McCarthy’s The Road Morality And Ethics

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The way good and evil have been perceived has always been one of the most important questions that human beings have to answer. There is always a line that goes to define what is meant by good and what is meant by bad. As a matter of fact, there are many choices that one has to make during the course of their life when they are faced with a very clear choice with regard to what is good and what is bad. In this story of Cormack McCarthy, there are also instances when there are ethical choices that are supposed to be made that are going to create significant dilemmas for all the stakeholders who are involved in the decision-making process. In this paper, it will be seen how morality and the boundaries of good and evil are supposed to work out, as well as the sort of decisions that need to be taken in situations that are morally ambiguous. When he is killing the other person, there is not much display of emotion, as he goes on to say (Johns-Putra 519–540).

“[…] turning the other cheek.”

Nightmarish Scenario and Hard Choices

Since the start of the storm, both the father and the son are trapped in a situation where they have to make sure that they make the right decision. The cruelty of the situation, though, is such that it has made Father helpless. It has to be noted that the description of the dream scene provides a fair idea about the sort of turmoil that the father and the son ahs to go through. The muddled decision-making that is being done by the father is also not helping the cause, so to make things much easier for themselves, it can be seen that the son has started to take the leadership. Again, it shows that when someone is faced with hard circumstances, one of the key things that need to be done is to make sure that they are willing to take the hard decisions. His son also has the fair idea that the moral code that is the basis of society is not going to hold out well in this scenario, so again, it was about making sure that some hard decisions are being made in terms of the way they are going to survive.

In the dream from which he’d wakened he had wandered in a cave where the child led him by the

hand (3)… He knew only that the child was his *warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God never spoke (5).*

Ethicality of the Game that is Being Played

The game that is seen here at times seems to be designed in a manner that looks to be testing the ethics and the morals of the person. The basic idea of the game seems to be the fact that no matter what is going to happen, the price of survival is to make sure that, at times, morally questionable decisions are needed to be good. There is some sort of ideological conflict as well, for instance, the son is about making sure that the person should stay good no matter what are the circumstances that are surrounding them. Now, no matter how noble this thought process is, it needs to be noted that the society that one gets to see in the story is where survival is one of the key things that need to be done by the stakeholders. It is one of the situations where people are more than willing to completely lose the semblance of humanity that they see most of the time. The son wants to make sure that the old rules are being taken care of, for instance, how the morals and the ethics of this society are going to hold out in the given time period. Again, this raises an interesting debate about whether moral principles and ethics are only going to hold up when society is working in order and whether these values become secondary when the whole aim of the life of the person is to make sure that they get to somehow survive. As can be seen, in how a father is taking care of the son, he puts it in very clear words when he says that.

""My job is to take care of you […] I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you."

Moral Conscience of the Man

One of the central characters of the story is "The Man," who is making sure that no matter what happens, he is going to inculcate a certain sense of morals and ethics in his son. He comes across as someone who has a fair idea of what is moral and ethical, and there is a conscious attempt. That does not mean that he has no idea about the reality of the situation that is being faced by him, instead he make sure that he goes to show his survival instinct in the manner that the protection and the well being of his son is being looked after. As a matter of fact, there are considerable moments during the course of the narrative of the story where it can be seen that he is even willing to let go of people, but if there is a need to make sure that some sort of violence is needed to be resorted to, he shows that he is more than capable of doing it in a corresponding manner. This goes in sync with what he says to his son during the earlier part of the story when he says that.

[…] every move, measurement, glassing, surveying, and act of scavenging”.

Again, the morally right thing for him to be doing under these circumstances is to make sure that he looks after the well being of the son. But what is the extent to which he must be willing to go to do that? Are there any moral constraints that are needed to be followed? This is the moral dilemma that one gets to see in the story. The whole moral state of the decision making process that they are left with can be summed up by the following line.

““slam down” (111) the door, taking any chance of escape away from the captives. The man justifies his decision to not help the hostages by saying “[…] they’d eat us too”.

There is another instance when he goes on to say

“[…] harvesting chunks of their living flesh as food.”

Conclusion

The story provides a good-thinking perspective with regard to morality and how the boundaries of good and evil are supposed to work out in any society. It raises an argument that when there is chaos and the only impulse that people have is to make sure that they are surviving, what are the ethical choices that they are left with? The problem, though, starts to happen when this line starts to blur. This is where the decision-making process becomes hard due to the fact that the line of the morally correct decision is hard to find in such circumstances.

Works Cited

Johns-Putra, Adeline. “” My Job Is to Take Care of You”: Climate Change, Humanity, and Cormac McCarthy’s The Road.” MFS Modern Fiction Studies 62.3 (2016): 519-540.