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## IN VIDEO 9, NEIL TALKS ABOUT:

- *How does one undertake this inquiry oneself?*
- *The five senses, energy and the misperceptions of common sense*
- *The limits of science exploring consciousness and Thomas Nagel*
- *Vedanta, meditation and the 3,000 year old answer within*

Judy Feldman: The question I wanted to ask is, when you meet with family and friends and you start talking to them about how science, and your scientific mentality and reason, brought you to Vedanta, and they say, "How can we learn about this?" What can you say to them? How can they start to do their own research, following up on your own explanations of how you got there? Because more people than not, at least in the people we've spoken with over the past decades, do not have as rigorous a science background as you do. So, they need both the science and they need other approaches. What would you suggest?

Neil Feldman: Well, that's a tough question because when we talk, I'm presenting stuff that isn't published anywhere, although it's based on this real philosophy. I could refer people to study the Vedanta, and you can find hundreds of books on Indian philosophy, but that's not really what I'm trying to do. The quandary is, for me, there isn't...When people ask, they've usually heard my rehash of John Dobson's Cosmology, and I do have papers of his, articles of his that I'm happy to send, and I've sent to others, although they've never responded afterwards.

I've also heard, when I've given this presentation to people who had heard it from Dobson and then heard it from me, that they thought I did a better job than Dobson. It's all his ideas. That's another quandary, because I have it written down, my way of explaining what he's talking about. The simple answer, if somebody is really motivated, really wants to get into this, then study the Vedanta and make of it what you can. But, the whole point of what I'm trying to do is get rid of all the baggage that accompanies something that's thousands of years old, comes from a culture we don't understand and is really beside the point. And get to the ideals and the universal themes that transcend culture, or transcend nationalities, and put it back where it belongs, which is, this is the legacy of every single person.

If you ask, well, how did I get into this? It wasn't by being jazzed by reading the Vedanta. It was because I read the physics. Long before really deeply into studying the Vedanta, and seeing that in fact there was so many similarities in how they described the universe,

regardless of how they got to their description, I came at it because I looked at Einstein's equations, what was going on, and I was stunned. I was completely floored. I still am. I think that people don't understand what Einstein's contributions mean to them personally. They acknowledge he's a genius, they understand these important things he's done. They don't believe for a second that it applies to them in some direct way, and I think it does. We're still in Newtonian thinking. We're still common sense thinkers. We're still believing that what we see is real, and Einstein threw all that out. That's not the case. It only got worse after Einstein. His quantum theory has shown even deeper contradictions.

What happens is, that people who want to maintain a common sense view come up with all kinds of rationalizations. I'm talking about physicists who understand the equations and are deeply into, maybe, writing their own PhD. Nobody looks at it the way I look at it, the way John Dobson looked at it, which is, this is mind boggling. This is something that needs to be digested in an entire culture, across the world. It's the world we're in and we don't know what we're in. We don't know what we're made of. We don't know how we run, and we don't know why. For most people, all those questions, if they ask them, they were discouraged from pursuing the answers very deeply because they had to go on and deal with particular matters. We're no longer in a culture that really values philosophy or deep thinking. My goal is to get people back to being stunned by what's gone on in physics.

Judy: Can you explain, for people that don't understand Einstein's equations, its implications for our normal lives when we depend on what we smell, we see, we touch, the sensory perception of the world, and how the Einsteinian discoveries upset that? Because I think people don't understand the fundamental basis of what it says about our sensory interpretation of the world, which is so mind boggling to you and to other scientists.

Neil: Yeah. We have a common sense view. It's a world out there, and we check into it and we check out of it, but it goes on, doesn't require our participation. The senses, we have five senses, and each of them is designed to react to a different form of energy. I mean, there's five forms of energy. Gravitational. Well, the inner ear responds to gravitational orientation in space. So, we sense gravity, we understand it, we have a mechanism to deal with that energy in our senses. Kinetic energy, that's friction. Our skin can feel heat from rubbing your hands together. That's the sense of touch. There's radiation, that's our eyes. We can perceive a certain band of wavelengths as light. There's electricity and magnetism, which actually are a pair, they come together, and our taste buds sense the electrical charge because protons, which are positively charged, taste sour. The nose is a magnetic sensor, and we get our sense of smell.

