

REVIEW: FRANK TUREK STEALING FROM GOD: THE BOOK THAT ACCUSES ATHEISM OF STEALING FROM BELIEVERS IN GO

Christian Frank Turek of <https://impactapologetics.com/> is a prime defender of the Christian faith. He wrote the runaway best seller *Stealing from God*. This book claims that atheists are using arguments that belong to and with belief in God to argue against God. In a nutshell that is not enough to prove atheists wrong. Contradictions are when one argument is against another so what if the reason atheists find themselves contradicting themselves is that the concepts of God and morality are incoherent? If atheists are actually trying to talk coherently about what is inherently incoherent then they succeed in vindicating atheism for they prove that God is self-contradictory confused nonsense. Turek like all self-styled believers keeps away from any prime and successful arguments against God and the wisdom of believing in God.

Quote: Thanks to fellow atheist Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins now appears to affirm objective morality while maintaining his atheism. In his book *The Moral Landscape*, Harris takes the position that objective moral values really do exist, and they can be explained without invoking God. He claims that if we just use our reason, we'll see that "human flourishing" is the standard by which we determine something is good or bad. Anything that helps humans flourish is good. Since reason and science can tell us what helps humans flourish, there is no need for God to ground objective moral values. If Harris is correct, it seems that he has successfully shot down the moral argument for God.

My comment: Christians say that this account does not explain why we should care about the flourishing of others. But everybody's gut instinct is that even if we don't know why, it is right. Christians say that morality gets its authority from God. But you can say this does not explain why we should agree. Some things you either see or don't like the beauty of a landscape. Maybe morality is like that too. Why not admit we don't know what we mean when we say we know morality is valid? Why does that even matter? Religion not the atheist is taking advantage of the ethereal side to all that that we cannot really explain.

Christians say that God is just and loving and so morality is grounded in his nature – the kind of God he is. This does not the doctrine that we must love sinners and hate their sin as if their sins say nothing about them as a person. If you cannot say your badness says something about you then it is the same for good. You are denying that bad or good deeds say anything about anybody. Thus you cannot say that God's goodness reflects on him. You are only being saccharine and fake. But back to how moral principles are valid because God is good and just and loving. What is that saying? It is saying God is flourished. If God being flourished grounds morality then us being flourished and being able to be grounds morality as well and we don't need God. If there is no God then morality is indeed grounded in us. So the believers accidentally prove Harris right!

If human beings flourish without faith or thinking of God and they do then that shows that if Harris fails to ground morality we can settle for saying, "It is clear we don't have to have a God or God belief to flourish so if we don't know what grounds morality we know that something does and it is not God."

Quote: I asked Christopher [Hitchens] to identify the objective standard by which he judged something to be evil. He kept avoiding a direct answer, so I finally just blurted out, "What is evil?" Without missing a beat, he quipped, "Religion!"

My comment: It takes guts to be evil. Even being cowardly has risks. You fail to protect yourself. It takes faith. It is the case that you think something supernatural is protecting you and you are made magically powerful and safe through the evil. You may not realise it. That is a form of religion for it is a strong form of religious faith. Religion and faith can be implicit and it is obvious that even self-proclaimed atheists who are sure they can start a war and win think some magical force such as God or luck is on their side. Hitchens is right.

Many forces including religion say that evil is banal. That is it is unnecessary and done for boring stupid reasons. That allows Catholics to explain how a nice person can go to Hell for having illicit sex against God's law. Evil is so crafty and can look harmless so religion could be harmless. Religion is based on banality and is a bandage for banality.

Quote: Thoughts can change brain chemistry. In researching "cognitive therapy," several studies confirm that psychotherapy patients can use their thoughts to create metabolic changes in their brains to overcome depression. So there's some truth to the saying, "you can become what you think about." (Not completely though, otherwise most men would become women.)

My comment here is that people are blamed for their depression. Doing that only leads to more despair and depression. It's a cruel irresponsible statement. Even to suggest that that MAY be the cause is terrible.

His prime point would be that if you think of sin and love sin then you will become sin. This is a good answer to the love the sinner and hate the sin lie. It is another proof that the fundamental Christian doctrine that you/God/Jesus can love the sinner and hate the sin for the sin is not the sinner is a lie.

As for men thinking about women and not becoming women there is a difference between thinking of what kind of person you can be and the kind of people others are.

Quote: Theists are just advocating common sense. There really are immaterial realities that are intuitively obvious and that we use continuously, such as the laws of logic, the laws of mathematics, objective moral values, consciousness, and free will. In fact, some of those immaterial realities you are using right now to read and understand this sentence.

