

A Sermon on the Essence of #TaoFu

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for November 29th, 2020 (and beyond)

This is intended to be a meditative sermon in which you arguably will get out of it what you put into it. The essence of #TaoFu is to avoid hypocrisy by practicing truth (honesty including intellectual honesty) and virtue with respect for the equality of all humankind including yourself in relation to others. Justice and fairness are both virtues with equality in mind. The essential question is "Do I require (or demand) more of others than I offer myself?" Sample questions are provided below and you can apply this question (inspired of course by the Golden Rule, Jesus said (Luke 6:31 Wycliffe Bible): "And as ye wolen that men do to you, do ye also to hem in lijk maner." Translated from Middle English by Rev. Smith "And, as you would have people do to you, do you also to them in like manner or likewise."):

MEDITATIVE QUESTIONS

Do I require more forgiveness than I offer others?

Do I require more generosity than I offer others?

Do I require more mercy than I offer others?

Do I require more diligence than I offer others?

Do I require more love than I offer others?

Do I require more honesty than I offer others?

Do I require more respect (AKA consideration) than I offer others?

Do I require more justice than I offer others?

Do I require more authority than I offer others?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions or if you were answering honestly would've answered "yes", you are a hypocrite and actively supporting inequality if that's your example unless developmentally disabled and in such a case it is understandable why you wouldn't be recognized as an authority as a matter of law.

If you are more "Even Steven" and know you require no more of others than you do of yourself, evidenced by the reciprocity of your relationships regardless of business or pleasure, awesome and keep up the healthy lifestyle.

If you answered "no, just the opposite in most regards if not all" because you offer more to others than you require of others, you are a very selfless person and in the jungle would likely be eaten first which you might not mind if so altruistic you accept that your

final act this life-cycle was feeding the hungry which is how most stories end literally or figuratively regardless of disposition.

Here's a sample scenario so you get the idea of how to exercise it when interacting or communicating with other people: [Question to Ponder: Would I remain as calm as Person 2?]

Person 1: You've really done it this time! I'm so pissed.

Person 2: [Thought: I'm being treated unmercifully, should I respond with mercy?] I see that you are very angry, but, I don't know why. I assure you I mean you no harm and didn't mean to offend you.

Person 1: You know why and are just playing games.

Person 2: [Thought: I have the right to know the nature of the allegations and context in which they occurred before penalty is assigned and since we are equals, you have no right to penalize me and I never agreed to that unless otherwise recognized at law.] I think you are just angry because I got angry that you used my credit card and took cash from my wallet without my consent so are hoping to manufacture a basis for my own guilt to avoid accountability for your own actions. Unless, there's another reason.

Person 1: I'm angry that you cancelled my credit cards without telling me and that's why I took from you because you had no right to do that.

Person 2: The bank cancelled your credit cards and I notified you of that or handed you the notice. That is not the same as my canceling your credit cards. Is that the only basis for your anger with me at the moment?

Person 1: I'm done talking to you.

So, Person 2 was responding to anger or wrath with honest reason and inquiry for the sake of understanding, justice, and fairness. Person 1 however was not being intellectually honest nor thinking in full context and arguably shut down when realizing Person 2 isn't susceptible to their undue influence and fully aware of what has previously transpired in full context. So, Person 2 not new to the situation, willing to reasonably consider the possibility of own fallibility, but not adopting the position of Person 1 who failed to effectively establish a winning argument in full factual context.

If Person 2 had been in the wrong, here's how that might have gone: [Questions to Ponder: Would you remain as calm as Person 1 and does Person 1 have altruistic or co-dependent tendencies?]

Person 1: You've really done it this time! I'm so pissed.

Person 2: [Thought: I'm being treated unmercifully, should I respond with mercy?] I see that you are very angry, but, I don't know why. I assure you I mean you no harm and didn't mean to offend you.

Person 1: You just used my treasured family heirloom Bible with full family tree dating back over 2 centuries as kindling and the electricity is working as is the heater, so, not an emergency. Does that explain to you why? I'm more hurt than anything else and kind of in shock.

