

Red Pill Community as a Spiritual Community

Red Pill Community jako wspólnota duchowa

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Abstract: The secularisation of contemporary Western societies has led to the disintegration of traditional forms of spirituality and the emergence of a “transcendental void” filled by alternative spiritual communities. One such phenomenon is the Red Pill Community, functioning within the so-called manosphere. This study aims to explore the spiritual dimension of this community and to determine how it assumes functions typically associated with religious groups. The research employs a qualitative content analysis of the statements made by Andrew Tate – one of the leading figures of the manosphere – combined with discourse analysis focused on the categories of identity and axiology. The findings indicate that the Red Pill Community constructs a nonconformist belief system in which initiatory practices, narratives of self-realisation, and responses to existential questions play a central role. The group’s online forums serve a communal function and facilitate effective recruitment of new members. The results allow for interpreting the Red Pill Community as a form of new digital spirituality that responds to the contemporary crisis of religion and identity. Despite lacking a direct reference to the sacred, this community fulfils functions typical of religious groups by using new technologies to shape a sense of belonging and meaning.

Keywords: Red Pill Community, young men, spiritual community, manosphere, new spirituality, secularisation, Andrew Tate, Matrix



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Abstrakt: Sekularyzacja współczesnych społeczeństw zachodnich doprowadziła do rozpadu tradycyjnych form religijności i powstania „transcendentalnej pustki”, wypełnianej przez alternatywne wspólnoty duchowe. Jednym z takich fenomenów jest Red Pill Community, funkcjonująca w ramach tzw. manosfery. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ukazanie duchowego wymiaru tej społeczności oraz określenie, w jaki sposób przejmuje ona funkcje charakterystyczne dla wspólnot religijnych. W badaniu zastosowano jakościową analizę treści wypowiedzi Andrew Tate’a – czołowej postaci manosfery – oraz analizę dyskursu skupioną na kategoriach tożsamości i aksjologii. Wyniki wskazują, że Red Pill Community tworzy system przekonań o charakterze nonkonformistycznym, w którym centralną rolę odgrywają praktyki inicjacyjne, narracje o samorealizacji oraz odpowiedzi na pytania egzystencjalne. Fora internetowe tej grupy pełnią funkcję wspólnotową i umożliwiają skuteczną rekrutację nowych członków. Wnioski z analizy pozwalają interpretować Red Pill Community jako formę nowej duchowości cyfrowej, odpowiadającej na współczesny kryzys religii i tożsamości. Pomimo braku bezpośredniego odniesienia do strefy *sacrum*, wspólnota ta realizuje funkcje typowe dla religii, wykorzystując nowe technologie do kształtowania więzi i sensu

Słowa kluczowe: Red Pill Community, młodzi mężczyźni, wspólnota duchowa, manosfera, nowa duchowość, sekularyzacja, Andrew Tate, Matrix

INTRODUCTION

Around the twenty-ninth minute of the 1999 film, directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski, *The Matrix*, a scene takes place that has become a staple of pop culture: Neo meets Morpheus (Wachowski & Wachowski 1999):

Morpheus: This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes... Remember... All I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more.

Neo, the main protagonist, who until now has navigated between a corporate career and illicit hacking activity, reaches for the red pill without hesitation, as it is the only way for him to understand what the “Matrix” is. He then awakens inside a mechanical cocoon to which he is connected by a system of cables. Soon, he sees that he is only one among thousands of such pods, each occupied by dormant, utterly unaware human beings. With the help of Morpheus, the enigmatic leader of the rebels, he manages to escape, and the truth about the Matrix is revealed: it is a reality simulation woven by machines, in which every human being is merely an image transmitted by robots to the body confined within the pod. The film became a global hit, and the expression “escape from the Matrix” emerged as an important metaphor signifying the act of leaving behind an enslaving, artificial, and conformist reality – one bound by norms and social expectations – that limits genuine understanding and experience of the world, deprives individuals of freedom, and enforces mechanical, unreflective functioning. Nowadays, the film’s symbolism is used by the online Red Pill Community (RPC), whose members call themselves Redpillists, which directly refers to the scene of Neo’s first meeting with Morpheus, when he had to choose his future. As the nomenclature suggests, community members chose the red pill, which meant escaping the Matrix.

