

# **Jack Donovan on men: a masculine tribalism for the far right**

Three Way Fight

November 24, 2015

# Contents

Gang masculinity . . . . .	4
Against globalism and feminism . . . . .	6
The Brotherhood . . . . .	7
Relationship with Men's Rights Activists and the Manosphere . . . . .	8
White nationalism and fascism . . . . .	8
Toward a failed state . . . . .	9
Male tribalism in context . . . . .	10
Dispossessed men versus the new capitalist order . . . . .	11



Donovan: “Ur-fascism is the source of honor culture and authentic patriarchal tradition.”

All far rightists promote male dominance, but the kinds of male dominance they promote differ enormously. The Christian right’s revolutionary wing — the folks who

don't just want to ban abortion, same-sex marriage, and teaching evolution, but replace the U.S. government with a full-blown theocracy — advocates “biblical patriarchy,” a doctrine that urges men to keep close control over everything their wives and children do, from the books they read to the time they go to bed. In this schema, for women to make decisions or speak for themselves isn't just a bad idea, it's a revolt against God.

Jack Donovan's version of male supremacy is radically different from that. He's a former Satanist, not a Christian, and he doesn't anchor his ideas in the Bible, but rather in evolutionary psychology — an approach that's probably meaningless, if not satanic, to Adam and Eve creationists. He doesn't focus on the family, but on championing a kind of male comradeship free of female constraints. This comradeship allows room for sexual relations between men, and Donovan is himself openly homosexual, which would of course be taboo in the Christian right. And while even the most hard-core biblical patriarchs aim to recruit women as well as men (claiming their path offers women security and respect, not to mention salvation through Jesus), Donovan doesn't write for women at all. His audience, his community, his hope for the future, is entirely male.

Over the past eight years, Jack Donovan has published a stream of articles and several books about men and masculinity. His best-known work is the self-published *The Way of Men* (2012 – hereafter referred to as *Way* for short), which reportedly sold an impressive ten thousand copies in its first two years. His ideas are important, in part, because they appeal to different sectors of the right, including members of the “manosphere,” white nationalists, right-wing anarchists, and (with a few modifications) even some Christian rightists.

## Gang masculinity

“The Way of Men,” Donovan argues, “is the way of the gang.” “For most of their time on this planet, men have organized in small survival bands, set against a hostile environment, competing for women and resources with other bands of men” (*Way*, p. 3). These gangs, he claims, have provided the security that makes all human culture and civilization possible. They are also the social framework that men need to realize their true selves. Donovan's gangs foster and depend on the “tactical virtues” of Strength, Courage, Mastery, and Honor, which together form his definition of masculinity. Gang life centers on fighting, hierarchy, and drawing the perimeter against outsiders (“separating *us* from *them*”). This, in turn, dovetails with many of Donovan's core philosophical precepts — that human equality is an illusion, violence (specifically male violence) is universal, and moral accountability should be limited to the members of one's own tribe.

Donovan advocates “androphilia,” by which he means love or sex between masculine men. He doesn't call himself gay, rejects gay culture as effeminate, and justifies homophobia as a defense of masculinity rooted in the male gang's collective survival needs. This might sound like self-hatred, but Donovan isn't hiding or apologizing for



In Donovan's ideal order, only male warriors would have a political voice

his own sexuality; he's defining it in a way that's radically at odds with prevailing LGBT politics. His version of homosexuality is a consummation of the priority that men in his ideal gang place on each other. As he has commented, "When you get right down to it, when it comes to sex, homos are just men without women getting in the way."

In Donovan's worldview, patriarchy is the natural state of human affairs, rooted in that primeval survival scenario where women are a prize that male gangs fight over. And seen through his eyes, patriarchy doesn't look so bad. Since Donovan is fundamentally uninterested in women's experience, he repeats lots of "common sense" male ideas without question. For example: "A rapist is something that no right-minded man wants to be," so the whole idea of rape culture is a feminist lie, "a tool to silence criticism of women and exert control over men's sexual behavior and conceptions of their own masculinity." Similarly, "men have always had to demonstrate to the group that they could carry their own weight" (*Way*, p. 46), while it's supposedly much more common and accepted for women to be supported by others. Never mind that women actually work longer hours than men and do the bulk of unpaid domestic labor, enabling men in all regions of the world to do less work.

