

## Id, Ego and Superego in McCarthy's Novel The Road

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### ABSTRACT

*With his psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud asserts that human behavior mostly occurs in the subconscious part of the brain. This theory leaves many questions for those interested in studying human behavior, as it leaves many questions for them. One of the most important of these questions is can a person really control his behavior? Freud's theory of the unconscious divides it into three drives: the id, the ego, and the superego. Ed is the most aggressive behavior in humans. The super ego is the part responsible for the moral aspect that pushes a person to do well. As for the ego, it is that part of the dengue that strives to find a middle ground between the id and the superego. Thus, the current study aims to identify the cause of corruption of human soul through analyzing the British novelist Cormac McCarthy's The Road. It will illustrate the human struggle for survival under a circumstance in which the law collapses and the ethics that are the basis of human interaction for the permanence of life disappear. It also sheds light on how to solve this problem. It should be noted that the study is formatted in APA (8) writing style in discussing the study and documenting the primary and secondary resources.*

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### 1. Introduction

Humans are sometimes exposed to natural disasters that are beyond their control and may lead them to a fatal end. These natural disasters may be caused by other factors or phenomena that humans cannot control, or they may be caused by human errors due to the failure of individuals to interact with each other within the same environment (Rahman, 2019; Weda et al., 2021). Cormac McCarthy's novel, *The Road* (2006) discusses the journey of the father and the son to unknown across the scorched lands of post-apocalyptic in America. The novel reflects the search for the lost hope of life after the collapse of the land to find a warmer climate near the sea. The father was suffering from an incurable disease due to breathing smoke for a long time, while the son lives in a state of terror due to the deterioration of the human race. They force themselves across wasteland as they push a shopping cart into which they gather the food and canned water they come across on their harrowing journey. Through his novel McCarthy reflects the great narrative tradition of death, despair, hope and the human challenge to survival.

In fact, Psychology is the science that is concerned with the study of the human psyche and what is related to his behavior (Amir et al., 2023; Andini et al., 2022). Therefore this paper pursues to understand human behavior, why and how he/she do such things and further to realize how these individual thinking and feeling. Thus, Psychology approach aims to analyze human mind based on the viewpoint of psychology and related to the assumption that each literary work discusses people's personal experiences and what goes around them in life. It is an academic discipline that includes the scientific study of individual's mental and behavior function (Brenan, 2006, p.32; Rahman, 2018).

Brierley, in his book entitled *S. Freud: Editor's Introduction to Id and Ego* (1923) exposes that the Psychoanalytic Theory is the personality theory. This theory is based on the notion that an individual gets motivated more by unseen forces that are controlled by the conscious and the rational thought (p.77). He adds that some of the concepts that make up the human personality are primitive and they force him to act based on the basic motives that he has. While other parts of the personality work to meet these urgent needs and strive to make the person conform to the requirements of society.

In *The Road*, McCarthy explains the work of the characters to defend their human identity as the father, the son and the cannibals, as these characters represent two contradictory groups. The father and the son represent the first group and the cannibals represent the other group. In this novel cannibals people reflects the id, as events reveal how these type of people reach the stage of moral detachment from higher values through eating human meet. In fact,

McCarthy wanted to describe the barbarism behavior that an individual might reach if the earth collapsed. Here, the first human goal for such types of people how to succeed in meeting their needs without caring about killing their friends. The important thing here is continuity in survival. "They felt guilty about eating ... their companions .... [and] they were not keen on eating meat" (McCarthy, p.25).

Luttrull (2010) reveals the dark side of the human heart represented by cannibals and the brutal way in which they devour their comrades (p.27). Therefore, the son and father must avoid such a type of human being because there is no similarity between them as they are "good men". Cannibals are bad Group who are generally the people who have turned to cannibalism by doing violent actions and hurting the other people, frequently depicted in literature as an act whereby occur in hell. Traditionally, it is connected to the radically demonic, the height of wickedness (Frye, 2000, p.148; Rahman & Amir, 2019).

