social ills.¹³

This is the optimistic idea of the French encyclopaedists, of Holbach's *Système de la nature*, which took a strong root in European civilization. The idea, although the encyclopaedists claimed the highest position in nature for the rational animal, implied the passivity of man, implied that his behaviour was the outcome of impersonal external forces. But this idea implies, on the one hand, man's irresponsibility, responsibility being shifted to the structures of society and external forces in general, and, on the other hand, freedom to manipulate man.

¹¹ *Ib.*, pp. 220—221.

¹² W. Golding, "Fable", in *The Hot Gates*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, pp. 85—86.

¹³ *Ib.*, p. 86.

His individual human nature, whatever it be, is neglected. Writers of Utopias, socially minded people *par excellence*, were the most famous for disregarding human nature, and for attempts to solve all the problems and dispel all the evils by constructing a perfect structure of society. In doing this they disregarded all too often the unique human individuality and fashioned their new societies on the pattern of a beehive. Dostoyevsky's criticism of Fourier, although Fourier is the last to blame on this point, and of the Utopian disregard of human nature in general is well known. At the same time Dostoyevsky noticed that there was something evil and sinister about this nature.¹⁴ That Western civilization is Utopian in this sense has been noticed time and again.

As distance lends a more synthesizing outline to the past century, its essentially political character becomes clearer to us. . . . Political preoccupation, that is consciousness of and activity in the social field, spreads among the masses, thanks to democracy. With a fierce exclusivism the problems of social life took over the first plane of attention, while the other element, individual life, was put aside as a matter of little consequence.¹⁵

The kind of political theory which has arisen in quite modern times is less concerned with human nature, which it is inclined to treat as something which can always be re-fashioned to fit whatever political form is regarded as most desirable. Its real data are impersonal forces which may have originated in the conflict and combination of human wills but have come to supersede them.¹⁶

Now, though Golding shared this intellectual climate before the war he was forced into changing his mind by his experiences in and after the war. The evil he has seen could not be ascribed to impersonal forces. It is rather that "man produces evil as a bee produces honey".¹⁷ This knowledge was considered, says Golding, as a taboo in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. It is just this taboo that Golding wants to consider openly, that is, to look for the source of evil in human nature. His question, echoing in this case Dostoyevsky's is, how could it happen that good systems and ideas finally produced bad results and never worked? The answer is simple. They left human nature out of count.

Social systems, political systems were composed, detached from the real nature of man. They were what one might call political symphonies. They would perfect most men . . .

¹⁴ In *Notes from Underground, Crime and Punishment, Brothers Karamazov, The Possessed*, e. g.

¹⁵ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*, W. W. Norton and Co., New York, 1963, p. 42.

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1962, Ch. V., p. 88.

¹⁷ W. Golding, *Fable*, p. 87.

Why, then have they never worked? How did the idealist concepts of primitive socialism turn at last into Stalinism? How could the political and philosophical idealism of Germany produce as its ultimate fruit, the rule of Adolph Hitler? My own conviction grew, that what happened was that men were putting the cart before the horse. They were looking at the system rather than the people. . . . I believed then, that man was sick — not exceptional man, but average man. I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and that the best job I could do at the time was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into.¹⁸

In *Lord of the Flies* at least, but not only in this book, Golding reverses one of the ideas inherited from the nineteenth century. The book represents a more thorough antithesis to nineteenth-century beliefs than is the simple antithesis to Bal-lantyne's view that evil cannot be generated in civilized Christian English schoolboys. It is the antithesis to the then prevalent belief that man's nature is conditioned by the structure of society. Golding decided to take man's nature as his starting point, "and to try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature".¹⁹ He reclaims man's responsibility to him by taking him as the constant and society as the variable, to use the language of mathematics. So if there is any evil in the world it must be traced back to man, not to society or any vague impersonal force.

I may repeat that the condition of man is the central theme of Golding's art, not man in society, which theme presupposes that man is the result of social forces. There is a large section of modern literature that is concerned with man thus isolated, man's condition in general, his metaphysical position in cosmos as it were. This has been often misunderstood and the lack of talent on the part of the author invoked to explain the non-existence of attention to social relationships in his books.

Far from offering a cross-section of English society of the late 'twenties Huxley confines himself to two groups. . . .²⁰

Golding has not yet shown himself capable of handling the subtleties of sophisticated social relationships and perhaps he never will; this may be a limitation, but not a damning one.²¹

¹⁸ *Ib.*, p. 87., N.B. Cf. the same idea developed in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*.

¹⁹ *Ib.*, p. 88.

²⁰ A. Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel*, Hutchinson's University Library, London, 1961, Part III, p. 167.

