The Art of Carrying the Fire

Carrying the Fire: Motivation for Survival in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

Konsten att bära vidare elden

Att bära vidare elden: Motivation för överlevnad i Cormac McCarthys *The Road*

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This essay is working on exploring what it is that motivates the man and the boy to survive despite the harsh reality they live in. The purpose of the essay is to show four main factors for motivation: morality, religion, society and paternal love. The first factor is the fundamental inner voice of morality which tells them why they should do something. In order to be able to productively discuss the topic of moral motivation I will introduce W.D. Ross's theory of Pluralistic Deontology as a means to find a framework in which to discuss this aspect of the novel. The second factor discussed is religion, which somewhat functions in the same way as morality does but seems to be more of a driving force, primarily for the man. The third factor is society in the sense of how it motivates one to take certain actions. I will use Thomas Hobbes's idea of the state of nature, but also make it clear how, specifically, a post-apocalyptic scenario affects the protagonists. The fourth factor and also the overarching factor discussed is paternal love. This factor is inter-located throughout the whole essay. Probably the most significant phrase from Cormac McCarthy's The Road is "carrying the fire" (79). It is a central focal point in the man and the boy's overall interaction. The importance of the phrase cannot be stressed enough and does, without a doubt, carry a significant meaning for them both. However, we never really get an explanation to what the phrase really means, which inevitably invites the readers to draw their own conclusions as to what the phrase conveys. It remains ambiguous throughout the novel but in terms of motivation it has to do with surviving and/or the upholding of values remembered from the pre-apocalyptic society. As I address the phrase this meaning it also becomes possible to see that there are motivating factors for both the man and the boy that affect their morale to keep the fire going. This essay will investigate three possible motivating factors found in the novel, and, in addition to this, an overarching factor that can, arguably, function as connection between the other three factors.

Probably the most significant phrase from Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is "carrying the fire" (79). It is a central focal point in the man and the boy's overall interaction. The importance of the phrase cannot be stressed enough and does, without a doubt, carry a significant meaning for them both. However, we never really get an explanation to what the phrase really means, which inevitably invites the readers to draw their own conclusions as to what the phrase conveys. It remains ambiguous throughout the novel but in terms of motivation it has to do with surviving and/or the upholding of values remembered from the pre-apocalyptic society. As I address the phrase this meaning it also becomes possible to see that there are motivating factors for both the man and the boy that affect their morale to keep the fire going. This essay will investigate three possible motivating factors found in the novel (the inner voice of morality, religion, and society), and will argue that a fourth, overarching factor (paternal love) functions as connection between the other three factors. The fundamental inner voice of morality tells them why they should do something. In order to be able to productively discuss the topic of moral motivation I will introduce W.D. Ross's theory of Pluralistic Deontology as a means to find a framework in which to discuss this aspect of the novel. Religion functions somewhat in the same way as morality, but seems to be more of a driving force, primarily for the man. The third factor is society in the sense of how it motivates one to take certain actions. I will use Thomas Hobbes's idea of the state of nature, but also make it clear how, specifically, a post-apocalyptic scenario affects the protagonists. As mentioned earlier the factor of paternal love will be inter-located throughout the whole essay as it is an overarching factor. By reading the phrase "carrying the fire" in terms of motivation, the essay will show that the phrase refers to morality, religion, society, but most of all to paternal love.

First, I will turn to the factor of morality. In order to explore the man and the boy's relationship to motivation through morality I will use W.D. Ross's theory of Pluralistic

Deontology to show their moral reasoning. Deontology is the field of ethical philosophy that on the basis of duties implies that one has certain obligations. James Fieser explains it well by writing that "[d]uty theories base morality on specific, foundational principles of obligation", and that "[t]hese theories are sometimes called deontological, from the Greek word deon, or duty, in view of the foundational nature of our duty or obligation." The concept of Ross's theory is that "it is based on adherence to rules or duties rather than outcomes" (Simpson). It differs from that of Kant or Utilitarianism in the sense that "Ross recognizes several different fundamental rules or principles that he terms prima facie duties" (Simpson). Ross "acknowledges that these duties can, and invariably do, collide and come into conflict with one another" (Simpson), which we will see examples of further on. The fundamental rules are as follows:

1. Fidelity. We should strive to keep promises and be honest and truthful.

2. Reparation. We should make amends when we have wronged someone else.

3. Gratitude. We should be grateful to others when they perform actions that benefit us and we should try to return the favor.

