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William Golding, *The World of Perception and the World of Cognition*

"Will to truth" do ye call it, ye wisest ones, that which impelleth you and maketh you ardent?

Will for the thinkableness of all being: thus do I call your will!

All being would ye *make* thinkable: for ye doubt with good reason whether it be already thinkable.

But it shall accomodate and bend itself to you! So willeth your will. Smooth shall it become and subject to the spirit, as its mirror and reflection.

F. Nietzsche,
Thus Spoke Zarathustra

In his second novel, *The Inheritors*, Golding has created a situation in which a group of not yet human Neanderthals meets a group of human beings. This situation if further used to define human nature by opposing it to the nature of the Neanderthals. Apart from the fact that the Neanderthals are described as not having discovered the use of tools and conceptual language, Golding has taken great pains to stress that they live on the level of sense-perceptions only, without having acquired the ability to interpret them and to understand their meaning.

Golding has achieved this by telling the greatest part of the story through Lok's eyes, a member of the Neanderthal people, using a technique very similar to the one William Faulkner used in the first section, "April Seventh, 1928", of *The Sound and the Fury*, telling his story through the defective consciousness of Benjy. Lok's uncomprehending description of a man of another race whose forehead was not hairy and who shot an arrow at him might serve as a good illustration of this procedure.

A head and a chest faced him, half-hidden. There were white bone things behind the leaves and hair. The man had white bone things above his eyes and under the mouth so that his face was longer than a face should be. The man turned sideways in the bushes and looked at Lok along his shoulder. A stick rose upright

and there was a lump of bone in the middle. Lok peered at the stick and the lump of bone and the small eyes in the bone things over the face. ... The stick began to grow shorter at both ends. Then it shot out to full length again.

The dead tree by Lok's ear acquired a voice.
"Clap!"

His ears twitched and he turned to the tree. By his face there had grown a twig...¹

To stress that the members of the Neanderthal people were using only their senses and not their brains, before giving another description of this objective sort, of men paddling a boat made of a log, Golding says,

Then the two people became nothing but eyes that looked and absorbed and were without thought.²

It strikes one as an attempt to exemplify Locke's thesis, *Nihil est in intellectu, quod antea non fuerit in sensu*, by showing that there are such people who confute Leibniz's emendation, *nisi intellectus ipse*. The "People" are described as really having nothing more than their sense-perceptions.

The technique Golding is using here is in its essence the same used by Faulkner. Benjy is, as well as Lok, only a point of perception. He does not describe events as being the centre towards which they are all related. Lok does not understand that he is being shot at. Benjy gives the same sort of un-comprehending description when he gets burned on the stove.

I put my hand out to where the fire had been.
'Catch him.' Dilsey said. 'Catch him back.'

My hand jerked back and I put it into mu mouth and Dilsey caught me. I could still hear the clock between my voice.³

In both Lok's and Benjy's descriptions things are endued with independent life and are active, whereas they themselves are merely parts of the whole picture. They see things hylzoistically, as if things were animate active beings.

Then he fell into the flowers, laughing, and I ran into the box. But when I tried to climb onto it it jumped away and hit me on the back of the head and my throat made a sound. It made the sound again and I stopped trying to get up, and it made the sound again and I began to cry.⁴

A similar description of Lok is given. He is drunk, hit on the face by his mate Fa, falls down to the ground.

¹ W. Golding, *The Inheritors*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1965, p. 106.

² *Ib.*, p. 114.

³ W. Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1961, p. 57.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 38.

He saw her right breast move, her arm come up, her open palm in the air, a palm somehow of importance that any moment now would become a thing he must attend to. Then the side of his face was struck by lightning that dazzled the world and the earth stood up and hit his right side a thunderous blow.⁵

This, however, is much more than a literary technique. It is a description of a being that has not got the discerning and organizing intellect. But that is just where the difference between Lok's People and Men comes in. It is clear from the outset that the People are innocent or, that they have not got the human nature of the intellectually far more advanced group that might be labeled *Homo Sapiens*. And, moreover, it is clear that *Homo Sapiens* possesses fear, is evil, tries to destroy Lok's People. Yet, the essential difference between the two peoples is that the one of them lives on the level of sense-perceptions, and the other on the level of intellect, consciousness, the use of language. One is ape-like, innocent, beyond good and evil, living in the present moment of their sense-perceptions, the other is, to use Alsberg's terminology, human, in possession of the "principle of humanity", the defective organic adaptation to environment, which has made them eliminate their organs and put tools and symbols in place of organic functions.

The most important characteristic which distinguishes the People from the real species man is that they are not alienated from nature. There is a number of indications for that. The first one is in the manner of narration which betrays the hylozoism of the People. The last quotation shows that when things are described through Lok's eyes it is felt that Lok is not the centre to which the events that happen to him are related. He is not a separate self, he has not yet made himself the centre of the world, is not, as it were, anthropocentric, but is one with the world. There is never an I, an Ego, that co-ordinates things and is the vanishing point of perspective. If he has a view of the world at all it is only implicit and hylozoistic.

The water was not awake like the river or the fall but asleep, spreading there to the river and waking up,...

