

A Sermon on Differentiating Between Instinct, Reason, and Intuition
Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for November 14th, 2021 (and beyond)

I begin this sermon by providing definitions regarding my use of the words “instinct”, “reason”, and “intuition” with corresponding meanings to hopefully help everyone have a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. The definitions:

Instinct: The body is aware of itself and its own vulnerabilities regardless of species and that goes for humans, nonhuman animals, and plants/vegetation. The body seeks to nourish itself, protect and heal itself from injury and disease, and responds primarily to nonverbal communication styles. For example, a nonverbal communication style is emitting certain smells including hormones or even the presence of diseases such as cancer (dogs and humans can sniff out cancer, dogs can sniff out other diseases such as diabetes as well: <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/meet-americas-cancer-sniffing-canines/>). Without honest reason including science, one might jump from the instinctual knowledge to the emotional response for self-preservation and then assume to intuit a threat of bodily harm resulting in the belief that a danger has been identified and superstitiously respond by claiming the diseased person is cursed or believing someone emitting pheromones is attracted to you specifically rather than thinking of his/her dream partner. Until you know what a deadly disease is and how it spreads, you may just identify the symptoms and communicate the threat or risk in the language you best understand.

Reason: Empirically based scientific knowledge that relies on material evidence-based, repeatable, and confirmable facts is the closest proximity to knowable truth or truths one can hope to achieve while recognizing there is always more to learn and know with unexpected or unforeseen variables that alter outcomes considerably. For example, $5 \times 5 = 25$ and $5 \times -5 = -25$. So, that negative symbol impacts the result even where everything else remains the same in the calculation.

Intuition: This may be spiritual in nature or simply how emotion interprets instinct when not fully aware of the reason for a specific behavioral inclination or thought.

Nonhuman animals are the most vicious when the most aware of their own vulnerability often due to traumatic injury or disease. “The most dangerous animal you can encounter in day-to-day life is an injured or sick one. It can be very tempting to approach the animal to attempt to help it, especially if it’s in pain. It’s very important you resist this impulse. An injured animal may perceive you as a threat looking to capitalize on their weakened state. When animals lack other means to confidently defend themselves, they have to be far more aggressive than usual.” Source: <https://varmentguard.com/blog/wild-animals-dangerous> Given nonhuman animals lack the knowledge available to humans through actual written records with sufficient evidence to support claims made such as “if you apply antibacterial medicine and/or take an antibiotic, you won’t lose your limb and may recover more fully”, they act on instinct alone and prefer to be left alone seeing anyone who may approach as seeking to exploit their weakened/vulnerable state.

But, if showing competency and the ability to reason, then the ill or injured may be able to understand the nature of the remedies or providers of remedies available. If respected as equals, then all should be trusted to think and decide for themselves regarding any available remedy based on data made available to them which should include outcomes of others who have tried the remedy so it is known what the risks and benefits are statistically even if results may and do vary. Nonhuman animals may have the ability to reason, but do not have the means to understand human methodologies or reasons for believing a specific remedy will work.

As a human, learning about anything, without recognizing where instinct may color your perspective, can result in lack of true understanding and a reset of sorts to more instinctual reactions rather than well-reasoned responses. The more unsafe, insecure, or vulnerable one feels, the more instinctual one becomes. If one doesn't understand instinct, one cannot differentiate between reason and instinct even if able to communicate verbally in some way.

Deimatic responses when threats are perceived are instinctual. Deimatic behavior is described as "Intimidating behaviour in animals which serves to warn off potential predators. It may be bluff (e.g. the inflation of the lungs in some toads, which increases their size) or may precede an attack (e.g. when skunks rise on their fore legs prior to spraying an evil-smelling liquid)." Source: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095707719>

So, if a human being is mugged (robbed and beaten) while walking down the street, that human being may begin to arm him/herself, dress in a more intimidating fashion, and choose to walk with other people or put on an air of invulnerability to instinctually guard against future attacks. That's all instinct and when it is life or death, often reason concedes to what appear to be reasonable demands made by the instinctual-body in regards to self-preservation. Reason seeks to calm the vulnerable body by addressing identified problems or risks in a meaningful way. And, the costuming and arming of a vulnerable human indicates the deimatic instinctual defense.

