

The Way Of Men

Jack Donovan

An outstanding assessment of where men are in the first world today, and an ominous portent

The fact that there are 566 prior reviews of this book that came out in 2012 is an indication of its importance. The best short review I can offer is in the words of the author himself. He gives a seven minute overview in this video: jack-donovan.com/axis/books/the-way-of-men/. The video also gives you an idea of who the author is. He is so masculine you can smell the sweat through your video screen. His very persona gives credibility to his thesis.

His theme is that men and women evolved to fulfill different roles in human society. We are a species of social animal that evolved in a dangerous world. Like our primate ancestors we depend on the group for our protection. Also like our primate ancestors the groups have tended to be male-dominated, and among the males there was a hierarchy.

The men depended on one another for mutual support in the defense of the tribe. Depending on one another as they did, they constantly sized one another up. They chose the strongest as the leaders. The qualities that they look for in a leader were:

- Strength
- Courage
- Mastery
- Honor

Strength and courage are self-explanatory. Mastery is the ability to do things. Much mastery is, or was, directly involved in the defense of the tribe. Masters were the ones who could make tools, conduct reconnaissance to figure out where the enemy was, concoct strategy and tactics to defeat the enemy. However, even in our Neolithic days mastery involved storytelling, singing, the arts and other social skills.

Honor embodies all of the above. It is the commitment to carry through on promises. Donovan draws the distinction between two concepts: being a good man, and being good at being a man. Being a good man is a moral quality. Being good at being a man is a question of manly virtues such as the four named above. The two do not necessarily coincide.

He gives as examples movie heroes such as Dirty Harry who are good at being man but so morally compromised as not to be good men. He cites the popularity of such movies as evidence of what our society values, regardless of what it claims. In this he echoes Roger Devlin writing about Cary Grant in [\[\[ASIN:1935965891 Sexual Utopia in Power\]\]](#).

Donovan gives an evolutionary history of how we arrived at the current relationship between men and women. Prior to the dawn of agriculture they filled very different roles. Men were hunters and fighters. They hunted for proteins in the form of game and they defended against predators and other tribes. One of Donovan's recurrent themes is the need to defend the perimeter.

Donovan may underestimate the speed with which the human genome and certainly culture have evolved since the Neolithic. As Stephen Pinker writes in [\[\[ASIN:B005HHSYMW The Better Angels of our Nature\]\]](#), we had to become much less aggressive in order to live successfully in cities. As Harpending and Cochran write in [\[\[ASIN:B0042FZRPC The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution\]\]](#), we became measurably more intelligent and also weaker. Civilization allowed us to survive being poorer of eyesight, slower of foot, and having worse teeth.

Nonetheless, it is beyond dispute that until at least the dawn of the 20th century men and women filled different roles in just about every society. The jobs men did required physical strength, often courage, frequently tolerance of unpleasant situations, and usually that men depend on one another as they worked in teams. Women supported their

men and their families. They may have done strenuous work as well – gardening intending cows is not easy – but it was in support of a family unit.

These traits are visible in many societies today. Among my Vietnamese former in-laws the women still cooked and the men earned the money, drank and talked together, and philandered a bit. It was as it had always been. My second mother-in-law, a Japanese, rigorously defended her turf in the household. Though I am a good cook, I was not allowed in her kitchen until her dying moment. I add, happily, that my present Ukrainian mother-in-law is a peach. There is no "spending my grandchildren's inheritance" bumper sticker on her car! There is no car. She spends her time making sure that her young grandchildren are properly taken care of. That is how it should be... it is her genomic legacy.

Building houses for poor people in Nicaragua and Brazil with Habitat for Humanity I saw the same same-sex bonding. The women cooked and took care of the children – and children were a neighborhood project everywhere – and the men had the mastery required to help us build the houses. It was amusing to see how inept with their hands the Americans on my teams turned out to be. We were doing simple things like pick and shovel work, cutting and wiring reinforcing steel, and laying concrete block. These middle class Americans didn't know how to do that, and certainly did not know how to work as a team to get it done. Habitat had us there for goodwill. It boosts awareness of their projects in America, and besides that, volunteers on these teams had to pay their own way and make a contribution to the project. That was pretty much the sum total of our contribution. Our labor was incidental.

