

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

www.ChooseHappiness.net

On God

From

Monday Night Study Group, 1973

Bruce Di Marsico

Outline

- God is an explanatory principle. It is the principle of moving toward happiness.
- To personify God as a real, existing entity is to try to turn towards a "happiness" which is not your own happiness.
- Psychological terms such as id, ego, libido are also explanatory principles.
- Prayer can be understood as relating to an image of your perfect fulfillment of happiness.
- The idea of "sin" is unnecessary motivation to turn towards your happiness.
- "Hell" is the choice, when you realize that you can be happy now, to regret not having been happy.

Introduction

In this talk, Bruce Di Marsico discusses happiness from the standpoint of religious terminology. God is an explanatory principle. It is the principle of moving toward happiness. What Option means by “happiness”, many in the past have meant by “God”.

To personify God as a real, existing entity is to try to turn towards a "happiness" which is not your own happiness. Religions in general arise from trying to help people to be happy by generalizing (fruitlessly) an individual's happiness to all.

Some theological terms from the Option perspective:

Prayer can be understood as relating to an image of your perfect fulfillment of happiness.

The idea of "sin" is unnecessary motivation to turn towards your happiness. “Sin”, in fact, is an ancient term for unhappiness.

"Hell" is the choice, when you realize that you can be happy now, to regret not having been happy.

READINGS

Interpret this question for yourself. How many of you believe in God, and to how many is that an irrelevant question? Irrelevant to you, to your life to anything. I would probably raise my hand on both the questions.

What I am interested in those who don't believe in God or believe that there is no God. How do they know what I am talking about that they could answer? Now what you might be saying you don't believe in is the God your mother and father told you about, but you don't know what I am talking about. Interpret it for yourself, and that's what I am trying to point out now, that somehow you had to interpret it to be something that you objected to, or you could interpret into no meaning, as into a meaningless. How many of you believe in "Phhht"?

Now the next question is how many of you know that there is a God, as opposed to those of you who believe in God? I am with those people, whoever they are. And those of you can't answer, okay, how many of you know there is no God?

You don't have to know what everybody in the world calls God, you only have to know what you wanted to call God, and the only way you could say that you could know there is no God is to make it a contradiction. You'd have to define God as an impossible, and then you could say you know there is no God.

You can define God as a non-existent, but you cannot believe in that which is both not existent and substantiates itself, for instance as a square circle. I do not believe that there is a square circle. It is a contradiction by definition, but it's truly irrelevant whether there is a square circle or not, there is nothing I could do with one if there was one. By definition it's non-existent.

Now I think that you are going to find that the question of God has got a lot to do with your own happiness, and a lot to do with the society around you and its

happiness and unhappiness and its beliefs. God is very frequently defined by most theologians as first of all indefinable; God is ineffable and indefinable. . . and then they go on to define him.

I had a theology professor who said to me “you can't draw a picture of a soul there is no doubt about that. By definition a soul is immaterial thing”. But then he proceeded to go to blackboard and drew a circle which he then divided up into sections, labels, and everything else, which to him was supposed to be meaningful to us, and then from there on acted as if there was such a thing as a soul.

Freud did the same, with such terms as id, ego, super-ego, libido, etc. These were constructs, as God is a construct for most theologians and psychologists, it's a construct which is an explanatory principle. As an explanatory principle one can talk about it, relate to it and understand it. If you stop understanding it as an explanatory principle but believe it to be an existent, a thing with existence and substance and reality, then you start treating it as if it weren't an explanatory principle any longer, which leads you into whole other thing, which is people can talk about forces with inside themselves for good and for evil just as freely through psychological jargon as they can with theological jargon. I'd like to point out to you that they are both very much the same, the history of psychology and the history of theology been very much. They been dealing with the problem of God and the problem of evil and man, and the problem of forces unseen by man that determine men's behavior.

An explanatory principles is meant to explain something. As an explanatory principle, I have no difficulty in talking about God. I think that the problem very frequently is that “how does that affect me if I want to treat as a subsistent? Can I make it subsistent for purposes of my own life and happiness? Can it mean something?”

So now for instance a lot of you who object to all the traditional interpretations of God, you are probably also intuitively objecting to something that you just can't

conceive. You might be stymied by statements of like that of Saint Nissa who says that God is beyond which can be known, that which is beyond that we can know, so it's impossible to say it doesn't exist if you define it as beyond which can be known. But then it's totally irrelevant, unless it taps you on the shoulder. Something beyond knowing is, as far as all practical concerns, non-existent.

