

## The Strongest Argument for God with Tricia Scribner

(August 29, 2020)

Today we are going to talk about an argument for God's existence that you don't often hear, but this argument for God's existence is true, even if the universe is eternal. It's true, even if macro-evolution is true. And this argument goes all the way back to Aristotle. It was brought into the Christian world by Aquinas. And I think it's one of the best arguments for the existence of God. One of the problems with it is, it takes a little bit of background knowledge to understand it. But once you understand this argument, this argument, I think, is a game changer when talking to anybody. Even somebody who says, you know, I just believe in science. Science is really the ground. Unless this argument is true, science wouldn't even work. That's how powerful this argument is.

And to help me talk about this argument is my friend, almost Dr. Patricia Scribner, who actually has taught, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, probably more than I have. Because for 10 years she taught it in a high school here in Charlotte, North Carolina. She's a PhD candidate at Southern Evangelical Seminary, from which I've graduated. She's written or contributed to about 10 books. The newest book is called, *Answering the Music Man*. We'll explain what that is about. In fact, the argument we're going to talk about is an argument that Tricia has written in a chapter in this book, *Answering the Music Man*. So, it's always great to have Tricia on. Tricia, how are you?

**Tricia:**

Doing great, thanks. Thanks for inviting me.

**Frank:**

Oh, absolutely. Now you have a background in medicine. You've been a nurse. You understand what goes on in the human body. And you after a nursing career decided that you wanted to look more into how design points to God, which you've done, I know. And you've looked into the this, the issue of evolution, quite a bit. You've written several books. And this newest book

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is called, *Answering the Music Man*. It's a book you've edited with Kyle Celts. It actually is a response to a number of arguments put forth by an atheist known as Dan Barker.

**Frank:**

I don't know if you guys have heard of Dan Barker. He kind of travels around, he does debates, and he just tries to show people that atheism is true. And there was a debate that I happened to moderate between Dan Barker and Richard G. Howe, who's a professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary. This was at our annual conference on Christian apologetics a few years ago. And this book, *Answering the Music Man*, came out of it. And it contains a lot of good arguments for God, responding to the arguments put forth, supposedly, to deny God by Dan Barker. So, first of all, if you can Tricia, tell us where this title, *Answering the Music Man*, came from?

**Tricia:**

Well, yeah, this is one of the most interesting aspects of the book. We are not responding just to any atheist. Your listeners may realize that he's not one of the, what has come to be called, the Four Horsemen, the most well-known atheists; Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens. But he's been around a long time, and what's unique about Barker is that he claims to have been a Christian. Not only this, but he has been in music ministry. He has been an assistant pastor. And he has come out of Christianity and claims now to be an atheist. And so, because of this, we need to respond to him.

And when Kyle came up with this idea for the book, the first connection you make when you say, *Answering the Music Man*, is of course, that he's a musician. He wrote music, he wrote Christian music, and in fact, he points out that he still gets royalties on his Christian music, even as an atheist. So, that's the first way that we think that the title, *Answering the Music Man*, is important.

But there's an underlying reason that Kyle actually noticed. He came up with this title because it made him think of this guy in the musical, *The Music Man*, and this guy, I believe his name was Harold Hill, was a character who traveled around the Midwest in the early 1900s in this show. And he tells all these parents that he's going to make their kids musicians. In fact, he's going to create a band. And so, he supposedly teaches them music, he sells all the instruments, he sells

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the band uniforms, and then right before the kids performance, he skips town, of course, with all the money that he made from the sale, because he really knows nothing about music.

And Kyle thought there was a resonance between this concept of The Music Man in the musical and Dan Barker. Because Dan Barker claims to understand philosophy, he claims to understand Aristotle, and he makes these arguments against Christianity, when in reality, he knows very little about the real Christianity of Orthodox classical historical Christianity. And yet, he claims to be able to respond to these arguments and that his rejection of the existence of God is grounded in his intellectual disagreement with the claims of Christianity, when in reality, he doesn't even really understand them and he certainly doesn't explain them, according to what we mean by many of the arguments that were from way back. Even back as far as Aquinas, and even further, Aristotle's, for the existence of God.