The divisions were even clearer in the time I spent among the Kayapó Indians in the Amazon. Although the men love the children – children are the greatest asset among groups in which warriors frequently die in battle, and this tribe was not settled on a reservation until 1967 – raising them was the women's job. The men's house in the middle of camp was the men's territory. They gathered in the evenings to decide on tribal affairs (about 80 people) and tell their tall tales. My contemporaries, men who had grown to adulthood prior to settling on the reservation, had a mastery of the forest. They knew how to hunt wild pigs with war clubs and how to catch fish with their bare hands. They knew what every vine in the forest was good for, as food, medicine, or water in a drought. It was shocking to note how little of this the younger generation was picking up. They could fish with fishing rods, hunt with shotguns, and go to the Brazilian nurse with her health problems. They sat around and played video games. There was no longer any demand for "being good at being a man." It presaged the situation of reservation Indians in the US and Canada.

The man's role has changed in Western Europe and America. The women have relentlessly abolished every uniquely male redoubt in our society. We do not have men's clubs. We do not have the Boy Scouts. The military is thoroughly feminized. Sports teams are integrated. The workplace has come to be dominated by feminine values. See this month's flap at Google over the firing of James Damore.

The women have invaded every aspect of the male world, one which is shrinking in any case. Our technology has reduced the need for traditional male virtues. Women make more docile cubicle rats than men. It is no wonder that video game usage, alcohol abuse, opioid abuse, philandering and other socially disruptive behaviors are on the rise. There is little way for a man to define himself as a man in today's world.

Men never were and do not want to be mothers. Another bit of news this week is that the number of "Mr. Moms" in America peaked at about 230,000 and is falling. Men simply do not want to be women.

Donovan goes into length about the difference between the chimpanzees and the bonobos. Chimpanzee society is male-dominated. It is very hierarchical. The dominant males have the best access to the females. Males form alliances to compete for dominance. Neighboring groups sometimes war with each other. Males sometimes beat the females to keep them in their place. The males tend to know who their sons are and establish something but patriarchy. Females may grow from group to group, but the males tend to stay with their male relatives.

Bonobos, on the other hand, are more female dominated. They mate rather indiscriminately, homosexually as well as heterosexually. Paternity is never certain. The females have the stronger bonds. It is the females who stay put and the males who go away to other groups.

And, Donovan notes, the bonobos enjoy a rich and protected world, rather like the first world society of today. They do not compete against gorillas like the common chimpanzee does. They have enough resources to stay fed year-round. There doesn't seem to be much to fight for.

The common chimpanzee has a territory about ten times as large as that of the bonobos, theirs but an arc of land south of a bend in the Congo River. Donovan would conclude that the common chimpanzee is a tougher competitor, and that the bonobos can only afford their California lifestyle due to the happy accident of their geography. He contends that the developed countries of the modern world are living in bonobo land, but the metaphorical river separating them from the rest of humanity is about to dry up.

Of the four masculine traits that Donovan discusses, strength and courage have been severely devalued. Honor has been so diluted by actions such as putting every student on the honor roll that the only thing left is mastery. The fact is that not every man has the talent to become a master. Even those of us who do – I am a master programmer – find ourselves sharing the workplace with women. Not only do we share the workplace, but find ourselves being dragged down wherever the evidence shows that we are dramatically more successful than women. We have no place to hide.

Donovan asks where this is leading. It appears to be heading toward collapse. Women dominate politics for the moment. They champion the nanny state, in which little boys are regarded as little more than defective girls. See [\[\[ASIN:B00ADRXOTO The War Against Boys: How Misguided Policies are Harming Our Young Men\]\]](#). Women's invasion of the workplace has reduced the number of men who are attractive marriage partners. Since women don't need them, the men don't feel much obligation to work. Childcare is a hassle.