Comment: But logic and mathematics are not things. They are not spirits! They are abstract not immaterial! These and the other things need not involve God or religion. Notice how he says that morality and consciousness are intuitively obvious. This is admitting that we don't need anything other than our intuition. If you have no source of information but intuition then as ought implies can that is enough to establish morality. Simple! No God! No hocus pocus!

Quote: This is not a debate about evidence. Everyone is looking at the same evidence. This is a debate about how to interpret the evidence, and that involves philosophical commitments about what causes will be considered possible before looking at the evidence. If you philosophically rule out intelligent causes beforehand—as the Darwinists do—you will never interpret the evidence properly if an intelligent being actually is responsible. Notice that how one defines “science” is not science itself.

Comment: That is like saying a dice that falls and brings up 6 is evidence but saying somebody threw it or did not is interpretation. Either way it is the case that it fell and why not leave it at that? Why not let the evidence suggest the philosophy instead of the other way around? Atheists and believers who are studying the evidence have to let the evidence guide the philosophy - one side is not doing it and lying about it.

Quote: [Some] either make God subject to objective morality or an arbitrary source of morality. The supposed dilemma goes like this: Does God do something because it is good (which would imply there is a standard of Good beyond God), or is it Good because God does it (which would imply that God arbitrarily makes up morality)? But this is not an actual dilemma at all. An actual dilemma has only two opposing alternatives: A or non-A. We don't have that here. In this situation we have A and B. Well, maybe there is a third alternative: a C. There is. When it comes to morality, God doesn't look up to another standard beyond Himself. If He has to look up to another standard, then He wouldn't be God—the standard beyond Him would be God. Nor is God arbitrary. There is nothing arbitrary about an unchanging standard of Good. The third alternative is that God's nature is the standard. God Himself is the unchanging standard of Good. The buck has to stop somewhere, and it stops at God's unchanging moral nature. In other words, the standard of rightness we know as the Moral Law flows from the nature of God Himself—infinite justice and infinite love.

Comment: Turek is saying that God is subject to objective morality because it is his nature - it is him! He denies there is a dilemma. Notice how he says the buck has to stop somewhere. The question, "Why should I do this?" stops with, "Because God is infinite justice and love" But what has the infinite have to do with it? And it is about getting a parking spot and stopping the questions. That is using God not respecting him. Why are we not saying we all know we have justice and love in us and could live by a better standard and stop there? How could it matter if it is God's justice or love?

Quote: Atheists have long been critical of Christians for trying to legislate morality. But atheists are trying to do the same thing. They're trying to legislate their new absolutes over the old “self-evident” ones grounded in God. For example, many atheists are ardent supporters of absolute rights to abortion, same-sex marriage, taxpayer-provided health care, welfare, contraceptives, and several other entitlements. But who says those are rights? By what objective standard are abortion, same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, taxpayer-provided health care, and the like, moral rights? There isn't such a standard in an atheistic universe. So atheists must steal the grounds for objective moral rights from God while arguing that God doesn't exist.

Comment: So these secular rights which many see as not being rights at all but just evils are also treating God as real despite themselves! This is ammunition for say the pro-life atheist who says that faith in God is bad for morality. If the atheist is necessarily assuming a morality making God and not realising it, then the doctrine or perception that there is something is responsible for abortion etc. is accurate. God has written morality into a confused person and thus must take responsibility for the results.

Quote: While evil is real, it's not a “thing.” Evil doesn't exist on its own. It only exists as a lack or a deficiency in a good thing. Evil is like rust in a car: If you take all of the rust out of a car, you have a better car; if you take the car out of the rust, you have nothing. Evil is like a cut in your finger: If you take the cut out of your finger, you have a better finger; if

you take the finger out of your cut, you have nothing. In other words, evil only makes sense against the backdrop of good. That's why we often describe evil as negations of good things. We say someone is immoral, unjust, unfair, dishonest, etc. So evil can't exist unless good exists.

Comment: This is very black and white. A good healthy finger is not that good - it is ageing and vulnerable and produces toxins. There is no proper good as such. Its all shades of grey. Good and evil are just rubbish practically speaking. This is just Turek trying to be so pious that you think he only sees the good.

Quote: Hitler was anti-traditional religion because he didn't want anything to transcend his authority. Moreover, his disdain for the Jews seemed more focused on their ethnicity rather than their religious beliefs. As Dinesh D'Souza points out, "A Jew could not escape Auschwitz by pleading, 'I no longer practice Judaism,' 'I am an atheist,' or 'I have converted to Christianity.' This mattered nothing to Hitler because he believed the Jews were inferior racial stock. His anti-Semitism was secular." Hitler justified the Holocaust by citing evolution...

