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What the #$*! Do We (K)now!? (What the Bleep Do We Know?!)

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What the #$*! Do We (K)now!? (What the Bleep Do We Know?!)

Abstract
This is a review of What the #$*! Do We (K)now!? (What the Bleep Do We Know?!) (2004).

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Quantum physicist. Theologian. Biochemist. Neurochemist. Enlightenment teacher. Anaesthesiologist. Chiropractor. Doctor. In *What the Bleep Do We Know?* a variety of individuals who fulfill the foregoing roles are addressing the deepest questions about the ultimate nature of reality and its significance for human beings. The questions are addressed primarily through a narrative, told through the eyes of Amanda (Marlee Matlin) who works as a photographer. She is struggling with the meaning of her life, and her various encounters with her boss, a boy with whom she plays basketball, her artist roommate, people and cartoon human body cells at a wedding, and finally the voices of the professionals mentioned above, help her to resolve in some way her existential dilemma.

This is a film about quantum physics and its implication for understanding the world, human beings, and the nature of reality. Quantum physics presents a challenge to the usual way that humans have understood the world, and thus represents a shift to a new paradigm. The old paradigm in which we are stuck, represented by modern materialism, is not the way the world is actually constructed, according to the disparate voices in this film. What we actually see is not reality, but simply the tip of the iceberg. Reality itself is not "out there," but rather, we create reality. Thus, the internal is much more significant than the external. Quantum physics, then, is a physics of possibilities, not only for the universe as a whole, but for each individual as well. If we can create reality, then we can change
the way we approach and affect the world. Intentionality becomes of paramount importance: choosing to create the reality that we want, but not simply as individuals. Since quantum physics also supports the notion that everyone and everything is integrally interconnected, the nature of reality is one: "The deepest level of truth uncovered by science and by philosophy is the fundamental truth of the unity. At the deepest sub-nuclear level of our reality, you and I are literally one.”

But this truth and reality itself are enveloped in mystery, so we should not be compulsive about our "need to know.”

This film addresses the question of God very specifically. One way in which it assumes the existence of some kind of divine being is by making reference to the "Ultimate Observer.” The question is specifically asked, "Have you ever seen yourself through the eyes of the Ultimate Observer?” As the photographer, Amanda in some ways serves as a symbolic stand-in for this Ultimate Observer. Through this analogy, the film suggests the need for an important kind of distancing needed in order to see reality more truly as it is. However, the film appears to dismiss belief in the existence of a God who is discrete and separate from humanity as blasphemy and part of an outdated cosmology fostered by organized religion born of hubris. Thus, when Amanda is sitting in a church, she critiques such arrogance: "The height of arrogance is the height of control of those who create God in their own image.”

Rather, she concludes: "I have no idea of what God is yet I have an experience that
God is…” In addition, the issue of the efficacy of prayer is specifically addressed. It is tied in with the notion of intentionality, and suggests that we in fact can change reality. The example given is of 4,000 people who meditated one day in Washington, DC, and as a result, the crime rate decreased by 25 percent, as was predicted. How meditation works is not as significant as that it does work, and that it is tied in with human intentionality perhaps more than it is tied in with God.

The movie is quite entertaining and enlightening, with an approach to the subject matter that does not follow a normal film sequence but rather presents us with bits and pieces of knowledge and information, in particular about quantum physics. Although the film addresses scientific questions, albeit ones which have ethical, religious, and practical implications, it is certainly a fascinating film to view, and thus I would caution anyone against dismissing it because of its seemingly heavy subject matter. There are very few films that deal so directly and so creatively with such deep existential questions. I would recommend that one watch this film in conjunction with another film that came out around the same time, *I Love Huckabees*. Together these films present a cohesive approach to the question of the meaning of life, informed by existentialist philosophy and quantum physics. In response to the question posed by *What the Bleep Do We Know?* the answer given in this movie is "Not much.” But the film also seems to say that how we have previously understood the world is faulty, that we need to modify our
perceptions, and that we need to tap into our potentiality and possibility. The strong message of the film is that due to our understanding of how the universe works, through the field of quantum physics, we are all capable of affecting reality infinitely more than we ever imagined. The opening lines of the film put it very nicely:

"In the beginning was the Void
Teeming with infinite possibilities
Of which you
Are one…."