

A Sermon on Questioning Dogma

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for March 3rd, 2024 (and beyond)

This sermon is in dialogue format and may be acted out at any given time in any given way. It is inspired in large part by the book “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” by Mary Wollstonecraft (Shelley) who being denied a formal education while appreciating its value in a limited way failed to fully understand the benefits or purpose of open social discourse.

DIALOGUE

#TaoFu Mary: I was taught to read and assigned my place in society to be a slave or despot as I contend those are the only two options for women of my time. I insist on more opportunity for women, which begins with equal access to formal education that will open the doors to inclusion in all areas currently dominated by men in the public sphere. Luxury and politesse or social grace is the bane of my existence. There should only be one class, the middle or moderate class, but still a servant class responsible for menial tasks like housekeeping and the like.

Angela: You were taught to read outside of any formal education and read books of your choice outside of the full context they were written and without personal or professional knowledge of the authors beyond what you’ve read. With formal education, often context is provided through open discourse or with respect to the limitations on any source of information in the age of reason as being necessarily incomplete requiring evermore investigation and study. Science recognizes that slight variables can change outcomes and is willing to be tested ad infinitum because its only aim is the whole truth.

#TaoFu Mary: I abhor fiction and believe the only literature that should be allowed is religion, history, and any or all nonfiction aforementioned included. Fiction is trivial and for the feeble-minded. Women should home-school their children until age 7 and all school should be co-ed day schools where mothers continue education at home to adulthood. This can only be achieved if women are formally educated. I despise Islam because they claim women have no souls and I despise Russia for making whips for the sole purpose of beating women into submission.

Angela: Are you familiar with the works of William Shakespeare? Would you ban Shakespeare? Often where the truth or full context has been censored by tyrants and/or despots, the truth has been hidden in fiction to allow it some consideration even if only in the abstract where penalty may attach to it if not delivered as fiction. So, to study fiction in light of the context in which it was written may lead people to a greater understanding of truth in full context. In addition, it is difficult to imagine teaching children about virtue and vice without morality plays or even some fairytales. “Landover Baptist Creation Scientist, Dr. Jonathan Edwards, announced findings related to his research into the female soul early this week. "The absence of either salvation or condemnation for women finds extensive support in the Word of God." He reported. "Jesus said that the sole reason God created women in the first place was to provide company and service to

men (1 Corinthians 11:9), God determined that men would be lonely living alone, so he created women purely to keep men company and serve their needs (Genesis 2:18-22). Women are therefore completely subordinate to men (1 Corinthians 11:3). It stands to reason, though, that once men enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they will be one with God, and will no longer be lonely and in need of mortal companionship. Thus, the reason behind having women will no longer exist. Women, like the members of the animal kingdom, will fall by the wayside." Source: <https://www.landoverbaptist.org/news0500/femsoul.html> "The claim that a Catholic council denied that "women are human" was taken up by Pierre Bayle in his pamphlets against Catholicism, and Bayle's work was used in anti-Catholic works, the rephrasing of the linguistic questions (does Latin homines include females?) in terms of a question of women having a "soul" is apparently due to one M. Aime-Martin." Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synod_of_M%C3%A2con Russian Cossacks still flog dissenters and/or those who violate the law. They whip both male and female dissenters alike without regard for gender. Source: <https://www.rferl.org/a/the-mayor-s-muscle-moscow-leans-on-cossack-brawn-to-put-down-dissent/29215357.html> On religion, do you believe that Catholicism or some branches of Protestantism are as despicable as the similar proposition found in Islam on the matter of whether women have souls? Is it possible that in pointing out that stated belief whether in or out of context was just a form of propaganda for any continued crusade to get Christian women to feel threatened by Islam so they support ongoing wars against Turkey or other predominantly Muslim countries or regions? Was it used to pacify any antiwar sentiment among western women now or in your time?

#TaoFu Mary: Anyone who denies that women have souls I abhor. I don't care what faith they claim nor what philosophy they espouse. But, the Muslims and the Russians are the worst and a threat to civilization. French women are libertines and should be subjected to religious training. Women should be welcome to participate fully in the public sphere so as not to be forced to choose between being a slave or a despot. Most women I know are nothing more than lapdogs living to please the men around them or total despots with hordes of servants that do everything for them. There has to be another way.