²¹ M. Quinn, "An Unheroic Hero: William Golding's 'Pincher Martin'", *Critical Quarterly*, 4 (Autumn, 1962), p. 248.

Absence of attention to social relationships seems to be the result of abandoning the nineteenth-century view of the relationship between man and society, the change in artistic treatment of characters in the novels, their isolation, is due to the change in views. The answer to the question "What is man?" is sought elsewhere, on what is thought to be a more fundamental level. Man's nature, or being, or the whole of his condition has come into focus, and it is this interest that arouses speculations whether Golding is or is not a religious writer. Perhaps, one should rather read him against the background of existentialist literature which seeks to define man not as a political animal, but man in his isolated metaphysical being. If the writer seems to be too philosophical or religious it is simply because the age in which he lives has forced the most and only the most fundamental problems on him. Although Sartre wrote about the situation of the writer in 1947, this statement seems still to hold good so far as Golding's situation now is concerned.

Therefore, we are all Jansenists because the age has made us such, and insofar as it has made us touch our limits I shall say that we are all metaphysical writers. I think that many among us would deny this designation or would not accept it without reservations, but this is the result of a misunderstanding. For metaphysics is not a sterile discussion about abstract notions which have nothing to do with experience. It is a living effort to embrace from within the human condition in its totality.²²

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In order to demonstrate what, for him, human nature is like, Golding uses various devices to isolate it and then to put it into special circumstances to give it occasion to manifest itself. It might not seem unjustifiable to say that Golding places his characters into experimental situations in the sense in which the word experimental is used in natural sciences; namely, that he tries to create an artificial environment for his characters which would exclude all other factors of behaviour except the one that is being investigated, human nature in this case. Thus, anything that happens in his novels is a function of human nature and it is only this nature that is accounted as morally responsible for anything that happens.

In *Lord of the Flies* the device he makes use of to isolate human nature from all possible external influences is to shift a group of children from civilization, from England which is presumably engaged in a large-scale war, to an uninhabited island. Thus he creates a kind of an experimental legendary primordial condition of humanity, on the principle that "The

²² J. P. Sartre, o. c., see note 10, p. 216.

Child is father of the Man", which would enable him to trace down the origin of evil to human nature. The kind of aggressive, destructive society that these children created was, due to the fact that they were completely isolated — in an "air-tight" condition —, the function of their fallen human nature. Golding himself gives an account of how and why has he undertaken to carry out so many isolating limitations in the book.

So the boys try to construct a civilization on the island; but it breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the terrible disease of being human.

The protagonist was Ralph, the average, rather more than average, man of goodwill and commonsense; the man who makes mistakes because he simply does not understand at first the nature of the disease from which they all suffer. The boys find an earthly paradise, a world, in fact, like our world, of boundless wealth, beauty and resource. The boys were below the age of overt sex, for I did not want to complicate the issue with that relative triviality. They did not have to fight for survival, for I did not want a Marxist exegesis. If disaster came, it was not to come through the exploitation of one class by another. It was to rise, simply and solely out of the nature of the brute. The overall picture was to be the tragic lesson...; that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and that the only enemy of man is inside him.²³

The "tragic lesson" seems to be guilty of *petitio principii*. It presupposes the thing its author wants to demonstrate — man's fallen nature, and deduces a destructive society "out of the nature of the brute" with great cogency in spite of the logical fallacy.

The device of isolating children from adult influence, to allow free play to their human nature, seems to be of the similar order as the device of going back, through history, to a hypothetical primordial condition of humanity, in search of the evil inherent in human nature, the procedure adopted in *The Inheritors*.

In this way the problem of the origin of evil is removed into a distant past. If it were Golding's question to explain the origin of evil in this way he would be guilty of the same mistake that theology, in Marx's words, commits.

...theology explains the origin of evil by the fall of man; that is, it asserts as a historical fact what it should explain.²⁴

It seems that Golding is not so much preoccupied with possible causes that have made man's nature evil, but rather with the

²³ W. Golding, *Fable*, p. 89.

²⁴ K. Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", *Early Writings*, C. A. Watts and Co. Ltd., London, 1963, p. 121.

plain statement of the fact that it is such and with an analysis of its manifestations.

Going back through history to the hypothetical Neanderthal people, then, seems to be an attempt to simplify the problem by removing the superficial layers of personality created by civilization, so that the original human nature might stand out more clearly for analysis.

It is hinted in *Lord of the Flies* that the adult world is engaged in a devastating war. Children, on their part, end their career on the island by engaging in the same destructive activity and finally set the whole island, their whole world, on fire. It is simply that human nature in them has come to its full manifestation and explained the behaviour of adults, but not the origin of evil in man's nature. While the main point of the first novel seems to be the recognition of the fact that "the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation", *The Inheritors* tries to investigate this morally diseased creation more closely by opposing it to a hypothetically innocent creature — the Neanderthal Man.