We're equipped with five senses to deal with five kinds of energy. There's one more energy that somebody might point out, nuclear energy, which is a recent discovery. But actually, nuclear energy is a different category. It has to do with Heisenberg uncertainty principles. So we can't sense nuclear energy directly, but we can make a magnet, but that's not a fundamental energy. In any case, we rely on the senses, we believe that what they deliver is reality. What's happened in science since the time of Einstein is that, in fact, the senses are shown to be incapable of showing what the reality is. They're not equipped for that. We're not equipped for that. Our bodies, our genes, everything about us, is not equipped to present what's really going on in the Universe as it really is. Probably because evolution didn't need to do that. All of our senses, our bodies, everything else, have been shaped by factors that have evolved over time.

But nonetheless, having come to this point where we're asking, "What's the origin of the universe? What are we made of? Where did this stuff come from, and what's behind it, if anything?" What's going on in the physics is that, in fact, we can't answer those questions by the limitations of the senses, and yet we use a very effective tool, the scientific method, to explore this universe, but it's limited. It's based on observations, it's based on what the five senses really can deliver. There's this contradiction. The five senses can't show what's going on, especially in the perceiver, in consciousness, and science refuses to cross the line of observation, quite rightly so. It insists that what it evaluates is observable and refutable. It's gotten us very far, but now we're sort of at a limit. We're at this point where it may not be able to answer these questions within its own limits.

My side of it is, okay, science takes you up to a certain line. I get the feeling, especially from people who aren't scientists, or involved in the sciences, that they believe science has essentially ridiculed the idea of something transcendent, something more. Anytime anybody wants to talk about a purpose behind the universe, or is there some direction that's going on? Is there something or someone or some entity behind the show? And the science completely jumps on that and says, "No, it's not necessary. Everything works within the laws of physics, so we can explain what we see around us." Yes, in the observable universe they can explain observations, but you can't explain consciousness, and we can't explain the sense that we have of right and wrong and all these other intangibles that really make very little sense from an evolutionary point. Why would evolution have developed these things?, is the first thought. But, they're just not up to the task.

For me, step one is to say, "Look. We should take science and reason and go as far as possible with it, and if you're willing to do that, if you're willing to be open minded, then you will be stunned to realize that over 100 years ago everything went out the door." The common

sense view of the universe disappeared. It doesn't exist. Einstein's equations are correct. We know this in a practical sense, because it makes predictions that aren't common sense predictions. The Newtonian world was common sense.

The reason that Einstein was finally accepted, it took 20 years, is because his equations could predict something that was later verified by observation. In this case, it was the position of a star behind the sun, and it was only measurable during a total solar eclipse. In 1919, Sir Arthur Eddington set out on an expedition. I think they tried earlier, but there were some unfortunate failures in the observations. It wasn't until 1919 that somebody could do the precise observation and see that this star behind the sun was appearing where Einstein's equations would predict, but not where Newton's equation would predict. All of a sudden, Einstein was vindicated and everybody paid attention to what he had basically publish in 1905. The breakthrough: that our senses don't deliver this the way it really is.

Now, is it important? Well, if there's nothing behind the universe, it's probably not important. But, in fact, I think that these equations point to the fact that there is something behind this, something very important, something that is dear to all of us, something that every person has in their legacy, so to speak, and they don't know it. To me, I think it's tragic. I think this something that we're talking about, this treasure that each of us owns, was known to the ancient world, was known to the guys that wrote the Upanishads, and the women and whoever they were. Was known, and is still known, amongst those who turn within and explore consciousness. But, that's a very, very small portion of humanity right now. Probably could count them all on your fingers. That isn't right, because what they know is not just for them. There's not a world for the mystics, separate from the world for the physicists, separate from the world for the dummies like us that don't know anything. If any of it's true, it's true for all of us.