## 2. Result and Discussion

The "bad guys" on *The Road* have deteriorated to the point where they now consume their own generation, and they are the only responsible for all the destruction that occurs in the environment. In opposition to the boy's overarching desire to restore civilization that represents the hope and the future of new life. In *The Road*, the journey is a means to an essentially similar destination for both the father and the son. It is a psychological process that requires men to let go of the past in order to effectively remember the happiness life, whereas it implies a moral awakening for children. The son frequently gets lost in the past, a world that the well-known place whose inhabitants have also disappeared. The tragedy alters sophisticated civilization as he knows it and creates a distinction between "good guys" and "bad guys" in society. The newborn in a post-apocalyptic world represents the potential of a brighter future, where "the good guys" triumph over "the bad guys," and where cannibalism may one day be eradicated by modernity. Therefore, cannibalism is the evil men and gangs stand behind the destruction of human civilization and the ugliness that dominates the planet, where practically everything lovely is destroyed. The father and his son anticipate living in a calm environment, but they are frequently confronted by those attempting to hurt them or take their essentials.

In *The Road*, the protagonist who is both the woman's husband and the boy's father is represents the ego through leadership. His life is more important to the boy because he is the only one who protects and provides him what he needs, because the boy's mother kills herself at the beginning of the novel, despite the man's fervent desire for her to live. She even threatens the father to kill the son to avoid all kinds of torment he could receive from cannibals, but she does not dare to kill her son as she is his mother. In fact, she lacks the hope to survive as she response, "You can't protect us. You say you would die for us, but what good is that" (McCarthy, p.56). In *The Road*, the wife and death figures are understood as personages of complicated ideas, according to allegory standards. The meaning of her suicide could be revealed through a metaphorical interpretation of the doting mother from *The Road*. Andrew Hoberek (2011) believes that "the wife committed suicide... not because she is a weak woman, but because she succumbed to a deadening coincidence between the imagination and reality." (p.35) What the wife did is only a result of her weak faith and her inability to uphold justice in a society that lacks principles and morals, in addition to her lack of confidence in those around her because they are human beings as she says:

No, I'm speaking the truth sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They will rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I can't. I can't."(McCarty, p.58).

Therefore, she committed suicide to end her internal conflict and not to live with people who do not belong to humans in any connection as they simply torture, rape and eat to survive. Shortly after the wife committed suicide, and during their journey towards the unknown, the father thinks to himself" she was right. There is no argument." (McCarty, p.58)

Every time, the father considers what would happen to the child if they fell into the clutches of these violent groups, he is subjected to psychological anguish. Thus, "few will read *The Road* without fleeing to their own children and holding them close, few people will read it without being concerned about the world they will leave behind" (McCarthy, p.63). They are fighting for survival after all the plants and animals were killed by a mysterious creature. At that time, human experience had devolved into chaos, and numerous examples of cannibalism had surfaced. Thus, the father decides to proceed to the south in the hope of finding a tranquil location with food.

Furthermore, the setting of the novel indicates that the father is worried about his son and his psychological well-being. Thus, "in the night, when he heard terrible shrieks coming up the stairs and tried to put his finger over the boy's

ears and the screaming stopped after a time" (McCarthy, p.121). Nevertheless, to protect his son, the father removed his revolver from his belt and hid it beneath the sheets to be ready to defend his son. In a dream, he saw his son lying on a refrigeration table and awoke terrified. He could bear it in the daylight, but not at dark and horrible night of the corruption world, for this reason he sat awake, afraid the dream might come again ( Nimitha & Lydia, 2019).