**Frank:**

Now, if you're if you're listening to this going, well, I never heard of Dan Barker, I don't really care about Dan Barker. Well, actually, Dan Barker, despite his arguments sort of being the focus of this book, it's irrelevant whether you know about Dan Barker or care about who he is, because the arguments that he brings forth are very common arguments brought forth by atheists. So, yeah, we're answering The Music Man here. But if you want to have a good resource to respond to arguments that not just Dan Barker brings forth, but other atheists bring forth, in this new book, *Answering the Music Man*, we'll help you do that. And you've got a quite a list of contributors to this. Many of them are from our alma mater, Southern Evangelical Seminary, including Richard Howe, and John Ferrer, and JT Bridges, and several others. And what kind of topics do you cover in here, Tricia? Will you kind of give us an overview of the book before we drill down on the on the argument that you talk about?

**Tricia:**

Okay, well, there are 11 chapters in all, and a couple of the contributors wrote two chapters. We deal with what new atheism brings to the table, what is unique about new atheism and their claims and how they redefine what atheism means as a lack of belief. Now, as you say, Barker is not alone in this. This is the mantra of the new atheists that, actually, atheism is a lack of belief. Then there's a chapter on faith and reason and Kyle specifically deals with the fact that he mis-defines that faith has meant throughout Christian history. And then he after

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building that straw man, he breaks that straw man down. And then Jason McCracken deals with the column argument, it's the argument back to the first cause and shows some of the categorical logical mistakes that Barker makes.

Then the centerpiece, I would think, of the book is Richard Howe's explanation of Thomas Aquinas' distinction between essence and existence. Now, this is a deep dive, granted, but if you are willing to put in as much effort as you are to learning how to work your coffeemaker into this, deep dive into this, you will be able to understand why these atheists arguments are invalid. They don't make sense.

**Frank:**

I was just gonna say that, yeah, it is a deep dive when you look into some of the atomistic arguments for God. But I've said this on this show before, and I'll say it again, the best arguments for God are actually not the arguments you hear about the most. The arguments that I use, actually, are not the best arguments; the cosmological, teleological and moral arguments. Although there's a species of the teleological argument we're going to talk about today, they're not the best arguments. They're just the easiest ones to explain to an audience that doesn't have any background information. If you have good background information, if you have a good philosophical knowledge, the better arguments for God are actually these metaphysical arguments, the ones that this book talks about.

Again, the book is called, *Answering the Music Man*. It's edited by Kyle Celts and Tricia Scribner. Tricia is my guest today. And when we come back from the break, we're going to dive a little bit further into what's in here, in particular, this argument I mentioned earlier. This argument is so powerful for God, that it doesn't matter if the universe is eternal, it doesn't matter if evolution is true, it doesn't matter if the person loves science. This argument is a powerful argument we'll get into. I'm Frank Turek. We're back in just two minutes. Do not go anywhere.

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**Frank:**

What are the best arguments for the existence of God? Probably not ones you've actually heard of very often. That's what we're talking about today. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. Website is [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). Thank all of you for your positive reviews of this podcast on iTunes. If you haven't put one up there, we'd appreciate it. It helps move it up the charts and more people can see it share it with others if you would. Also, we're over 200,000 subscribers on YouTube. Thanks for checking us out there. And our Facebook pages, Instagram, Twitter, we're out there and that's about the only way we can get to you right now given the lockdown.

Although we do have some events coming up, that I'll tell you about a little bit later. Let me just ask you before we go back to Tricia. How many people listening right now have trouble relating, or bringing young people to Jesus? That should be everybody. Sometimes it can be difficult to communicate across generations. Well, my friend, Sean McDowell, who just did a course for us on the issue of homosexuality, which was amazingly well received by so many people, he's come up with a brand new course. It's going to start here in September, and it is about reaching the Gen Z generation.

