

# On the Manosphere

Petyr Rieke, Sept. 2025

The manosphere meme has glided through my reading with suggestions of toxic masculinity and right-wing politics. Supposedly that is what is driving many young men to conservative politics or causing them to withdraw from society with the incels being the most misogynistic and radical. So, I spent a bit of time studying Andrew Tate -- one of the foremost voices associated with the manosphere. I focused on some of his YouTube motivational "sermons" on InSpillgence. They were, quite frankly, modestly inspirational. He gives hint of his male-oriented philosophy to this audience with background images of tough guys, fancy cars and a few pretty babes. I call this a sermon because it was essentially that. I could, by changing some language to use inclusive pronouns and emphasizing family more than wealth, create a plausible Universalist Unitarian sermon aimed at young people of all sexual persuasions, races or upbringing. The message is one about self-belief and a strong work ethic. Can't and won't argue with that. But Tate's basic message is deeply tainted with a hateful and predatory subtext.

With his interviews, presentations and social media presence, he does send a distinctly misogynistic message. It is focused on getting wealthy, seducing women and implying that these are somehow the rightful place of men in society. There is a distinct flavor of the lone-wolf mastering the world and taking advantage of all the losers that are just keeping you down. So, I have many issues with the guy, first of all, Tom Cruise was exactly this numbskull as Frank Mackey in the movie *Magnolia*. It's an old trope.

But let's play the MACHO game and see who wins.

Simply stated the guy's only manly street cred is his career as a kickboxer and he does appear to be a very successful conman. Got to admire that the guy is buff. Being a gym rat for most of my life, I can appreciate the work that goes into that look. He'd kick my butt in the ring but we all have our strengths and weaknesses. Many people find the overly muscular look distasteful but I see someone I just might be able to train-up to do some real work. Assuming they are willing to be part of a team, big strong guys are very useful but they have to be trainable. Tate is unfortunately not a team player.

In comparison, John Cena has a similar background as the "world's greatest wrestler" but is also an actor and musician. Clearly in his eponymous role on the comedy show "Peacemaker" he takes his role as a tough guy with some humor and humility.

My manly street cred is mostly in mountaineering. I assume that having a Ph.D. in Chemistry with dozens of refereed journal publications, working with teens and mentoring young people with disabilities don't count in Andrew Tate's list of manly things to do. But let me just say, I learned to do CPR on a dead guy on Mt. Saint Helens when I was 17. As a lumberjack, I was often first on the scene of a faller or fellow hooker smashed between rolling logs. Some of my mountaineering friends are dead.

So, you tell me who wins. My vote goes to John Cena. It's a silly argument as the question is rhetorical and does not have an answer. Why then is Tate a conservative, misogynist and why am I am social liberal. The answer goes back to the basis of his logic.

First, his stance appears to be that data cannot be believed, science is wrong and that all correct answers are obvious and common-sense. For all con-men and women, (let me not be sexist here), the common-

sense argument is a fundamental assumption and is often used to hide the lack of deductive reasoning. Despite how wrong common-sense often is, many people naturally take it to be superior to an actual education. It's common-sense, how could that be bad? Basing his diatribes on common-sense allows the Tate's followers to not question the validity of what he is saying.

Second his message assumes the believer, and encourages the believer, to believe in their own fundamental superiority. "We are different, we are superior – we will take our due." is a central theme. If you only believe in Mr. Tate and his superiority, he will tell you that you too are superior and (with your monetary help) everything will be set right. His philosophy appeals to young men who want to get rich and get laid, who want recognition and respect for those things and who apparently have no real path or future to achieving any goals much less these crass materialistic and sexist goals.

Third, he enables this assumption of superiority in that society should be essentially based on anarchy so that he and his followers can by brute force rise to the top garnering along the way plenty of money and women. A ruthless society gives his followers the right to live above the law -- independent and free of the society that squelches their talent. As humans, we originated in anarchy and have rejected that social organization time and time again.

Contrarily, psychology tells us that cooperation has many useful benefits in all aspects of society. Personally, I believe that men and women set up different forms of cooperative agreements when isolated from each other and understanding those differences is key to setting up coed cooperative systems. But this is a separate rant on its own.

Finally, there must be an enemy. In his case, he chooses women and hence the misogyny. Being half black, it might be difficult for him to identify the enemy based on race but this does not prevent others from playing the racial supremacy card. In the U.S., we tend to identify racism as white versus black because of our national history of slavery. But consider for example the simmering hatred between the Chinese and Japanese. And then of course there are immigration and religion as bases for propping up a subgroup of people as the enemy. Based on physical appearance, an outsider would have great difficulty in differentiating a Hutu from a Tutsi. As part our basic nature; we seem prone to identify certain groups as inferior in order to differentiate our tribe and seem superior.