Person 2: I just thought it was an old book laying by the fireplace so was likely intended to be used as kindling. I apologize and it won't happen again.

Person 1: Please do not start any fires or touch anything you see in my home in any manner that would destroy it without my express permission. So, in the future ask first.

Person 2: I did ask if it was okay if I started a fire in the fireplace. You said there was kindling by the fireplace.

Person 1: There is kindling by the fireplace. There's a stack of old newspapers in a cage to the left and also some small kindling sticks to go under the larger logs. It's all right there. The Bible was on a separate table to the right of the fireplace stokers and shovel. So, not with the kindling.

Person 2: How much to replace The Bible? I'm happy to pay for a replacement.

Person 1: It is priceless and irreplaceable.

Person 2: It's just a book. Don't you have a copy of your family tree that's not in the Bible? I can replace the Bible and get you a membership at ancestry.com. That's the best I can do.

Person 1: Don't worry about it. I forgive you and just ask that you don't touch my stuff anymore without my consent and supervision.

Person 2: I did ask and I apologize for the misunderstanding. I honestly don't feel I require supervision, though respect you to ask for consent of course.

Person 1: I honestly think an intelligent person would've known the Bible wasn't kindling. Since you used it as kindling when there was plenty of actual kindling available, I have to believe you to be intellectually disabled/challenged or dishonest and vicious. I am choosing to believe you are intellectually disabled or challenged rather than evil. It is my sincere belief that intellectually challenged people may require supervision to prevent harm such as a precious family heirloom being destroyed. As a result, when it comes to my belongings, I ask you to respect that I wish to supervise your use of my belongings in the future.

Person 2: Fine, I won't touch your stuff or try to do anything nice like build a fire ever again.

Person 1: Great, but, my house my rules and your house your rules where we're each free to leave if we don't like the rules. I'm fine if you choose to burn your own books in your own fireplace and limit that practice to your own home to avoid further conflicts.

Person 2: I don't have a fireplace. I have burned a few books from my own library at bonfires. I honestly use old books as kindling. I really thought it was kindling. I'd like to think you recognize my intelligence enough to know if I were to start a fire in your fireplace again, I'd use the kindling assortment on the left rather than the right of the fireplace.

Person 1: I may need some time to adjust to the loss of the heirloom Bible. I had no idea that anyone would ever mistake it for kindling. Should I have specified the kindling was to the left of the fireplace? Would you consider it from the fireplace's perspective as facing out or your perspective facing the fireplace? Should I have specified there are twigs and old newspapers by the fireplace that can be used for kindling? See, I kind of feel like I should've just started the fire myself or supervised.

Person 2: Had you specified to use the old newspapers in the cage, I'd likely have used that. Had you clearly stated the heirloom Bible wasn't kindling, that would've worked too.

Person 1: I'm still in shock over this, but, your explaining the thinking behind it helps a little. I forgive you and I forgive myself while accepting this was a learning experience for me too. Not in a million years would I have foreseen or expected a guest to use my heirloom Bible as kindling.

Person 2: I know what I'm getting you for Christmas.

Some food for thought as many continue to process "Black Friday" and Thanksgiving leftovers! And, please remember "religion is the practice of good faith" and US law defines "good faith" as "honesty in a person's conduct during the agreement. The obligation to perform in good faith exists even in contracts that expressly allow either party to terminate the contract for any reason. "Fair dealing" usually requires more than just honesty. It generally requires that a party cannot act contrary to the "spirit" of the contract, even if you give the opposing party notice that you intend to do so." Source: <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/committees/business-torts-unfair-competition/practice/2016/duty-of-good-faith-fair-dealing/>

Final Questions:

Were Person 1 and Person 2 in the scenario and/or alternate scenario more honest or dishonest? Were Person 1 and Person 2 in the scenario and/or alternate scenario more

virtuous or vicious? Which one, if any, reminds you of who you are and which as how you like to think of yourself if different?

To get started or continue with #TaoFu Self-Defense, additional exercises are available at <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> .

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.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>