

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

www.ChooseHappiness.net

You are your happiness

By

Aryeh Nielsen

You are your happiness

A word that Bruce Di Marsico used even more than the word “happiness” was the word . . . “you”! He occasionally talked about what he meant by this word. Most summarily, he said “You are your happiness”, also “You are what you value.”

To set the context, try this thought experiment:

If you changed your hair color, would you still be you?

If you lost the use of your body, would you still be you?

If you suddenly found yourself, seemingly against your will, liking what you don’t like (attracted to foods, people, and behaviors you don’t like), would you still be you?

What is “you”?

As you read these words, there is a tacit experience of valuing things, now.

“You” is a reference to this experience.

In Bruce Di Marsico’s example, if you value the taste of olive oil, then “you” is the experience of valuing the taste of olive oil (among other things also valued).

Valuing things is synonymous with *emotional* beliefs. Emotional beliefs always take place in the context of *practical* beliefs, each individual’s model of the world (in the above case, such beliefs as: “olive oil exists”, “olive oil is edible”.) It is worth noting that practical beliefs have nothing to do with unhappiness. For example, if someone believes that a spaceship of aliens is docking in the back of their skull, to quote Bruce Di Marsico, “Maybe they know better than you. If it doesn’t matter for their happiness, what does it matter what is the way things ‘really’ are?”

“You” is a reference to an experience

Consider the declaration, “I am here.”

Throughout the day, in each moment, this declaration would have a slightly different meaning, because in each moment, “here” is a different place. “Here” is a reference, a way of pointing to a relative location, not a thing-in-itself.

Similarly, in each moment, “I” is different, because the experience of valuing changes moment by moment. When hungry, food is valued more highly. When not hungry, food is valued less highly. An individual’s beliefs can change radically, at any time. “I” is a reference, a way of pointing to an experience of valuing, not a thing-in-itself.

“I” also has practical use: “I” can be a reference to an individual body. In this sense, “I” means “this body right now.” This practical use of “I” has no consequences for happiness in any way. In this case, “I” is used as an object of experience, not the subject of experience. “I like the hair I have” can be elaborated as “I (as an experiencing subject) value the hair this body (as an object of my experience) has.”

The “I” that is relevant to happiness is the *subjective* “I”, which is the experience of valuing, not the objective “I”, which is an object (the body) that is valued.

“Happiness” is the taste in your own mouth

One definition Bruce Di Marsico used for “Happiness” is: the ultimate explanatory principle, the goal of everything you do. The goal of everything you do is simply *what you value most*. “You” is a reference to the experience of valuing. So, we see that “you” and “happiness” actually refer to the same thing! Your taste is what you value. The goal of everything you do is what is most to your taste. It is your happiness.

As Bruce Di Marsico put it poetically:

Happiness is admitting that you like that you want what you want.

Happiness is admitting liking that you don't like what you don't like.

Happiness is admitting liking that you change your mind whenever you think that's best.

Happiness is admitting liking that you don't change your mind until you really change your mind.

Happiness is admitting liking that you feel just the way you like to feel about everything you do.

What happens to “you” after you die?

After the death of the body, if there is still an experience of valuing, then that “you” is no more limited in happiness than before the death of the body, because there would still be the experience of doing and being whatever is valued most, in the context of after bodily death.

If there is no experience of valuing, then there is no “you” to talk about, and the question becomes the equivalent to “What happens to a ripple on a pond when it has completed?” A ripple is a process, not a thing, and once the process has completed, the process does not exist.

In sum after bodily death, there either is no “you”, or happiness is perfectly available. Either way, then, death presents no obstacle to your happiness.

Did something make you who you are? Parents, past lives...?

If someone says “I am who I am because of my childhood”, or “I am who I am because of my past lives”, what are they saying?

In Bruce Di Marsico’s example, if you value the taste of olive oil, then you are the experience of valuing the taste of olive oil. What does it mean to say “I value the taste of olive oil because my parents fed it to me everyday”, or “I value the taste of olive oil because I was an olive farmer in my past life”? These “explanations” don’t add any information about who you are, because you are simply the experience of valuing olive oil. Whether these “causes” are true, false, impossible to verify, or meaningless has no bearing on your present-time valuing of things, and so is irrelevant to the question of who you are.

Not believing yourself

Bruce Di Marsico has described unhappiness as not believing yourself. He elaborates, by saying that unhappiness is the impossible belief that you don't value what you value. Feeling you "should" have values other than you do in order to be happy is an example of this impossible belief.

The experience of valuing things right now is exactly what is meant by "you". If these values change, then that is the "you" of right now. Happiness is valuing things as you do. To fully elaborate out the statement, "You should be different (in order to be happy)" means "You 'should' have values other than you do, in order to fully value things as you do." This is clearly an impossible statement! This is what is meant by "being against oneself". And this is what unhappiness is.

Consenting to happiness: "Watch and enjoy what happens"

Since you are your happiness, you can never truly be unhappy; you can only mistakenly believe you are unhappy. Bruce Di Marsico called being free of this mistaken belief "consenting to happiness". It is the perfect knowledge that you value what you value, and never do not.

What is there to do when you know that you value what you value and never do not? "Watch, and enjoy what happens", as what is happening is the process of your happiness. This process alternates between what Bruce Di Marsico called *Joy*, or moving toward what you value, and *Peace*, or the satisfaction of having arrived at what you value (for now), which Bruce Di Marsico sometimes summed up as "Happy, and not done for now" and "Happy, and done for now."