## Against globalism and feminism

Donovan sees a basic tension between the wildness and violence of gang life and the restraint and orderliness that civilization requires: civilization benefits men through technological and cultural advances, but it also saps their primal masculinity — their strength, courage, mastery, and honor. For most of human history, he says, men have fashioned workable compromises between the two, but with societal changes over the past century that's become less and less possible. Today, "globalist civilization requires the abandonment of the gang narrative, of *us* against *them*. It requires the abandonment of human scale identity groups for 'one world tribe'" (*Way*, p. 139). Who is leading this attack on masculinity? "Feminists, elite bureaucrats, and wealthy men" — who "all have something to gain for themselves by pitching widespread male passivity. The way of the gang disrupts stable systems, threatens the business interests (and social status) of the wealthy, and creates danger and uncertainty for women" (*Way*, p. 138).

With the help of globalist elites, feminists have supposedly dismantled patriarchy and put women in a dominant role. As Donovan argues in *No Man's Land*: "For the first time in history, at least on this scale, women wield the axe of the state over men." Women have "control over virtually all aspects of reproduction," and "a mere whisper from a woman can place a man in shackles and force him to either confess or prove that he is innocent of even the pettiest charges." Faced with the bumper sticker slogan, "Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings," Donovan retorts that

this should be rewritten as “Feminism is the radical notion that men should do whatever women say, so that women can do whatever the hell they want.”

Unlike Christian rightists, who argue that feminism misleads women into betraying their true interests, Donovan sees feminism as an expression of women’s basic nature, which is “to calm men down and enlist their help at home, raising children, and fixing up the grass hut” (*Way*, p. 137). Today, feminists’ supposed alliance with globalist elites reflects this: “Women are better suited to and better served by the globalism and consumerism of modern democracies that promote security, no-strings attached sex and shopping” (*Way*, p. 148). It’s not that women are evil, Donovan claims. “Women are humans who are slightly different from men, and given the opportunity they will serve their slightly different interests and follow their own slightly different way” (*Way*, p. 150). But that slight different way inevitably clashes with men’s interests and therefore needs to be firmly controlled, if not suppressed.

## The Brotherhood

Donovan’s social and political ideal is a latter-day tribal order that he calls “The Brotherhood.” The Brotherhood is rooted in the primeval gang experience, where all men of the group affirm a sacred oath of loyalty to each other (spoken or unspoken) against the outside world. In this order, a man’s position would be based on “hierarchy through meritocracy,” not inherited wealth or status. The Brotherhood might be run as a democracy or it might have a king — Donovan isn’t particular as long as the leaders prove their worth and are accountable to the men of the group. All men would be expected to train and serve as warriors, and only warriors would have a political voice. Women would not be “permitted to rule or take part in the political life of The Brotherhood, though women have always and will always influence their husbands” (*A Sky Without Eagles*, hereafter *Sky*, p. 158).

Women’s main roles in this system would be to birth and raise children, and to help preserve memories of the ancestors, because “young men should grow up knowing what their great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers did, and who they were, and what they believed” (*Sky*, p. 160). To some extent this sounds like standard conservative gender ideology, but there’s a difference. “The family is a means for the continuation of The Brotherhood, and gives a sacred role to women in The Brotherhood. The ideal woman is Queen Gorgo of Sparta,... boasting that only women of her tribe give birth to worthy men” (*Sky*, p. 158). This is a reversal of the idea that men become hunters and warriors to protect and provide for their families. As Jef Costello noted on the white nationalist website *Counter-Currents*, Donovan is saying that women exist in order to bring men into the world, and the family exists because it makes idealized male gang life possible.

