

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

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A Critique of Therapies

By

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Bruce Di Marsico spoke occasionally of Freudian, Reichian therapy, New Age and Existential ideology, and conventional religions. Here, we will look at his critiques, and then summarize the critique in general form.

A critique of Freudian therapy

The Option critique of Freudian therapy is quite straightforward.

First, Freudian therapy presumes that past incidents (in particular, childhood incidents) are the cause of present time unhappiness. The Option response is: it is completely irrelevant when a pattern of unhappiness started historically (yesterday, in childhood, or in past lives), because you are believing it is wrong to be as you are *right now*.

Second, Freudian therapy proposes that perfect happiness is not possible, just being “ordinarily” unhappy. The Option response is: unhappiness is only *believed* to be necessary; perfect unhappiness is already your situation, and can never be otherwise, you can only believe that you are unhappy.

Third, Freudian therapy proposes an ideal way of being, the person who is “well-adjusted” to society. The Option response is: happiness is perfectly personal.

A critique of Reichian therapy

Di Marsico was more sympathetic to Reich than to Freud. The Option critique of Reichian therapy is more nuanced than that of Freudian therapy, and actually points toward how Reichian can (though rarely does) function to help people not need help to be happier.

A summary of Reichian Therapy

Reichian Therapy conceives of the self in three "layers":

- 1) The biological core, the natural biological expression of bodily desires
- 2) The intermediate layer, which is the feeling that natural biological expression of desires would somehow be wrong or bad. This layer is bodily visible as distortions in the expression of biological impulses.
- 3) The surface layer, which is the social presentation of self, often intended to disguise the intermediate layer.

For example, the desire to be forceful in the biological core, when feared, becomes anger. A social presentation of "being nice" may disguise this anger in social interactions.

Reich and Di Marsico's Terminology

Reichian and Di Marsican terminology are analogous:

| <u>Reich</u> | <u>Di Marsico</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| The Biological Core | Happy Desiring |
| The Intermediate Layer | Unhappy Beliefs |
| The Surface Layer | Acting |

By "the biological core", Reich is referring to the bodily expression of happy desiring.

By "the intermediate layer", Reich is referring to the bodily expression of the belief that "to feel as I feel about things would be wrong or bad".

By "the surface layer", Reich is referring to how people may (knowingly) express other than they feel, what Di Marsico called "Acting"

The intermediate and surface layer together are called "armoring", or the bodily expression of unhappiness (the belief that it would be wrong or bad to feel as you do about what happens)

Di Marsico's Criticism of Reich

Bruce Di Marsico criticized some schools of Reichian therapy, saying "Reichian de-armoring is temporary since it does not deal with beliefs."

Here he is criticizing particular schools of Reichian Therapy.

There are two ways Reichian therapy can fail to deal with beliefs.

1) Strategic vs. Relational schools: many schools of Reichian therapy are strategic: they have (to a greater or lesser degree) strategies for treatment. These schools have the medical model: they diagnose and cure. The Option Method is designed only to question an individual's own personal unhappiness, and makes no presumptions whatever about the form of their unhappiness. Very few schools of Reichian therapy are purely relational, meaning they are only interested in what is happening for the client in each moment, and make no diagnostic presumptions.

2) De-armoring (addressing symptoms) vs. cultivating the core (getting in touch with happiness): many schools of Reichian therapy conceive of their task to be breaking down armoring. This is analogous to merely addressing unhappiness. In Option, the purpose of questioning unhappiness is to find the happy motivation behind the unhappiness, and help the person get in touch with that; this yields the revelation that unhappiness is not necessary as motivation, since they are already happily motivated. Again, a few schools of Reichian therapy do focus on cultivating the core, but the vast majority focus on addressing symptoms.

A Critique of New Age ideology

The Option critique of New Age ideology is simple: it proposes that you must know or believe something, some esoteric knowledge, in order to be happy.

Option proposes that knowledge and beliefs can be the cause of unhappiness, but not happiness, as happiness is just you feeling as you feel, which requires no knowledge or beliefs.

A Critique of Existential ideology

Existential ideology proposes that unhappiness is necessary (the universe is absurd, etc.). Every bit of Option rejects that proposition.

A Critique of Conventional Religions

Historically, most cultures have agreed that the fundamental "problem" of human existence is not getting what you want.

There have been two main "solutions" (or "cures") for this "problem":

First, to get what you want

Second, to not want what you want

(more elaborately, to achieve a state where you no longer want what you presently want, so that you are no longer at risk to becoming unhappy by means of your desires not being fulfilled)

Self-help philosophies offer ways to get what you want in this life.

Many religions (traditionally known as "Western" religions) propose that you will get everything you want in the afterlife.

Other religions (traditionally known as "Eastern" religions) propose that you are not likely to get everything you want. They propose not wanting as the solution.

This is the impossible solution of not wanting to want what you do want. It is true that where there is no wanting, there can be no unhappiness, but someone can only

stop wanting what they want if they no longer want it; they cannot "make" themselves stop wanting what they want.

Option offers and describes happiness prior to the question of getting what you want. It proposes that there is no problem with not getting what you want; we need not be unhappy that we don't get what we want. Option also proposes that there is no need to not want what you do want. If we are not unhappy with not having what we want, we do not need to not want what we do want. Stated positively: we can be happy, and want what we want, whether we get it or not.

A summary of Di Marsico's Critique

Below is a summary of Di Marsico's critique of therapies, comparing the Option point-of-view to the general therapeutic point of view.

- 1) You can be happy without getting what you want *vs.* Needing to get what you want, or trying to not want what you want.
- 2) Perfect happiness is already the case *vs.* Coping with, or adjustment to unhappiness
- 3) Addressing what is happening for the client now *vs.* Presuming a cause for feelings outside the client
- 4) Happiness is completely personal *vs.* Proposing an ideal way of being
- 5) Completely personal course of therapy *vs.* "diagnosis and cure"
- 6) Getting in touch with happiness *vs.* Addressing symptoms
- 7) No knowledge is necessary for happiness *vs.* Learning knowledge or beliefs