Misogyny is particularly attractive to young men. Young men feel slighted and blame their lack of progress on women. Their desire for companionship can turn to hatred and contempt if they are continuously rebuffed and have no route to making social contact. Further, making social contact with women seems more fraught with more hidden traps than it ever was. The "Me Too" movement was enlightening for many young men. Guys like Aziz Anzari, were put through the media wringer for basically being a stand-up guy and doing the right think. Al Franken also was caught up in the frenzy for reenacting a stupid and dumb skit about groping a fellow co-worker. Meanwhile Donald Trump speaks openly of "grabbing them by the pussy" and very likely indulged in Epstein's sex-trafficking operation. If you buy into this misogyny, you are going to see a Trump as the successful embodiment of Tate's message.

For young men in their early twenties (I call this age "the embarrassing years"), the rules of social contact are too fraught with danger. The long-standing fear of rejection is now compounded with real fears of accusations of sexual impropriety. The result is fear and inaction. Young men who give it some thought simply withdraw from the social scene or limit it to other young men. It is from this pool of

disenfranchised young men that Tate preys upon. For women the dating scene seems even more bleak as many young men simply won't play along and spend their time doing something else. What's left are the "Cooch" hounds who will spend considerable time seeking sex without relationship.

Unlike those of us in our winter years, young men did not see the feminism of the 60's and 70' and understand its positive influence on society. In my youth, I was aghast at both the forced and willing compliance of women to take on traditional roles as housewives. Women seemed all but unapproachable and uninteresting. My own feelings of inadequacy and fear of embarrassment pervaded my behavior and I just simply could not "make the moves." The reality is I just focused on education and work and left women to their own devices. On occasion, some gal might just take an interest in me and through persistence sneak past my barriers. Hence my "body count" for better or worse remains quite low.

Intrinsically, I can understand the reluctance of today's young men to engage with women. They perceive that society has favored and promoted women simply for being women of some accomplishment often equal to their own accomplishment. "Why are women so special?" they might ask. Without the context of the women's movement of two generations ago, it seems blatantly sexist in the reverse sense. A simple mindless solution is to return to a time when women should cater to any mans whims. Tate promotes his misogyny as the solution to the problem.

Consider the term "feminism" which I take as the desire for women to have equal opportunity with men. But what is the counter term? There are none that promote the belief that men should also have equal opportunity to women and which, also, don't imply some form of male superiority. Many young men, lacking any contextual history of the patriarchy that governed most of human history, see only a society skewed in favor of women. And there are good arguments to believe society is failing men and that young men lack role models for masculinity that are not subversive to feminism. But young men don't even have the words much less a voice to express their needs in society without reverting to submission of women. Filling this void is the power of Andrew Tate's message.

This question of how to raise young men without fear of women is an important and lengthy one. However, this rant is on why Andrew Tate's message is so appealing and we defer how to address the issues of young men for another time.

Instead, the cult of intrinsic male superiority is dangled by Tate and aggrandized by the entertainment industry as the answer to the meaning of men. Arnold Schwarzenegger made great fame and fortune portraying this trope but Schwarzenegger does not go around promoting Tate's misogyny. I remember coming home from college and visiting one of my old friends from high school days who was training as a policeman. His bachelor pad apartment was decorated with John Wayne posters. It was clear as we guzzled beers that he took this version of masculinity as a model and not as fantasy portrayal. To be fair, reality set in when he married the girl right next door to my house and had two wonderful daughters.

In all my years hitchhiking, I've run into a few nasty cops and have found, that by subtly portraying myself as a wandering lumberjack from Montana, I could make friends with them. It helped to have an exotic look, adopt a blue-collar lingo, avoid seeming to be superior or educated and painting for them the dream of a frontier life that was far removed from the shity little town they lived in. I was often astounded by their wish for a simpler life where masculinity seemed so easily defined. However, in living much of that outward reality, I understood that beneath the surface such simplicity did not exist.

The meaning of being a man has emerged as a major question in our social evolution. It is slowly being addressed and some men have begun to put a voice to that frustration without demeaning women. Indeed, I plan to write about the social structure of men and our failure to step in and mentor young men especially during the “embarrassing years” when one’s insecurity makes us most vulnerable to easy answers.

But the Tate’s of the world are like rabid dogs spreading a dangerous and toxic disease. Gov. Noem: You have experience in dealing with apparently dangerous dogs. Perhaps you could turn your attention from harassing folks based upon skin tone and accent to addressing this important social issue. Or would you like to be one of Tate’s sex slaves or at best a “Trad Wife”?