Now, the reasoning mind may feel the desire to dress in a more intimidating fashion is intuitive rather than instinctual. This may be a result of inspiration based on those perceived as invulnerable, courageous, or prepared for defense or battle. Any archetype or being defined as immortal and unable to be killed is the fallback for those who are more emotional than reasonable. Intuition may be how emotion interprets instinct. "It's so weird. I just feel like cutting my hair and using product to make it into spikes. Just a change." Or, "Chameleons are interesting. They protect themselves by blending in and I think I'll do that." The former is an emotional-instinctual response and the latter quoted text in this paragraph is a reasonable-instinctual response to potentially the same threat or perceived vulnerability. Reason recognizes available remedies and pursues them after weighing the risks and benefits, emotion just wants to be soothed while trusting someone else can handle it without their having to be reasonable and report crimes properly to the authorities or being so deimatic they become monstrous and isolated.

If I know this and believe this, an atheist may ask how it is possible I could still believe in intuition or God. I don't understand the will to live without it. Even plants defend themselves and make war on each other. In botany and gardening, plants kill other plants that threaten their resources and this practice is called allelopathy, which sometimes involves chemical warfare. Source: <https://www.thespruce.com/what-is-allelopathy-1402504> "For years, scientists are baffled by the question of whether plants can feel pain or not. A team of scientists from Tel Aviv University may have the answer to that question, as they discovered that some plants can emit a high-frequency distress sound when in environmental stress." Source: <https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/24473/20191218/a-group-of-scientists-suggest-that-plants-feel-pain.htm> Even plants cry for help when attacked and unable to defend themselves. Are the plants praying? Where does the instinct to cry for help or belief someone will be honest and virtuous enough to respond come from if not God? Why would instinct be hardwired for survival and to reproduce in all living things? You could call it intelligent design, the biological imperative, or whatever you like to call it. But, why is there a biological imperative preset at the core of our instinctual existences?

Certainly one could point out that being honest and virtuous creates peace and harmony among all those who exhibit such characteristics with mutual respect and equal recognition, and that those who deviate bent on deception and vice are responsible for conflict and disharmony. The records of history as well as organized civilization also show that to protect, preserve, sustain, nurture, and share life for any extended period peaceably and harmoniously requires commitment to truth and virtue with willingness to understand each other. But, why do we want to live? Where does the desire to exist come from in the first place? All living things want to live and whether plant or animal, will fight for life. So, one could argue that there is no explanation at this time why the will to live is present in all living things and attributing that will to Chi, "the force", or what some refer to as God is basically a placeholder until science can determine where the will to live and fight for life comes from whether instinctually, reasonably, or intuitively.

Every word on this page is an abstract intangible symbolic of what it represents. It only has meaning to those who are fluent in the language it is written in that can also read and write in that language. Materialized life-forms may be physical manifestations of abstract intangibles which all share the singular desire to exist in the first place. And, that desire to exist may be the will of God, unexplained phenomenon, or something completely different. It is that desire that keeps us all here and fighting for our lives. The alternative is to not exist and some people are so despondent, incompetent, or passive that it seems, though the minority, they can make the case for non-existence. The fact that a case can be made for non-existence by looking at exceptions to a generally accepted rule from many perspectives, does not disprove God nor explain where the will to live comes from and why we exist. So, excuse those of us who pursue that one if you find it a waste of time and appreciate that without a commitment to truth and virtue, it is likely existents will be greatly reduced in number if not entirely wiped out. But, children can argue about nonsense all they want and it won't change what is objectively and reasonably known to be true through observation, trial, and error.

“I’ll die if I don’t get that job even if other jobs are available that would hire me” is either someone speaking figuratively and being dramatic or a suicide waiting to happen. Whether life is worth the risks is up to you. And, if you give up on life, don’t blame life because as long as you are alive you exist though sometimes primarily in memories or dreams depending on level of consciousness and differential awareness.

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>