As a son of the protagonist, the boy is a sympathetic, innocent and hope figure. The boy thinks about others wishing to help them constantly throughout the novel, even those who want to harm him and his father. His father is frequently motivated by his empathy for strangers to put survival first and make the effort to help others. Fear is a significant characteristic that is unique to the boy. Despite their difficult circumstances, he often avoids loneliness by strengthening his relationship with his father making him responsible for his protection safety and comfort. The boy expresses his longing for his mother, her lack of presence with him, and his lack of the safe and happy life that he used to live with his mother, but after her death, he lives in a state of insecurity, instability, and brutality. Saying that:

I wish I was with my mom. ... You mean you wish that you were dead. Yes. You must not say that. But I do. Don't say it. It's a bad thing to say. They boy wishes to die with his mother rather than to live in this bad situations. (McCarthy, p.56)

The father understands his son's desire to be with his mother because of his need for her tenderness and comfort which he finds in his mother's arms, because he does not want to face the danger of cannibals at all. In fact, the son represents the super ego that represents the struggle between the id and ego. The father realizes the depth of the child's relationship with him and the intensity of his attachment to his father and that the child's fate is related to his father, because he wants to continue his life with his father, who is ready to sacrifices himself for the sake of his son. Accordingly, the father confirms this idea to his son saying that "my job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God" (McCarthy, p.77). Moreover, the father asks his son saying:

The father: What would you do if I died?

The son: If you died I would want to die too.

Consequently, the father concludes that: So you could be with me? Yes. So I could be with you. Okay. (McCarthy, p.9)

As a result, the fundamental component of meaning would be the father's love for the boy. One may thus argue that the boy (or the father's relationship to the boy) would not form meaning without the father's love for the boy, or that it would, but that the meaning is enhanced by the father's love for the boy's. The boy doubts his father's question and asks him:

The son: Are we going to die?

The Father: Sometimes. Not now

The Son: And we're still going south.

The Father: Yes.

The Son: So we'll be warm

The Father: Yes. (McCarthy, p.10)

When the father claims that they will not die now, he assures his son that they are mortal and that the end of every human being is death. He means that they will not die now precisely due to the laws of nature and life, including the young age of the boy and his father. In fact, the father has an important mission that he must complete which is to bring his young son to a place of safety and stability by bringing him to the south. Accordingly, the father assures his son that they are mortal, but the father tries to survive for a longer period, not for his sake but in order to protect his son who cannot protect himself because he depends on his father completely. Consequently, the father provides the protection and security for his son and makes his every effort to avoid his son the danger and help him to survive. Therefore, the father represents life for his son.

The protagonist has lost everything; his wife, his home, his family, his house, his friends, and even his individual identity in the apocalypse. All he has is his son. While discussing the characteristics of dystopia, Erica Gottlieb who wrote dystopian fiction, *East and West: The World of Terrorism and Trial* (2001), through her book, she discussed the problems facing man (the protagonist) through which he challenges himself (2010), expressing that:

I wish I was with my mom. ... You mean you wish that you were dead. Yes. You must not say that. The protagonist's experience and fate is tragic in the sense that it deals with irrevocable loss on the personal level: he or she loses his position, his beloved, his freedom, and ....a loss possibly even worse than the loss of life: the loss of his private individual identity. (p.13)

The father yearning appears to fully consume him and reveal everything he has lost. He would bring that world back or restore it if he could. The intended receiver of his final curse, on the other hand, is confounded by the father's remembered relationships with his wife. It may be interpreted as bravery, as he seizes this precise event to serve as a spell against the current darkness. When his wife abandons him to commit suicide, she does so in the dead of night, and "the coldness of it was her ultimate gift" (McCarthy, p.58). Hence, the Character's emotions, which are impacted by their surroundings, can also change a character's personality characteristics. In fact, "the father does not trust his dreams," believing they are "the summons of languor and death" (McCarthy, p.15). So, the psyche of the father is changed according to this gloomy violence environment (Mubarok, 2019). A tough and tenacious, the father who defends his son is fighting for survival after all the plants and animals were killed by a mysterious creature. At that time, human existence had devolved into chaos, and numerous examples of cannibalism had surfaced. They traveled to the south in the hope of finding a tranquil location with food (Ibarrola, 2010).