4. Non-injury (or non-maleficence). We should refrain from harming others either physically or psychologically.

5. Beneficence. We should be kind to others and to try to improve their health, wisdom, security, happiness, and well-being.

6. Self-improvement. We should strive to improve our own health, wisdom, security, happiness, and well-being.

7. Justice. We should try to be fair and try to distribute benefits and burdens equably and evenly. (Simpson)

When *The Road* is looked upon through the lens of Pluralistic Deontology there are clear crossovers between the rules when viewing different scenarios. First off we can see that both the man and especially the boy cherish fidelity, the first prima facie duty, in the sense that they verbally state that they do so. At one point the boy says: "If you break little promises you'll break big ones" (McCarthy 38), which tells the reader that one needs to stay morally true even on the smallest of occasions to prevent moral purity of being disrupted. It also tells us that their honesty is crucial for the survival of their moral guidance.

Honesty is something we can also find in the second and third duties, reparation and gratitude, two duties that focus on compassion as well as forgiveness. These can be seen activated in the scenario when the man and the boy stumble upon an underground bunker. The man and the boy both enjoy some fancy luxury, in comparison to the current standards of the post-apocalyptic tale, feasting on some canned food as well as enjoying a clean scrubbing in a tub. Even though what they stumble upon might seem like a divine gift from above the boy surely acknowledges that their temporary Eldorado is actually the result of hardworking humans and not God. The boy acknowledges that they should show gratitude as well as repentance for their actions when he asks the man if they should thank the people who created the bunker since they have technically trespassed and stolen some of their food. The man agrees and the boy then, just as one would pray to God and say, dear God, starts off his thanksgiving-speech with "Dear people" (McCarthy 132). As the boy repents for their actions by thanking the ones that they are indebted to we can see that the rules gratitude and reparation are present. This situation also tells us that the boy perhaps, by starting his thanksgiving in this manner, believes that human kindness is bound in the flesh rather than in the spirit. He ends the thanking by saying "we hope that you're safe in heaven with God" (McCarthy 132), which tells us that even though they might not connect compassion with God they still do not reject God.

Moreover, we can see how their ethical decisions differ from that of other characters, such as the roadrat, in the sense that they refuse cannibalism even at the brink of starving to death. This refusal then obviously ties itself to the fourth duty which states that one should refrain oneself from harming others. As the boy and the man refrain from cannibalizing others, as opposed to the bad guys, who in fact cannibalize in order to survive, they place themselves in a category of being, in their own words, good guys:

> [The Boy:] We wouldnt ever eat anybody, would we?
>
> [The Man:] No. Of course not.
>
> [The Boy:] Even if we were starving?
>
> [The Man:] We're starving now.
>
> [The Boy:] You said we werent.
>
> [The Man:] I said we werent dying. I didnt say we werent starving.
>
> [The Boy:] But we wouldnt.
>
> [The Man:] No. We wouldnt.
>
> [The Boy:] No matter what.
>
> [The Man:] No. No matter what.
>
> [The Boy:] Because we're the good guys.
>
> [The Man:] Yes. (McCarthy 117)

The passage explains their reasoning of what is good or not, thereby giving us an understanding of their thinking.

The fifth duty, beneficence, is expressed when the man and the boy encounter an old man who calls himself "Ely" and decide to feed him (McCarthy 150). We can, however, also see how this duty clash with the sixth duty, self-improvement, as the man and the boy

encounters a man struck by lightning. The boy, having a differing survivalist mentality than that of the man, urges him that they should help the man struck by lightning even though it becomes clear through the response from the man that by doing so they would decrease their chances of survival (McCarthy 51). On the one hand, as the boy urges, they should strive to help others improve, but on the other hand helping others in this specific scenario would be a violation of the duty of self-improvement since it could very well mean the end for them both, which the man understands. There is therefore a need of prioritization. The care that we could see in this situation tells us that even though they want to stay morally true they will have to make some sacrifices now and then in order to keep each other clear-minded and able to survive. One can say that by doing what seems good in this scenario increases their motivation to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). This is shown in the seventh and last duty of Ross's Pluralistic Deontology, justice, which can be regarded as an ongoing mentality throughout the whole of their journey. The man obviously has to take care of the boy but in the sense that he needs the boy, cherishing the boy as a father, to be able to live on. Thus the duty to stay morally on-track becomes a motivating factor and by using Pluralistic Deontology we can come to understand the man and the boy's moral reasoning.

