

The Option Method Institute

Education based on the teachings of Bruce Di Marsico

Option, Mysticism, and Pragmatism

by

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Mystical Pragmatism

One way that Bruce Di Marsico described Option is as “Mystical Pragmatism”. This description can be illuminated by exploring the traditions of Mysticism and Pragmatism. Both of these traditions have many aspects and schools; as discussed here, the focus is only on those aspects that are closely allied with Option.

Mysticism

Mysticism is a mode of experience that has arisen within most cultures and religions. The strain of mystic thought most relevant to Option is Catholic Mysticism, in particular the thread following from St. Thomas Aquinas, Via Negativa (Negative Theology): theology that attempts to describe what is by negation, speaking only in terms of what cannot be said about the perfect goodness that may be called happiness, reality, existence, or God. St. Thomas Aquinas: “In itself the proposition ‘God [happiness] exists’ is necessarily true, for in it subject and predicate are the same. [i.e., to exist is to be happy]”

Mysticism, as a religious practice, focuses on the individual experience, as opposed to institutional practices or theoretical knowledge. Some branches of mysticism proclaim that nothing can be said of what the mystic experiences. In the negative theology tradition, terms such as “happiness” and “God” are references to what is fully known beyond illusions, but can never be fully described. There is no knowledge to be gained, only occluding “knowledge” to set aside in order to see the reality of happiness clearly. In this tradition, Option Mysticism focuses on dissolution and deconstruction of beliefs, not on their acquisition. In some schools of the Buddhist tradition, this is summed up as “Wanting enlightenment is a big mistake,” meaning that the illusion that you need to become enlightened is, in itself, un-enlightenment.

These are some traditional descriptions of the experience when all apparent “knowledge” of unhappiness is set aside (using “happiness” interchangeably with God, reality, existence, etc):

- *Happiness is perfectly simple.*
- *Nothing is evil.*
- *The knowing of happiness is unique to each consciousness.*

What makes Option Mysticism unique is its rigorous lack of providing frameworks of myths and metaphors to describe the indescribable, and an avoidance of prescribed rituals to facilitate the experience of happiness (such as prescribed forms of meditation, prayer, or behavior).

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a tradition that first rose to prominence in 19th century America, developed by, among others, Williams James, who taught that “a belief is a proposition on which a person is prepared to act.” Functional Psychology, an outgrowth of pragmatism, developed the idea of Stimulus-Organism-Response, in response to behaviorist models of the human organism as a Stimulus-Response mechanism.

Some relevant tenets of classical pragmatism are:

- *That which is known to be true is what we believe; it is not objective.*
- *Beliefs are a model of a reality that may exist objectively, but objective reality is not knowable to us except through beliefs. Knowledge is true for us until it is discovered to be false by failing to match our experience.*
- *We needn't have justifications for what we know.*
- *Values are hypotheses about what action is useful to an organism.*

It is worth noting that the Mystic and Pragmatic traditions use the word “Knowing” in very different manners. In Mysticism, “Knowing” refers to that which is known natively, prior to beliefs, and has no object. “To know” is an intransitive verb that takes no direct

object. In the language of Mystics, Happiness is the only thing truly known by anybody, and is known as inherent knowledge.

In Pragmatism, that which is "Known as True" is that which is known by virtue of beliefs held as true: "To know" is a transitive verb that always takes a direct object. In the language of Pragmatists, what is known are facts about the world, which are only ever known provisionally and tentatively.

Option

In summary, Option can be described as a form of Mysticism because of the axiom that happiness is known whenever unhappiness is not "known", and Option can be described as Pragmatism because it takes the "knowledge" of unhappiness as a belief, that is, a predictive basis for action, with no inherent truth value. Together, they reveal that happiness is always known when it is no longer believed that it is necessary to be unhappy.