Gleaning and Killing

Purposely killing another morally good human being is one of the worst things someone can do. Scythe, written by Neal Shusterman, is a novel set in the future where mortality is conquered, and people live forever unless they are gleaned. One of these and the one mainly focused on by the book is “gleaning” where one of the scythes choose and kill someone from society who they deem fit to die who also do not get revived when killed. The book follows 2 teenagers who get selected by the scythe Faraday to become new scythes to glean people and the cycle continues. Killing in this sense is given a moral pass by the narrator as in the book it is seen that the reason is a good cause by helping society at large by attempting to curb the population growth and help retain aspects of when mortality existed. Murder can be defined as the unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another. Although in the book these killings are not unlawful but, in the world, we live in now these would clearly be illegal, and they are certainly premeditated by the scythes doing the act. Although counter to Shusterman’s vision of the world in the book, the Scythes in the book dedicate their lives to committing immoral acts and are morally misguided.

Many scythes in the book are seen to abuse their powers to “glean” people in a fashion that is clearly morally abhorrent. One of these scythes and the scythe that the book mostly follows is scythe Goddard. Scythe Goddard plays the main antagonist shown by his actions such as mass gleaning, taking the high blade’s daughter hostage, and forcing Rowan to disable his pain nanites to inflict suffering on him. The stance the author takes is Scythe Goddard is immoral and terrible. The new age scythes and the traditional scythes both fundamentally killers. There is no fundamental difference between Goddard and the traditional scythes in the book as they do essentially the same immoral act. The author seems to emphasise that Scythe Goddard is eviller because he enjoys his gleanings, but the “better” scythes do not enjoy gleanings. Why would the approach one takes to killing someone change the morality of the killing as the same death is brought regardless? Regardless of how the scythes kill their victims they are all evil.

The Scythedom is an organisation which ruins the utopia the book it set in. The death of an individual can be a very traumatising event and causes suffering not only the individual dying but the people around them such as the family, friends, and peers. The death and destruction of selected individuals is the crux of the Scythedom. Having an organisation based on the Death of humans essentially chooses at random or chosen at random depending on the persons choice is fundamentally a terrible organisation. Death is not something to be taken lightly violates rules and laws in almost every culture.

“It’s not socially or morally corrected to call it such. It is, and has always been, “gleaning,” named for the way the poor would trail behind farmers in ancient times, taking the stray stalks of grain left behind.” (Shusterman, 12) In this world it is inappropriate to call gleaning killing. The use of this euphemism is a way of distancing the act from what it truly is and makes it seem less immoral and better for society. If gleaning were called killing, then the scythes would seem much more like serial killers than they do now. This could be catastrophic for the Scythedom and cause hate against them which is what this organization wants to avoid at all costs. I disagree with the renaming of this term and renaming killing to something else only makes it more unclear and murkier of what the true meaning of the word is, killing someone.

To conclude the Scythedom is clearly an awful organisation predicated on the idiotic idea that death must be preserved when mortality has been conquered. This organisation uses logical fallacies of tradition and brings it to the extreme by keeping the tradition of one of the worst things in the world, death.

References

Shusterman, N. (2018). **Scythe**. Walker Books