## Relationship with Men's Rights Activists and the Manosphere

Donovan shares some ideas with Men's Rights Activists ("MRAs") — notably that the legal system and the media unfairly discriminate against men — and has published several essays in the MRA-oriented journal *The Spearhead*. But he criticizes MRAs from the right, arguing that their stated goal of equity between men and women is a capitulation to feminism. Donovan is more favorably disposed toward the so-called manosphere, a loose online network of men who promote vicious hostility toward feminism and sexual predation toward women. In Donovan's words, "The manosphere is an outer realm where male tribalism rules.... [It] is not about what women want, or about making sure men and women are equal. The manosphere is about men writing about who men are and what they want, without supervision." In turn, influential manosphere figures such as Roosh V (Daryush Valizadeh) have praised Donovan's work. Roosh V commented on *The Way of Men*, "Ironical that a gay man wrote one of the manliest books I've ever read."

## White nationalism and fascism

Donovan is a sort of white nationalist fellow traveler. He has written for white nationalist websites including *Counter-Currents* and *Radix* and spoken at white nationalist gatherings such as National Policy Institute conferences. As he writes in "Mighty White," he is "sympathetic to many of their general aims," such as encouraging racial separatism and defending European Americans against "the deeply entrenched anti-white bias of multiculturalist orthodoxies." White nationalism dovetails with his belief that all humans are tribal creatures. But race is not his main focus or concern. "My work is about men. It's about understanding masculinity and the plight of men in the modern world. It's about what all men have in common." His "Brotherhood" ideal is not culturally specific and he's happy to see men of other cultures pursue similar aims. "For instance, I am not a Native American, but I have been in contact with a Native American activist who read *The Way of Men* and contacted me to tell me about his brotherhood [probably Vince Rinehart of *Attack the System*]. I could never belong to that tribe, but I wish him great success in his efforts to promote virility among his tribesmen" (*Sky*, p. 166).

Donovan has also embraced the term "anarcho-fascism," which he explained in terms of the original fascist symbol, the *fasces*, a bundle of wooden rods that stands for strength and unity. Rejecting the common belief that fascism equals a totalitarian state or top-down bureaucratic rule, he identified the fasces with the "bottom-up idea" of "a unified male collective.... True tribal unity can't be imposed from above. It's an organic phenomenon. Profound unity comes from men bound together by a red ribbon of blood." "...the modern, effeminate, bourgeois 'First World' states can no



longer produce new honor cultures. New, pure warrior-gangs can only rise in anarchic opposition to the corrupt, feminist, anti-tribal, degraded institutions of the established order.... Ur-fascism is the source of honor culture and authentic patriarchal tradition.”

Elsewhere, Donovan cautions that he isn’t “an anarchist or a fascist proper,” but simply wanted to make the point that “revitalizing tribal manliness will require a chaotic break from modernity” (*Sky*, p. 14). Still, there are strong resonances between his ideas and early fascism’s violent male camaraderie, which took the intense, trauma-laced bonds that World War I veterans had formed in the trenches and transferred them into street-fighting formations such as the Italian *squadristi* and German storm troopers. Donovan also echoes the 1909 Futurist Manifesto, a document that prefigured Italian Fascism: “We want to glorify war — the only cure for the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.” All this is part of what J. Sakai meant when he wrote that fascism “is a male movement, both in its composition and most importantly in its inner worldview. This is beyond discrimination or sexism, really. Fascism is nakedly a world of men. This is one of the sources of its cultural appeal.” I don’t completely agree, because fascism can also appeal to women on a mass scale, but the inner worldview Sakai was highlighting is an important aspect of fascism, and Donovan articulates that view as well as anybody.