The setting of Golding's novels is not constructed only in order to provide, by means of isolation, a stage for human nature to manifest itself without any restrictions. At the same time it is a provocation for human nature to come into play. The protagonists find themselves in unexpected critical situations which force them to discover their true human nature in action and to attain self-knowledge.

In *Lord of the Flies* a group of children is literally thrown out of an airplane, together with the passenger tube, to a tropical island. On another level it might be taken as a symbolical statement of man's destiny, the being thrown into an unknown world. Piggy's fear that "We may stay here till we die",²⁵ because adults are all dead and there is nobody there to rescue them, might be used to corroborate this interpretation. They are left alone in the world without any authority to appeal to for help.

In *The Inheritors* a small group of Neanderthal people, after having escaped a catastrophic forest fire in which almost their whole tribe found death, encounters new and unexpected difficulties.

In *Pincher Martin*, on the first level of simple narration, a naval lieutenant tries to preserve his life on a rock in the Atlantic, after his ship has been torpedoed. At the same time he is the "Everyman" who stands "in the same general condition as we have always stood, under sentence of death",²⁶

²⁵ W. Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1964, p. 20.

²⁶ W. Golding, *Fable*, p. 91.

and the general human condition is being defined, in this book, through his inability to accept death.

In *Free Fall*, although it becomes evident only in the second half of the book and the novel is written in the manner of the confessional novel, Sammy Mountjoy, a character who tries to come to self-knowledge through a kind of confession, is in a German POW camp and goes through a self-revelatory crisis induced upon him by a German psychologist.

Father Jocelin in *The Spire* goes through the same type of self-revelatory crisis and is helped in his progress to self-knowledge by the visitor who is sent by high church authorities to investigate into his doings.

One common characteristic of these different situations which provide a crisis for the characters of Golding's novels is that they create an atmosphere of aloneness and isolation in which there is nothing left to the protagonists but to come, almost by force, to the understanding of the human condition as it is revealed in themselves.

The isolation of the naked human nature from all the influences of various structures of society is carried out further by the choice of characters. Children, in *Lord of the Flies*, and the eldest among them is not more than twelve, are not yet initiated into adult society. In *The Inheritors* only primitive people are concerned. There can be hardly any talk of society and socializing influences in connection with them. Pincher Martin is, by profession, an actor, and Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall* a painter. Being artists, they are both in a certain sense outsiders to the society in which they live, not committed to the rules of the game so much as the bulk of people that keep society going.

The critical, the extreme situations have the role of a catalyst in a chemical process. The author, on his part, tries to influence his reader through self-revelations of his characters. In so far as he uses this technique, Golding may be associated with the writers whom Sartre describes as "producing a literature of extreme situations",²⁷ but it can be said that there are far stronger, more essential, correspondences between Golding and Sartre than between Golding and the writers Sartre names. There will be occasion to deal with these correspondences later on.

If one tried, provisionally, to isolate only the answers to the question "What is man?" in Golding's novels, the overall result would be that man is a diseased creature, and that it is him who, due to his disease, makes hell of his own life.

²⁷ O. c., see note 10, pp. 216—217. Sartre mentions, "Camus, Malraux, Koestler, etc."

In *Lord of the Flies* one may follow all the stages of recognition that man is evil. A group of children finds itself on a paradisiac island with a prospect of unlimited unrestricted play-world before adults come to rescue them. But very quickly children discover an irrational fear, although, quite demonstrably, there is nothing to be afraid of. This is one of the first hints that there must be something evil in children themselves, what they are afraid of but what they do not recognize as their property. So they project the cause of their fear into the Beast. Piggy, the boy who represents discursive reason, suggests that "Life is scientific" and that there is nothing to be afraid of "Unless we get frightened of people".²⁸ He hits very near to truth, to the point Golding wants to make, but he probably means *other* people, some people who are not good, people like Jack for example.²⁹ Another boy, a visionary, Golding has specified that he has meant him to be a Christ figure,³⁰ comes closer to self-knowledge, which is the same as to say that he comes to the knowledge that the evil, the Beast, the thing they are all afraid of is constitutive of human beings, their essence, as it were, since it is through this property only that men are what they are. When asked for his opinion about the Beast his answer is:

"What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us."

"Nuts!"

That was from Piggy, shocked out of decorum. Simon went on.

"We could be sort of . . ."

Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind's essential illness. Inspiration came to him.

