

A Sermon on Fear-Based Confidence Games

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for April 23rd, 2023 (and beyond)

Thanatophobia means fear of death and 75% of Americans fear death to some extent. Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/959347/fear-of-death-in-the-us/> 67% of people in the UK are afraid to talk to disabled people and fear disability. Source: <https://blogs.iu.edu/adriasnotebook/2021/12/02/fear-discomfort-and-disability/> The fear of the disabled is an instinctual and primitive response to the potential direct or indirect risk of life, quality of life, or health the entire body wishes to avoid. Some blame ignorance for the response because one assumes knowledge that the disability isn't communicable, which is likely why the person hasn't been quarantined, would alleviate or overcome the instinctual response. However, this overlooks the fact that natural predators prefer easy prey and if near easy prey the instincts respond to the potential attraction of predators by looking to move away so as not to be part of a mountain lion's supper. "Wolves and mountain lions (also known as cougars or pumas) pose the biggest threat, but packs of coyotes, feral dogs, or even alligators have been known to attack young or injured horses." Source: <https://www.helpfulhorsehints.com/horse-predators-what-eats-horses/> In 2022, 4 people were killed by alligators in the US. Source: <https://a-z-animals.com/blog/every-major-us-alligator-attack-that-happened-in-2022-4-fatalities/> Civilization and creature comforts give many an opportunity to create an illusion that humans have evolved to the point where instinct is fully domesticated and fear-based decision-making is no longer the human status quo. But, somehow many consumer decisions are based on fear of disease, injury, and death where the decided solution is subjective and emotionally driven rather than objective and driven by reason. This is often the result of a fear-based confidence game where fear of disease, injury, and/or death is exploited by someone exaggerating often both the risk and the supposed benefit of their soothsaying follow-up sales pitch.

The rest of this sermon is in dialogue format to help consumers better understand how to identify a confidence game and avoid being a victim of fraud.

DIALOGUE:

Con-Gamer: Malnutrition kills. 13,690 Americans die of it every year. Source: <https://www.thehivelaw.com/blog/how-many-people-starve-to-death-in-america/>. To avoid becoming a statistic, you should take these dietary supplements 3 times a day. Are you getting your Recommended Dietary Allowance? Subscribe and save your life!

Voice of Reason: "The research found that vitamins A and K, magnesium, zinc and copper were linked to a lower risk of death from heart disease or stroke, and an overall lower risk of dying during the average six years of follow-up. But these findings were true only when the nutrients came from foods, not from supplements. Of more concern, the study found that taking at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily from supplements was associated with an increased risk of death. This was not true of calcium from food..." "There's a belief that supplements can improve and maintain health, but this study provides more evidence that there are no benefits," added Zhang. She's an associate

professor at the Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy in Boston.”
Source: <https://www.webmd.com/vitamins-and-supplements/news/20190408/study-dietary-supplements-do-nothing-for-health>

Con-Gamer: There are hidden forces at work and if they are displeased, you will be severely punished. If you hang out with me and prove to be the generous friend I imagine you are, you'll be celebrated like a king. Also, I'm not at liberty to disclose the nature of your penalty.

Voice of Reason: Are you talking about law enforcement and/or the government? Law enforcement isn't hidden and the laws are reasonable, accessible, and knowable for the most part. I'm aware that if I violate the law I will be subject to penalties attached to said violation(s). If not, then the hidden forces have no authority in this jurisdiction. Are you attempting to extort me with a veiled threat if I don't obey you? It's a strange carrot/stick thing? You are saying if I submit to you and/or the hidden forces you referenced while being generous with you that no harm will come to me while suggesting if I displease you and/or those hidden forces I will be severely punished? That's extortion.

END DIALOGUE

Critical thinking is the best defense against confidence games/gamers. I wish I could recall something Jeff Goldblum said quoting Carl Sagan I believe in the film "Incident at Loch Ness". I think he paraphrased Sagan's comment about Kepler and so won't mind if I paraphrase yet again to say Goldblum said "Just because believing something is fun doesn't mean we should believe it." I'd expand the sentiment to some degree especially when it involves a sales pitch like "I've frightened you terribly by exploiting a commonly held fear and now I comfort you with a proposed solution that might actually kill you while making me rich in the process especially if you don't discover that what I've sold you is snake oil before the statutes of limitation run out on reporting/prosecuting my swindle."

MEDITATIVE QUESTIONS

Have you ever been a victim of fraud and/or misleading marketing?

Do you make fear-based consumer decisions that take facts out of context when present at all to exaggerate a risk that is minimal at best and potentially exacerbated by the solution you've invested in at time of sale?

Which of the following options describe you more?

- a. I'll try anything once, especially if it sounds like fun.
- b. I know what I want and what I need without consulting salespeople.
- c. I'm likely to buy anything that claims to be healthy because I feel good about it.
- d. I'd do anything to better protect and defend myself from illness, injury, or death.

FINAL THOUGHT: I'd answer the meditative questions with Yes, No, and "b" respectively. But, opinions differ and I'm open to feedback.

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.

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