As the father and his son walk along the shore, the father's cough becomes increasingly worse. He believes that he is getting closer to the death. Thus, he instructs his son to keep with him the weapon and go south. He states that if the boy continues to speak, he will never abandon him. Following the father's death, the boy meets a stranger who invites him to accompany him, along with his wife, son, and daughter. The boy is using the knowledge; he is gathered as a result of his increased awareness to get away with bad people. He believes that he will be in safer hands for the rest of his life. The boy is mentally disturbed after he lost both his mother and his adoring father. The author has recounted all of his sufferings, thus the psychological aspect of the novel has been underlined by the writer. It also delves into the pain that the protagonist goes through (Ibarrola, 2010).

All the times the father has dreams towards his wife, he considers her as lover because he has a good relationship with her. Accordingly, "[t]he father in the Road is marked for death ; he knows it and so do we ...the question the novel must answer is not what will happen to the father, but to the son ?" (McCarthy, p.270). After the death of the father his son must continue his way. The father has to prepare his son by teaching his son how to develop his physical abilities in addition to teaching his son morals by referring to "good guys" and "bad guys." the "Good guys" avoid killing others unless it is absolutely necessary to protect one's life (McCarthy, p.39); they also avoid eating human flesh. After the destruction of the world, it is considered as unsafe place for humans especially for boys as it is full of dangers and full of cannibals. The boy sees the destruction and listens to the instructions of his father who always warns him of bad people, because the boy is innocent and does not expect evil and treachery from others in addition to being young and unable physically to protect himself. Therefore, he lacks the sense of security and lacks the stable life. Consequently, when the father asks his son to wait while he goes into the woods to make a fire the boy refuses saying: "I'm terrified...I'm really scared" (McCarthy, p.27). His son usually refuses to be left alone because he is terrified from the cannibals declaring "I'm not coming with you,". When his father prepares to explore empty houses, he permitted his son to follow closely behind him but his son refuses saying: "I'm scared" (McCarthy, p.110). The son is afraid as they are hiding from four bearded men and two ladies near the home. The son wants to assure his father that he is paranoid saying for the second time "I'm so scared" (McCarthy, p.113). He then declares, "I'm really scared" before passing out (McCarthy, p.186). When the son awakens from a nightmare one night, he says "I'm really scared" (McCarthy, p.189). When the father desires to return to the boat for one final time, his son says, "I'm kind of afraid," because the life that you live in is really horrible. He also has images of awesome things, the universe as it once was, which terrifies him even more because he believes that a man in danger should only have perilous nightmares. Thus, the boy has fears rather than dreams. He has nightmares that lead him to scream out for his father. He seems to be less concerned with his mother, whom he only briefly addresses, and more concerned with the facts of their lives. Surprisingly, the boy with the kind spirit has the greatest fear, which his anxious father associates with stunning scenery and his wife who abandoned them both (Morgenstern, 2014).

In fact, the father takes good care of his son, as he is the protector and the defender of him. He is the one who protect his son from the dangers and defends him against everything that exposes him to harm. The father has enough experiences to distinguish well from evil and good from bad thus chooses what is good for his own interest and the interest of his son a like so he is the ego. Moreover, the father is desperate to protect his innocent young son (superego) who has not contaminated by the corruption of the society (cannibalism which rearrests the id) and to preserve his life

because the son represents the hope of happy future and the start of a new happy life where good people live in peace and security and where individual relations and law prevail.

As he lies dying, the father has this conversation with his son, who wishes to be able to die with him, but he tells the son to persist, to survive and carry the fire. This fire, the kind found within the self, is a symbol of everlasting hope and human resilience. Instead of succumbing to the bad circumstances and resorting to evil acts to survive, the boy carries the fire and does not compromise his higher human morality. The boy demonstrates that he carries the fire throughout the book, since no matter what horror they narrowly escape. The boy always seeks to help others and never believes that they should be hurt or punished, even if hurting others might ensure his own survival. The following conversation is a good example that shows the effectiveness of the role of the father and what he does with his son to be qualifying him and enable him to play his expected role as the chosen one.

The father: You have to carry the fire.

The son: I don't know how to.

The father: Yes you do

The son: Is it real? The fire?

The father: Yes it is.

The son: Where is it? I don't know where it is.

