

A Sermon on My Tattoos

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for April 2nd, 2023 (and beyond)

I have three tattoos. All I consider religious art. On my right wrist is a Scorpion with “Release The Titans” in Old English font wrapped around like an ink bracelet. On my left wrist is ☯ with “Shikata Ga Nai” in Comic Sans font wrapped around like an ink bracelet. On my upper right back shoulder is a flying unicorn not to be mistaken for Pegasus or simply a flying horse. The first one was the flying unicorn. Horses often represent freedom as do wings. Unicorns represent imagination and/or freaks of nature/anomalies. Sometimes in summer months, that tattoo is fully visible to everyone and on occasion someone will ask “Is that a Pegasus?” Of course, first I need to correct them because Pegasus was the name of the last surviving flying horse belonging to the mythical Zeus and so if they ever chance to ask that to anyone again, they know to omit the “a” from their inquiry. After correcting on that point, I say “No, it is a flying unicorn.” At this point, some accept that and some say “there is no such thing mythical or otherwise” to which I respond “There is at least one and you’ve seen it”. But, of course it is merely a physical artistic representation of an idea that is unknown to exist beyond my imagination and the tattoo artist’s work. There is more to this story, but suffice to say I had the flying unicorn added when I was 19 years old.

It wasn’t until my late twenties that I had the Scorpion and “Release The Titans” added to my right wrist as an ink bracelet. According to Astrology, my sun, moon, and mercury are all in Scorpio (the 8th house). “Release The Titans” is a reference to Greek Mythology and the arguable foundation of Western Philosophy and/or Culture. I planned prior to getting that tattoo to get another on my left wrist once I decided on a design. This is in part an homage to the superhero known as Wonder Woman created by DC Comics and as played by Lynda Carter who I considered a role model in that series when I was a small child.

The third and likely final tattoo is the ☯ with “Shikata Ga Nai” wrapped around the left wrist and was added in June, 2021. The reason “Shikata Ga Nai” is in Comic Sans font is to recognize the Asian sense of humor and in hopes to offer an homage because so many Americans get Asian character tattoos without really knowing the meaning and I decided on the English phonetic version which I know the meaning of and got it in Comic Sans. Those who know the phrase and see it, often smile. It brings me joy to bring them joy. In addition, with the #Taoist Yin/Yang symbol which translates as “The Way” and “Shikata Ga Nai” which can mean “It cannot be helped”, “Nothing Can Be Done About It”, and most accurately as “The Way Does Not Exist”, it represents an ongoing religious debate in itself and when contrasted with the right wrist design an argument or attempt to harmonize Eastern and Western philosophies which we are all free to imagine.

My tattoos are not gang symbols, nor representative of any club, tribe, or group identification. Each tattoo was uniquely imagined by me, with the third designed by me though inked by a professional like the other two. However, it is doubtful anyone could argue that the material world failed to inspire each one more so than not. Horses exist. Birds and wings exist. Rhinos, rams, goats, and bulls have horns. There’s not much

imagining to do to create a hybrid of some sort to come up with the first one. The second one is arguably derivative and/or clearly so given scorpions and titans are both referenced in Greek myths. The third though, I believe the third makes the trio a real work of body art that is truly philosophical while representing disagreement in more ways than one and potential for balance and harmony. They do however arguably reveal I explore philosophy and welcome disagreement which may identify me as a Wycliffite even though not intended to do so and the flying unicorn was added before I was ordained. I love them and am glad they exist. I feel without the left wrist ink bracelet the work would be incomplete.

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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