The cliff leaned out as if looking for its own feet in the water.

"There will be more wood too. Will you not give the fire more to eat?"

... the water had risen so that many bushes stood with their feet in it.⁶

These are only a few examples of the descriptions that reveal a hylozoistic view of nature. They reveal that the people are

⁵ *The Inheritors*, p. 203.

⁶ *Ib.*, pp. 12, 25, 39, 99.

only one of the animate natural beings among the rest of the animate beings in Nature.

They live in an inseparable unity with Nature. They do not make tools or weapons, but simply use what comes to hand. This signifies, again, that they do not consider Nature to be a mass of inanimate matter waiting to be made use of for their human purposes. They still do not consider it an external object of their activity. They cannot think of felling down a tree to use it as a bridge, but make use of trees that have fallen down of themselves. They do not kill animals, but eat them when they find them dead. Nature, therefore, is not an alien object to them on which to impose, and which to use for, their own purposes. They do not have their separate human purposes, so they cannot think of imposing them on Nature. If Nature had any purposes, one could say that these were, at the same time, their purposes. They have not developed the attitude of stepping out of Nature and making use of it. The only difference between them and animals is that they have started using fire and so have made the first step in alienation from nature.

Both tools and weapons are implements of aggression, aggression towards Nature at first, and imply separation from it. Technical intelligence then, which culminates in modern science, and which turns the whole nature to the use of man is the first sign of human nature as separate from the wholeness of Nature.

The People have not yet become anthropocentric. They have not made themselves the centre, the purpose and the meaning of the world. They do not make use of the world but are a part of it and, as a consequence, "think" of nature in hylozoistic terms. The question "What is man?" in connection with them would be meaningless. It has got meaning only with man alienated from nature, the man "who has lost the feeling of being at home in the world".⁷ Where there is no humanity separate from nature there is no occasion for such a question.

One more example of the way in which Golding tries to convey this essential unity of the Neanderthal man with nature is that they make no distinction between their subjective states and the qualities of nature. When the oldest man in the group, Mal, has fallen into the water he feels cold but states objectively, "It is cold"; and when he is shaken by coughs the oldest woman says, "This is the cold of the water where the log was".⁸

⁷ M. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, Fontana Library, London, 1966, p. 192.

⁸ *The Inheritors*, p. 34.

Death is a thing they are reconciled with and which they accept as a matter of course. It is a return back to earth, a female Goddess that gave birth to all life. As everything comes out of her belly, everything returns back to it. When Lok dies at the end of the book there is no one of his tribe to bury him. In his last moments he is described in the third person as a scene in the life of nature, as a part of it, as a "creature", as "it" which lies down by the ashes of a dead fire and seems to grow into the earth. In the morning a wind of dawn scatters the ashes "across the motionless body". Individual death is just an episode in the life of nature. Fear of death and reflection about death come into existence only with the being that has a self separate from nature to die.

So much for the unity with nature. Next is the internal unity of the group. With the Neanderthal people described in *The Inheritors* there is no self separate from the group. First of all they live in a kind of mutual emotional participation in everything that happens to a single one of them. When Mal fell into the water and came out in shivers,

They crouched and rubbed their bodies against him, they wound their arms into a lattice of protection and comfort. . . . Liku wormed her way into the group and pressed her belly against his calves. . . . The group of people crouched round Mal and shared his shivers.⁹

The strings that tie them together are so strong that Lok, who has gone away to look for one of them that has disappeared, cannot stand the feeling of separation which means death, since it is only the whole group that is one individual. They know and understand each other by miming each other's actions and in this way identifying themselves with the other. That means that their knowledge of each other is immediate, that they turn into the other through this identification, that they feel in the same way as the other feels. So they do not have any need for communication through words, which is a way of mediation, an indirect way of communicating which presupposes separateness of the individuals. They do not have any need for mediation since they achieve knowledge of others through identification with them. When Lok follows a member of the other tribe he knows his intentions by following his track and repeating his movements. He knows him through identification.

There built up in Lok's head a picture of the man, not by reasoned deduction but because in every place the scent told him — do this! As the smell of cat would evoke in him a cat-stealth

⁹ *Ib.*, p. 21.

of avoidance and a cat-snarl; as the sight of Mal tottering up the slope had made the people parody him, so now the scent turned Lok into the thing that had gone before him. He was beginning to know the other without understanding how it was that he knew.¹⁰

This knowledge through identification, without the need for any means of mediation, makes him feel torn away from the unity with his people.

All at once Lok was frightened because she had not seen him. The old woman knew so much; yet she had not seen him. He was cut off and no longer one of the people; as though his communion with the other had changed him he was different from them and they could not see him. He had no words to formulate these thoughts but he felt his difference and invisibility as a cold wind that blew on his skin. The other had tugged at the strings that bound him to Fa and Mal and Liku and the rest of the people. The strings were not the ornament of life but its substance. If they broke, a man would die.¹¹

This substantial union which is necessary for their life is emphasized by a description of the way the people communicate. As they live on the level of sense-perceptions and have not got the use of conceptual language they have no need for real communication which is mediation. What their communication is, is an automatic sharing of pictures.