So, if you go to Online Christian Courses, or you just go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org) and click on online courses, you'll see it there. The new course is called, Reaching and Equipping Gen Z. It begins September 28. And people are signing up. We just announced it yesterday and we're already starting to fill this thing up, because Sean is so good at this and so good at showing you how to reach young people. He's also going to have his father, Josh, on one of the live zoom sessions, and J. Warner Wallace, as well.

The, How to Interpret Your Bible, course starts September 7. I'll be doing that. And then the, Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, daytime course for high school and college students, or their parents, begins on September 17. Check all that out. Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org), click on online courses.

What is the argument for God's existence? That is so compelling, in my view anyway, that in many people never talk about. We're going to get to it, but before we do, Tricia, we're in the middle of discussing what else is in the book. You were talking about Richard Howe's Thomistic

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argument for God's existence. You also get into this issue of the immoral God, because that's one thing that Dan Barker keeps harping on, that the God of the Old Testament is immoral. In fact, many of the other atheists do. So, that is another point in there that is talked about. You have something in there about Bible contradictions. Who does that and what do they cover in that?

**Tricia:**

Yeah, Tom Baker does a great job of that. He says that Barker has some 38 lists of over 170 bible contradictions. So, these, like you say, are arguments that the new atheists bring up all the time. And so, he focuses specifically on Barker's failure to consider context, and his actual mischaracterization of biblical truth, as well as the misapplication of proper, you know, interpretation methods that should be used. And so, he does a great job there. And as you say, then John Ferrer returns to the moral issue.

And then there are a couple of chapters on, Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead? And it doesn't just deal with the evidence that you often hear from Christ rising from the dead, but Bridges and Brewster also, in their chapters, deal with things like the objectivity of history, can we trust history, the possibility of miracles, as well as the trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts which we commonly hear.

And then, finally, my last chapter is called, Finding Purpose on the Journey to Nowhere, because Barker claim that there's no objective purpose outside of ourselves. That we've generated all from the inside and only conscious beings can will to do so. And, of course, the argument from final causality says that's just simply not correct, that doesn't comport with reality. The truth is even non-conscious things, in reality, work toward an end. An end that's identifiable according to, I think, time and this has to have an explanation, and Barker does not get one.

**Frank:**

Well, let's talk about the objective purpose to life, because Dan Barker, and of course other atheists, deny there's an objective purpose to life. And in your chapter in this book...again, the book is called, *Answering the Music Man*. Tricia, you say there is an objective purpose to life,

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and it can be discovered. First of all, what do you mean by objective purpose? Let's just start there and then we'll talk about the evidence that it actually exists.

**Tricia:**

Yes. Whenever we talked about objective purpose, as opposed to subjective purpose, we're talking about more than just contriving your own problem to solve that gives you a sense of fulfillment and meaning. That's what Barker means by purpose. When I'm talking about objective purpose, I'm talking about something that can be seen that's outside of ourselves, that is evident to us.

For instance, we see when we plant a pumpkin seed that what grows at the end of that is a pumpkin. Now, pumpkin seeds and cucumber seeds look a lot alike, but whenever I plant a pumpkin seed, and a cucumber grows, I don't automatically think, oh well, pumpkin seeds grow cucumbers too. And that's because each thing is a thing according to a kind of a thing, what Aristotle and Aquinas called form.

So, the ends, or the objectives, the ultimate goals that are being fixed to attain, are defined by the kind of thing that it is. And we see this as pervasive throughout all of reality, both inanimate and animate types of these. And many atheists, such as Mary Midgley, concede that this exists. She said, you know, there's pervasive purpose. So, this is different than Barker's contention, even among his atheist colleagues. And that is, she says, whenever you see a seed sprout growing under a slab of concrete, you will see it working its way around trying to get through the cracks. And this purposiveness is evident throughout all of reality.

**Frank:**

This purpose is going to lead us to an argument for God and we'll unpack it as we go. I'm talking to Tricia Scribner, and the book is called, *Answering the Music Man*, and her chapter in this book is, *Dealing with Objective Purpose*. So, when we say objective, Tricia, how does that differ from subjective? Let's define those terms as clearly as we can.