In addition to the motivation derived from morality as in the sense of Ross's theory there is also a quite literal moral code derived from the novel itself. This moral code tells us that the man and the boy are keen on analyzing their every actions in order to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79), thus increasing motivation through moral reasoning. In his article "God, Morality, and Meaning in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*", Erik J. Wielenberg does not only discuss God's ambiguous existence or non-existence throughout *The Road*, but also touches upon the subject of good versus bad by compiling a list of six moral values presented by the man and the boy throughout the novel. The list can be seen as examples of how the man and the boy take certain actions in order to ensure that they conform to what was

once seen as morally right by pre-apocalyptic societal standards. The first point of the list is

"Don't eat people", which is a value that we can easily find examples of in the novel. For

instance the discussion of cannibalism quoted above (McCarthy 117), or the repulsive images

brought forth by the episode with the "charred human infant headless and gutted" (McCarthy

175). Both are situations that deal with the ugliest part of a post-apocalyptic survival scenario

where humans are forced to eat other humans if they want to survive. But through refraining

from eating others the man and the boy are sacrificing an "insurance" of food for the principle

of staying morally true, increasing the motivation to make due. This is also true for the

following points. The second point of that list is "Don't steal", exemplified by the scenario

with the thief and their cart. The point also shows itself when they stumble upon the bunker to

which, as mentioned in connection with the W.D. Ross discussion, they save themselves from

being thieves by showing "Gratitude" and "Reparation" (Simpson). The third point is "Don't

lie," which connects to the following point, "Keep your promises." Wielenberg exemplifies

these points with the cocoa-situation, when the man "pretends he has split a half-packet of

cocoa between the two of them when in reality he has given it all to the boy". In this scenario,

the man once again contradicts his own pre-apocalyptic morals of right and wrong, which

ultimately elicits yet another questioning of morality from the boy. Wielenberg completes the

list with "Help others", which the man struggles to uphold if they are to survive as for

example the interaction with the man struck by lightning, and "Never give up," which is the

ongoing struggle for survival to which the man and the boy fundamentally refer to as

"carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). What can be said about both Ross's rules and Wielenberg's

list is that the man and the boy use morality to push themselves forwards. By analyzing every

action with their notions of right and wrong they enable themselves to increase the motivation

for "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79) through their moral reasoning.

With the purpose of widening the subject and deepen our discussion on morality, I will also include Euan Gallivan's use of a Schopenhauerian moral construct, which can serve to illustrate how the man and the boy can remain morally pure even though their actions might be perceived as immoral. Gallivan quotes Schopenhauer opinion that "the person who refuses to show the right path to the wanderer who has lost his way, does not do him any wrong; but whoever directs him on to a false path certainly does" (101). He then applies Schopenhauer to the passage when the father encountering the man struck by lightning focuses on their own survival: in his "refusal, or as he sees it, his inability to help the man struck by lightning, the father does no wrong" (Gallivan 101). The point is that the action to not help the man, from a Schopenhauerian position, becomes justified. This prioritization is crucial for the man to be able to motivate them both to keep on carrying the fire. *The Road* is a tale of a father and a son surviving in a normless and godforsaken world, by pre-apocalyptic standards. The man is reluctant to help others since, in the man's own words, "We cant share what we have or we'll die too" (McCarthy 44). This tells us that when placed in a post-apocalyptic or any other extreme scenario, it is ultimately impossible to stay morally pure with survival as a priority one. However, since the whole idea of a post-apocalyptic scenario is that of survival, one can still argue that the man's actions are based on the notion of fatherly love and "compassion" (Gallivan 101). To sum up, the factor of morality (both internal or external) is quite complex when put into the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road,* whether explain with the help of Ross's ethical rules, Wielenberg's list, or a Schopenhauerian moral construct.

