Society’s Corruption

William Golding wrote his novel Lord of the Flies in 1954 based off of his idea that humans are born naturally evil and it is rules and laws that stop us from being truly evil. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Genevan philosopher from the 18th Century strongly disagreed with Golding. Rousseau’s theory is that humans are born good and it is society that corrupts us and makes us evil. Many people around the world agree with Golding and Rousseau but several movies, books and articles as well as scientific studies prove Rousseau’s theory to be true. **It is the pressures put on humans by society that corrupts us and makes us evil, we are taught that violence and fear are acceptable by other members of society and are expected to follow in this path. No human is born naturally evil, we are merely taught to believe that we are.**

In Golding’s book, *Lord of the Flies* the stranded boys establish a democracy with the main focus to get off the island. They boys recognize how important is to have rules and note that they are not savages with Ralph saying, “We’ve got to have rules and obey them. After all, we’re not savages” (Golding, 42). They elect Ralph as chief and decide that a conch that they found will be their symbol for democracy and whoever is holding it is allowed to speak. The boys know that they are indeed civilized and are not savages and all work together in order to get off the island. As time progresses, Jack, Ralph’s runner up as chief gets frustrated with the democracy and starts his own tribe. Jack takes advantage of his power and the so called ‘beastie’ on the island to threaten the other boys to join his tribe; all while Ralph and his friend Piggy are attempting to find a way off the island. Jack only gains this way of thinking due to to the way he was taught to act while growing up during an atomic war, Jack is taught that fear and violence is acceptable and uses it to his advantage. An older boy on the island, Rodger, is found throwing rocks at some of the littluns on the island but intentionally missing due to the fact that his “arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him” (Golding, 87) he knows deep down that it would be wrong to actually hit the boys with the rocks even if there was no one of importance around him. Eventually Rodger joins Jack’s tribe and ends up actually aiming at the boys he is throwing rocks at because after joining the tribe and seeing the savagery that they have adopted he, as well adopts it due to the pressures put on him by the other boys on the island. A majority of the boys on the island join Jacks tribe, not because they are natural savages but instead because of Jack’s autocratic type of ruling and the pressures that the society puts on them that turns the boys in to savages.

In the movie Mean Girls, directed by Mark Waters, young Cady Heron moves to the United States after living in Africa for the last 12 years of her life. Cady has spent her entire life giving to the people around her but when Cady gets to high school she sees the social hierarchy and is invited to join The Plastics. The Plastics, as described in the film, are the most popular girls at North Shore High School due to their use of fear to assert their dominance over the entire school. The Plastics are evil girls who thrive off of other peoples self hatred and contribute to their fellow students feelings of self loathing. When Cady joins The Plastics she meets Regina George, Gretchen Wieners, and Karen Smith. These girls have very strict rules to keep each other to the standards of The Plastics. Cady involves herself with the plastics as she believes that they are nice girls who like her for her but as time goes on and Cady spends more time with the girls she learns how cruel they are to each other and others around the school. Cady creates a plan with her friend Janis and decides to pretend to be a Plastic but ends up actually becoming just as rude, judgmental and evil as them. Cady believes that she has no other choice then to continue being friends with The Plastics because of the pressures they put on her to stay in the group. Janis, after realizing that Cady has truly become jut like the Plastics tells Cady that shes “not pretending anymore” (Waters). Janis realizes that Cady has only become an evil girl due to the circumstances she was put in but still does not like the situation. Cady Heron’s story proves Rousseau’s theory as she was born a genuinely good human being but when exposed to the corrupted society that is our world, she becomes a more evil person.

One may argue that a scientific experiment such as the *Stanford Prison Experiment* proves Rousseau’s theory to be wrong and instead support Golding’s theory that all humans are naturally evil. This experiment showcases several people who willingly agreed to do the experiment to study the development of norms, roles and societal expectations in a prison setting. Volunteers were randomly selected to be playing the part of either a prisoner or a guard and as time progressed they found themselves getting very violent and aggressive to the other group. Many believe that once being put in this setting, the volunteers stopped caring for rules and laws and their true evilness came out. The experiment actually shows the affect of societal norms and expectations, these people did not act as savages because that is who they truly are but instead because that is what they were told people in prison act like. The people involved in the experiment were merely playing a role that society tells us to be true.

Ultimately, Golding’s theory that humans are naturally evil has been proven as wrong and Rousseau’s theory has been proven to be true. Although some humans may inevitably become evil it is not because they were born that way. Society teaches humans to be evil by corrupting the minds of those around us to conform to societal norms. Rousseau’s theory can be proven true via several different sources specifically novels and movies such as *Lord of the Flies* and *Mean Girls* showing that humans become evil due to circumstances and societal pressures all around. Humans are taught to be evil and it is not rules and laws that stop us from being truly evil but it is instead the goodnesses inside each human that stops up from being inherently evil.

Bibliography

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