**Tricia:**

Yes, objective being external, to the mind, really existing out there, not defined by me, but in governance in a sense, that we submit to. And so, the subjectiveness of something is, then, as

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you have mentioned before, true then for all people, all places, and at all time. It exists as part of reality, embedded in reality. We don't make it up.

**Frank:**

We don't make it up. It's not in us, the subject, it's derived from a source outside of ourselves. And in this case, it would be the creator, God's nature is how we find our objective purpose. Our objective purpose comes from God. If there is no God, if there is no standard beyond us, then obviously, there is no ultimate purpose to life. But what kind of purpose does somebody like Dan Barker, who seems to punt to survival somehow, that's what he kind of says, and many other atheists say, which is, it's all about survival. Why doesn't that work as an objective purpose?

**Tricia:**

Well, because number one, he says that we contrive our own problems. That ultimately, they're for the unconscious purpose of survival, but that the way that we find purpose is we make it ourselves. And so, number one, that doesn't work. Now, I would agree with him that we seek our own self-flourishing. So, in that we can find a point in common with him and other atheists, because at least he's conceding that we seek purpose. But we have to ask why we seek purpose as human beings and why does an organism that's not conscious [unintelligible] its own flourishing? And, of course as Christians, we would say, because the ultimate being, God, as we participate in the good in being, the source of all of that is the ultimate being. And that's where our purpose comes from. So, we can't contrive it. We didn't exist to contrive our own existence, so how could we contrive our own purpose? When we're non-existent we can't contrive anything. But he's then saying, take on the lesser, make lesser objectives. Find a problem that you need to solve and that that would take care of giving you a purpose, But it cannot, of course.

**Frank:**

Now, of course, if God exists, there is an objective purpose. The question is, what is that objective purpose? And that comes to us through, not just natural revelation, but in more specificity, special revelation, the Bible. And of course, according to Jesus, our purpose is to know God through him. That's ultimately our purpose. To know God through Jesus Christ. This is our eternal purpose, as Jesus says in John 17:3. He says, "3 Now this is eternal life: that they

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know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent". That's why we're here; to know him. And then, therefore, to make them known. Dan Barker just says, well, we're just here to survive. And as you point out, Tricia, okay, yeah, every living thing works generally for its survival. But how would he differentiate, do you think? And maybe this gets into more of the morality chapter, if, in order for say, Hitler to survive, he decides to kill people that get in his way? How would he claim that would be wrong? Or would he claim it to be wrong?

**Tricia:**

Well, I can't really speak to whether he would claim it to be wrong, although he does say his idea of morality is to minimize harm, which as the chapter writer on the morality, that doesn't go far enough. And so, he might just define it as doing no harm. But he can't really provide a full explanation. That's the problem.

**Frank:**

Yeah. Well, I think the key word you said there was, his morality is to prevent harm. Why would he be right, and Hitler wrong, if Hitler wants to harm him in order to benefit himself to help Hitler and his and his super race survive? Why would that be wrong on his worldview?

**Tricia:**

Well, I don't think that he can sustain an argument that it's wrong. Not if it's materialism, because as you pointed out, we're simply molecules in motion. And so, if we're molecules in motion, then we're really determined by our biological makeup and we have really no will. There is no way that he can justify, not only his argument for his definition of morality, but the fact that others may have a different argument that is contradictory to his and may actually cause him harm. I mean, he hasn't evaluated his definition itself, as you're pointing out. Why think that his definition is the right one? If it's truly all subjective and we can define our own morality, we can define our own purpose, then each man to himself, and there is no way to adjudicate right from wrong, or whether there's purpose or not purpose. We're all just [unintelligible]. I believe that you moist robots, is that what you've called us? So, there's no way to really judge that.

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**Frank:**

And as you point out in the book...and again, the book is called, *Answering the Music Man*...Tricia that if survival is really our goal, then how do we fold altruism into our moral system? When people sacrifice themselves to save others, which of course, the greatest moral thing you can do according to Jesus. There's no greater love than to give your life for your friends. As Jesus said before he went to the cross, altruism makes no sense on a survival epic anyway.