Next, I will move on the second proposed factor of motivation in the novel, which is the factor of religion. When reading *The Road* it will become apparent to the reader that the man has a very close relation to religion. There are hints throughout the novel, both in his thoughts and in his language, that he relies on underlying religious values. The man feels an obligation based on his religious beliefs to protect and transport his son south. What the

following part of the essay aims to discover is the connection between the man's and the boy's religious beliefs and their motivation to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). Many scholars have investigated the significance of religion. John Vanderheide, for example, wants us to view the discussion on cannibalism between the man and the boy as an example of the use of a catechism that reveal religious undertones in their moral reasoning (109). Another scholar, Randal, S. Wilhelm, suggests that the son can be connected to the imagery of the Grail, a religious icon which the father sees as his divine mission to transport south, thereby becoming another motivating factor for the man to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). However, here too in addition to the religious motivations we must also take paternal love into consideration. Take for instance the discussion between the man and the boy, as the man seems to be on his deathbed, where the man then says to the boy: "You have my whole heart. You always did" (McCarthy 244), which shows his paternal love and devotion to the boy. The man's powerful sense of fatherhood and duty is seen when he washes the boy from "a dead man's brains" (McCarthy 72), a man that he himself had to kill in order to ensure their survival. The significance of being a father is also seen when states that the washing is "my job" (McCarthy 72). At another time, "He'd carved the boy a flute from a piece of roadside cane and he took it from his coat and gave it to him" (McCarthy 75). The scenario is not the rough spun, total-survival attitude which we usually see in the man, but signs of true human emotions in the sense that we see the man, as a father, wanting to give the boy, his son, a flute amidst all destruction. If not for the boy's amusement, the act shows his own sense of feeling like a good enough father. In the end, the man's decisions throughout the novel are those of a desperate father in a post-apocalyptic world where the laws no longer exist. The streets are filled with survivors, scavengers, and cannibals who all, in fact, have shared, and still do, the same catastrophe as the man and the boy. It seems as though that the man through this action enables us to view the importance, in connection to their motivation, of paternal love. This

could be seen as a moment where paternal love is indeed motivating them to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79).

Indeed, the factor of religion becomes hard to discuss without the interrelated factor of paternal love since the man and the boy are dependent on each other for motivation. Discussing the situation with the mother's suicide, Wilhelm proposes that her death is simply there for the story's progress to be more focused on the individualism between the father and the boy instead of a family survival, which it would have been otherwise: "Although the wife's reasons for committing suicide and merciful murder may seem logical, even rational, given the potential threats of rape, torture and cannibalism, McCarthy seems to drive the point home here that such a philosophy is untenable, even immoral in the face of human suffering, whether there is a God or not". While the suicide might be an easy way out of this post-apocalyptic hell, the scenario with the wife can be perceived as McCarthy displaying how difficult reasoning can be. As the mother sees it, there is no hope at all, only suffering, for them all in general but the boy in especial. The man on the contrary decides to push on, even if it means exposing his child to the dangers of the post-apocalyptic world. Focusing on the man it becomes possible to reason that this yet another example of how the man becomes motivated by the boy, be it his paternal love or religious duties, to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). It seems as though that the man, through motivating himself through religion, motivates the boy to carry on with his paternal love.

The Road is a story of a man and his son and their journey through a "[b]arren, silent, godless" post-apocalyptic scenario in a struggle for survival (McCarthy 13). To give an example of how the man, through himself just trying to be a parent, tries to motivate his son to keep on fighting we will have a look on this rather complex discussion between the man and the boy. It shows the man forced to motivate his son although he himself might not be sure about the reasoning of why exactly:

[The Boy:] I wish I was with my mom.

He [The Man] didnt answer. He sat beside the small figure wrapped in the quilts and

blankets. After a while he said: You mean you wish that you were dead.

[The Boy:] Yes.

[The Man:] You musnt say that.

[The Boy:] But I do.

[The Man:] Dont say it. It's a bad thing to say.

[The Boy:] I cant help it.

[The Man:] I know. But you have to.

[The Boy:] How do I do it?

