

REVIEW OF HOW FRANK TUREK'S BOOK STEALING FROM GOD HANDLES THE WAR BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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 argues that using science to refute God is misplaced.

Quote: The absolute truth is that it's impossible to deny the laws of logic without using them. They are the self-evident reasoning tools we need to discover everything else about the world. They are self-evident in the sense that you don't reason to them, you reason from them.

Comment: Atheists and theists are not arguing over the vast majority of scientific issues about how the world operates. There are no atheist and theist theories on how electricity operates to power your computer or how an engine operates to power your car. Those are settled matters that anyone can verify by observation and repetition. But there are very different atheist and theist theories on origin questions. They are more controversial because they cannot be settled by repeatable experiments in a lab. You can't go in a lab and observe the creation of the universe again, or witness the origin of the first life or new life-forms. While scientists can observe how a cell operates, they can't observe how the first cell originated. No scientist was there to witness it. Likewise, no detective was there to witness the murders of Ron and Nicole either. You can't resurrect the victims and go back in time to observe and repeat the murders over and over again. Those are all historical questions that require a forensic approach. Scientists and detectives must look at clues left behind to figure out what happened in the past. The critical distinction I'm making is that there are two types of science: operation science, which investigates repeatable questions, and origin science, which investigates historical questions. Sometimes these two types of science are called empirical and forensic. Choose whatever name you like as long as this main difference is clear: Questions involving operation or empirical science involve repeatable events that you can observe in real time. Questions involving origin or forensic science involve historical events that cannot be repeated. For that reason, operation science is usually more certain than origin science. Despite that distinction, you may be surprised to learn that there is little consensus on what is or isn't science. Those who insist that science is only about finding natural causes by using observation and repetition are excluding sciences that infer intelligent causes, such as archaeology, cryptology, and the forensic science done in criminal cases like the Simpson trial. Such a narrow definition even excludes evolution as science because life's history can't be directly observed or repeated in the lab. [Such a definition also prevents an atheist from saying that science could disprove God. For if science deals with only natural causes, then there is no way science could tell us anything about supernatural causes.

Comment: Two types of science then. Empirical science is better than forensic for it is obvious that the evidence is better when you experiment to see if something can repeat itself. Forensic is a more fluid and less certain even if there is not necessarily much less uncertainty there. To assume that when you see a brick it is a material thing is to assume there is no chance a spirit being is making you think it is there or simulating it. Science and theology are contradictory to each other.

Quote: [Atheist scientists] must make a compelling case that everything has been caused by materials and consists only of materials, including

The beginning of the universe

The fine-tuning of the universe

The laws of nature

The laws of logic

The laws of mathematics Information (genetic code)

Life

Mind and consciousness

Free will

Objective morality

Evil.

Comment: He wants to say that not all things are material. But say the alternative - spirit did exist. A pile of spirits making up something the same as a machine that don't even know they are there or what they are is just another form of materialism! A thing with no components is in all essentials as much a thing as a gold coin.

Quote: "I think that there are a good number of things that cannot be scientifically proven, but that we're all rational to accept," Craig began. [Interrupting] "Such as?" "Let me list five," Craig continued. "[First,] logical and mathematical truths cannot be proven by science. Science presupposes logic and math so that to try to prove them by science would be arguing in a circle. [Second,] metaphysical truths like there are other minds other than my own, or that the external world is real, or that the past was not created five minutes ago with the appearance of age are rational beliefs that cannot be scientifically proven. [Third,] ethical beliefs about statements of value are not accessible by the scientific method. You can't show by science that the Nazi scientists in the camps did anything evil as opposed to the scientists in Western democracies. [Fourth,] aesthetic judgments cannot be accessed by the scientific method because the beautiful, like the good, cannot be scientifically proven. And finally, most remarkably, would be science itself. Science cannot be justified by the scientific method, since it is permeated with unprovable assumptions. For example, the special theory of relativity—the whole theory hinges on the assumption that the speed of light is constant in a one-way direction between any two points, A and B, but that strictly cannot be proven. We simply have to assume that in order to hold to the theory!"

... During Craig's five examples, Atkins looked stunned. It was as if he had virtually no knowledge of philosophy or the fact that science is built on philosophical principles. His claim that "science can account for everything" is another way of saying that we get all our truth from science, which is known as "scientism." For those of you who started in the beginning of this book, you're way ahead of me. You can already see that scientism is self-defeating because the claim "we get all our truth from science" is not a scientific truth. That truth doesn't come from science. It's a philosophical claim. You can't do science to prove that. In fact, as Dr. Craig pointed out, you can't do anything in science without assuming several philosophical principles. But Atkins couldn't see that because he was so enamored with the success of his metal detector.

