

FRANK TUREK BOOK STEALING FROM GOD - DO SCIENCE AND GOD CONTRADICT EACH OTHER?

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.

He makes comments in the book about science and God. He seeks to do away with the fear that scientific methodology means rejecting God or ignoring God. If God alone matters then when he is so important then ignoring him is just another way of rejecting him.

Quote: [With regard to suffering and the way things are done etc] complaining that God should have done it differently is a judgment for theology, not science. He says, "The definition of science ... is a philosophical question."

Comment: He says in his book that science does philosophy without realising it and as theology and philosophy are inseparable it follows that you cannot rule out science having the right to judge. Science is about observation and testing it. Something based on testing surely would have the biggest right to command our belief and agreement! And that is what science is about. Despite himself Turek agrees with us.

Notice how he says theology must decide if evil and suffering can happen in a universe that comes from an all-good God. He is careful not to say ethics for ethics is thinking of how best to reduce harm. If you use ethics not morality and not religion then God is judged bad. It is that simple.

Science presupposes an ethic that says, "Don't harm truth. Discover it." It clearly then says God needs to go if it harms truth.

Quote: Neuroscientist Mario Beauregard and his coauthor Denyse O'Leary observe that, "placebos usually help a percentage of patients enrolled in the control group of a study, perhaps 35 to 45 percent. Thus, in recent decades, if a drug effect is statistically significant, which means that it is at least 5 percent better than a placebo, it can be licensed for use." In other words, in some cases, merely thinking you are getting medicine is almost as good as actually getting medicine. This makes no sense if materialism is true.

Comment: It makes perfect sense when a placebo is less effective than you'd expect. The score is not very good and ignores the fact that if a person is given a placebo and gets better that it still may have little or nothing to do with the placebo.

Placebos are compatible with materialism for if thoughts are material powers then good thoughts might help. Placebos are evidence for materialism.

The evidence is that despite the placebo having a good name, it is over-emphasised and opens the door to charlatans.

The placebo is based on a lie and an error so unless you want to invoke it as evidence of witchcraft style gods and spirits who are morally negligent then don't invoke it.

The placebo is a huge thing more than we realise and we all use placebos every day even if it is just a glass of water. It should be top evidence then for the falsity of materialism if Turek's logic is followed.

Quote: [God is "Omnipotent: all powerful; can do whatever is logically possible]. Omnipresent".

The two are linked. You are not really all-powerful if you cannot be everywhere. All powerful means you can be everywhere and indeed should be. People see that as everything being made out of God or as good as. Such pantheism whether one is aware of identifying God and everything else or not is harmful and amounts to seeing evil as a blessing from God especially when you are not the one facing the evil!

Christians deny being pantheists but if they are or most of them are then it follows that science is theology if the universe is god or God or the body of God.

Quote: Idols don't really exist!

My comment: So to worship God if he is not real or any unreal god is to waste worship. It is worshipping nothing.

Christianity says that God is the one real thing so it follows that if he is not worshipped and he is not real then that is the worst idolatry of all. Worshipping Zeus is less risky!

Quote: If they say, “All truth changes,” ask them, “Does that truth change?” If they say, “All truth depends on your perspective,” ask them, “Does that truth depend on your perspective?” If they say, “You’re just playing word games with me!” ask them “Is that a word game? Why is it that when I use logic, you say it’s a word game, but when you use logic, you assume it’s gospel truth?” Logic is not a word game. It’s very serious business. It’s the means by which we understand everything about life.

Comment: Nobody sane thinks that if everybody starts to believe Queen Elizabeth I does not exist then the new truth is that she didn't. Maybe Turek's opponents are just noticing that we learn new truths all the time and describing it wrong. It is not that truth is changing. It is that truth is being added to or updated.

Quote about Francis Crick who discovered DNA: If Crick is correct, we’re not free creatures—we’re just molecular machines. We’re not really reasoning; we’re merely reacting.

Comment: Computers can think! Reason is a reaction of a certain kind. The dog may have no reason but it acts as if it knows not to jump into the fire.

Quote: No one created something out of nothing? To doubt the law of causality is to doubt virtually everything we know about reality, including our ability to reason and do science. All arguments, all thinking, all science, and all aspects of life depend on the law of causality.

My comment: If no one created the universe out of nothing who cares? If something did then something did. It doesn't have to be someone!

Quote: There are good reasons for positing God. If space, time, and matter had a beginning, then the cause must transcend space, time, and matter. In other words, the cause must be spaceless, timeless, and immaterial. This cause also must be enormously powerful to create the universe out of nothing. And it must be a personal agent in order to choose to create, since an impersonal force has no capacity to choose to create anything. Agents create. Impersonal forces, which we call natural laws, merely govern what is already created, provided agents don't interfere. For example, gravity as an impersonal force can't decide anything. It blindly does the same thing over and over...