Comment: Hitler did use religion, unorthodox yes but still religion, to hurt the Jews. He gave no hint that he did not believe his version of religion. Some say that Hitler and his system abused Darwinism as an excuse for eliminating the Jews for science did not support any alleged inferiority. Maybe the idea that God was using evolution to eradicate bad strains of human beings was at the back of Hitler's head and that was why he was seeing himself as part of this elimination process. But the reality is that Hitler was a creationist not a Darwinist. He wrote, "nothing indicates that development within a species has occurred of a considerable leap of the sort that man would have to have made to transform him from an apelike condition to his present state." Faith was to blame for what the Nazis did not evolution.

<https://evolution-institute.org/was-hitler-a-darwinian/>

Quote: More Pain, More Gain.

Comment: Turek says the more you suffer the better - since when did he go among the lepers?

Quote: Most philosophers agree that the existence of evil is not incompatible with the existence of God. In fact, as we have seen, the existence of evil actually establishes the existence of God! "But are you saying that the ends justify the means?" No. God is not doing evil so that good may result. In fact, God is not doing evil at all—we are. We are the rebels. While God holds all things together and is responsible for the fact of freedom, we free creatures are responsible for our acts of freedom. Even God can't force free creatures to make free choices—that would be a contradiction. Therefore, God allows us to do evil and allows natural laws to run their course, knowing that, although there will be pain along the way, good will come from it. As parents, we do this with our children, even though we don't know the future for sure. We allow our children to make some bad choices, knowing that, although pain will result, it's the only way to accomplish the good of maturity. If we can allow bad choices with limited information, God can do it with complete information.

Comment: If I do evil nobody can change the past not even God so God tries to turn it to good. This is not the end justifies the means or is it? No. But if God sees what will happen and lets you do harm to yourself then that is the end justifies the means! It is not the same as a parent living in a world which throws up the unexpected all the time!

Quote: He argues that given time evil turns good so it fits an all-powerful and all-good God...

This ripple effect is the revolutionary insight I referred to earlier that helped me make sense of what appeared to be senseless evil. It means that even the worst evil committed by free creatures or the suffering caused by natural disasters cannot be deemed purposeless. While our time-bound limitations prevent us from identifying specific good outcomes for every bad event, the atheist can't prove they will not materialize. That's why most philosophers agree that the existence of evil is not incompatible with the existence of God. In fact, as we have seen, the existence of evil actually establishes the existence of God!

Comment: Christians like to say logicians tend to find no incompatibility between a perfectly good God and evil. But what they do not admit is that the logicians finding none is not the same as saying there can be none. The other problem is that many philosophers have an inadequate view of evil - they are captivated by moral toxins such as utilitarianism and relativism so what they say does not count. Christians cannot solve the contradiction themselves so they resort to using such people to shore up their God delusions.

Good coming at the end of evil has nothing to do with making evil in any way good or showing that God was right to let free agents do the evil. The argument itself is evil and hard-faced. It is using the results to justify the evil being allowed which is the end justifies the means worked backwards.

Quote: Is Jesus telling us not to judge? No, He's commanding us to take the speck out of our brother's eye—that involves

making a judgment. He simply tells us to get our own house in order first so we judge rightly, not hypocritically. In other words, Jesus isn't telling us not to judge; He's telling us how to judge. Elsewhere Jesus tells us, "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

Comment: That most Christians think judging is immoral and that Jesus banned it is alarming. Jesus said that you can judge the person not just the sin for he wanted you to have the person calling another race dragged before the Sanhedrin. Jesus himself would see faith and religion as dangerous and needing careful regulation when so many abdicate moral responsibility and civic spirit in the name of minding their own business and not having an opinion. The only truly non-judgemental person as Turek says is a dead one. We judge endlessly every day.

Quote: Chesterton said, "Meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain. Meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure."

Comment: Interesting. Turek argues then that we end up numb if we are atheists or don't make God central. "No wonder atheism ultimately leads to despair. Life is meaningless and no amount of temporal pleasure can cure that." That does not fit the many atheists who spend time doing good works and who deny that their life is bland and pointless. What about barely-religious Christians who are happy? If they are weary of pleasure and are thus happy to sacrifice themselves and suffer for others then so what? Notice how Turek is getting at the notion that atheism and its disciples are harmful - very harmful indeed. Christians tend to think that atheists are indirectly to blame for many suicides. It is hate towards atheists. Yet it is obvious that if God alone matters then you have to say there is no point without him. Worship is passive-aggressive.