Comment: All we need is to revise scientism a bit. Scientism can assume the things listed by Craig and still be able to say that the best or most reliable or only truth comes from science.

Christians are so anxious for us to have faith that they will advocate scepticism about everything as long as it thinks it believes! The truths Craig assails are top of the list of things we need to believe and accept. If there is a choice between Jesus' resurrection [put any Christian idea in there you wish – ie infallible Bible, God] and maths clearly you have to pick maths. It is telling that if there are problems verifying the top beliefs it is disgrace to try and use that to validate or pave the way for beliefs that cannot be as important. Craig fails to see that in fact he is giving a case for NOT believing in Christianity.

Quote: Science is often politicized. A meta-analysis of nearly twenty surveys showed that one third of scientists admitted to some kind of research fraud. The fraud included changing the design or research data to get the results they or their funding source wanted (and those are just the ones who admitted it!). [There is tremendous pressure to report results that will help facilitate the next financial grant or promotion. There are also political motivations (hence the controversy over man-made climate change) and the moral motivations that we saw in chapter 4. There is stifling ideological pressure too. Thomas Nagel writes, "Physico-chemical reductionism in biology is the orthodox view, and any resistance to it is regarded as not only scientifically but politically incorrect." That's putting it mildly. Many scientists who doubt Darwin and merely suggest intelligent design is possible have been the victims of ideological witch-hunts for questioning atheistic orthodoxy. They've been harassed, denounced, and fired.

Comment: Turek warns of the dire consequences should the scientist "doubt the secular religion of materialistic science". Religious believers often let it slip that they agree with the likes of Hitchens that religion is dangerous.

Quote: Science is built on philosophy, as are all fields of study. Science is just one method of discovering truth and is limited in scope. Like a metal detector, science can only help us detect certain cause-and-effect relationships.

Comment: Turek contends that science and God are not in competition as explanations for the universe and what happens in it. He says science is like learning how a car works but that has nothing to do with trying to show that there is or is not a carmaker. This is in fact wrong. It is not really a car you are examining but the carmakers work. The carmaker is in the back of the scientists head and at the back of his approach. The scientist is not examining God's work when she examines the universe - but treating it as how accidents can lead to order. Science is implicitly and methodologically athiestic. God and the carmaker have no relevant similarities.

Turek says that "many scientists are ignoring the theistic implications of the big bang, and the extreme fine-tuning of the universe by appealing to the speculative multiverse." But if the something that exploded might need a creator the big bang

by being the ultimate accident says otherwise. No order in the universe justifies assuming a designer when we cannot imagine the scale of the big bang or big bangs as we should say. Back then it was all accidents and chaos and nothing else and order is a drop in the bucket beside that infinite ocean of mess.

Turek argues that it is reasonable to conclude that "the universe looks planned - 'a put-up job' - because it really is a put-up job." What an odd statement. Its an admission that the universe really is a curious pile of accidents.

Quote: There's not only no evidence for a multiverse, it's a "dodge," as you recall agnostic astronomer Paul Davies put it. No scientist would be imagining undetectable universes if this one didn't appear to be so incomprehensibly fine-tuned. The multiverse hypothesis is a bald attempt to dodge the designer by multiplying the possibility that this seemingly fine-tuned universe exists by accident. That's why Dawkins uses the word "luck."

Comment: Rubbish. Fine tuning is made more complicated by assuming the multiverse. And it is true that things seem to pop in and out of existence on the quantum level as if the universe is composed of minute multiverses. Multiverse is more than an assumption.

Quote: Despite that distinction, you may be surprised to learn that there is little consensus on what is or isn't science. Those who insist that science is only about finding natural causes by using observation and repetition are excluding sciences that infer intelligent causes, such as archaeology, cryptology, and the forensic science done in criminal cases like the Simpson trial. Such a narrow definition even excludes evolution as science because life's history can't be directly observed or repeated in the lab. Such a definition also prevents an atheist from saying that science could disprove God. For if science deals with only natural causes, then there is no way science could tell us anything about supernatural causes. So it's difficult to identify the demarcation line that separates science from nonscience, as even some prominent atheists admit. However, most agree with Sir Francis Bacon, the father of modern science, who said that "true knowledge is knowledge by causes." In other words, at the very least science is a search for causes. When we do science, we are trying to discover what caused a particular effect. Therefore, as we saw in chapter 1, the fundamental principle in all of science is the law of causality. If we can't assume that effects have causes, then we can't do science. But what do we mean by causes? Logically, there are only two types of efficient causes: natural and nonnatural (i.e., intelligent). Either something was caused by a natural force (like gravity) or an intelligent being (like a person or God). For example, natural forces caused the Grand Canyon, but intelligent sculptors caused the faces on Mount Rushmore. Now, here's where the different worldviews of theists and atheists eventually lead to different conclusions. Theists are open to both types of causes, but atheists rule out intelligent causes before they look at the evidence. This rule of the atheists—[is] known as methodological naturalism.