Quite without warning, all the people shared a picture inside their heads. This was a picture of Mal, seeming a little removed from them, illuminated, sharply defined in all his gaunt misery. They saw not only Mal's body but the slow pictures that were waxing and waning in his head. One above all was displacing the others, dawning through the cloudy arguments and doubts and conjectures until they knew what it was he was thinking with such dull conviction.

"To-morrow or the day after, I shall die."¹²

And, finally, comes the question why do they live on the level of sense-perceptions? This seems to be a consequence of their unity with nature and unity among themselves. Their sense-perceptions are a result of their passive attitude towards the world. Knowledge through language and concepts is operational, is a means of dominating nature, is a tool. The people, who are in a complete unity with nature, have no use for conceptual language, they accept passively whatever comes their way. If one were to make a brief description of them one might say that they have no self separate from the group (this makes communication automatic), and no self separate from nature; or, in different terms, that the individual is one with

¹⁰ *Ib.*, p. 77.

¹¹ *Ib.*, p. 78.

¹² *Ib.*, pp. 38—39.

the group and the group one with nature.¹³ They are so completely a part of nature that their sex is neither a source of pleasure or a means of establishing unity with the other. It is simply what it is on the animal level.

If such a creature were made to understand and interpret its sensations this would mean that it has learnt to relate all its sensations to a centre, to a self, an Ego separate from nature, that it has stepped out of nature and has learnt, through interpretation, to relate and to subject all things (no longer animate beings in nature) to himself. That would mean alienation from nature, birth of human nature or, in theological terms, the fall of man.

This life in unity with nature makes their sense-perceptions far more vivid than ours. They are both more vivid and more beautiful. One might say that the people live on the aesthetic level if the word is taken both in its old and modern sense; the old one meaning, relating to sensation or perception, and the modern one, dealing with the beautiful. That their perception is more vivid and beautiful than ours goes without saying, since we use our sense-perceptions as signs to convey meaning and disregard the quality of the sign. Their purely aesthetic impact is lost with us because we use them for symbols, we are primarily interested in their meaning.

On the other hand, Golding's Neanderthal Man would be simply a disinterested point of perception in nature, a completely selfless being that would, if it did not have to eat in order to live, just sit passively and contemplate the vivid and beautiful sense-data passing in their procession through this point of perception it is. To be a point of perception would mean that such a creature would lack its own point of view, or any point of view for that matter. It would not be *homo mensura*. It would lack the attitude which would make it the criterion of all things.

This, in the nature of things, may only be an ideal construction. These people would be the creatures without independent will of their own. Therefore Golding has made a compromise between the people's animality and aesthetic perception, but in so far as there is aesthetic perception it is here to emphasize the absence of individual will.

¹³ Golding's people in *The Inheritors* have a similar attitude to nature as Cassirer's primitive man has, except that they are not organized in a society, "To him nature and society are not only interconnected by the closest bonds; they form a coherent and indistinguishable whole. No clear-cut line of demarcation separates the two realms. Nature itself is nothing but a great society — the society of life" (E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1966, Ch. VIII, p. 110).

Living beings dwell in their expectations rather than in their senses. If they are ever to see what they see, they must first in a manner stop living; they must suspend the will, as Schopenhauer put it;¹⁴

These, however, are the creatures that still have not developed the technical, purposive relation to things.

(Besides, it can be shown that even genetically, in human development, the technical does not come first in time, and what in its late form is called the aesthetic does not come second.)¹⁵

If in *The Inheritors* we had a description of the lost age of innocence we would have here an instance of cultural primitivism. But this does not seem to be the case. As described by Golding, this creature in the state of innocence is not yet human. On the other hand, as soon as there is a human being with a distinct human nature it is clear that it is alienated from nature. But then, it is only through alienation that the race of man comes into being or, in theological terms, only through the fall. There was no man before the fall. What Golding's People may represent is a frame of reference to define human nature by.

The New Men encountered by the People are the real human race defined in contradistinction to the People. They use tools and weapons. They make boats and kill animals. They are alienated from nature and make use of it, they try to impose their own will on it. They have made themselves the centre and the purpose of the world. They have developed conceptual language, but together with their intellectual development there comes into being, inevitably, their self-indulgent destructive nature. They have fear in themselves, the result of their own nature, and they externalize it into the People and try to destroy them. The mechanism described in *Lord of the Flies* repeats itself. Even the realization that one cannot get rid of fear by killing people into whom evil has been projected, that this something evil and destructive is too indefinite to be attacked directly, appears.

They were as different from the group of bold hunters and magicians who had sailed up the river towards the fall as a soaked feather is from a dry one. Restlessly he turned the ivory in his hands. What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?¹⁶

¹⁴ G. Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1955, Ch. IX., p. 68.

¹⁵ M. Buber, o. c., see note 7, pp. 216—217.

¹⁶ *The Inheritors*, p. 231.