1. RED PILL COMMUNITY

The Red Pill Community is one of the communities that function within the “manosphere”, which, as Debbie Ging explains, is a collection of online blogs, channels, chat rooms, groups and organisations that fight for “men’s rights” (Ging 2017). She explains that the term “manosphere” was first used in 2009 to describe male blogging communities, and its popularisation is attributed to the book *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*, published in 2013 by Ian Ironwood. It mainly focuses on teenagers and young men, who are extremely susceptible to manipulation. Youth is drawn into this online world during a developmental period in which the worldview and the revaluation of original value systems are formed (Crone & Konijn 2018). Therefore, it is young people who are most appealed to

by the Red Pill. A survey commissioned by the charity Hope not Hate found that 80% of 16- and 17-year-old British boys had consumed content created by Andrew Tate (Hope not Hate 2023).

Unlike the main character of the movie *The Matrix*, the Gentlemen who become redpilled (a term meaning embracing the philosophy of the Red Pill Community) do not wake up in a slippery capsule in a world dominated by machines, but in a universe ruled by feminists and democrats. This state of affairs is, of course, as terrifying as the dystopia proposed by Lily and Lana Wachowski. Fortunately, the Red Pill community can help them acclimatise to this terrible reality with advice on how to live without succumbing to the mainstream, or even how they will be able to overcome the obstacles that feminism throws at them. According to them, the true nature of society and sexual relations is completely different from the one created today.

The Red Pill community is one of many similar groups that make up the manosphere. As the name implies, it is a collection of virtual spaces designed for men and men's rights. Most of these will be communities that share similar philosophies to the RPC or focus on right-wing ideologies (Ging 2017). It brings together men from all over the world under a single, virtual banner, and their most popular meeting place is forums dedicated to individual subgroups on reddit (Cousineau 2021). Supporters of men's rights already noticed the oppression imposed on them by society in the 1960s, and now researchers are paying attention to the psychological aspect of men's interest in the manosphere.

Modernity is characterised by a huge pace of development and change, and is therefore closely related to risk and impermanence, which has a huge impact on individuals (Giddens 2002). In such a climate, the individual is in a constant process of shaping his own self and image, but in order to do this, one needs to know what course to take.

“These aims imply a masculinity that is looking for answers on how to deal with the changing expectations of men, within both the crisis of masculinity and the rejection of traditional masculinity. In this way, men seeking guidance on how to construct their masculinity, because traditional role models have been called into question, are drawn to strong characters and the provided proof and the reassurance of male superiority that the manosphere represents” (Mountford 2018, 4).

Young men may find it much more beneficial to follow the philosophy of male supremacy in a reflective project of building identity. The crisis of male loneliness makes them extremely susceptible to misogynistic influences.

Social research makes it clear that dissatisfaction with one's social and romantic life is a major motivator for joining the Red Pill Community. Due to an alternative value system that encourages the rejection of modern society, Red Pill members involuntarily separate themselves from real life. The virtual community convinces them of the superiority of the views of the manosphere over the mainstream, while at the same time putting the members themselves in a superior position to the average bread-eater. This mechanism further deepens the feeling of isolation from the rest of the world. The ideology on which the Red Pill is based and the values instilled in its members make social integration significantly more difficult and, as part of the feedback, effectively locks the Red Pill members in their virtual spaces.

The researchers also point to another reason why young men crave the philosophy of the Red Pill and the like. The most commonly declared motivation for joining the community was the fact that they felt vulnerable in their relationships with women (Cedzyński 2024). This is a deceptively simple but true explanation. After the first romantic failures of adolescent men, the question arises about their source. The lack of satisfaction and the inability to build a male-female relationship make them naturally start looking for the reason for this situation. From a psychological point of view, the Red Pill community offers its members an asylum from self-reflection and self-criticism and allows feminism to be blamed for personal failures.

