

A Sermon on the Sense of Smell

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for March 24th, 2024 (and beyond)

Do you mask your scent with perfumes, colognes, or other products? If you do, you are not alone. In the animal world, both predators and prey try to mask their scents to avoid detection of the other. Source: <https://www.earthtouchnews.com/natural-world/predator-vs-prey/meet-4-animals-who-use-chemical-deception-to-camouflage-their-smell/> Making assumptions based on anyone's choice to deceive or attempt to deceive in this manner may result in mislabeling or misidentification. Does such masking result in confusing predators or does it act offensively triggering autoimmune responses in those with allergies or similar sensitivities? Maybe both. You'd likely need to investigate beyond the scent of the masked individual to determine if the mask is intended as a defensive or predatory indicator. For those who live with traumatic stress, a masked scent may trigger trauma, not solely if the mask is associated with a specific trauma, but also if the deception alone results in instinctual distrust.

"The ability to detect and react to the smell of a potential threat is a precondition of our and other mammals' survival. Using a novel technique, researchers have been able to study what happens in the brain when the central nervous system judges a smell to represent danger. The study indicates that negative smells associated with unpleasantness or unease are processed earlier than positive smells and trigger a physical avoidance response." Source: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/10/211014100139.htm>

"Many animals are thought to be able to smell fear on humans, but it seems we can sniff out whether other people are spoiling for a fight. Researchers have found odours in human sweat may alert us if someone is feeling angry or aggressive, helping to put them on alert for potential violence." Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3384185/Can-SMELL-angry-Chemical-signals-sweat-warn-person-feeling-aggressive.html>

So, where scent-masking is present, the instinctual response recognizes the deception which may indicate the presence of a predator or someone attempting to avoid being detected as a defense measure. In either case, it suggests the presence of predators whether the masked scent is intended to conceal the potential threat of the scent-masker or reveals that said scent-masker has sensed a predator or threat in the vicinity and has masked for self-protection. Either way, other people or animals who live with traumatic stress may instinctually be aggravated by the deception and respond to it with suspicion and upset.

I'm not suggesting anyone begin or stop masking his/her/their scents. I just hope cognitive awareness of instinctual realities helps those capable of reason navigate exposure to unnatural or deceptive scents to mitigate any visceral or primal responses to any potentially erroneously instinctually interpreted stimuli. But, if you wish to show some consideration for those who suffer allergies or traumatic stress, possibly don't mask your scent or explain you only do so to ward off predators and hope that translates if not already recognized by any offended by the mask. However, if your chosen perfume or cologne was worn by a predator who attacked someone that is responding strangely to you as a result, they may

not know why themselves on a conscious level and solely be responding instinctively to a smell they associate with their trauma. In other words, you may smell like a predator even if using the scent yourself defensively which may result in others misidentifying you as a predator too.

Some say Mary brought Jesus spikenard, which was the most expensive cologne/perfume at the time. Source: <https://renner.org/article/when-mary-brought-jesus-a-lavishly-expensive-gift/#> Spikenard smells woody, spicy, and musty. Source: <https://www.doterra.com/US/en/education/pe/spikenard-oil#> One may assume it was intended to protect him from predators even though eventually he was convicted and sentenced for killing rapists who victimize children in an extrajudicial manner even if most would find it to be justifiable homicide. Depending on perspective, Jesus may be considered a predator and/or prey. Spikenard is also a chief ingredient in an opiate known as Philonium Romanorum which is cited as a potion of Philo of Tarsus circa 107 A.D. in the US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, investigations into causes of death. Source: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/196709NCJRS.pdf>

I know Easter is next Sunday. Do you think Mary killed Jesus with an opiate intended to relieve pain? And, if not, is it possible that Jesus never died but was in a drug-induced coma before being laid to rest in the cave? Were the effects of it as an opiate known at the time and if not, was it just intended to mask his scent? Historically and even presently, drugs are used as chemical weapons. Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9866636/>

Happy Spring!

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.