The first realization that there was something wrong with the New Men comes to Lok while he is watching them, hidden in the foliage of a tree he has climbed together with his mate Fa. The New Men got drunk on mead and were revelling. A pair is indulged in sexual intercourse below Lok's hiding place, and this intercourse, being a fight and a consumption, and pursued for the sake of pleasure, marks its difference from the simple natural mating of animals and the People, and differentiates man from the creatures of nature, leaving a taste of sin and guilt behind.

Their fierce and wolflike battle was ended. They had fought it seemed against each other, consumed each other rather than lain together... Now, the fighting done and peace restored between them, or whatever state it was that was restored, they played together. Their play was complicated and engrossing. There was no animal on the mountain or the plain, no lithe and able creature of the bushes or forest that had the subtlety and imagination to invent games like these, ... They hunted down pleasure as the wolves will follow and run down horses...¹⁷

It is Max Scheler who connects hedonism with degeneration.

The instinct that is liberated from its fate [of subservience to the species, M. M.] appears, to a certain extent, among the higher animals and, at the same time, opens up an horizon of excess. It becomes a potent source of pleasure independent of the needs and necessities of life as a whole. ... If they [the drives, M. M.] are used by man primarily as a source of pleasure... we are dealing with a late and decadent phenomenon of life. ... The "pleasure principle", therefore, is not an original phenomenon, ... but a consequence of an intensified associative intelligence.¹⁸

Golding is consistent with this view not only in so far as sex is concerned. The People eat and drink to satisfy hunger and thirst, the New Men eat and drink to excess. If this view were pursued to its ultimate consequences one would end in Ludwig Klages's view of the relation of "spirit" to "life" (and Klages equates "spirit" with "intelligence", "ego", and "will").

According to Klages, spirit and life are not complementary principles, but spirit is engaged, from the beginning and by its nature, in a struggle with life and with all psychic life of simple, automatic expressiveness. In this struggle, spirit appears as the principle which is more and more destructive of life and soul in the course of history. Thus history appears as decadence, as a record of a progressive disease of life as represented in man.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ib.*, pp. 176—177.

¹⁸ M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, pp. 28—29.

¹⁹ *Ib.*, p. 85.

Although it would be going too far to equate Golding's view of man with Klages's it seems right to draw attention to the fact that Golding is fond of using similar medical imagery in connection with human nature and the human condition. What seems even more important is the fact that in *The Inheritors* it is every single property of *Homo Sapiens* that differentiates him from animals, that makes him a destructive being.

What Lok has seen from his place in the tree may very likely be Golding's childhood experience. In the autobiographical story, *The Ladder and the Tree*, he explains how he used to escape from his fears and from the incomprehension of adults up a chestnut tree in their garden, and how once he saw a pair of lovers who were, after being watched by him for some time, startled away by a passer by.²⁰ What Golding saw from his chestnut tree Lok, with details added, saw from his treetop. And in *The Spire* again, Jocelin, in a way, repeats his experience, looking down from the spire, which he likens to a treetop, surveying his parish, and suddenly having a vision of evil containing the elements of what he has just seen. As the tree is a sacred secluded place to the little boy so the spire is an island in a corrupted world to Jocelin.

For the world is not like that. The world is a huddle of noseless men grinning upward, there are gallows everywhere, the blood of childbirth never ceases to flow, nor sweat in the furrow, the brothels are down there and drunk men lie in the gutter. There is no good thing in all this circle but the great house, the ark, the refuge, ...²¹

The two levels of man, perception and innocence, and knowledge, consciousness and guilt, are constantly present in the rest of Golding's novels in various disguises. From *The Inheritors* onwards it has been made clear that it is only through knowledge, consciousness and guilt that human nature comes into being. Consciousness of the self as separate from nature is the first step in alienation, or the fall. Developing intelligence which subjects the rest of nature to the human will is the logical consequence of it. Anthropocentrism and egotism are closely related. When "the preservation of the self and its imposition on the universe, if need be by destroying whatever is in the way"²² becomes the sole essential value in

²⁰ W. Golding, "The Ladder and the Tree", in *The Hot Gates*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, p. 171.

²¹ W. Golding, *The Spire*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1965, pp. 106—107.

²² M. Kinkead-Weekes and I. Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, p. 107.

the world, human nature has come to the apex of its destructiveness.

What is in cognition, in conceptual knowledge that alienates man from the world? First, it requires stepping out of nature, becoming an independent ego. Second, it is a fact that through conceptual knowledge of nature, although it helps man to master it, man loses direct, immediate contact with it, which was still preserved on the level of perception. Conceptual knowledge becomes a pattern of its own which is a mediator between man and nature, and in this way prevents his unity with it. Apart from alienating him from nature, it distorts his vision in its attempt to reduce the world of possible experience to an easily understandable scheme.

Giving names to things is, in these terms, a nihilistic act. It destroys our immediate relation to the thing named, prevents us to see it as it is in its "thusness" as a phenomenologist would say, turns our attention to the word, and to the pattern of words, verbalizes our experience, makes us live in the world of words, not in the real world.

In order to emphasize the unnaturalness of the use of words and the lack of any relation between words and things, Golding made Pincher Martin name his rock with the names of London squares and streets. He has made the rock familiar to him in that way, imposed his own will on it.