Angela: In modern western civilization, women are welcome to participate fully in the public sphere as equals in the eyes of the law regardless of economic class. Women can run for and hold public office, own property, run businesses, and live as independently as their circumstances permit while arguably making concessions where economic realities are factored in, though still an affluent family facilitates greater opportunity for their relatives regardless of gender than less affluent families can afford to facilitate to this day which limits potential and thereby opportunity for those with less resources overall. But, women who have a more public life often delegate the responsibilities of caring for their children to a variety of professionals including nannies which you may refer to as governesses or nursemaids, daycares, babysitters, and public schools having no time or energy to do everything you suggest be the norm in your work. It seems to me you would deny women with children participation in the public sphere as you feel motherhood is a vocation that should not be neglected nor exploited by those who bear

children and that any tutoring should be the sole responsibility of the mother with no hired help. 84.3% of women have at least one child by age 49. Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr179.pdf> This suggests that your recommendations would at least result in women being taken out of the public sphere to devote themselves fully to motherhood once they become or even begin the process of becoming a mother. Since that is the vast majority of women, the public sphere may be limited to only 15.7% of women in terms of full participation if following your directives which read a bit dogmatic and that's likely a result of your being denied a formal education while mostly guided by your church when not encouraged to read other materials provided by your loved ones.

#TaoFu Mary: Are you saying I'm spoiled because my loved ones facilitate my reading books all day in comfortable surroundings and I'm permitted to opine ad infinitum on the limited materials I've been provided? I am not spoiled. I detest those who spoil. I protest spoiling of any kind. I believe in firm and kind discipline that facilitates independence. I believe women have equal right to independence and full participation in the public sphere.

Angela: A minority of women though, because 84.3% must per your own directives devote themselves to motherhood and some of the rest must remain available to do menial tasks that the small percentage of women left need help with because they are too busy with their independent lives in the public sphere and require hired help to facilitate their independence. I believe everyone should understand economics prior to pursuing independence and also their current economic position so they are better able to be responsible for their own financial/economic sustainability. Where would your property come from in the event you were able to legally own property in your time?

#TaoFu Mary: I'd be given property by my family or my husband's family upon marriage. I'd own my own property I've inherited and co-own any property through marriage that my husband inherited. I'd be totally independent. I'd have a successful public life in government and be assigned an estate as part of the aristocracy after which I'd give my children the property left to me and/or my husband.

Angela: Percy wrote "Frankenstein", didn't he? I think Justine was inspired by you. It says in the introduction he wrote it based on your idea but gave you the credit to support your independence and equality. You lived from 1797 to 1851. Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and Louisa May Alcott all published their works throughout the 19th century and as early as 1813 with some of Austen's works without any husband ghostwriting for them in any way. Were you an unwitting despot? Hitler was a vegetarian and a tyrant who propagandized arguing against bourgeoisie values while adopting them at the same time. "So to come back to the question of Nazis: fascism is a last resort for the bourgeoisie, not something they just all want eagerly." Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/Socialism_101/comments/vwbl3y/what_threat_did_the_nazis_pose_to_the_global/ You were a vegetarian too, right?

#TaoFu Mary: Are you sure I wrote “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”? Are you sure you read a true copy of the original versions of any of my work?

Angela: I believe so, but am open to learning more or even at some point checking my copies against the originals if I can find them and be sure they are the originals. And, as much as you respond to Rousseau, Dr. Gregory, and others in your work that inspired this without having any confirmation or discourse with them directly for the sake of additional context while quoting them arguably piece-meal, I like to think you’d see this sermon as much as an homage as a criticism.

#TaoFu Mary: I do and appreciate that any woman at any time would start and run her own church that explores philosophy without regard to pre-existing dogma or settled universal truths.

Angela: Thank you.

#TaoFu Mary: “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.” Genesis 5:2 KJV “This is the historical record of Adam’s generations. When God created mankind, he made them in his own likeness. Creating them male and female, he blessed them and called them humans when he created them.” Genesis 5:1-2 ISV Jonathan Edwards is an idiot and clearly didn’t read all of Genesis taking what suits his oppression of women out of context to promote erroneous and disproved dogmatism when full context is considered including Genesis 5:1-2 as stated in both the King James and International Standard Versions.