"What's the dirtiest thing there is?"³¹

The writer found it necessary to introduce his own comment into children's inarticulate talk and so to identify himself with Simon's view. One is tempted at this point to disagree with the view proposed by Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor that *Lord of the Flies* is not a *roman à thèse* since it contains three different views, equally doubtful, Piggy's, Jack's and Simon's. It is said that they are doubtful because,

Piggy has one eye; Jack is a savage; Simon is a queer little boy who has fits. There are question-marks over all three views. This is not a *roman à thèse*.³²

²⁸ *Lord of the Flies*, p. 105.

²⁹ Cf. M. Kinkead-Weekes and I. Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, p. 45.

³⁰ *In Fable*, p. 97.

³¹ *Lord of the Flies*, p. 111.

³² O. c., p. 45.

Piggy's view, as interpreted in the study just quoted, is that the world and the people are essentially good and that evil comes into being through the action of some individuals with whom something has gone wrong.

In the adult world Jack would be cured by a psychiatrist or restrained by greater power than his, which would also solve the Beast. Horror and wrong happen, but they are deviations which can be overcome by sanity and responsibility.³³

Now, this is exactly the optimistic nineteenth-century view, containing belief in the rectifying power of social institutions and in science, to which Golding is so strongly opposed. It is not simply one of the questionable views in his book, it is the view which he wants to prove wrong. Piggy is consistently represented as holding nineteenth-century optimistic views which Golding attacked on various occasions as either wrong or concerned with a narrow field of human experience.³⁴ Piggy believes that "Life is scientific" which is only an ironic expression of the nineteenth-century belief in science and automatic progress that science is constantly making. His proof is nothing but the expression of his belief.

In a year or two when the war's over they'll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast — not with claws and all that, I mean — but I know there isn't no fear, either.³⁵

The Beast is an externalization of evil in man, and as science disregards this sphere of human experience, Piggy, who believes that life is scientific, cannot believe in it because he shuts out this sphere of experience just as science does. Piggy is represented as an ironic incarnation of optimistic nineteenth-century views. He is given spectacles, an implement of producing civilizing fire. But instead of being civilizing it is used to set the whole island on fire. It seems to be just an ironic parallel to the fact that the advancement of science has been used to produce atomic weapons capable of destroying the whole world. Human conscience is not strong enough to be entrusted with human science, seems to be Golding's message not understood by the nineteenth century and stated by him fully elsewhere. In *The Brass Butterfly*, Phanocles, a figure with a scientific turn of mind, claims to have conquered the universe and yet is defeated and going to be killed by Roman soldiers. He poses the question "What is wrong with man?" and gets Golding's answer by the Emperor.

³³ *Ib.*

³⁴ Cf. *The Hot Gates*, "Egypt from My Inside", "Fable", "In My Ark", "On the Crest of the Wave".

³⁵ *Lord of the Flies*, p. 105.

Men. A steam ship, or anything powerful, in the hands of man, Phanocles, is like a sharp knife in the hands of a child. There is nothing wrong with the knife. There is nothing wrong with the steam ship. There is nothing wrong with man's intelligence. The trouble is his nature.³⁶

Phanocles, a believer in science as Piggy is, replies,

Intelligence is the whole man.³⁷

Piggy's glasses, the sign for science, have produced destructive fire, science itself has produced atomic bombs. Those who made them did not bother to think of human nature. Piggy does not want to recognize evil in man and calls the killing of Simon an accident. He is killed at the end of the book unawares, not recognizing the fact of evil which is shut out of his scientific view of the world.

On the other hand, it is Piggy who is the first to realize that nobody in the adult world knows where they are and that they have to organize their life until rescue comes, displaying in this way the virtue of commonsense.

Nineteenth-century commonsense and goodwill represented in Ralph, who shares Piggy's views, are helpless when confronted with the fact of evil. In the controversy whether there might be ghosts, as projections of evil, his final resort is to fall back upon the democratic procedure of voting out the truth as if the truth were a matter of the majority vote. The theme is picked up again by Golding in *Free Fall*. At the point when Sammy Mountjoy makes deductions from the rationalist universe of his teacher of physics, it becomes clear that it is Piggy's belief in science that inspires Nick.

A candle burnt under a bell-jar. Water rose and filled the space once occupied by oxygen. The candle went out but not before it had lighted up a universe of such orderliness and sanity that one must perforce cry; the solution to all problems is here! If there were problems, nevertheless they must contain their own solution. It would not be a rational universe in which problems were insoluble.³⁸

But it is just the acceptance of this "soulless universe" in which man with his intelligence is the highest that made Sammy realize the relativity of good and evil.

I saw that if man is the highest, is his own creator, then good and evil are decided by majority vote.³⁹

³⁶ W. Golding, *The Brass Butterfly*, Faber and Faber, London, 1958, p. 58.