The father: Yes you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it. (McCarthy, p.234)

Accordingly, Cormac McCarthy claims that as a boy who was depending on his father's care, he progressively loses his dependency on him and eventually obtains his independence to continue his trip on his own. Furthermore, his maturity entails the personal self of all human beings" (Wang, 2016). However, after his father's death, the words "scared," "scary," or "fear" never appear again, either explicitly or subliminally. He doesn't even turn around and go back into the trees when he sees a stranger coming up the road. As opposed to what he previously did, "he just stood in the road and waited the pistol in his hand" (McCarthy, p.281). The son has mostly conquered his typical dread and gradually built his confidence in himself and his abilities and he is no longer afraid and confused as he was in the past. Now he stands confidently and boldly in front of the stranger man showering him with a barrage of questions. He bravely poses numerous crucial questions about life and death to the guy, including, "Are you one of the good guys?" "How do I know you're one of the good guys?" (McCarthy, pp.282-283), "Are you carrying the fire?" "Do you have any kids?" (McCarthy, p.283) "And you didn't eat them." (McCarthy, p.284)

Throughout the novel, the boy has developed into a man as he state above who: "is the one who has to worry about everything." He must fulfill the quest's fundamental objective, which is to find and encounter the other "good" characters. Instead of deferring to his father, he now saw himself as the one who had to make the final decision (Kunsa, 2009, p.66). The boy is referred to by the father as a godlike figure throughout the novel describing his son as: "God's own fire-drake" (McCarthy, p.31); "Golden chalice, good to house a god" (McCarthy, p.8); "what if I said that he's a God?" (McCarthy, p.183) In these quotations, the father describes his son as being like a god, being able to contain a god inside himself, and being equal to a god. The boy is God's goodness since God is the embodiment of all that is good, and this goodness is equivalent to a diamond. As a result, if the son is equivalent to a God, he has the power to create new worlds and , his goal is to find other decent people and collaborate with them to create a new society that adheres to his moral principles. With their help, he can defeat the "bad people" who represent anti-civilization and establish a new civilized world, as Kunsa, (2009) claims that the boy serves as a moral compass in this situation (p.59).

The boy completes three days after his father's death as "someone was coming. He started to turn and go back into the wood but he didn't. He just stood in the road and waited the pistol in his hand." (McCarthy, p.301) In this attitude, the boy find himself in difficult situation whether he can leave his dying father and continue his way or he cannot as he wanders himself. The boy does just as he has been instructed to do. He waits in the road and expects the outcome of the meeting. The boy asks the man who approaches, asking whether he is one of the "good guys" whom responds "yes" (McCarthy, p.302). The boy needs proof that this man is nice since he doesn't eat people and is "carrying the fire". Thus, the boy decides to take one last risk and follow this man and his companions, who include a lady, a boy, and a man. After a long journey in an unknown way, the boy managed to survive and escape from the cannibals, but at a great cost, he lost his parents, and life is no longer the same, due to the corruption of the human soul that destroyed everything beautiful on earth.

### 3. Conclusion

Cormac McCarthy's novel, *The Road*, looks at the moral contemplation that gives meaning to human life, in addition to showing the extent to which human relations are interconnected in such a disastrous circumstance and the extent to which the human race is able to stand firm on their moral backgrounds. *The Road* shows that the long journey of the father and the son is dominated by a clear moral law about what makes life meaningful and what is the cause of its ruin.

In *The Road* the main reason for the destruction of the human soul, which the study aims to explore, is that the love of survival turns men to use violence in order to survive. Also, in the absence of law, the world turns into a jungle which is dominated by struggle for survive. Moreover, the world turns into a jungle based on deadly conflict, where things lose their true meaning, love and compassion disappear from human hearts, and violence becomes the necessary mean for survival, where plants and animals turned into dust and ashes.

In McCarthy's novel *The Road*, the main character succeeded in performing his human role as a father by preserving the life of his son and completing preventing him from being one of the cannibals (id), who depend on human blood for life. The long journey made the father (ego) sometimes have to resort to killing and justified cruelly to defend his life and the life of his son, who represent the hope in the novel and to achieve his goal of preserving his life and his innocence being a superego.

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