Nevertheless, it is not only the anti-feminist attitude that focuses the manosphere. Its members also adhere to one homogeneous vision of masculinity, the overriding goal of which is to maintain a dominant social position by referring to violent practices and manifestations of discrimination (Mountford 2018). The core thought of the Red Pill Community is based on references to the supposed "laws of nature." Red Pill men represent a growing subculture that rejects popular narratives. The origin of the name of the community, which is presented in the introduction, is crucial to the main idea of the movement. Manosphere believes that the truth that men need to wake up to is that feminism hurts them and robs them of their masculinity. They are advised to reject modern, Western and liberal social thought, and propose the path of "truth". All the above beliefs make up a belief system of a nonconformist nature. In times

of physical division and digital proximity, Red Pill forums are extremely effective in recruiting and indoctrinating new, young members.

2. SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES

According to Ferdinand Tönnies, a community is a stable, permanent form of functioning and coexistence; the individuals within it are dependent on each other, benefit from relationships, and possess and use common goods (Tönnies 2008, 182). Emile Durkheim saw the community as a functional space: he distinguished mechanical solidarity (primary communities, the harmony of thoughts and actions) and organic solidarity (modern communities, society is a complementary creation thanks to the internal division of labour, but not reducible to individuals), which differ from each other in the degree of development of the communities in which they occur (Durkheim 2021). The community is the source of rights and obligations regarding the proper functioning of society: socialisation aims to introduce the individual into communities and equip them with normative systems that facilitate functioning in society. The lack of a point of reference, which is a community, leads to anomie – a state in which an individual is unable to discover what he thinks social expectations are because the system that was the source of this information has collapsed (Sztompka 2002). An important part of the individual is the religious community, which, according to Paweł Załęcki, is a kind of social collective, forming a strong interpersonal bond between members who share a worldview, beliefs and participate in the same practices (Załęcki 2002, 358-359). The functional dimension of religion is crucial in this context, as it is conditioned by its ability to create specific value systems, ideological, symbolic, ritual elements and specific evoked feelings that help navigate the hardships of everyday life (Martin-Velasco 1988, 23). Religious communities thus equip the individual to answer questions about the meaning and purpose of life, shape morality and provide support in difficult moments.

Postmodern societies seem to function in opposition to communities; instead, social life is realised through associations, which are individualised creations. Individuals care about their own well-being, and members are negative and distrustful of each other; there is no

concept of common goods (Tönnies 2008: 185). Nevertheless, as Paweł Załęcki points out, the sense of threat, which, according to Ulrich Beck, is characteristic of postmodern societies (Beck 2002), is often intensified by the inability to meet basic needs and occurs as a result of the inevitable course of social events, leads to the emergence of protective communities, which include religious communities, characterized by, among others, interpersonal intimacy and the introduction of meaning-creating contexts and moral obligations (Załęcki 2002, 360). Janusz Mariański points out that the beginning of the 21st century is associated with the weakening, but not the disappearance, of religious influence, with a simultaneous increase in its importance in some areas of life (Mariański 2009, 34). The researcher explains that secularisation, the aim of which was to deprive man of the transcendental dimension, effectively weakened the position of the Church and caused the development of new spiritualities (Mariański 2016, 3), whose fluid, non-institutionalised form satisfies spiritual hunger, without requiring subordination to organised ritualism (Mariański 2015, 16). The very concept of spirituality, according to Janusz Mariański and Stanisław Wargacki, means an innovative, inclusive, individualised style of spiritual culture in postmodern societies: “it is democratic, easily accessible, individualistic in nature and goes beyond the structures of institutionalised religion, so it is often non-ecclesiastical” (Mariański & Wargacki 2011, 142). Due to their personalised form, postmodern forms of religiosity reject an objective understanding of Christian values, which are extremely important in the formation of human identity, i.e. all facts inscribed in human nature, “which serve the harmonious realisation of the needs and desires of human nature leading man to his goals ..” (Schrade 1993, 138). The universality, ruthlessness and transcendentality of these values make them create a stable axionormative system that allows us to navigate reality and give life seriousness and purpose (Schrade 1993, 138). The lack of rational assimilation of these values leads to the shallowness of the human experience through the practice of hedonistic and materialistic acts: the individual rejects an objective, natural understanding of ethical principles and develops his own definition of values such as love, responsibility or justice. Threat is therefore not the only reason for the search for communities in the postmodern reality: globalization and the resulting flood of information, as well as the radical structural changes that affect postmodern societies, detach the individual from stable norms and values, forcing an individual choice of

