

A Sermon on the Fear of Disillusionment

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for June 27th, 2021 (and beyond)

This sermon is in dialogue format to illustrate objective context with understanding you may subjectively interpret, reinterpret, or misinterpret subtext from my perspective. I'm accustomed to expecting that from a few familiar with my work.

Neutral Party: Are you comfortable?

Independent Party: In what way? Am I physically comfortable? If that's what you meant, then, yes. Am I emotionally comfortable? I'm a bit anticipatory though assume I have a good idea what will transpire. So, I'd say comfortable enough emotionally. And, am I spiritually comfortable? I'd need to know what constitutes that and whether the question is about my soul's level of comfort or if I'm comfortable with my current religion. Right now, I'd need clarification before continuing or responding further.

Dependent Party: This is fine.

Neutral Party: Would you like something to drink?

Independent Party: Are you talking wine or spirits? If spirits; are you using it as a euphemism and if so in what way? What options are available?

Dependent Party: I'll have the same or whatever is most convenient.

Neutral Party: I'm glad you are both physically comfortable. I'm not a spiritualist so the questions do not involve spirits of any sort. I'm not sure besides alcohol any other way to interpret spirits in terms of "wine and spirits". Would you like water, tea, coffee, or a soft drink? It's no trouble.

Independent Party: Spirit is another word for semen or sperm. I just wanted to clarify. Is it tap, filtered tap, or purified bottled water? Is it mineral water?

Dependent Party: Water's fine.

Neutral Party: Bottled mineral water.

Independent Party: Sure, I'll take one bottle. Talking 8oz or 16oz or what? Do I pay you now?

Dependent Party: Looks like 16oz or so. 16.9 oz I think it says on the bottle.

Neutral Party: I'll put it on your tab. Just kidding. What brought you in today?

Independent Party: One of us is an alleged narcissist. We want you to decide if it is true.

Dependent Party: The allegation was made by a third-party not present. I totally disagree with the allegation.

Neutral Party: What's your dream vacation? This is for both of you to answer separately.

Independent Party: I don't have one. My dream job though is working with highly intelligent people and doing something that makes the world a better or more enjoyable place. I would consider such a job a vacation compared to my current vocation, which is teaching special education. It is rewarding at times in its own way though.

Dependent Party: A luxury suite I never have to leave surrounded by servants that immediately provide for my every whim and desire. The suite should be a penthouse with an oceanic view and Olympic training pool on the balcony. All visitors, calls, mail, and internet communications are screened and handled by someone else in most cases. It will be as if I died and went to heaven. Everyone will be so jealous that even the rich and famous will want my suite but won't ever get it unless I actually die.

Neutral Party: The penthouse dreamer is who was alleged to be the narcissist, am I right?

Independent Party: How did you guess?

Dependent Party: Why are we bothering you with this? We should go. But, why do you think I'm a narcissist?

Neutral Party: Process of elimination and using deductive reasoning. It was clear from your opening statement in response to the question on comfort that you are a dependent personality. "This is fine" was a subtle compliment that is dependent on tone in terms of meaning or underlying sentiment, which is how narcissists usually start, but that wasn't how I reached the conclusion. Your second answer about the beverage assumed anyone else would be having one. It also suggested potential to be wasteful or create confusion, which I overlooked or forgave because I didn't specify options though assumed that you were aware of your surroundings and knew of all options including the soft drinks since I was already drinking one. This isn't to disparage the joker who I think was trying to add levity out of concern you may be upset by the time this is over. The commentary on alcoholic beverages and euphemisms was amusing even if inappropriate. Of course, you both went with water. Most people don't like being labeled and dehumanized as a result of the label applied. So, disagreeing with the label of narcissist regardless of who said it is understandable, especially if it was said as an insult or in a dehumanizing way. But, to dream for a promotion or change in career where you continue to contribute to society is practically altruistic and a real sign of virtue in full context. And, to dream of being treated like an invalid with no responsibilities nor cares in the world indefinitely as if you are only alive for your own pleasure while everyone else does your bidding is kind of textbook narcissism. I studied psychology in college. I'm not judging, just observing and opining.

Independent Party: Interesting. Does the narcissist have a death wish? Is that common for narcissists?

Dependent Party: Do not take me out of context. There is a difference between wanting to be pampered and having no earthly or mortal responsibilities and wishing to be dead. I said it would be “as if I died and went to heaven” not that I would actually be dead.

Neutral Party: I believe I already said that I’m not a spiritualist.

Independent Party: But, if religious and you believe in life after death as reincarnation to the material world or eternal life in heaven, then any hint of envy or jealousy would be a deadly sin for which you’d go to hell rather than heaven if you didn’t cease to exist altogether?