Comment: The cause does not need to transcend space and time and matter. A different kind of space time and matter or energy can cause what we have. And an impersonal force can choose in a sense. A person who is insane with drugs still acts like there is enough of a faculty there to choose. But in reality there is no choice but a mimic one. Not all choosing is choosing.

What can Turek do to refute the suggestion that our personalities and brains are comprised of countless regularities that blindly do the same thing over and over but we cannot notice for it is so complicated and works as if we are not blindly doing things?

Quote: “Since nature had a beginning, nature can't be its own cause. The cause must be beyond nature, which is what we mean by the term ‘supernatural.’”

Remember that the supernatural can be anything or have any laws we can imagine for we don't know exactly how it runs. We cannot test for its presence or its laws. It need not give us a God or a force that does the miracles or magic we want to attribute to it.

The universe is only needs a supernatural that is big enough to make its match – nature. It still does not give us a God. And how do you define supernatural? Is it a kind of nature we know little or nothing about? Is it paranormal? Is it magic?

Quote: The cause must be beyond nature, which is what we mean by the term “supernatural.” John was quick to charge me with committing the “God of the gaps” fallacy. When we can't figure out a natural cause, we plug God into that gap in knowledge and say that He did it. That's not only wrong, it's “lazy,” as many atheists assert. But that's not what's going on here. I explained that we are not basing our conclusion on a mere “gap” in our knowledge. Those of us who conclude that a theistic God is the cause of the universe are not arguing from what we don't know (a gap), but what we do know. Since space, time, and matter had a beginning, we know that the cause can't be made of space, time, or matter. In fact, the conclusion that there is a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal first cause flows logically from the evidence itself. If anyone is committing a fallacy, it is the atheist. Call it the “natural law of the gaps fallacy”—having faith that an undiscovered natural law will one day explain the beginning of the universe.

Comment: You don't need a miracle to explain the puddle on your floor. You don't know how it happened. Saying its supernatural fills a gap or saying it is natural does. Which one is based on what we know? The natural. Filling it with a natural explanation is better than just leaving the gap. Leaving the gap is better than filling it with magic. Any other set up is just illogical.

The reality is that the atheist scientist and the Christian both see voids and claim to try to find answers for what is in the gap in what they already know. It is like figuring out what the missing jigsaw piece looks like. But one of them is not doing what they say they are doing. Decide who then!

Quote related to atheist scientist Krauss: Krauss says the cause of the universe is not God—it is “nothing.” He cites happenings at the quantum level to dispense with the need for God. (The quantum level is the world of the extremely small, subatomic in size.) “One of the things about quantum mechanics is not only can nothing become something, nothing always becomes something,” says Dr. Krauss. “Nothing is unstable. Nothing will always produce something in quantum mechanics.”

Comment: Seems to be saying that nothing is not really nothing. The idea that God made all things denies that there is simply nothing.

Quote: While it is true that one can use bad philosophy, it is impossible to use no philosophy. In fact—and this is the essential point—Krauss, Dawkins, and the like can't do science without philosophy.

Comment: Excellent point. Everybody is a philosopher. Thus you have to be humble and take correction. Period.

Quote: For monotheism, the starting point is an unexplained God. For science, the starting point is the unexplained laws of nature.

Comment: Both sides hold that it all boils down to unexplained laws. Even God didn't and couldn't make a law that he must exist and he didn't make himself the way he is. One side talks about laws that are not explained and calls them God and the other does not. But it is clear that the first is overstepping the mark. Unexplained laws should suffice.

If both are about unexplained laws then both religion and science fail to give us the important explanation.

At least we know nature is there and works not by laws strictly but in reasonably predictable ways so we should start with it.

Quote: God's relationship to the law of causality is ... often misunderstood. Contrary to what many atheists seem to believe, the law of causality does not say that everything has a cause. The law of causality says that everything that has a beginning has a cause, or every effect has a cause. But not everything can be an effect.

Comment: If something did not have a cause that does not mean it is a God.

They want God to be a moral being. All who oppose morality as an objective truth are in fact assuming it is! Everybody has a logic or morality or philosophy even if they do it badly. So you just have a morality and that is that. It is grounded in us not in a God. The cause stuff cannot give people the God they want when the moral argument is such a disaster.