lifestyle (Mariański 2009, 52), i.e. a culturally defined form of realization of given norms, habits and needs (Dubis 2014; Fatyga 1999). This means that the individual is no longer dependent on the values-based traditions of local communities in the context of choices that shape their everyday life: nowadays they choose from alternative forms that put man at the very centre, promising him to find the way to his “I” and the sphere of *the sacred* (Mariański 2009, 53).

There is a growing interest in esoteric movements that refer to “astrology, mysticism, Eastern religions, psychological techniques, magic, parapsychology, and to live extraordinary experiences and sensations” (Mariański 2009, 57). These movements are the postmodern equivalent of religious communities, which equip with an appropriate axionormative system, help navigate reality and answer questions about meaning. They provide psychological closeness, but do not always meet the requirement of physicality by functioning in virtual spaces, which, thanks to anonymity, liberate from the prevailing social norms and give freedom in proclaiming views, have a positive overtone (Willson 1997).

One of such virtual communities is the Red Pill Community, the essence of which, conditioned by the emotional identification of its members (Siewierski 2015, 6), is a metaphor of “leaving the Matrix”, which leads to learning the truth about the laws that govern society and the matrimonial market. According to RPC members, the rest of society exists in ignorance, which intensifies the sense of social anomie on a global level and strengthens bonds within the group. Members of the RPC are bound not only by a system of values and a sense of belonging to a group, but also by the belief that they are superior to the “unenlightened”, who are still forced to live in a lie. By distinguishing itself from the rest of society and creating the illusion of the only true social ideology, the RPC shapes a unique, alienated, virtual community. Members share the same value system and specific beliefs, practices, and emotional states (Siewierski 2015, 6). What sustains the RPC community is the networks of contacts based on forums on services such as Reddit or Discord, and the consumption of content published by mentors of the manosphere, such as Andrew Tate. They are the ones who show the members of the community what they should focus on and what they should believe in. In addition, RPC forums are a safe zone for men to share their thoughts and experiences. An inseparable part of the manosphere is also giving each other advice in accordance with a

given value system. In this way, the community helps regulate negative emotional states and creates an atmosphere of a “support group”.

By providing a specific axionormative system, integration through sharing the “truth”, unity of worldview and virtual anonymity, which allows for the expression of controversial views and deepens the sense of separateness from the rest of society, the RPC ensures the fulfilment of the psychosocial needs of individuals and functions as a community.

The secularisation and marketisation of spirituality have significantly changed the original character of spiritual communities: they are not tied to a specific religious institution, they are selective (the individual decides on the degree of his or her own involvement and consumption of given content) and may have a virtual dimension. They bring together like-minded people, equip them with an axionormative system, navigate everyday life and provide answers to the ultimate questions: about the meaning and purpose of life. One such community is the Red Pill Community, which is spiritual in its structure, ideology and practice.

3. RED PILL COMMUNITY AS A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY – AN ANALYSIS OF ANDREW TATE’S STATEMENTS

Among the most famous celebrities and gurus of the manosphere are brothers Andrew and Tristan Tate, who became famous thanks to their activity on social networks: as former professional kickboxers, they have amassed millions of followers thanks to their conservative, misogynistic views. They publish videos in which they flaunt their luxurious lifestyle and introduce the RPC philosophy to the audience, and they also run an online academy where they share methods to get rich and give advice on how to succeed in the matrimonial market. They are the most popular idols of the community, who additionally take part in the creation of the community philosophy, and Andrew Tate, who is the most media-oriented of the brothers, is perceived as the global voice of the community. Their lifestyle is aspirational for the members of the group, as he has all the qualities of a real man in the eyes of the Redpillists (BBC 2025).