[The Man:] I dont know. (McCarthy 56)

The man shows his uncertainty over their journey which might be the result of the traumatic

scenario and the ambiguous existence of God. But it perhaps also shows how their

relationship is built as well. Based on religious conceptions and in order to motivate himself,

the man needs to stay fully devoted to the son and to accomplish that he needs his son to

survive. Thus the man, as it seems, remains motivated through the religious duties and is

dependent on his son whilst the son, for his own motivation, requires only the man's parental

care. This, apparently, gives us reason to say that their relationship, in the end, is that of an

equal give-and-take. They need each other to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79).

An issue to address in connection with the religious motivation is of course the

apparent ambiguous existence of God. The man is quite meditative when it comes to this

subject, which can be seen in one of those episodes where the reader has access to his

thoughts: "Perhaps in the world's destruction it would be possible at last to see how it was

made. Oceans, mountains. The ponderous counter-spectacle of things ceasing to be. The sweeping waste, hydroptic and coldly secular. The silence" (McCarthy 249). Worth noting here is that as he describes the rebirth of the world, the man uses the words "coldy secular" (McCarthy 249), perhaps revealing his view that the world is truly "godless" (McCarthy 13). Following up on this utterance he then says, quite strikingly, "The Silence" (McCarthy 249). As it seems, McCarthy is quite keen on using the specific word "silence" in his various descriptions of the current post-apocalyptic world: "The nights were blinding cold and casket black and the long reach of the morning had a terrible silence to it" (McCarthy 118); "Barren, silent, godless" (McCarthy 13); "He lay listening to the water drip in the woods. Bedrock, this. The cold and the silence" (McCarthy 18); "they crouched in the roadside ditch like lepers and listened. No wind. Dead silence" (McCarthy 67); "They stood and brushed themselves off, listening to the silence in the distance" (McCarthy 87); "Two loud clicks. Otherwise only their breathing in the silence of the salt moorland" (McCarthy 224). The persistent pattern of silence is not arbitrary, but the word does not have the same meaning in all instances. Let us look at the indirect silence in the following quote:

> He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. (McCarthy 119)

We can see that the void-like description here describes how the world is silent in the sense of absence of life or movement. But if we look at the quote "Barren, silent, godless" (McCarthy 13), the word appears to point towards the absence of the voice of God. This difference, it seems, tells us how complex the man's relationship to religion is, and that maybe religion

cannot be his sole motivating factor. However, this does not negate the idea that religion is a motivating factor for him, but reinforces the idea that there are more forces, such as paternal love, at work. We can therefore state that it seems as though religion and paternal love are motivating factors.

I now move on to the third motivating factor, society. Throughout this essay, we have seen that there are several underlying factors for the motivations of the man and the boy. While morality, religion, and paternal love are by far the biggest remnants of the pre-apocalyptic society, the world in which they now wander through has changed so dramatically that we no longer have a society, but rather a state where every man is at war with everyone, much like Thomas Hobbes's state of nature. Sharon Lloyd explains that the idea of the state of nature is a state in which there is an absence of a government and that it is "a state of perfectly private judgment, in which there is no agency with recognized authority to arbitrate disputes and effective power to enforce its decisions". This, as it seems, is the case for *The Road*'s state as well. There is no natural hierarchical authority which means that the world of *The Road* becomes a society in which "[t]he right of each to all things invites serious conflict, especially if there is competition for resources, as there will surely be over at least scarce goods such as the most desirable lands, spouses, etc" (Lloyd). There is a competition for resources within the novel and this would most likely alter the mindset of both the man and the boy, thus perhaps ending up being a factor for motivation. Add to this that "[p]eople will quite naturally fear that others may (citing the right of nature) invade them, and may rationally plan to strike first as an anticipatory defense" (Lloyd). It seems as though this mindset is quite similar to the highly-restricted mentality of the man, who is consistently reluctant to consider encounters with other humans. They live in a society where one is free to decide "what's respectful, right, pious, prudent, and also free to decide all of these questions for the behavior of everyone else as well, and to act on her judgments as she thinks best" (Lloyd). This could perhaps explain

how the man and the boy, considering the discussion on morality, are able to justify themselves as morally righteous.