Quote: The laws of logic are not human conventions— that they exist independently of human minds. First, human beings change, but logic doesn't change. The laws of logic provide an unchanging independent measuring stick of truth across changing time, culture, and human belief. They are true everywhere, at every time, and for everyone. In fact, that's why we call them laws—the laws of logic apply equally to all of us as do the laws of physics and math. Second, if we each had nothing more than our own private conceptions of the laws of logic, how could communication be possible? In order for Michael to understand me and for me to understand Michael, we each must be accessing something unchanging that transcends us yet is common to us. Those are the unchanging, immaterial laws of logic. Those laws provide the bridge between minds. They also provide a bridge to the outside world. Without that bridge, we'd be locked inside our own skulls unable to access or make sense of the external world. We use that bridge, but we didn't invent it. Third, all debates presuppose that an objective truth exists outside the mind of each debater. Each debater is trying to show that his claims are closer to that objective truth than his opponent. Every truth claim—whether it's “God exists” or “God doesn't exist”—requires unchangeable laws of logic. If the laws of logic were changeable human conventions, then any thought anyone conceived would be “true,” even contradictory thoughts. So “God exists” and “God does not exist” would both be “true” at the same time and in the same sense. How absurd. Put another way, if the laws of logic were just inventions of the human mind, then every thought would have to be regarded as just an invention of the human mind. With no fixed laws by which we could reliably ground our thoughts, we couldn't know anything confidently. That would include anything atheists or anyone else said.

Comment: Life cannot work and we cannot co-operate without principles to agree on. We must remember that there is no true respect for others or justice in the absence of respect for logic - logic is best seen as a way of learning to work with the truth and separating what is unreal from the real.

Quote: "Evolution is ultimately random," say the atheists. True, the mutations may be random in the sense that they do not have any goal in mind, but the natural forces that produce the mutations are not random. Living and nonliving things continue to exist because the foundation of the entire material world is goal-directed, not random. Atoms continue their regular goal-directed operations, which are held together by the four fundamental forces, which are held together by
Oops, sorry. We're not supposed to go any further. When we go further, we land at an uncaused, completely actualized intellect with the attributes of a theistic God. Another problem for atheists is that there is no way to detect randomness without the backdrop of order and goal-directedness evident throughout the universe. So when atheists say evolution or life itself is random, they are implicitly admitting they know of something else that is orderly and goal-directed.

Comment: This orderly something which is goal-directed is what Turek means by God. And something can be orderly without goals apart from just being orderly!

Turek contradicts himself. Didn't he make the claim that chance is not a thing or force but merely describes how we do not know what caused something?

It may be that we cannot know.

It is simpler to just admit that order can appear by itself and we don't know for sure how we got developed. Where is the humility in Turek?

Evolution is a misleading word for it can be thought to mean improvement and direction. The word complexity is better and reminds us that all life forms are about survival not living and nothing is protecting or guiding any life form. Extinction can come to humanity.

Quote: To be fair, Dawkins actually means chance, but that's hardly better. Chance is not a cause. It's a word we use to describe mathematical possibilities or to cover our ignorance when we really don't know what the cause is. There is no causal force out there known as "chance" or "luck." Dawkins certainly wouldn't accept a Christian citing "chance" or "luck" as a reason to believe in God or the Resurrection.

Comment: A Christian who says that he believes Jesus rose from the dead is saying he believes first of all that it was an act of God but as belief is not knowledge the implication is that it's a belief selected for primacy among a range of beliefs. The scale is that principally you think God did it and secondly that it was supernatural but not down to God and thirdly that chance did it like magic and so on. A belief only excludes what you select as your chief belief but the other ones are there graded according to what you think is possible and probable. Belief is not choosing one thing and nothing else but the preferable belief from the menu that seems to fit the facts and evidence best.

Quote: The absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. Maybe we'll find evidence someday that natural laws can do the job. After all, isn't Meyer just committing the "God of the gaps" fallacy? As you remember, that's the fallacy where you plug God into your gap in knowledge, only to find later that a natural cause is really responsible for the effect in question. That's exactly what Dr. Marshall charges Meyer with. But Meyer is in no way guilty of the "God of the gaps" fallacy. As Meyer explains repeatedly, he's not interpreting the evidence based on what we don't know, but what we do know.

Comment: It seems to be a natural cause of the gaps as well as a God of the gaps here. But the fact is that in daily life we always fill gaps with natural causes even if we don't know that they are. We are scientists too!

CONCLUSION: Turek fails to protect the superstitions of God and miracle and religion by trying to put them beyond the inspection of science. He fails to refute the scientists who see their professional and investigative methodology as a form of atheism or naturalism - rejection of magic and supernatural. Science is another word for observation so if it cannot see God it ignores him and that amounts to saying he is not real.