³⁷ *Ib.*

³⁸ W. Golding, *Free Fall*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1965, p. 212.

³⁹ *Ib.*, p. 218.

What Sammy is thinking of in this passage Ralph is putting into effect in *Lord of the Flies*.

No rationalist scientific view is capable of deciding right and wrong and with its abolition of all authority above man's introduces arbitrariness of moral judgement into the world. So Sammy comes to the same conclusion as Ivan Karamazov does in his parable of the Grand Inquisitor.

There is no spirit, no absolute. Therefore right and wrong are a parliamentary decision like no betting slips or drinks after half-past ten. ... There are no morals that can be deduced from natural science, there are only immorals. The supply of nineteenth-century optimism and goodness had run out before it reached me.⁴⁰

Belief in science and the destruction of the ability to make value judgements effected through the insistence on scientific, technical education only are heavily criticised by Golding himself. In his essay *On the Crest of the Wave*, attacking modern concepts of education in the eyes of which science is held supreme, Golding says this:

'Science' is not the most important thing. Philosophy is more important than 'Science'; so is history; so is courtesy, come to that, so is aesthetic perception.⁴¹

I must be careful. But it seems to me that an obvious truth is being neglected. Our humanity, our capacity for living together in a full and fruitful life, does not reside in knowing things for the sake of knowing them or even in the power to exploit our surroundings. ... Our humanity rests in the capacity to make value judgements, unscientific assessments, the power to decide that this is right, that wrong, this ugly, that beautiful, this just, that unjust. Yet these are precisely the questions which 'Science' is not qualified to answer with its measurement and analysis. They can be answered only by the methods of philosophy and the arts.⁴²

It seems impossible that Golding could have proposed Piggy's and Ralph's view, in the manner of the novel of ideas, as just one of the three equally problematic ones, since it is the view he has been severely attacking and since he explicitly says that Ralph "makes mistakes because he simply does not understand at first the nature of the disease from which they all suffer"⁴³ but who by the end of the book "has come to understand the fallen nature of man, and that what stands between him and happiness comes from inside him".⁴⁴

Finally, Golding makes an explicit statement that »Man is a fallen being" and then expresses his intention,

⁴⁰ *Ib.*, p. 226.

⁴¹ In *The Hot Gates*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, p. 129.

⁴² *Ib.*, p. 130.

⁴³ *Fable*, p. 89.

⁴⁴ *Ib.*, p. 90.

I looked round me for some convenient form in which this thesis might be worked out, and found it in the play of children.⁴⁵

Piggy's and Ralph's nineteenth-century views seem to be represented in the book for the author to be able to define his message in opposition to them, to use them as a point of departure, as it were, and then, to make Ralph wring himself off of the nineteenth-century optimistic self-complacent view and come to the attainment of Simon's insight into human nature.

Jack's view, on the basis of which the destructive society of little savages is built, is the one of primitive societies. Evil and fear of that evil which is in man is externalized into vicarious beings, into the Beast, and the scapegoat, in Simon's case, which is then killed in a ritual and, in that way, symbolically annihilated.

While Ralph and Piggy commit the mistake of disregarding the fact of human nature, Jack commits the mistake of externalizing and personifying it. All over again, Jack's mistake is committed by Tuami and the tribe of human beings in *The Inheritors*, when they project the evil which is in them into innocent Neanderthal people, and being affraid of the beast in themselves, kill the Neanderthal people into whom they have projected the beast. This seems to be the way how things happen not only in the least civilized cultures.

Simon, on the other hand, who is meant to be a Christ figure, may only reveal the truth which is identical with the author's lesson. Truth is revealed to him in the scene with the pig's head on a stick, meant by Jack as an offering to the Beast.

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with the parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" ...

"This is ridiculous. You know perfectly well you'll only meet me down there — so don't try to escape!"⁴⁶

As soon as Simon has this revelation the flies that kept to the pig's head find him, for it is now certain that the Beast is not outside of him.⁴⁷

This realization is then repeated, not perhaps with the same force, in *Free Fall*. Sammy Mountjoy, alone in a prison ceil of a POW camp, where he was left, instead of being tor-

⁴⁵ *Ib.*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ *Lord of the Flies*, pp. 177—178.