"I am busy surviving. I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. Some people would be incapable of understanding the importance of that. What is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it to mine. I will impose my routine on it, my geography. I will tie it down with names. . . . I will use my brain as a delicate machine-tool to produce the results I want".²³

But by imposing names on things one goes away from things and spoils his faculty of immediate and innocent perception which is identification with them. Golding almost explains it in a passage in a later novel. At the beginning of *Free Fall* Sammy Mountjoy, who relates the story, and his friend Johnny, stole into a private garden. The author makes a point of saying that they were "points of perception, wandering in paradise",²⁴ that they still did not have the alienated human nature. Sammy, just before leaving the garden saw a tree with these unadulterated eyes.

²³ W. Golding, *Pincher Martin*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1962, pp. 86—87.

²⁴ W. Golding, *Free Fall*, Faber Paper Covered Editions, London, 1965, p. 45.

There was one tree between me and the lawns, the stillest tree that ever grew, a tree that grew when no one was looking. The trunk was huge and each branch splayed up to a given level; and there, the black leaves floated out like a level of oil on water. Level after horizontal level these leaves cut across the splaying branches and there was a crumpled, silver-paper depth, an ivory quiet beyond them. Later, I should have called the tree a cedar and passed on, but then, it was an apocalypse.²⁵

That the tree grew when no one was looking, is important. No one could have trapped it with human names. The tree a child prefers, says Golding in *The Ladder and the Tree*,

is rooted in a garden or among houses. . . . Everything else has been shaped, touched, used and understood, plumbed, by powerful adults. But a tree lifts its fork above them, ramifies in secret.²⁶

After the tree has been given a name, the name becomes a screen which prevents the apocalypse, the revelation of the tree. It isolates man.

It is a property of human thought to impose an unnatural pattern on nature. Unnatural because a separate human purpose is imposed on nature through it. Pincher Martin is made to recognize this when trying to attract attention of anyone who might rescue him, by making a pattern of a cross on his rock out of seaweed.

Seaweed, to impose an unnatural pattern on nature, a pattern that would cry out to any rational beholder — Look! Here is thought. Here is man!²⁷

This, at the same time, is for Golding an ironic definition of all attempts of man's proud thought.

Even now, not in the hypothetical past of *The Inheritors*, but in the late teens of the twentieth century, there are still such persons to be found who live on the level of perception and innocence. It is Sammy Mountjoy's "Ma" in *Free Fall*, for example. She is in very many respects made on the pattern of Lok and Fa. In the same way as Sammy, but only as he was in his early childhood, she was "a neutral point of observation, a gap in the middle".²⁸ The lack of an interpreting and thinking self in infant Sammy is given in an appropriate comparison: "empty as a soap bubble but with a rainbow of colour and excitement round me".²⁹ In the same way, in order to describe

²⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 45—46.

²⁶ *O. c.*, see note 20, p. 170.

²⁷ *Pincher Martin*, p. 109.

²⁸ *Free Fall*, p. 17.

²⁹ *Ib.*, p. 17.

Ma "there are only the things that surrounded her to be pieced together and displayed with the gap that was Ma existing mutely in the middle".³⁰

Ma is beyond good and evil. "She is the unquestionable, the not good, not bad, not kind, not bitter".³¹ Above all, she is in no need of communication, whereas to communicate is the passion and despair of Sammy Mountjoy.

But Ma was different. She had some secret, known to the cows, perhaps, or the cat on the rug, some quality that rendered her independent of understanding. She was content with contact. It was her life.³²

That communication is not her problem, that she does not feel the loneliness of Sammy Mountjoy is emphasized by the description of what sex and love might have meant to her. To separate and lonely selves, what human beings are through their nature, love is an attempt at union. Not for Ma.

She did not have sexual connection for that implies an aseptic intercourse, a loveless, joyless refinement of pleasure . . . She did not make love, for I take that to be a passionate attempt to confirm that the wall which parted them is down. . . . No. She was a creature. . . . Her casual intercourse must have been to her what his works are to a real artist — themselves and nothing more. They had no implication.³³

Golding makes it clear that today such a creature would be classed as subnormal, in the same way in which the Neanderthaler appeared to Wells as an ogre, but what we get from his description is a happy innocent creature living in paradise. It is not only that Ma is described as an innocent selfless creature, a gap in the middle, but the little slum where she lived, Rotten Row, is described as Paradise. There is even something that may be taken as an allusion to *Paradise Lost*. To leave Rotten Row is to lose paradise. Once, a policeman came to fetch away two petty local troublemakers from Rotten Row. They tried to escape and ran into another policeman, who caught them immediately, "small men, easily grabbed in either hand".³⁴ The non-human majesty of the policeman and the expression, "easily grabbed in either hand", recall the situation and the lines,

. whereat
In either hand the hastening Angel caught
Our lingering parents,

³⁰ *Ib.*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ib.*, p. 15.

³² *Ib.*, p. 10.

³³ *Ib.*, pp. 14—15.

³⁴ *Ib.*, p. 22.

Rotten Row and early childhood are paradise lost for Sammy Mountjoy.