There are probably quite a few hundred very good proofs of the existence of God but none of them propose a God that, for instance, you would pray to or blame in the theological definitions. So that when you get into the existence of God as the prime mover or the cause of the universe or the thing that sets order, that's all fun but that isn't necessarily anything to relate to.

God can be something to relate to in your lives. Many of you here who have made a God out of happiness. Now, I don't mean a false idol. I mean that what you have understood as happiness with the capital H may very well be, and probably is to the best of my knowledge, what everyone else has ever meant by God, what they really mean by it. There is an unknowable that we will profess to know and that's for instance perfect happiness. Striving for happiness with the capital H; if you are striving for it, it proceeds from somehow the premise that you don't know it you haven't yet experienced it, you are not experiencing it, and that hasn't stopped you from striving for it. You haven't even got any evidence somehow, and yet that doesn't stop you striving for it.

Everybody in the world can give you very good arguments that God does not exist or that happiness does not exist and that does not stop you for striving for it. That is very in alignment with certain saints who say "I don't know whether it's possible for there to be God or not, but I don't care. I want there to be, and there is for me" and that's the same thing with happiness. Who cares if it doesn't exist, I am still going to have it. Who cares if it's impossible, that's what I still strive for and that somehow it would be really okay even if it pure, perfect, absolute happiness were never reached, as long as you constantly got closer to it. And if we

don't object to that concept, we understand what many people mean by God in terms that we might be able to understand. That although God is unknowable, unreachable, unattainable and ineffable, that has never stopped us from anything.

It becomes kind of a thing to fix one's focus on which can never be in perfect focus. It becomes that which is at the end of a road, when we can't see the end of the road, but we can see the road.

Happiness can be described itself as an explanatory principle and not a substantive thing. It's that beyond which we are constantly striving for, that which even after we are happy we are still striving for, that which explains everything that we do. We have often talked about it that way, that even after we are happy we want to be happier and that is the ultimate reason beyond everything that we do, joy, peace it's the ultimate reason for our actions and our motives.

Well some people have been calling the ultimate reason for what we do God. I always say in my classes that you could even call it happiness, but it is that beyond which we always strive for. Understood in that way there isn't anything to object to, the problem is when that all of a sudden God becomes personified and says "you shall not do this and you must not do that and you ought to do this", when that start saying you should feel bad, then it becomes a contradiction and it no longer is a explanatory principle. When *that which is beyond* becomes personified so that it could feel hurt and feel bad itself, it becomes a contradiction.

No true theologian is their right mind believes that God could be hurt or offended. They find it very hard to talk about sin against God as having any meaning whatsoever because all sins can be only be against your own happiness. They have been saying that nobody goes to hell who doesn't want to.

The Episcopalians have funny thing. In the beginning of the service they recite at the beginning of the book of Genesis that everything that God created was good

and constantly “and it was good and it was good, it was good” but yet as soon as that was over “I am no good. Everything is good but me.” Within religions, many of them have theologies do not use guilt or fear. In Christianity, that is called mystical theology. Mystical theology by definition has never had anything to do with unhappiness, guilt or fear or sin and it never even admitted the concept. Mystical theology is a theology that always taught that if you love God you can do anything. If you love God it was impossible to sin and it made no difference what a man did, no man could ever be a judged, that’s as the old as the Christian church, but many people don’t consider themselves mystical theologians and they prefer the dogmatic theology which has existed side-by-side with mystical theology and they both have had they have adherents. Mystical theologians tend not to become bishops and popes.

So what I want to present to you was the possibility to consider that the concept of God, or the term God, can a useful concept and could perhaps be useful concept for us, and could be meaningful. By no means a necessary concept, but as we are speaking English, it is a term that already exists.

Just as people can say “what do you mean happiness? What if it makes a person happy to kill? Why do you want to help them to be happy”, there are meanings of God which we can’t possibly be talking about.

Why even bring this up? What it has to do with anything? Why should we even be talking about it? Why can't such terms as happiness suffice? Well simply because they don't suffice. They are not really sufficient and maybe the term God isn't sufficient either. But there is a concept there that perhaps you can open yourself up to seeing as a relationship that in some way you can elect or choose to concretize, to give it meaning and relevance to your life to try to strive for it.