⁴⁷ Cf. J. P. Sartre, *Les Mouches*.

tured, to consider whether he was going to give the information he was asked to give, in complete darkness, not only isolated from other people but isolated even from all sense-perceptions, hermetically closed in himself, as it were, where everything was shut out except himself, "immured in dust behind barbed wire, was prison inside prison", discovered the same truth, that man does not need to be tortured by other people, that there is no need for a "wooden bench with clamps and a furrowed surface". He realized that the Nazis were wise and knew that he would torture himself,

...would endure all torment guessing and wondering and inventing — and would be forced in the end by the same insane twitch that avoids all the cracks between paving stones or touches and touches wood, would be forced, screaming but forced, forced by himself, himself forcing himself, compelled helplessly deprived of will, sterile, wounded, diseased, sick of his nature, pierced, would have to stretch out his hand — ⁴⁸

There seems to be the occasion now to look for some parallels between Golding and Sartre that invite attention. It is the question of the similarity of views and, more than that, the similarity of technique that is discoverable between Sartre's *Huis Clos* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, *Pincher Martin*, and *Free Fall*. I was not able to find out whether Golding drew on Sartre; or is it rather that through having similar aims he has chosen similar means. I have come across the only mention of Sartre's play by Golding in an essay called "Crosses" and published in the collection of Golding's occasional pieces bearing the title of the first essay, *The Hot Gates*⁴⁹ so that I know Golding is familiar with it beyond any doubt.

Free Fall lends itself extremely well to the comparison. Sammy Mountjoy has at first expected torturers in his cell in the same way in which Garcin expected to find "the instruments of torture" in hell, "The racks and red-hot pincers and all the other paraphernalia".⁵⁰ At the beginning neither of them is aware that the evil and the torturer are in him. They expect them to come from the outside, and are led gradually to apprehend the truth by the Socratic maieutical method by means of which both writers lead their characters as well as their readers to the realization of facts which they already know but are not fully conscious of.

In Sartre's play the newcomers to hell come with their own fears and suspicions and expect to find there what they are most afraid of. Estelle for example expects to find her

⁴⁸ O. c., pp. 173—174.

⁴⁹ O. c., p. 29.

⁵⁰ J. P. Sartre, "In Camera", in *The Flies and In Camera*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1946, p. 108.

lover who has blown away his face with a pistol shot. In the same manner Sammy Mountjoy expected to find a severed phallus in his cell whereas he was actually in no cell but in an empty cupboard, and the thing he felt with his hand and interpreted in accordance with his fear was a damp floorcloth left there. This episode is introduced only to provide one stepping-stone to the realization that everyone can best torture himself.

Both Garcin and Sammy are guilty of torturing gratuitously a human being that loves them. Garcin tortured his wife and Sammy Beatrice. Both of them are morally fallen beings, have an inner compulsion to torture the beings that love them, and this torture is, with both of them, the origin of their feeling of guilt. Both of them are cowards, the only difference being that Garcin does not want to realize it and tries to deceive himself. Neither Garcin nor Sammy Mountjoy are developing characters. The only thing at least Sammy Mountjoy can change is the state of his mind. Garcin is dead, cannot change anything in his life, can only sum it up retrospectively trying to understand and justify himself. Sammy Mountjoy undertakes the same job of reviewing, through memory, the whole of his life as if sitting in judgement over it. He does not want to justify it, only to understand it. Garcin's life, since he is dead is irreparable. He is what he has done during his life. Mountjoy has committed irreparable things, probably caused Beatrice's madness, he is what he has done in the same way although he is not dead. But he could not have done anything else but what he has done. He acted in accordance with his nature, was not free to choose.

What else could I have done but run away from Beatrice? I do not mean what ought I to have done or what someone else could have done. I simply mean that as I have described myself, as I see myself in my backward eye, I could do nothing but run away. I could not kill the cat to stop it suffering. I had lost my power to choose. I had given away my freedom. I cannot be blamed for the mechanical and helpless reaction of my nature.⁵¹

They are both of them characters who are by various devices helped by their respective authors to attain self-knowledge which dawns upon them through increasing stages of clarity until they are at the end seized by the full awareness of their condition. At the end of Sartre's play Garcin attains the awareness that "Hell is . . . other people!", meaning that we are forced inescapably to torture each other by the sheer weight of our presence in the same world. It is this very idea that imposes itself on Sammy Mountjoy.

⁵¹ *Free Fall*, pp. 130—131.

They said the damned in hell were forced to torture the innocent live people with disease. But I know now that life is perhaps more terrible than that innocent medieval misconception. We are forced here and now to torture each other.⁵²

Nevertheless, the lessons are not identical since Sartre does not operate with the notion of human nature whereas with Golding it is one of the main categories. Sartre's view might be reduced to the statement that man is what he makes of himself. Sartre even criticised very severely the notion of human nature in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. But there is agreement as to the human condition if we disregard the causes to which the authors may attribute this condition. With Golding it is human nature and that is the lesson Sammy Mountjoy learns.