Free Fall is more than any other of Golding's novels centred on the theme of communication. It is written in the first person, in the manner of the modern confessional novel. Golding's predecessors in this genre are Dostoyevsky, Gide, Sartre, Camus, his contemporary Saul Bellow. Sammy Mountjoy states at the beginning of the book that he wants to understand his life. This requires a display of the whole of his life in front of him. That is one of the reasons why he writes his story. The other, the most important reason is the will of his self to communicate. The feeling of loneliness and the wish to communicate are just one way of confessing man's alienation from nature, his fall. To have to communicate at all declares separation, singleness, self-centredness, human nature in a word. It is not what is visible of Sammy Mountjoy that wants to communicate. It is his inward self, his human nature.

It is the unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him, always awake, ... that hopes hopelessly to understand and to be understood. Our loneliness is the loneliness not of the cell or the castaway; it is the loneliness of that dark thing that sees as at the atom furnace by reflection, feels by remote control and hears only words phoned to it in a foreign tongue. To communicate is our passion and our despair.³⁵

This loneliness, which was not the problem of the People in *The Inheritors*, and which had nothing to do with Ma, is something that is peculiar to human nature. This loneliness is the loneliness of the necessity of mediation. We do not communicate through mutual identification but through the mediation of words, which means in a tongue foreign to our experience since words are only mediators of experience, not the thing itself. It would be a wonder if we could understand each other through the "twenty modes of change, filter and translation between us".³⁶

This is probably one of the first pessimistic realizations of conscious childhood, the realization of the impossibility of communication because of the difference of worlds in which people live. In his essay, *The Ladder and the Tree* Golding mentions an episode from his childhood. His father wanted him to learn Latin. It was a *conditio sine qua non* of his career. On his own part, he had a reason out of his childhood's world, a blot of ink has blotted the word "Latin" out of an adventure book of his, that made it clear to him that he would never be able to learn Latin. But who else could understand his reason?

³⁵ *Ib.*, p. 8.

³⁶ *Ib.*

My father was generous, loving, saintly in his attitude to his family. He would give up anything for us gladly. He was understanding, too. His human stature grows, the more I think of him. If we could not meet at this point it was no failing of his. It seems more like a defect in the nature of human communication.³⁷

Sammy Mountjoy describes an experience of similar order. He was caught in the act of spitting on the altar. He did it for all sorts of reasons a child would do such a thing, the main one being to show other children his daring. He was taken to be interrogated by the parson.

I knew I should never grow up to be as tall and majestic, knew that he had never been a child, knew we were different creations each in our appointed and changeless place. I knew that the questions would be right and pointless and unanswerable because asked out of the wrong world.³⁸

Later on in his life he tries to turn sex into a means of establishing immediate communication with another human being. It is used in an attempt to escape the boundaries of one's own identity which is, from the start, doomed to failure. The lonely self wants identity with another, knowledge through identity. The same kind of knowledge which Lok had of Mal's pain and cold and of a member of the other tribe when he followed his track. But Sammy is neither Lok nor Ma, he is no longer "a gap in the middle", and the only communication he can have is through mediation, "words are our only communication".³⁹ He wanted to circumvent this inability through sex and love.

"I said I loved you. . . — I want to be with you and in you and on you and round you — I want fusion and identity — I want to understand and be understood — oh God, Beatrice, Beatrice, I love you — I want to be you!"⁴⁰

But there was no means for this identification simply because he, Sammy, did not want to get rid of his own self. When Beatrice finally complied to his wish he did not get any nearer to her.

"I was not wise enough to know that a sexual sharing was no way of bringing us together".⁴¹

At that time, there was still a need in Sammy Mountjoy for communication, which turned later on only into a compul-

³⁷ *The Ladder and the Tree*, pp. 173—174.

³⁸ *Free Fall*, p. 66.

³⁹ *Ib.*, p. 90.

⁴⁰ *Ib.*, p. 105.

⁴¹ *Ib.*, p. 118.

sion to satisfy his pleasure-seeking self. Beatrice, a name that awakens associations with Dante and spiritual life, is no longer called Beatrice but only Miss. Ifor. She was there to be used by Sammy if it pleased him and then to be left.

"I no longer desired to understand her, no longer believed that she had some secret".⁴²

He became completely egotistical. After he has watched a cat that was run over by a car and screaming, he simply ran away to put the thing out of his mind. He did the same thing with distressed Beatrice.

For, after all, in this bounded universe, I said, where nothing is certain but my own existence, what has to be cared for is the quiet and the pleasure of this sultan.⁴³

Due to his education in sciences he came to believe that man is the highest, his own creator, and the conclusion he drew out of this premise was completely amoral.

Mine was an amoral, a savage place in which man was trapped without hope, to enjoy what he could while it was going.⁴⁴

There is at least some reason why communication is impossible in the constitutional self-centredness of human beings.

Sammy Mountjoy represents a human being that has come to realize this self-centredness and, in an ecstatic experience, succeeded to get rid of it for a short time.