Religious people report spiritual pleasure. Many like to pray for that reason. When that pleasure disappoints and lets them down then the one good thing the one perfect thing God or faith in him has failed you. It teaches you that you have nothing left to lose. If that makes you feel flat or disappointed everything else will only be worse. That loss can drive Islamists and Christians to seek death as martyrs or kill others in the name of holy war. Read Ariel Glucklich's *Dying for Heaven: Holy Pleasure and Suicide Bombers—Why the Best Qualities of Religion Are Also Its Most Dangerous*

Quote: [Somebody] says, 'I love you so much that I'm going to force you to love me.' Can he do that? Can he force you to love him?" Everyone agreed that was impossible. You can't force someone to love you. I went on to explain that the same is true in our relationship with God

Comment: Morality makes allowances for what you cannot help. If the only way you could love was in a way that forces then that is just the way it is. What if you turned out naturally that way and cannot help it? Ought implies can. Morality is about what you can do. Somebody programmed to murder would still be entitled to the Nobel Peace Prize. Thus there are more important things than love being free or not. For Buddhists compassion is a better virtue. It is not true that love alone matters - its insipid nonsense forged in the hearts of passive aggressive people like Jesus Christ. It is really about trying to impose what you want love to be on God and your idea of God.

Turek speaks of how God does not force us to love him. If freedom is so important then he cannot pressure or threaten us either but he does. Threats about suffering and Hell and being enslaved to Satan amount to terrible threats. It is taking advantage of our fears of the unknown. Yet Turek gives us a parable of how a lady on a date is rejecting the man when she says they should be friends only. He says the man will get no happiness or value out of forcing her to love him. It will not work.

Free will is defined as the power to choose on your own so you can do option a as easily as option b. But that means you can be free despite God when in fact the doctrine of creation says God creates your freedom and you so there is no such thing as really being able to create a decision against his will or permission. Turek's vision of free will is judgemental on us for it blames us and holds us accountable and is paradoxically atheistic! There is more freedom in a free agent who is pressured than this straightjacket set up by God.

God in fact is rejecting us by treating us as mere adopted children and calling us sinners. As God is happy anyway it makes no sense to say he would be unhappy if we are puppets. He comes first but how can he if he wants us to authentically love for our benefit not his?

Quote: Atheists sometimes compare their nonbelief in God to their nonbelief in Santa Claus. But the comparison fails because there is not only no evidence for Santa Claus, there is positive evidence against Santa Claus. Our knowledge of physics and the great distances involved provide positive evidence that it's physically impossible for one human being to dispense gifts to six billion people all over the world in one night using a sleigh and reindeer. In other words, we don't just "lack a belief" in Santa Claus; we have reasons to believe he doesn't exist. On the other hand, as we'll see later in this book, there is positive evidence for the God of the Bible and no evidence that would make His existence impossible. In fact, some classical theists call God a "necessary being" because His existence appears necessary.

Comment: So no evidence for God and or positive evidence against God would put him in the same league as Santa.

We are told the Santa thing is absurd. But if Santa is like an angel or God gives him the power of miracles then this assertion is wrong. It refutes a straw man Santa. That is not an honest approach at all.

Lacking belief in Santa makes you count as rejecting his existence. So some say the same applies if you lack belief in God. Turek says the difference is Santa is not needed to explain why there is something rather than nothing but God is.

The point about God is that he has magic power. It is that simple. It is not about the magic being able to turn nothing into something to make all things or if it is turning a child's wishes into Christmas presents? It is just the magic. It is not even about if it is God or Santa. The magic rules both out as nonsense. The bigger the wizard the bigger the nonsense.

If you can say there is more than just evidence lacking for Santa but there is evidence that he is not real the same holds true for God. Santa is not God and God is not Santa but that is not even the point. The point is they represent magic and do magic. To refute Santa you have to assume his magic does not happen so the same must be done for God. Fair is fair.

Quote regarding atheists debunking a silly version of God:

“To be fair, many Christians don’t have the proper conception of God either. They think God is something like a big angel or just a bigger version of themselves.”

Comment: Then how do you show that you are not worshipping such a travesty? The angel version is the God everybody wants. It is seen as his job to fix everything that you have a problem with in your life. And when nothing happens the way you want you turn against him. This God is not a bigger version of you as such. You are making him all about what you want from him not him. Its outrageous selfishness especially when people are starving in the world. So this God is a reflection of what you are like but you can go a step further and when you Joseph worship God you direct it towards a big Joseph in the sky. And many do that it seems. Or do all do it? A person who is doing that will hide it for its embarrassing. There is no way to tell. There is a lot of grey there. A person who seems to love God for God’s own sake may still mostly significantly be adoring something that is too much about them or too much like them. The selfish side explains their "devotion".

Quote: If you are mad at me for these comments, it means that in an important sense you agree with me.

Comment: People being angry at you shows that they strongly feel you are right but only when they cannot give good arguments against you to show you that you are wrong.

Finally

Here is that wonderful quote again, “While it is true that one can use bad philosophy, it is impossible to use no philosophy. I hope I have answered the bad philosophy in this book.