An analysis of Andrew Tate’s statements, the self-proclaimed leader of the manosphere, reveals the spiritual dimension of Redpill thought. The use of a qualitative research method allows for a greater dose of interpretation, “taking into account the broader context and

intentions of the sender” (Czarnik 2020, 10). The statements presented below are selected excerpts from Andrew Tate’s speeches according to the criterion of thematic relevance.

An important aspect that gives the RPC a spiritual character is the ritual nature of the practices that accompany joining its ranks. The very vocabulary used to describe this process is indicative of the ritualism associated with it: in a popular podcast episode, hosted by Tucker Carlson, Andrew Tate presents the following definition of the Matrix (YouTube 2024a):

Tucker Carlson: What is the Matrix?

Andrew Tate: Good question. I guess some Americans call it the Deep State, but I like to look at it in a more global way. When I say the Matrix, I think there are certain agendas which are being pushed, I think the media machine and the judicial systems of the world work together hand in hand. I think the goal is to control people’s minds to a point where they don’t discuss anything that’s important. The reason I use the Matrix is because I’ve watched that movie a few times and it has so many similarities (...) and the basic premise is that human’s minds are controlled and put inside of a false reality so that their body heat can be manifested for the machines, and I don’t think it’s much different to reality our minds are controlled. We’re put in a false version of reality, we’re told things that aren’t true, we’re arguing over things that don’t matter, we’re observing a false version of events and the goal of it is just to distract us long enough for our bodies to be used for the machines, the soulless, and I think it’s pretty similar.

He explains that you need to wake up from the Matrix: first you need to understand that you are part of a controllable, limited reality, then you need to awaken in yourself the desire for something bigger, inconvenient and non-conformist, then you need to “swallow the red pill” and take your fate into your own hands, free yourself from social dictatorship and understand the true mechanisms that govern this world. This process is ritualistic, as it assumes a specific sequence of activities, the performance of which leads to the achievement of specific goals; however, due to the lack of a physical dimension and the sequential form of thought processes, it is not a ritual in the strict sense of the word.

Another important element that shapes the spiritual dimension of RPC is the regulation and determination of the most important dimensions of everyday life, and thus the shaping of specific lifestyles. Leaders and popularisers of the RPC consider work on their image and material condition to be crucial: the result is dedication to exercise and paid work. Members of the community are encouraged to attend the gym every day and to choose a profession that brings the most profits. Physical exercise is supposed to improve the figure, self-confidence and eliminate malaise, and doing well-paid work is supposed to improve social status.

The spiritual dimension of the RPC is constructed primarily by providing answers to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. The motivational video “Andrew Tate: The Purpose of Life” posted on YouTube presents the following ideology of the RPC leader and guide (YouTube 2024b):

Host: Is happiness the purpose of life?

Andrew Tate: No absolutely utterly not, the purpose of life is to be confident, successful. If you try and base your life and your mentality purely around how happy you are you’ll end up hedonistic and destroyed. (...) I think that as a man your happiness comes from feeling respected over feeling loved and the reason perhaps, you’re happy now is because you have more respect for yourself because of the decisions you’re making, and you have self-respect. And I think that a lot of men even if they have self-respect if nobody else respects them, they’re struggling.

Thus, the vision is presented that the meaning of life is social success determined by respect, both from within and from without. In another statement presented in the film “Andrew Tate: I Will Achieve The Purpose Of Life | Masculine Motivational Advice On How To Win” Andrew Tate points out that this approach only characterizes men (YouTube 2024c):

Andrew Tate: I do not believe happiness is the purpose of life for a man I believe happiness is what children should strive for, and I believe women should aim to be happy I believe happiness is for women and children, I believe men should have a sense of purpose, I believe we should live for something. If you live for happiness then you’re hedonistic, you go to festivals, you do drugs, you drink alcohol, you’re an idiot. Living for happiness as a man makes you an idiot 99% of the time. If you live for happiness as a woman, you probably want to have a good relationship with your spouse and you wanna be giddy and you wanna laugh and joke and raise your children and make pretty things and it’s, it’s pretty good but male happiness is, is just being an idiot. I think you need a sense of purpose as a man I think you need something to live and to die for. If you feel purposeful, you’ll never feel sad, you may be stressed and you may be busy, but you’ll never feel sad.