Pincher Martin, on the other hand, represents a character who wants to preserve, to the bitter end, even after actual death, this self-centred personality. The only world he lives in actually is his self-centred destructive nature. His remembered relationship with Mary, a girl who resembles Beatrice in *Free Fall*, is instructive. It is not communication what he wants to achieve through sex, it is the destruction of anything other than one's self. It is the self-contained recalcitrance of otherness that intrigues him. He works up in himself a passion for Mary not because he loves her but because he realizes that in her otherness she is independent of him. He tries to rape her, which act has for him the meaning of mastering and subduing, he wants to cross the limits of other things, to turn everything into his own identity. It is not only enough for Pincher to preserve his identity, he wants to consume the whole world into himself, to impose his own self on the whole universe.

⁴² *Ib.*, p. 127.

⁴³ *Ib.*, p. 128.

⁴⁴ *Ib.*, p. 226.

His unnaturalness is his consciousness and his belief that he is the only thing in the world or, at least, the only important thing. He could not suffer that there should be something different than he, something out of his control, and therefore wanted to subject everything to his own will.

His first attempt to do this is by giving familiar names to his imaginary rock in the sea, "I am netting down this rock with names and taming it". He wanted to impose his own geography on it, names of London streets, because he wanted to adapt it to his own ways and not be adapted to its ways. By using words and notions familiar to him he tried to destroy the natural otherness of the rock. So the use of words and concepts is taken here not only as preventing immediate vision of things named, of nature, but as destructive of nature, as a nihilistic activity of thought, by means of which we make all the things known and knowable through familiar names, and in doing this destroy their otherness, their intrinsic quality. Once a thing has been given a familiar name, it is the familiar name to which we recur later on, not the thing.

Immediately after the passage that speaks of netting down and taming the rock with names, Golding comes to what seems to be a very appropriate image, the image of eating. Eating and digestion are considered by Pincher as universal cosmic functions. In the same way in which he wanted to subdue the rock to himself, by giving it names and so destroying its original otherness, he wanted to eat anyone who was independent of him, and destroy the person's recalcitrant otherness by digesting him into his own substance.

By associating the function of giving names and imposing concepts on things and the function of eating and digesting, Golding hints at the digestive function of thought, which is nihilistic because, in a manner of digestion, it turns anything it grasps into its own substance as it were, its own identity.

The whole business of eating was peculiarly significant. They made a ritual of it on every level, the Fascists as a punishment, the religious as a rite, the cannibal either as a ritual or as a medicine or as a superbly direct declaration of conquest. Killed and eaten. And of course eating with the mouth was only the gross expression of what was a universal process. You could eat with your cock, or with your fists or with your voice.⁴⁵

And Pincher Martin exclaims in his struggle for survival, which is actually the struggle to preserve his identity,

I'll live if I have to eat everything else on this bloody box!⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Pincher Martin*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ *Ib.*, p. 159.

The box stands for the whole world here. Earlier in the book there is an allusion to the story of the Chinese box. The story that the Chinese used to bury a fish in a tin box. After some time maggots eat the fish and then each other until at the end there is only one big maggot left that has eaten all the rest of them. The Chinese dig out the box and eat the maggot. Maggots arouse in Pincher, as an association, the remembrance of Hamlet's talk with Rosenkranz and Guildenstern about how all the world is a prison and Denmark one of the worst dungeons in it, and he substitutes the tin box for the world, making it a place where everybody eats everybody.

"Oh, the maggots. Yes, the maggots. They haven't finished yet. Only got to the fish. It's a lousy job crawling round the inside of a tin box and Denmark's one of the worst..."⁴⁷

In the same way in which eating everything in the world is the last resort to preserve identity, Pincher boasts to have, in his intelligence, the weapon of survival.

"Weapons. I have things that I can use."

Intelligence. Will like a last ditch. Will like a monolith. Survival. Education, a key to all patterns, itself able to impose them, to create. Consciousness in a world asleep. The dark, invulnerable centre that was certain of its own sufficiency.⁴⁸

Pincher Martin, even after he has died, wanted to preserve his personality since it was the only thing in the world that mattered to him. So he tried to achieve the impossible, to keep inventing his own existence and the world he lived in, using the patterns of thought that constituted his education. But these are clearly shown to be only patterns of thought, and not the real world, at the end of the last but one chapter of the book.

Pincher Martin, unlike Mal and Lok in *The Inheritors*, "refused the selfless act of dying". He is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the alienated human nature that wants to persist in its alienation, and to destroy everything else for the sake of its persistence. The self-centredness of Pincher Martin, which has led him to refuse to die even after the actual physical death has taken place, has a very interesting model in Eustace Barnack's refusal to die after he has actually died, in Aldous Huxley's novel *Time Must Have a Stop*. Eustace Barnack refuses to forsake his personality and to merge into unity with the "Order of Things". Pincher refuses to die into Heaven for the same reason, the necessity to forsake his identity. Both

⁴⁷ *Ib.*, pp. 135—136.