**Frank:**

You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. I'm Frank Turek. My guest is Tricia Scribner. The book is called, *Answering the Music Man*. We're back in just a couple of minutes, so don't go anywhere.

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**Frank:**

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. And we're talking about an argument for God. That's what we're going to zero in on in this segment, that you don't often hear, but it's a very powerful argument for God. And it is described in the book, *Answering the Music Man*, which is really answering the arguments that Dan Barker, a former Christian, and now atheist, tries to bring forth against Christianity. And as I mentioned earlier, if you don't know Dan Barker, it doesn't really matter, because the arguments he uses are very common arguments that atheists use. So, this book is going to be valuable to you, even if you don't know the name Dan Barker.

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But let's get into this argument, now Tricia, if we could. This argument, which is called final causality. And maybe we could start by talking about causality, because frequently we don't make proper distinctions and we say, hey, what caused this, what caused that? Or what is the cause of such and such? Actually, there are four types of causes that Aristotle identified. Could you describe what those four are?

**Tricia:**

Sure. Aquinas, let's make the connection there, as you had said, built upon much of what Aristotle's thinking had broken ground on, and Aquinas brought it into the Christian world, and theology, and Christian philosophy. Aristotle had already said that, every single substance that is an existing being, is immediately caused by something else. So, when Aristotle's talking about causes, he [unintelligible] it somewhat differently than what we do. We need to understand where he's coming from. So, this idea of bringing something into being is what he would call the efficient cause. And in normal language, when we're talking about causes, that's what we mean. Whatever brought it into being made it happen, the immediate cause, the efficient cause.

But that's the only one of four causes, or what Aristotle would say, explanation of a thing. And when we understand a thing through its causes, we know something about it, we say we have knowledge about it. So, that's the significance of these four causes. So, there's the efficient cause, which brings the thing into being, and so nothing comes to being out of its own, out of nothing. It's made of something, so the material that it's made of, say a table, is its material cause or explanation.

So, we have the efficient cause, the material cause, and then we are able to classify things according to kind; according to their structure, form, blueprint, their nature; and this form is called, by Aristotle, the formal cause. So, now we have the efficient cause, which brings it into being. We have the material cause, out of which it's made, such as a table may be made from wood. We have formal cause, which are all the characteristics of a thing, like a butterfly that differentiates it from a hippopotamus. That's the butterfly's nature. That's the formal cause.

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And then the final cause that we are digging into here is what Aristotle called the final cause, which could be correlated with the word purpose. That for which a thing is made; it's purpose. And we can identify the final cause because we see things striving toward a specific end. Humans seek the good flourishing. For a pumpkin seed, it moves towards pumpkin, or pumpkinness. So, everything in the world, every substance, works toward a final end defined by, specifically, not just anything, but defined by its nature. And so, take a pumpkin seed. It relentlessly moves through a million tiny steps that must be sustained throughout the process to reach a pumpkin and pumpkinness. And it doesn't move toward anything else; not towards two cucumberness, not toward elephantness, or anything else, but specifically towards pumpkinness. So, we have to ask why this is so and it can only be explained more deeply by a deeper cause.

**Frank:**

Let's get into that deeper cause now because it is true that everything we see around us is going in a direction. And as you say, a pumpkin seed always goes in the direction of becoming a pumpkin, a chick embryo goes in the direction of becoming a chicken, a baby embryo goes in the direction of becoming a human baby and ultimately to an adult, an acorn becomes an oak tree. Things are going in a direction. So, how does this show that there must be a being like God that exists?

**Tricia:**

Well, if things are moving in nature specified direction, nothing can cause itself. And so, whatever is supervising the directedness, this must happen by an intelligent being. It can't just happen by nature. That doesn't explain why each thing moves toward its own flourishing, according to its specific nature. For that we need the ultimate cause, which is God Himself.

**Frank:**

Now, if you're thinking right now about this, and you're going, oh gee, I don't know if this argument works, let's analyze the very fact that you can think. Okay, you can think about whatever you want right now. And you're thinking about our conversation. And as you're thinking about this conversation, neurons are firing, and you ask yourself the question, well, why are neurons firing? Well, because there's a deeper reality within the neurons that are atoms and atoms do what they particularly do. Why do atoms do what they particularly do?