For instance, we could describe a person at prayer this way: a person at prayer is talking to a projection that they see as the fulfillment of themselves, and what they

are doing is they are putting themselves in touch with all that they hope to be, and somehow relating to that, and they are getting in touch with their desire to be one with that. What is called “the person in prayer who is relating to God” sees God as love and in so doing is desiring to be more and more union with that love. It’s not any different than a person who was wanting to be happier, but one of the values it has, for us in terms of the peace and joy that it gives, it helps the person to be in touch that they are good for themselves and they are striving and that they are reminding themselves of what it is they really after. And so that what they do is incarnate, make tangible, something that up to now has been very intangible, the question of perfect happiness. It’s to make it present to themselves and that the major function of religion is to make something ineffable somehow effable, tangible and present to you to remind you, so religion develops lots of rituals, buildings, symbols.

We’ve seen people’s reluctance to refer to as happiness what they are striving for and everything that they want. So they call it God, but they can’t avoid it everything they doing they are doing it in order to be happy and they will naturally come together and form religions. And just as you will find a temptation to say that other people should be happy, should have straightened out their beliefs, etcetera, so have these other religions that have come together had a tendency to do that. From such practices as Option have sprung established religions with laws and commandments have come about, in the contradictory idea of “what you must to do be happy”

Sin in almost every theology is the turning away of that which is your perfection. Sin is “Thou shalt not turn away from what is your perfect good” and making it a law, as if that was necessary! Even the idea you would want to turn away from your happiness, in order to help you not to do turn away, somehow assumes you would like to turn away from what is your natural fulfillment.

We can understand the happiness as that which is perfect in the universe, and that

in so far as we are not coinciding with ourselves, we are unhappy. That unhappiness is somehow not coinciding with myself, not being at peace with myself, not being in harmony with myself, not being at one with the universe and such things as that. Then you can talk about personifying the concept of order in the universe. There is a principle involved there somehow and there was a principle involved with you before you ever created and when you came to be that somehow what you are calling happiness is somehow already been determined. It's like in your very nature. We talk about free will and free choice all the time but there is one thing that we can never choose to not choose and that's to be happy. Some people refer to that as divine compulsion other people have referred to what is the natural order but nonetheless there is one thing that we all agree on there is that which we all strive for willing or not.

Happiness is something that we all naturally go to and that the whole question of wanting it, willing it, choosing it, desiring it, are irrelevant questions. We can play around and we pretend to want it or not want it, or choose it, or not choose it but everything within us is geared toward our being happier. If you explore yourselves and you are patient you'll see for anybody to ever choose anything that they don't believe will lead to happiness, it's total incomprehensible, impossible.

Hell will have to be in terms of somehow an afterlife. See the idea of an afterlife is then your vision is clear, and now you can see clearly what you are all about that. All which held you back which was supposedly was your body, your materiality, which hold you back from seeing things clearly, is now gone, and there is no obstacle you are seeing anymore. You see God and you have one of two choices. You can be fantastically happy about that and that's called heaven or you could say, "oh my God had I only known" and you can spend an eternity saying that. "Oh what I have been doing somehow being unhappy." I am not so sure your vision isn't clear now. I think the whole idea of that your body stood in your way is only an explanation for why we haven't chosen now but I am not so sure our vision isn't clear that we are not doing right now the very same things that some of

us would do for all eternity if we were given eternity to do it.

Why would it be any different if I said to you will never die, you will live for all eternity, would you really be any different or might you for the rest of all eternity still choose to be unhappy in order to get something done? It ultimately still comes down to future us.

“Everything is good” can be a very useful attitude. I say useful, if we understand what we mean by it. Everything that is, is good in the sense that nothing is bad, or in the sense that no particular thing is not bad (unhappiness causing).

Questions for Reflection

Do you believe in God?

What do *you* mean by God?

Notice what explanatory principles you treat as real entities in daily conversation, for example, “intuition”, “ego”, “trustworthy”. Description of people’s subjectivity are often explanatory principles.

If you knew you were going to live forever, what could happen in the future that would let you be happy then that could not also let you be happy now?

When you have practiced the Option Method, how have you felt about your past unhappiness when you were no longer unhappy about what you had been unhappy about?

Meditation for the Week

- Unhappiness doesn't really exist, just as sin doesn't really exist. Both propose the contradictory principle that you could turn away from your own happiness, or God.