## Toward a failed state

In the preface to his latest book, *A Sky Without Eagles*, Donovan writes that a few years ago he advocated a “resurgence of masculine virtue” in America, but he came to realize “that contemporary American and Western ideas and institutions were actually causes of men’s decline and inseparable from it” (p. 12). He has written repeatedly that he doesn’t believe in the existing political system and that it offers no viable solutions. For example: “The best thing you can do for your country — for the men around you, for the future — is to let the system tear itself apart. The way to increase personal sovereignty for men is to decrease the sovereignty of the state by withdrawing the consent of the governed.... If American men stop thinking of the government as ‘us’ and start thinking of it as ‘them’ — if we stop thinking of ourselves as Americans and start acting in our own interests, things could get really interesting.” Donovan believes that the U.S. is on the road to becoming “a failed state — a state where no one believes in the system, where the government is just another shakedown gang, where no one confuses the law with justice.” And he looks forward to that collapse: “In a failed state, we go back to Wild West rules, and America becomes a place for men again — a land full of promise and possibility that rewards daring and ingenuity, a place where men can restart the world.” He urges far rightists to “build the kinds of resilient communities and networks of skilled people that can survive the collapse and preserve your identities after the Fall.”

Donovan's repudiation of the existing political system, more than anything else, separates him from anti-feminist conservatives and places him squarely in the far right. However, urging men to sit back and wait for the system to fail is an oddly passive strategy for someone so fixated on being "manly." Maybe Donovan just hasn't had time to develop more active plans for helping to bring down the globalist-feminist state. Or maybe he recognizes that if you're serious about revolution, it's not always best to advertise your intentions in public. As Three Way Fight has discussed before, government counterinsurgency operations don't just target the left, but also the right.

## Male tribalism in context

As I argued in "Notes on Women and Right-Wing Movements," far rightist positions on gender draw on four distinct ideological themes. One is patriarchal traditionalism, which promotes rigid gender roles and women's subordination through the nuclear family. Another is demographic nationalism, which declares that women have a duty to the nation, race, or other collective to have lots of babies. A third theme is quasi-feminism, which advocates specific rights and an expanded political role for women while accepting men's overall dominance. The fourth ideological theme is something that I called "male bonding through warfare" or the "cult of male comradeship":

*"This theme emphasizes warfare (hardship, risk of death, shared acts of violence and killing) as the basis for deep emotional and spiritual ties between men. It is often implicitly homoerotic and occasionally celebrates male homosexuality openly, and is frequently at odds with 'bourgeois' family life. In the cult of male comradeship, women may be targets of violent contempt or simply ignored as irrelevant and invisible."*

When I wrote these words, I was thinking of European far rightists of the 1920s and 30s such as Ernst Jünger and the Nazi stormtroopers' leader Ernst Röhm, as well as, more recently, Afghanistan's Taliban. But while the Taliban combine their militaristic male comradeship with patriarchal traditionalism, Jack Donovan represents the ideology of male bonding through warfare in pure form.

Donovan's work is part of a trend on the far right toward increasingly harsh and explicit male supremacy doctrines. Quasi-feminism, which gained some influence among neonazi groups such as White Aryan Resistance in the 1980s and 1990s, has lost ground, while many Christian rightists and white nationalists have shifted toward starker forms of "traditional family" politics or moved into the manosphere. Biblical patriarchy is a prime example of this. Donovan's male tribalism is another.

*Anti-Fascist News* recently noted a growing respect in white nationalist circles for Donovan's vision of male warrior culture.

*"Though this is radically different than what many on the 'alt right' think [is] socially productive, they do note that society may need these cultural*

*elements and that they are rightist in that they celebrate in-group/out-group distinctions, tribalism, and hierarchy.”*

AFN frames this as part of a broader shift away from homophobia among many white nationalists:

*“We see a mixing of queer identity with open fascism with bands like Death in June, and all through the ‘manosphere’ there is a deep misogyny and white nationalism expressed by gay authors who have been invited into the fold. Though the stereotyped ‘gay culture’ is always derided by these groups, they play hard with the idea that queerness is biologically determined.”*

White nationalist intellectual forums such as Richard Spencer’s National Policy Institute and Greg Johnson’s *Counter-Currents* have given Donovan a forum, and *Counter-Currents* has also published homosexual white nationalist James O’Meara. Even in Klan and Nazi skinhead circles, where Donovan’s homosexuality is often vilified, AFN notes that “more often than not...there is tacit approval of his inclusion and even a sort of backhanded support.”