To further show the connection between Hobbes's state of nature and the society of *The Road*, and in particular why both of them do not show a desire for peace, consider two arguments made by Hobbes (as explained by Garrath Williams):

(i) He [Hobbes] thinks we will compete, violently compete, to secure the basic necessities of life and perhaps to make other material gains. (ii) He argues that we will challenge others and fight out of fear ("diffidence"), so as to ensure our personal safety. (Williams)

The man acts in accordance with the first argument in the situation where he strips the thief of his clothes, a rather violent action, in order to safely retrieve their possessions (McCarthy 225). The second argument can be exemplified by the action of the man, when out of fear for the life of his son, he shoots a roadrat in the head in order to ensure their personal safety (McCarthy 65). It is then plausible to say that society, in the state of nature, is a deciding factor for the man's and the boy's motivations to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). This in the sense that their actions, from which their religious and moral gratifications derive from, are factors for motivation.

Against this background, we are now able to discuss survival and parenthood, and more specifically what it means to be a father, in a post-apocalyptic society. *The Road* is just as much a "meditation on morality" (Wielenberg 1) as it is a showcase of the paradoxical issue of being a father in a desolate and hopeless society. The man, presumably a previous man of God in light of his ongoing thoughts and biblical allusions, wants to make his son a sign of goodness as he constantly prompts him with the Christian values summed up by

Wielenberg. The paradoxical part, however, is that the man throughout the novel constantly

contradicts the moral values through his own actions, which he is forced to do to survive.

This, perhaps, indicates the complexities of making do in a "state of nature" like the one in

The Road. The man is forced to sacrifice his own moral purity for the sake of preserving his

son's. Examples of these situations have been discussed earlier in this essay, but as a reminder

we can use the example of the man struck by lightning. Here the man, in order for their

survival, decides that surviving is in fact more important than helping others. This action

contradicts Wielenberg's point that they should "Help others" as well as it contradicts the fifth

point from Pluralistic Deontology that says that "We should be kind to others and to try to

improve their health, wisdom, security, happiness, and well-being" (Simpson). This should

then decrease their motivation to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79), but as we have

seen morality does not solely influence their motivation. It seems as though their struggle for

"carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79) is just as much dependent on a mixture of the man's

religious beliefs and the hostile environment of Hobbes's state of nature. This, if anything,

tells us that whatever the scenario might be the man will always see to his, and his son's, best

at all times which is a prioritization necessary for survival in, specifically, this post-

apocalyptic scenario. The mentality of the man, as a father, but also as a survivor in a state-of-

nature-like society, seems to be a common mentality for post-apocalyptic father-son

relationships in current culture, seen also in the character of Rick Grimes from the TV-series

The Walking Dead. It is true that in many respects, McCarthy's *The Road* indeed differs from

that of *The Walking Dead*, but the moral of the story is all the same in the aspect of one father

struggling with both survival as well as parenthood in critical environments. These two

scenarios depict the uncertainty of surviving in a post-apocalyptic society. One does not know

if one will survive the night but the survival instincts force one to plan for the future even so if

that means getting through, day by day until salvation arrives. As it so appears, in order to

maintain some kind of substance over how the man and the boy motivates themselves to push on, "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79), we must take all the mentioned factors into consideration: morality, religion, society and, as the overarching factor, paternal love.

In conclusion we can state that it is plausible that the presented factors are parts of what drives the man and the boy to keep on "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79). Through Pluralistic Deontology, the literal moral code derived from the novel and the Schopenhauerian ideas we can say that morality is a motivating factor. After compiling discussions on the significance of religion throughout the novel we can say that religion is a motivating factor since one can see that religion bears a significant power on especially the man's motivation but also remains closely inter-located with paternal love. Which lead us to the last factor of the societal situation and its effects. The society of *The Road* is in striking resemblance to Hobbes state of nature thus one can understand how society becomes a motivating factor for both the man and the boy. But most importantly, the factor of paternal love is present in all these factors, thus becoming an overarching factor. We have also discovered that all of these factors seem to be interdependent. So, how does one seek out motivation to action and motivation to stay alive in a world where it seems as though that all reasons for living has been crumbled up and tossed far away? Well, as it appears, in order to maintain some kind of substance over how the man and the boy motivates themselves to push on, "carrying the fire" (McCarthy 79), we must take all the mentioned factors into consideration: morality, religion, society and, as the overarching factor, paternal love if we are to explain the man's and the boy's motivations.

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