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Well then you get back to the four fundamental forces of nature; the strong and weak nuclear forces, electromagnetism, and gravity. And then when you ask yourself the question, Well, why are those four natural forces there? And why do they do what they do? You're ultimately going to arrive at an uncaused first cause that didn't have a beginning, that doesn't actualize itself, that just is what Aristotle would say would be pure actuality. This being is just maxed out. It has no potentiality. It has no boundaries on itself, in the sense that it can change or become something else. Here's where we get into all the philosophical jargon we'd have to unpack if we could, if we had more time to go further. Its essence equals its existence. It just is.

In fact, the being that the Bible calls this being, the name of this being is called, the Great I Am. The being that just "bes". You can't get under this being, there's no being under it, this being IS being; everything else HAS being. And so, if you're thinking right now, the reason you're actually able to think is because there's a being at, say the bottom of all these processes, which is sustaining all of nature as we speak. It's sustaining your ability to think, it's sustaining the four natural forces, which sustain the atoms, which sustain the neurons, which sustains your ability to even think about all this.

This is why we say that this argument for God, which is called final causality, or Thomas Aquinas would say, the fifth argument for the existence of God, this argument is true even if the universe is eternal. This argument is true even if macro-evolution is true. This argument is true even if somebody thinks science gives them the knowledge, they need to somehow disprove God.

In fact, let me ask you this. Sorry for going on that little rant there, Tricia. This is a very passionate argument for me, anyway, because I think once it's understood, it's so intuitive, and so irrefutable, that there has to be a being like God. Now, granted, this doesn't necessarily prove the Christian God at this point. We'd have to, you know, find evidence for Jesus to know if it's the Christian God, but it seems to prove to prove at least a theistic God. But Tricia, let me ask you this. The Bible talks about, in him we live and move and have our being. And all things are held together by this being. How, when you have talked to people about this argument, do they seem to understand it? Does the light bulb seem to come on when you talk about this?

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**Tricia:**

I think it takes a little contemplation on our part, and that we've gotten maybe a little lazy as Christians, because we don't really think through what we mean by some of these things. So, not immediately, because as you say, we need to understand some terms that are foundational. Understanding the four causes, and those sorts of things, are a new way of thinking. And that's, of course, what [unintelligible], Aquinas' thought is. It's a new way of thinking. But this is what's so powerful about this argument, is that we're not just like the column argument, going backward in time, to say there's a first cause, to which someone says, well, that doesn't mean you exist now. And it's stronger than intelligent design arguments that get us back to some sort of justice, an unmoved mover. We can know some things about this [unintelligible], some things can be metaphysically necessary, not just logically necessary, but metaphysically necessary, because whenever you think about a cucumber, for instance, it takes about 1400 hours, 86,000 minutes, over 5 million seconds for a cucumber to reach maturity as an edible cucumber. And so, what we're saying is, it didn't need a cause at the beginning that had a plan that it would just become a cucumber and only a cucumber. Not only that, but we're saying for every single of those 5 million seconds of it reaching to full cucumerness, there had to be a sustaining cause willing it, directing it toward that specific end of cucumber. And that's far more powerful.

So, the new atheists have not accurately explained this argument, much less responded to it or refuted it. That's the power of this argument. If we're willing to dig in and take our time and ponder, turn off Twitter, turn off everything and just think for a little while, after we read this through, there are some paragraphs worth reading five or six times. This is worth thinking through five or six times. Then we begin to understand that it's impossible, metaphysically, for this kind of being not to exist since nothing can explain its final purpose, and it's reaching a certain end. It can't even explain how it got here in the first place, much less how [unintelligible] end before the beginning. Only an ultimate being who is being could do that.