Dependent Party: Fine. I don’t want anyone to be envious of me nor for the rich and famous to be jealous of my dream penthouse. But, I want everything else to stay the same in my dream vacation.

Neutral Party: What if you were surrounded by servants in a similar situation where all your communications and visitors were screened or non-existent? The servants would be the source of all your whims and desires most likely. Would you trade your current lifestyle for that one?

Independent Party: I would not make that trade. I like spontaneity and variety. I think I’d actually be bored to death in the penthouse as described. I’d stick with my dream job that feels like a vacation because it is so awesome and I enjoy problem-solving so stick me anywhere. Being helpful is cool. Some people really need it too.

Dependent Party: I would trade my current relationships, life, lifestyle, and more for my dream vacation as described.

Neutral Party: That’s too mean.

Independent Party: I’ll be fine. Make the trade.

Dependent Party: No, I’d never leave you. I mean, I might if the dream vacation was an actual possibility, but I’m comfortable enough for now.

Neutral Party: Here’s a card of someone I went to school with who may be able to get you that permanent dream vacation. You’d have to be willing to leave everyone and everything behind while understanding they may not be able to visit or even contact you without being screened. And, here’s the number of a friend who is into party supplies that may have an alternative path to your dream life.

Independent Party: Do you have anyone I should contact?

Dependent Party: Thanks. I'll check it out.

Neutral Party: I enjoy you. Call me anytime. Are you interested in being a professor or traveling the lecturing circuit? If you wrote a book with insight into special education techniques you find most effective, you could teach a course on it while being surrounded by academics and potentially revolutionizing the field. Don't give up on your dreams and you don't have to settle either.

Independent Party: I just might do that.

Dependent Party: Finally, we end on a positive note.

Neutral Party: Who made the allegation, if you are comfortable saying?

Independent Party: It's been said a few times by close family and friends.

Dependent Party: This is the first I heard of it and I had no idea it was an insult or I would have protested this entire exchange. Personally, I don't think one person's opinion holds much weight, do you?

Neutral Party: Depends on the person. A judge's opinion holds a lot of weight, as does the opinion of a juror or jury foreperson. I'm not a judge. I'm a potential juror though and like to keep practice. A member of my household just got a jury duty notice in the mail today. Are you in the jury pool? Would you sit on a jury?

Independent Party: Absolutely. It's a civic duty and if I were on trial or a victim in a case at trial I would want someone like me on the jury. I'm fair and like to think I'm not too big of a hypocrite. I'm in the pool.

Dependent Party: You've got your pool, I've got mine. I've never sat on a jury and intentionally never registered to vote to avoid jury duty. I do not need that in my life. Who wants to spend time down at the courthouse? Better things to do, really.... I'd rather sit in a hot bathtub surrounded by candlelight with music playing and a glass of wine in my hand. And, you can assume that's what I'm doing whenever I let it go to voice-mail.

END DIALOGUE

At this point, you may feel relieved as a result of not considering the different circumstances as described for Dependent Party's dream vacation. But people should choose their wishing language very carefully. See, you could end up in a cult, prison, or psychiatric facility that matches the description at least on paper of a luxury getaway surrounded by servants where all communications with the outside world are screened or non-existent. Some call those situations a form of social death and those who get out alive often find the experience more hellish than heavenly. But, for those who find such a setting more comfortable or suitable, the good news is those options still exist.

Otherwise, I still recommend the emancipation guide available at <https://www.heal-online.org/emancipationprep.pdf>.

The fear wasn't written into the piece, but is assumed to exist outside of this space. Dismiss full context at your own peril if you relate most to Dependent Party. And, if you were wondering what the source of music is for Dependent Party and whether it is corded or cordless, waterproof or not, you aren't alone in considering a potential 4th option for a ticket to the afterlife whether material or not.

If you are offended on Dependent Party's behalf, ask yourself if it is because you know someone like Dependent Party and think this is too harsh or if you are like Dependent Party yourself? It's possible you are emotionally dependent on the one who reminds you of Dependent Party if it's not yourself. And, it is also possible you recognize Dependent Party as mentally challenged so feel where nuance may be lost it isn't fair to employ nuance in conversation with them. Is it too kind to assume Dependent Party is competent or too cruel? If you believe it is too kind, then Independent and Neutral Party remain kind too. If you believe it is too cruel, then if you match the description of Dependent Party don't be offended when people openly identify you as special needs.

If you read through all of this and feel angry and misunderstood, that's vanity. I wasn't thinking about anyone in particular when I wrote this sermon. Vanity is a deadly sin too. If you read through all of it and enjoyed it but feel you enjoyed it too much, I wanted you to enjoy it and I'm clergy. God bless you!

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.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

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