According to this ideology, men are burdened with enormous responsibility; they must renounce temporary pleasures and work hard to find meaning in success, which is an appropriate social status and universal respect. This perspective is also confirmed by the following statement by Tate, presented in the video entitled “Andrew Tate: Explains the Purpose of Life” (YouTube 2023):

Host: Why we are created as humas and why we are here? What is the purpose of life? Why have we been given life?

Andrew Tate: I think we’re here to struggle and to learn. I don’t think we’re here to be happy. (...) You’re a man. You have responsibilities. You’re here to do important things. And important

things are going to be difficult. And they're going to be hard, and you're going to get frustrated. But that's what gives you purpose. I don't see anyone who's chasing happiness. I think that's a very feminine frame. I understand why some women just want to be happy I don't think, I don't know how it feels to be a girl because I'm not one. But in my experience, I know women who just want to be happy. Girls just want to have fun. Fine. But you're a man, right? And if you're a man, then it's absolutely, entirely different experience of life. I, I think we're here to struggle. I think we're here to endure pain. I think we're here to just see how hard we are to kill. I think that going through terrible things and living through them and coming out the other side is one of the most fantastic things about being a human. I think it's like once you understand what life is really about, there's no emotion, which isn't enjoyable. The only emotion that, the only emotional state which can be seen as detrimental is feeling nothing at all.

Through suffering and hard work, one can find the way to success, which becomes the meaning of life: a man who is lost and unsure of his fate and who is looking for answers to ultimate questions should say goodbye to immediate gratification and to finding easy solutions. In order to truly understand life and oneself, one must prepare for suffering and acquire the attributes that will allow for a dignified life, find strength, respect and maintain the will to fight. On his website, Andrew Tate outlines 41 principles that men should follow, including: "Principle 1: I believe that men have the divine imperative to become as capable powerful and competent as possible in this life"; "Principle 13: I believe that a man's life is difficult and he has the sacred duty to become strong to handle such difficulty"; "Principle 14: I believe men are personally responsible for their actions and for the results they achieve in their lives"; "Principle 25: I believe in acquiring wealth and abundance in order to improve my life and do good for those I care about"; "Rule 41: each day I dedicate myself anew to create the greatest possible positive impact in the world and do the work necessary to achieve a greater masculine excellence across all realms of human endeavour" (Andrew Tate: Live What You Dream – official website). These principles show that one of the leaders and main popularisers of the RPC believes in the divine destiny of men, which is to obtain the right social status that will allow for a dignified, wealthy and hardworking life: the meaning lies in overcoming the natural obstacles of life, in shaping one's masculinity. Success is defined by the material state and the social respect aroused. If men face their fears instead of running away from them, they will embark on the glorious and ultimately successful path that was destined for them in advance: life is supposed to be difficult, profit is supposed to be great.

CONCLUSIONS

The transcendental emptiness, which is a long-term consequence of secularization, the fact that “morality loses its institutional safeguards, becomes more and more a matter of autonomous, individual conscience” (Mariański 2002, 48) and rejects the objective concept of Christian values, has significantly expanded the possibilities of the spiritual market: a number of groups, organizations and communities are created that focus on religious practices and answers to ultimate questions and thanks to the technological progress often take on a virtual dimension. One such online community is the Red Pill Community, which, using the terminology of the popular movie *The Matrix*, calls on its members to wake up from an artificial, tightly controlled reality and to join the “real world”. The very process of entering the community already assumes a ritualised character, and the elements that confirm the spiritual framework of the RPC and evoke the functional dimensions of religion include the valorisation of life attitudes as well as the provision of key answers to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. The ideology is addressed to men, who are encouraged to take full responsibility for their own lives, to confront adversity, and to deliberately construct success – understood as the ultimate goal, defined by wealth and masculinity. The Redd Pill Community thus exploits the openness of the spiritual marketplace and the human need for belonging to communities in which one may find both acceptance and significant philosophical constructs. Therefore, despite the RPC not explicitly positioning constructs. Therefore, despite the RPC not explicitly positioning itself as a community that refers to the sacred, it can nonetheless be observed that it assumes a spiritual character by virtue of the functions it performs.

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