Both authors want to inculcate their lesson and in order to do it they proceed in very similar ways, using the Socratic method. Through cumulating insights which the author has forced upon him by placing him into critical situations, Garcin is led to learn gradually that hell is other people and himself. To help him on his way to the full realization of the lesson there is another protagonist who is giving him the necessary lesson before he comes to realize it. In *Huis Clos* it is Inez. She realizes the main point of the play and expresses it almost at its beginning.

Sammy Mountjoy is made to review in memory all his past life in the same maieutical way, and he is given a Nazi psychologist, professor Halde, to help him attain self-knowledge. By leaving him to himself and by using, in this way, his own human nature to torture him, Halde helps him to realize that it is his own human nature which is unendurable to live with.

Why are the characters in both the play and the novel driven through a series of gradual recognitions? It seems to me that they are treated with the Socratic method for the benefit of the reader who must be impressed by the conversational insight in characters to accept with his whole being an otherwise trite lesson which has never been fully assimilated by him. Speaking about *Lord of the Flies* Golding said,

Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held. I looked round me for some convenient form in which this thesis might be worked out, and found it in the play of children.⁵³

⁵² *Ib.*, p. 115.

⁵³ *Fable*, p. 88.

To preach such a lesson would be trite. "Hell is other people" by itself is equally trite. This seems to be the reason why the author gives his reader the example of a person coming to the full realization of this lesson through painful experience. He tries to involve him emotionally, not only intellectually; to make an effect upon him, to press knowledge on him through effect. Speaking about the reception *Lord of the Flies* got from its critics Peter Green says,

All recognized its power; but it reached them in the same way as a good poem, through direct emotional apprehension. Like any good propagandist, Mr. Golding slipped a fast one on his audience: he got beneath their rational guard.⁵⁴

In other words Golding tries to shock the reader into accepting his view of the general condition of man, not to reason with him. When the reader goes, by proxy, with Ralph, through all Ralph's experiences he acquires Ralph's insight, which is the moral of the book, without much critical reserve. In this sense both Golding and Sartre, by getting beneath their reader's rational guard, try to appeal to him on the same level as the journalist does. It seems to be only in intention and talent that the difference lies. This is one of the ways how an old and trite truth which has become emotionally neutral is revived, is turned into an emotional experience; the attempt having the intention to wring the truth off from its emotional neutrality and to turn it, as it were, into an acid state in order that it might act upon the conscience of the reader.

The same kind of parallel that has been drawn between *Huis Clos* and *Free Fall* can be drawn between *Huis Clos* and *Lord of the Flies*. *Lord of the Flies* is first of all an attempt to show vividly that evil is not external to man but only an externalization of what is in him. What the Beast represents to the children, hell with its paraphernalia of torture represents to Garcin. Ralph, by degrees and helped by Simon's insight, learns that evil is in man in a similar way in which Garcin comes to the realization that hell is other people helped by the insight of Inez. Both characters reach their knowledge in a climax at the end.

Pincher Martin and *Huis Clos* seem to have at least one thing in common, however superficial. The protagonists are dead in both cases. In both cases they are in hell of a sort. With *Pincher* it seems to be clear that the hell he is in is his own human nature which he is unwilling to part with. The human nature which Sammy Mountjoy, after he has had his

⁵⁴ P. Green, "The World of William Golding", in *William Golding's Lord of the Flies, A Source Book*, by William Nelson, p. 177.

ecstatic experience, has found unendurable to live with is the very thing Pincher Martin cannot forsake. In his article "The Novels of William Golding" professor Frank Kermode quotes a part of Golding's statement about Pincher Martin that appeared in *The Radio Times*.

Christopher Hadley Martin had no belief in anything but the importance of his own life, no God. Because he was created in the image of God he had a freedom of choice which he used to centre the world on himself. He did not believe in purgatory and therefore when he died it was not presented to him in overtly theological terms. The greed for life which had been the main-spring of his nature forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying. He continued to exist separately in a world composed of his own murderous nature.⁵⁵

Golding goes a step further from the realization of the morally diseased murderous nature of man. He comes close to the opinion that there might be something wrong with the species man biologically speaking. In *The Inheritors*, Lok, a Neanderthal creature, not yet human, watches the members of the real human race. His impression is given in terms of sickness unto death.

The new people did not move like anything he had ever seen before. They were balanced on top of their legs, their waists were so wasp-thin that when they moved their bodies swayed backwards and forwards. They did not look at the earth but straight ahead. And they were not merely hungry. Lok knew famine when he saw it. The new people were dying. . . . They walked upright and they should be dead. It was as though something that Lok could not see were supporting them, holding up their heads, thrusting them slowly and irresistibly forward. Lok knew that if he were as thin as they, he would be dead already.⁵⁶

As an ironical comment to this impression, it was Lok and his tribe that disappeared from the surface of the earth and the new men survived and multiplied thanks to this something that Lok could not see, and which was intelligence. The theme of the sickness of the species man reappears again at the end of *Pincher Martin*, when what is left of Christopher Hadley Martin proposes its view of man.