Donovan’s celebration of “small, nimble” gangs, failed states, and “anarcho-fascism” also meshes with the trend toward political decentralism across much of the far right. This trend reflects influences as varied as Posse Comitatus, the European New Right, laissez-faire economics, and Calvinist theology. Donovan’s work has been embraced by the anti-state far rightists of *Attack the System*. He himself cites ENR theorist Guillaume Faye as an influence on his vision of an ideal society, “The Brotherhood.”

## **Dispossessed men versus the new capitalist order**

To put this in some kind of socio-economic context, it’s helpful to look at Bromma’s important essay, *Exodus and Reconstruction: Working-Class Women at the Heart of Globalization*. As Bromma notes, globalization is dramatically eroding the old patriarchal system of controlling women through families:

*“A unifying theme of the new capitalist order is that the labor of working-class women is too valuable to leave in the hands of the ‘man of the house.’ Women’s labor is now to be controlled more directly by capitalists and their professional agents, without all the clumsy and inflexible local mediation formerly assigned to husbands, fathers and brothers. Working-class women must be ‘free’ to move from country to country, from industry to industry, from household to household. They are needed in the industrial zones, needed in giant factory farms, needed as nurses and ‘entertainers.’ Their domestic work is increasingly moved out of their own families and merged into great global service industries.”*

As women have been drawn into the capitalist labor market, growing numbers of men “have been forced into the margins of the labor market, if not out of it altogether.”

These changes, Bromma argues, have brought with them new forms of violence against women on a large scale:

*“Where they are concentrated, capitalists and warlords manipulate and encourage dispossessed men to terrorize them, to push them off the streets and out of public life.*

*“And there is something more: the destruction of traditional family-based rural patriarchy brings with it a powerful reactionary male political backlash.*

*“Millions of men are losing ‘their’ women, and ‘their’ jobs, and it’s driving them crazy. Today, the main opposition to capitalist globalization comes not from the weakened anti-imperialist Left, or — yet — from working-class women, but rather from militant right-wing men. The anger of male dispossession fuels reactionary populist, fundamentalist and fascist trends in every part of the world.”*

These dispossessed right-wing men “are increasingly resorting to radical and violent measures to ‘defend’ and ‘reclaim’ their patriarchal birthright, or at least grab a piece of the action in a new male order.”

Jack Donovan, who couples anti-feminism with a hatred of globalizing elites, offers a voice to some of these men. As Karl Kersplebedeb has noted,

*“Donovan’s gang has to be understood as also representing specific (patriarchal) class interests. Keeping in mind Bromma’s observations in the piece Exodus and Reconstruction...we can see these gendered gangs as aspiring managers of women’s labor, and a vision of a world system based on gangs like this would be a form of capitalism in which class and gender divisions were more explicitly and violently maintained in sync. (After all, someone has to feed the warriors, and here as elsewhere that will be the [female] proletariat.)”* (Email communication, 5 October 2012)

It’s unclear how much staying power Donovan’s ideas have or whether they can win over men on a scale comparable to Christian right gender politics, but it’s safe to say that support for his ideas is growing. Donovan offers a philosophy of resurgent male power that’s just as sweeping and systematic as biblical patriarchy and that can appeal to men who are indifferent or hostile to evangelical Christianity, including pagans, atheists, and non-heterosexuals. This philosophy is congenial to white nationalism but not limited to it. It’s one more indication that the far right does not stand still.

#### **Image credits:**

1. Cincinnati Statue, at Sawyer Point, Cincinnati, photo by Wally Gobetz, via Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)
2. *Les lutteurs* (the wrestlers) by Wilhelm Haverkamp [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

The Ted K Archive

Three Way Fight

Jack Donovan on men: a masculine tribalism for the far right

November 24, 2015

<[www.threewayfight.org/jack-donovan-on-men-a-masculine-tribalism-for-the-far-right](http://www.threewayfight.org/jack-donovan-on-men-a-masculine-tribalism-for-the-far-right)>

**[www.thetedkarchive.com](http://www.thetedkarchive.com)**