Comment: The quest for repetition implies that it is blind forces that are at work and nobody is governing them for if there is then they are not blind forces. What if God changed the repetition tomorrow? Science denies God by not needing him or looking.

Quote: Miracles have to be rare in order to be identified as miracles. So Hume rules them out simply because they are what they have to be—rare!

Comment: But how rare? Rare enough to dodge science for science cannot get to most really rare one off events on time!

A communion wafer bleeding in every cathedral in Ireland on the feast of divine mercy annually would be far from rare. Hume says miracles are uncommon but that is incidental to his argument. A person saying a brick talked to him cannot have the same credibility as one who says the brick cracked. What about the "miraculous" ability of the human mind to fool itself? Nature does its own kind of miracle! Rare can be a cover for getting around the fact that people lie and make mistakes. That is how believers excuse the miracle not being testable. If we should assume people can be telling the truth when it is likely that they are not we cannot in the case of miracles. If you can assume somebody who may tell lies is right about seeing kind Maisie having murdered the husband that is okay for by definition things like that as unlikely as they are can happen. We have a definition for that: acting out of character. But a miracle by definition is not in the same league. With the first there is evidence and proof that things can act unexpectedly and be very unlikely for that reason. But you cannot see an event as a miracle or a magic event unless you believe miracles and magic happen in the first place. With one you have your mind made up for you by logic and proof and with the other you have your mind made up first before seeing any evidence. And the fact is that the unlikely unexpected thing is just different from the miracle magic thing. If you believe goats cheese is good for you it does not follow you have to believe the same thing about another form of cheese. Miracle tales are assumptions dressed up as evidence.

Quote: [Regarding Sam Harris' book, The Moral Landscape, which says that science not God grounds objective morality which is about wellbeing - he says morality is just another word for wellbeing]. The problem with Harris's approach is that he is addressing the wrong question. The question is not what method should we use to discover what is moral, but what actually makes something moral? Why does a moral law exist at all, and why does it have authority over us? The Moral Landscape gives us no answer. It's a nearly three-hundred-page-long example of the most common mistake made by those

who think objective morality can exist without God. Harris seems to think that because we can know objective morality (epistemology), that explains why objective morality exists in the first place (ontology). You may come to know about objective morality in many different ways: from parents, teachers, society, your conscience, etc. (Harris talks about brain states.) And you can know it while denying God exists. But that's like saying you can know what a book says while denying there's an author. Of course you can do that, but there would be no book to know unless there was an author! In other words, atheists can know objective morality while denying God exists, but there would be no objective morality unless God exists. Science might be able to tell you if an action may hurt someone—like if giving a man cyanide will kill him—but science can't tell you whether or not you ought to hurt someone. Who said it's wrong to harm people? Sam Harris? Does he have authority over the rest of humanity? Is his nature the standard of Good? To get his system to work, Sam Harris must smuggle in what he claims is an objective moral standard: "well-being." As William Lane Craig pointed out in his debate with Harris, that's not a fail-safe criterion of what's right. But even if it was, what objective, unchanging moral authority establishes it as right? It can't be Sam Harris or any other finite, changing person. Only an unchanging authoritative being, who can prescribe and enforce objective morality here and beyond the grave, is an adequate standard. Only God can ground Justice and ensure that Justice is ultimately done.

Comment: Okay so we are told that morality is related to wellbeing but is not wellbeing. If that is so then that in fact does not matter. If you were forced to choose between wellbeing and asking why morality has authority you would have to choose the first. Morality would demand you do so for morality has to be practical. Authority is no good for morality if morality is not practical. Thus morality is incoherent when you bring in authority and God. By a process of elimination, Harris is vindicated.

Turek thinks Harris is treating science as a method for working out what is moral and confusing how you might discover something to be moral with what makes it moral. Discovering something is moral has nothing to do with the reason it is moral. Discovering what is moral and prescribing what is moral are different and separate things.

That seems logical.

It is not.

Morality and communication go together. Morality communicates something though it is not a radio or person or thing. 1 and 1 = 2 communicates something too without being any of these. Having established that, morality and discovery are different but not separate. Discovery is part of the ingredients. So Harris is not far wrong. He is right enough.

CONCLUSION: No "solution" to religion contradicting science works. Worse there are clear proofs that science in content and in principle contradicts religion.