The nanny state has promised all the protections that women want: police protection, socialized medicine, free education for their children, and pensions. At the same time society no longer holds motherhood in much esteem. Women regard workplace success as more important. The result is a dearth of children, especially among the more intelligent women. There is an impending demographic crisis as the baby boomer generation enters retirement. There are not enough young people to pay the generous pensions they have been promised. They are not numerous enough, and though Donovan does not go into it, they are predominately from the less educated and less capable strata of society.

How will society extricate itself from the situation? Donovan doesn't look for a solution in the political realm. He sees that it will collapse of its own weight. His advice is to prepare. Prepare yourself physically: stay strong, attain some mastery, force yourself to do things that will develop your courage, and seek honor among your peers. Build a circle of friends who will be your perimeter in the coming hard times.

His idea of a perimeter could be better developed. Here is my attempt. In the Bethesda, Maryland neighborhood where I lived prior to my divorce everybody was working at some very important job for the powers that be. They were ambassadors, NIH doctors, World Bank economists and the like. We did not know each other. If the underclass from the other end of Washington had poured into the neighborhood attempting to burn it down, as I witnessed them burn Los Angeles in the riots of 1965, we would not have been able to mount any kind of defense. We did not know one another.

Conversely, the Ukrainians who surround me in Kyiv all know each other. They have useful skills. If their car breaks down, they know what to do. They have garden plots. They recognize each other as co-ethnics. And, lamentable as a progressive would find it to be, they definitely regard the Gypsies in our neighborhood as "other," and with no basis I can see attribute such petty crime as the stealing of the roses I had planted in front of our fence to the Gypsies. In any

case, I think that this is as good as it gets for a perimeter. It would be nice to see a brotherhood such as was evident among the Kayapó Indians, but there is no way that could happen in the modern world.

That's the conclusion . Prepare yourself, and form your perimeter, because hard times are coming. A five-star effort. I include below a few especially valuable quotes.

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"In 1994, Michael Kimmel wrote an essay which provocatively asserted that "homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood." He went on to clarify that this homophobia had little or nothing to do with homosexual acts or an actual fear of homosexuals. He wrote, "Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear."

"At the primal level, flamboyant dishonor presents tactical problems for the group. By outwardly and theatrically rejecting the core masculine values, particularly strength and courage, the flamboyantly dishonorable male advertises weakness and a propensity for submission to outside watchers. Any honest student of human (and in many cases, primate) body language will be forced to recognize that the postures, gestures and intonations of males generally regarded as effeminate are in fact postures, gestures and intonations that communicate submissiveness. Humans are complicated, and when push comes to shove, stereotypically effeminate males are not always as submissive as their body language would seem to indicate. However, submissiveness is what they advertise."

"The man who flamboyantly rejects the honor codes of the group can obviously not be trusted to "snap to" in a state of emergency. Dishonor is disloyalty. A man who not only openly refuses to strive to be as strong, courageous and competent as he can, but who flaunts these codes theatrically for all to see is a weak link. He makes his peers seem more vulnerable for tolerating vulnerability, and more cowardly for tolerating cowardice. He brings shame on the group, and with shame comes danger, because public displays of weakness and cowardice invite attack."

"However, unless self-sacrifice and restraint are to be masculinity's defining qualities—unless masculinity is to be an ascetic discipline and nothing more—there is a point somewhere down a road of diminishing returns that being a good man is no longer a good trade. There's a point where a man who wants to "feel useful" ends up "feeling used." When the system no longer offers men what they want, how long can you expect them to perform tricks for a pat on the head?"

"To protect and serve their own interests, the wealthy and privileged have used feminists and pacifists to promote a masculinity that has nothing to do with being good at being a man, and everything to do with being what they consider a "good man." Their version of a good man is isolated from his peers, emotional, effectively impotent, easy to manage, and tactically inept."