⁴⁸ *Ib.*, p. 163.

authors, although they use different means to express it, wanted to emphasize that the insistence to live in the bounds of human nature and personality, the will to strengthen this personality leads to isolation and unhappiness and is to blame for all the evils of this world.⁴⁹

It is interesting to note how the two authors agree as to human nature. Huxley has a passage in *After Many a Summer* in which he gives exactly the same reasons why the attempts to start Utopian communities have always failed as Golding gives, namely, that the organizers were "unduly optimistic about human beings".⁵⁰ The following passage, for example, might be signed by Golding.

No human society can become conspicuously better than it is now, unless it contains a fair proportion of individuals who know that their humanity isn't the last word and who consciously attempt to transcend it. That is why one should be profoundly pessimistic about the things most people are optimistic about — such as applied science, and social reform, and human nature as it is in the average man or woman.⁵¹

Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall* is the first of Golding's characters who realizes this need to transcend his human nature at least by forsaking it temporarily. The book begins with Sammy's wish to get rid of all the systems of thought into which he has tried to squeeze his experience. He begins with the knowledge that they are foreign to experience, that they come from the outside. He wants to do the opposite of what Pincher Martin does, i. e. not to give names to things, but to throw them away and to confront once again experience as it is.

I have hung all systems on the wall like a row of useless hats. They do not fit. They come in from outside, they are suggested patterns, some dull and some of great beauty.⁵²

In other words, he wants to get back to the stage of simple sense-perceptions, of the time when he was a child, a point

⁴⁹ *Pincher Martin* may at the same time be likened to a short story by Jack London, *To Build a Fire*, but with a difference. The story is a description of an attempt at survival in freezing cold somewhere in the wilderness of Alaska. Jack London gives a very detailed description of one man's efforts to build a fire to save himself from freezing. But the author's aim in the story was to give an actual picture from life, whereas Golding wanted only to borrow some life for his idea from the detailed description of the fight for the bodily survival in the Atlantic.

⁵⁰ A. Huxley, *After Many a Summer*, Penguin Books, London, 1961, p. 196.

⁵¹ *Ib.*, p. 198.

⁵² *O. c.*, p. 6.

of perception wandering in paradise, and when he had an apocalypse of what he would later have called a cedar tree. What he wanted now was just to get rid of that name to be able to see with innocent eyes again. This required getting rid of one's self-centred human nature which he did not even recognize as such. But the recognition was given to him by Dr. Halde who promised to show him what he was. After he had experienced what his nature was like, in his solitary confinement in a POW camp, and achieved a kind of ecstatic state in which he could again see things as they were, simply because his nature was no longer in his way, he was able to let it die even though he was physically alive. Again, he did exactly the reverse of what Pincher Martin achieved.

I raised my dead eyes, desiring nothing, accepting all things and giving all created things away. The paper wrappings of use and language dropped from me. Those crowded shapes extending up into the air and down into the rich earth, those deeds of far space and deep earth were aflame at the surface and daunting by right of their own natures though a day before I should have disguised them as trees.⁵³

Now one remembers that at the beginning of the book Sammy has had a revelation of a tree and has remarked, after its description, "Later, I should have called the tree a cedar and passed on". Now, at the end of the book, he makes the opposite remark after having passed through a considerable period of life during which clear vision was obliterated by his human nature.

Immediately after he has passed through this experience he theorises about it. His vision formed "an order of things" which rested on the long forgotten relationship of man to man, which was its substance and which was thrown away by us. Criticism of nineteenth-century views is implicit here.

The brilliance of our political vision and the profundity of our scientific knowledge had enabled us to dispense with this substance. It had not been perceptible in the laboratory test-tube when we performed our simple qualitative analysis. It had caught no votes, it had not been suggested as a remedy for war, . . . This substance was a kind of vital morality, not the relationship of a man to remote posterity nor even to a social system, but the relationship of individual man to individual man.⁵⁴

Sammy Mountjoy came to realize that what constituted his interior identity was his human nature which he was able to recognize in his vision. But if it were not for this vision he

⁵³ *Ib.*, p. 186.

⁵⁴ *Ib.*, p. 189.

might have been a man who lived contentedly enough with his own nature.

But now to live with such a thing was unendurable.⁵⁵

He even expresses a tentative opinion that this nature must in a way die, "for must not complete death be to get out of the way of that shining, singing cosmos and let it shine and sing?"⁵⁶

Anthropocentrism and scientific systematization of facts have led us to the disaster of the second world war, suggests Golding. His message is that we should get rid of Pincher's and our own attitude towards life, inherited from the nineteenth century, and open ourselves to experience.

We stand then, on the shore, not as our Victorian fathers stood, lassoing phenomena with Latin names, listing, docketing and systematizing. Belsen and Hiroshima have gone some way towards teaching us humility. We would take help and a clue from anywhere we could. It is not the complete specimen for the collector's cabinet that excites us. It is the fragment, the hint. . . . We know nothing. We look daily at the appalling mystery of plain stuff. We stand where any upright food-gatherer has stood, on the edge of our unconscious, and hope, perhaps, for the terror and excitement of the print of a single foot.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Ib.*, p. 190.

⁵⁶ *Ib.*

⁵⁷ W. Golding, "In My Ark", in *The Hot Gates*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, p. 105.