I will tell you what a man is. He goes on four legs till Necessity bends the front end upright and makes a hybrid of him. The finger-prints of those hands are about his spine and just above the rump for proof if you want it. He is a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with

⁵⁵ In W. Nelson's, *William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book*, The Odyssey Press, Inc., New York, 1963, p. 116.

⁵⁶ *The Inheritors*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1965, pp. 143-144.

a naked covering of parchment, with too little room for his teeth and a soft bulging skull like a bubble. But nature stirs a pudding there and sets a thunderstorm flickering inside the hardening globe, white, lambent lightning, a constant flash and tremble.⁵⁷

Lok's and Pincher's view seems to come very close to the view that the species man is an evolutionary failure. This view has had its proponents in the anthropological theory and it might be useful to mention it here in its most radical formulations as they are given in Max Scheler's book, *Man's Place in Nature*. The most radical view of man as a kind of a blind alley of "life" on Earth paraphrased by Scheler is of a disciple of Schopenhauer's, Paul Alsberg. I am mentioning it here not because I think that it is identical with the view expressed in the two quotations just given. Alsberg's view is interesting as an extreme limit to which such a train of thought might lead Golding, if it were developed consistently. Here is Scheler's summary of the view:

He has expanded Schopenhauer's doctrine by asserting that "the principle of humanity" consists exclusively in man's being capable of releasing his organs from the struggle for survival as an individual or as a species in favor of developing tools, language and concepts. The latter are explained in terms of the principle of canceling sensory organs and functions or in terms of Mach's principle of achieving the highest possible "economy" with respect to sensory contents, ... Language itself is conceived as a non-material tool whose purpose is to eliminate the work of the sensory organs. The cause of the origin of this "principle of humanity", this tendency of life to eliminate its organs and to put tools and symbols in place of organic functions — thus, the cause also for the growth of the human brain in a morphological and physiological sense — is, according to Alsberg, the particular defective organic adaptation of man to his environment: his lack, in other words, of those specific organic adaptations (grasping and climbing feet, claws, canine teeth and hairy fur) that are found among the primates, man's closest relatives. Thus, what is called "spirit" is for Alsberg nothing but a late surrogate for defective organic adaptation.⁵⁸

Pincher's idea that Necessity making man walk upright makes a hybrid of him, a freak robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked covering of parchment etc., echoes very faithfully what is said in this passage about man's defective organic adaptation. Even the passage explaining the growth of the human brain as caused by his defective organic adaption to environment is represented by "the soft bulging skull" and a "pudding inside the hardening globe".

⁵⁷ Pincher Martin, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1962, p. 190.

⁵⁸ M. Scheler, o. c., see note 6, Ch. III., pp. 58—59.

On the other hand, the tribe of the Neanderthals in *The Inheritors* is represented as not having been driven by necessity on this "wrong" course of defective development. Lok's people have got grasping and climbing feet, they have hairy skin, they have not acquired the use of language and abstract concepts, of tools and weapons. As a result of this, since the work of the sensory organs has not been eliminated by the use of language, concepts, and material tools, they have preserved very vivid sense-perceptions in terms of which only they could think, if prelogical "thinking" in terms of pictures is deserving of that name.

This limitation makes them unable to live outside the present moment. They cannot go very far into the past or into the future because they can count only on what is present to their senses. What is absent escapes their memory very quickly. They cannot think properly just because they cannot go out of what is present into the world of what is only possible, they are confined to the world of their sense-perceptions, to the immediate only.⁵⁹

These people living on the level of sense-perceptions are set against the real race of men who have developed the use of language, concepts and tools, and it is clearly shown that together with this ability for abstract thought the "diseased human nature" comes into existence, the nature of children in *Lord of the Flies*, the human nature of Pincher Martin, Sammy Mountjoy and Jocelin. It has become clear for the first time in *The Inheritors* that human knowledge, consciousness, and human evil are linked together for Golding or, to put it bluntly, that they are constitutive of human nature. Intelligence, even technical skill, come to be associated with evil in *The Inheritors*. After the thesis that evil is inherent in man has been "worked out" in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding has shifted attention to the analysis of the "principle of humanity" which is inseparable from evil.

⁵⁹ Ernst Cassirer in *An Essay on Man* says that the "difference between 'real' and 'possible' exists neither for beings below man nor for those above him. The beings below man are confined within the world of their sense perceptions".