Angela: In Plato’s “Symposium” Aristophanes reportedly reports how humans originally were male and female combined as one whole person but because they questioned Zeus’ authority he split humans into two separate genders experimenting in various ways until we have the composition we have now. Zeus is represented as a male deity, but there are multiple male and female deities in Greek Mythology. So, with comparative religion/myth, one may via hearsay attribute a masculine identity for the creator while recognizing both genders as equal in the eyes of the creator though not equal to the creator where Zeus is the Creator depending on cultural influences and context.

#TaoFu Mary: But, Aristophanes got it wrong because Prometheus created mankind out of mud and Athena breathed life into the clay providing the breath of life that animated the first humans. The point is we both have souls and are both women. Athena is Zeus’ daughter with Metis a nymph and not a Goddess like Hera.

Angela: Yes, the nymphs are an inferior class in the hierarchy of Greek entities. Would they be considered middle class or a servant class?

#TaoFu Mary: Their male counterparts were Satyrs. It is all euphemism for libertines or those who engage in prostitution. In Christian parlance, Athena would be considered a nephilim because that is the term for half-breeds biblically. Zeus would likely be represented by an archangel biblically, potentially similar to Moses’ father where his

mother in the bible had a similar experience to that of Danae the mother of Perseus, Zeus being his father of course.

Angela: Do you consider that nonfiction? In “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”, at least the version I read, you consider religious and philosophy books factual.

#TaoFu Mary: Do you believe my book would have been published had I not represented all the views I stated as my own in the book even where clearly contradictory?

Angela: Possibly and as is, an arguably subversive mystery that requires more than a cursory read and minor contemplation to discern.

#TaoFu Mary: Thank you.

END DIALOGUE

FINAL THOUGHT: Speaking of euphemisms, analogies, and/or metaphors, if Zeus is the Creator per Aristophanes via Plato, and most stories were shared through oral tradition until after the invention of the printing press, where such has been shown to result in intentional or inadvertent changes of the original stories whether true or myth, the reality is that many nonhuman females reproduce autonomously. “Parthenogenesis is a Greek word meaning “virgin creation,” but specifically refers to female asexual reproduction. While many people may assume this behavior is the domain of science fiction or religious texts, parthenogenesis is surprisingly common throughout the tree of life and is found in a variety of organisms, including plants, insects, fish, reptiles and even birds. Because mammals, including human beings, require certain genes to come from sperm, mammals are incapable of parthenogenesis.” Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/27/world/virgin-births-parthenogenesis-partner-scn/index.html>

It seems to me witnessing that in nature without enough data while believing Zeus is the Creator might turn into a story about living things starting out as both genders combined and where it doesn't hold true it is because the animal that was witnessed, or inspired the story, was replaced by humans at some point in the telling. Zeus liked to take the form of animals to pursue relations at times and humans share 65% of our DNA with birds. Source: <https://education.seattlepi.com/animals-share-human-dna-sequences-6693.html> Also, “Some organisms can use mitosis to reproduce asexually. The offspring of asexual reproduction are genetically identical to each other and to their parent. Most single-celled, microorganisms reproduce asexually by duplicating their genetic material and dividing in half. For example, phytoplankton reproduce primarily through asexual reproduction. Some single-celled eukaryotes, including some plants and animals, reproduce asexually in processes called fragmentation or budding.” Source: <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/exploringourfluidearth/biological/aquatic-plants-and-algae/growth-development-and-reproduction> Single-celled organisms are reportedly our ancestors and the ancestors of all living things. Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2023/05/multicellular-organism-evolution->

[yeast-experiment/674030/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/674030/) So, if Zeus is the Creator of all living things including the single-celled organisms from which we evolved, then we were at one point reproducing without a partner or basically cloning ourselves as complete wholes until split apart through mitosis which suggests mitosis is the punishment for the single-celled organisms that is still visited on all where accepting Aristophanes' contention is based on any facts or has any truth to it. Human sperm are single-celled organisms that all start out female. Sources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK26914/> & <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/4470128/>

END OF SERMON

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.