It's stunning to me that somebody could, 3000 years ago, describe the universe that looks very much like what quantum theory is describing. Now, quantum theorists take umbrage to that, but the early quantum theorists did not. They all came across the Vedanta and said, "Wow. This is the closest thing that I've seen that corresponds with what these equations imply, or these observations imply." But, in any case, today we've buried that, because the whole goal is to make things in the common sense world not be threatening, or make it acceptable. That's not right. We shouldn't be doing that. There's nothing true about what our senses deliver, except that they're delivering something wrong. But, there's something there. It's not that they're making this up. It's not like we're talking about unicorns. We're touching something, and we're seeing a certain way, and it works

great for propagating the species, but it does not work at all for explaining what's going on in the universe, or why we may be in it.

Judy: What would you say to someone who's saying, "Well, okay. On the one hand, you're looking at , but on the other hand, you're using as your alternative evidence the personal experience of someone who lived 2000 years ago, that is purely based in their personal experience, as opposed to some kind of hard science and rationality. How can you reconcile you as the promoter of this kind of thinking, using such disparate evidences to come to your conclusion?"

Neil: That's a great question, and that's precisely why when you asked early on, "How would anybody explore this?" we're reluctant to point them towards the Vedanta and the 3000-year-old philosophy. They got it by looking with it by process of meditation. It's all out there. You can read it. What they said, which is true, is that, "You shouldn't believe any of this, except that you can recreate it in your own laboratory, in your own self." They have always said that, over and over again. That at least with those that are true to this, which is why the Upanishads were written. The Upanishads are basically either the experiences that people had after following these disciplines, or an explanation of what the disciplines were so that others could follow in this path.

Yes, we're talking about two different approaches, so to speak, to getting at the truth. The external approach, the one that we're following, the scientific approach, is one way of getting knowledge. Then there's this other idea that by looking within, you can get knowledge. Now that idea is dismissed by many. Nonetheless, you have this written and oral tradition, and in the 3000 years since you have experiences of various mystics and others, or people that all of a sudden just had this experience without any kind of preparation, it's repeated. It's in this human psyche. No question about it.

Aldous Huxley was a Vedantist, became convinced that drugs could unleash this perception, and wrote Doors of Perception with this idea. Many people got into psychedelic drugs and all, thinking that this would be a shortcut to having this experience. Unfortunately, it's not a shortcut. It may very well result in perceiving something different than the normal, and that I think is a valuable thing that the psychedelic drugs prove, which is basically how tenuous our viewpoint of the world is, based on whatever's going on in our own chemical makeup. Some people who have a problem, either chemical unbalance or some other problem, may very well see a different world, but that's not the world of the mystic that I'm talking about.

In any case, what I hope is that at this point in the science we don't stop, we keep pushing. We want to know the truth. Science has come up against a limit. Some people have seen it earlier than others. But,

the more and more we get into the sophistication of the tools we have, in quantum theory in particular, the more difficult it becomes to have a straight face about this common place world that we see. I believe that it's going to lead to a point where everybody acknowledges that it's time to look at the subject that's observing.

Judy: Recently you've been reading some Thomas Nagel, and he's a philosopher, as opposed to a scientist. Not as opposed to, but different from. He points out the limits of science as well. What do you think of his discussion of consciousness in relationship to the limits of science?

Neil: Yeah, Nagel is great because he's first of all, he's an atheist, so he still doesn't want to say anything that can't be provable or discussed, so he comes from that position. That, I think, gives him certain cachet, if you will, whereas others who are coming out of a religious tradition look like they have some ax to grind. In any case, he points out the elephant in the room, which is consciousness cannot be explained by an appeal to evolution and appeal to just the law of physics. It cannot be explained by a reductionist view that science takes of picking things apart.

He makes that statement. I agree with him. But, there's plenty of scientists who say, "No, no, no. Give us time. We're going to prove that this is...Consciousness is just a byproduct of chemicals and neurons and a very sophisticated network of stuff going on in the brain." Whereas I think Nagel points out, quite correctly, "No, that isn't going to be able to explain this." And, he doesn't try to explain it. All he does is point out the problem. The problem is science can't answer this question about consciousness. What it is, how it works, where it comes from. And what about all these internal states that we have? So, he's probably the boldest to put forth the problem. Because he's got good credentials, he's a philosopher, he knows what he's talking about. Hopefully that will spark a discussion that does end in ridicule because consciousness is the final frontier.