

Mccarthy's novel the road is about man's inherent altruism in a world of selfishn...

[Transportation](#), [Road](#)





The man in *The Road* is portrayed as a very religious individual, this is indisputable. One could deduce from this that therefore he is selfless in protecting his son and carrying on in the times in which he finds himself. This viewpoint contrasts with the one that the man is selfish with his actions, doing everything to survive and not helping anyone he meets on his journey. All the decisions the man makes throughout the novel can be used as examples to argue each point of view, and it may be that it is a mixture of both.

Maybe the man acts in a selfless way due to selfish beliefs. The whole image of religious self-sacrifice by the man is probably what McCarthy intended, this can be seen through his determination to preserve his son's life. An example of this is when he defends his son from the man from the truck. He risks everything by shooting the man as this leaves only one bullet in the chamber of the revolver, as he intends to use it in a life threatening situation to kill his son, it means that he will probably die while suffering.

His whole determination to stay alive could be seen as to only keep the boy alive, this is seen as selfless as he only wishes to help the boy survive, not himself. This altruism is directly connected to the man's solid belief in god and in what he is doing. Throughout the novel other people's selfishness can be seen, the cannibalism and stealing juxtapose with the man's proper behaviour; he tells his son that they would never eat someone and shows generosity towards the old man.

Cannibalism is an indication of how people act immorally in the novel in order to stay alive in the novel, the man refuses to do this and is therefore



portrayed as having a higher morality than anyone else. On the other hand one could identify the man's behaviour as purely selfish, he has a fixed idea in his head, he is protecting his son for his own given mission to be complete. The man does not wish to help anyone other than himself, he only reluctantly helps the old man when his son insists, and happily takes the clothes off a defenceless man later on, returning them only again as a result of his son's persistence.

He acts immorally on several occasions, not offering assistance to the man who had been struck by lightning and locking the people in the basement again when he had discovered them instead of helping. It could be argued that everything an individual does is aimed at personal gain, selfishness, either physical or psychological. The man is certainly benefiting psychologically from keeping his son alive as he believes he is doing the right thing and fulfilling his purpose. Also his religious morality can be questioned, as he considers suicide even though this is not allowed according to the bible.

The fact that he does not become a cannibal may be used to identify him as still retaining some kind of moral code, however, he does anything to keep him and the boy alive and it is not improbable that in a situation of severe starvation he would have turned to cannibalism had it been an option. From all of his actions in the novel, the reader can justifiably come to the conclusion that the man is just as selfish as the other people trying to survive in the post-apocalyptic world.



The man can certainly be described as selfless as well as selfish, he aims towards a noble goal but does not let anything stop him, and he identifies other's lives as less important than the boy's. Even though he is not described as committing highly immoral actions such as cannibalism, it cannot be ruled out that from his actions we can deduce that this is what he would have turned to had the situation permitted it.

On the other hand does acting immorally indicate acting selfishly, in the novel it certainly does but this may not actually be the case, it may be argued that the immoral actions by the man are done to help the boy survive. McCarthy links selfishness to immoral actions quite strongly in the book and so due to this the man is presented to the reader as selfless, this was the intention of the writer and the reader will most probably grasp this attitude while reading the book. Upon further thought however, it may be seen that the man is simply selfish and there is nothing more to him than that.