**Frank:**

Let me put this in my own language, because I think it is a powerful argument that needs to be pondered, as you say, Tricia. And that is that, if everything's going in a direction, let's take an acorn for example. An acorn is going in the direction of becoming an oak tree. If it's properly nourished it's going to become an oak tree. It's not going to become an elm tree. It's not going

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to become a birch tree. It's not going to become a seahorse. You know, it's going to become an oak tree if it's properly nourished. If it's going in a direction and it doesn't have a mind of its own, which it doesn't, there's no mind, there's no brain in an acorn, or even an oak tree. But if it reliably goes in the direction of becoming an oak tree, then there must be a director. There must be a being that is directing all these things toward their end. And by the way, ladies and gentlemen, this is why we can do science. Because the entire natural world is directed toward an end. And if it wasn't directed toward an end, we couldn't detect reliable cause and effect, which means we couldn't do science. And we'll unpack that a little bit further on the other side of the break.

You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. My guest is Tricia Scribner. A book she co-edited is called, *Answering the Music Man*. It has this argument in it, and many others, that answer the popular atheist arguments against Christianity. And we'll talk more right after the break. Don't go anywhere.

**Ad:**

Friends, Frank Turek here. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, is a listener supported radio program and podcast. So, if you like what you hear here, would you consider donating to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org)? 100% of your donations go to ministry, zero percent to buildings. We're completely virtual. So, if you can help us out, we greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

**Frank:**

You've come to the right place if you want to hear arguments for the existence of God. Maybe one that you haven't heard before. Today, we're talking to Tricia Scribner. I'm Frank Turek. And we're talking about this argument called, the argument of final causality. The argument from goal directedness. The argument that Thomas Aquinas, who lived in the 1200s AD, said it was his fifth way to argue for God. And we're saying that this argument works whether or not the universe is eternal, even if it is eternal, which it isn't. It works even if macro-evolution is true, even though it isn't. And it works even if the person you're talking to thinks that science is where you get all your truth; you can't get all your truth from science because that truth itself doesn't come from science and science is built on philosophy, which we'll get to here in a minute. But it's such a powerful argument, it shows that there has to be an uncaused first cause

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that directs everything else. Yeah, I want to unpack the idea that science is impossible without final causes or without goal directedness. So, can you unpack that a little bit further for us?

**Tricia:**

Well, sure. I am not a scientist, but I come out of the biological sciences and would like to consider myself a person of science. And so, this is critically important to me, because we can continue to seek to provide evidence based practice. And so, whenever we come to science, we have to understand, as you say, that the very ability to do science, not things that science define, but things which science is governed by, are things like; the principles of logic, first principles; the idea that opposites can't be both true at the same time, in the same sense; things such as the order of the universe. All of these are presupposed, and final causality, the fact that substances move toward a kind, specific end is assumed by science, for science to be able to even operate. And what we need to understand that science is dependent upon the reality. It didn't make them up.

And so, whenever we try to be people of science, we just need to be aware science is not the end all. As you've often said, science doesn't say anything, scientists do. Everything requires interpretation of data. And so, these presuppositions of science constrain, or provide the boundaries, of how the scientific method operates. And one of the clear [unintelligible] is the fact that scientists can depend upon time specific, purposeful actions, that enhance the things flourishing as part and parcel of what is embedded in reality. And this is critically important for scientists to understand and I think it helps people of science to go, oh, I don't have to jettison my scientific mind, or looking for evidence or rationality, to come to Christianity. That's why this argument is worth digging into because once you dig into it, once you read it several times, really tried to process what's being said here, it's well worth the effort, because it takes us to the One God whose existence is his essence, whose essence simply is his existence.

**Frank:**

And you can get the book, *Answering the Music Man*, which goes into this argument, and many other arguments that Tricia talks about here. And Tricia Scribner is my guest. She is the co-editor of this I also mentioned this argument in the book, *Stealing from God*, for those of you that have that. It's in the chapter on information and intentionality. And you write this in the book here, Tricia, because a lot of people going well, you know, can't this be explained by

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evolution, that kind of thing. You write, "biological processes demonstrate purpose, they don't create purpose. Purpose is a feature of them, not caused by them."

That's well stated. In other words, there are forces that drive biology. Well, what are those forces and who's directing these forces? Why are they so precise? Why are they so orderly? The very forces of nature. Look, even if macro-evolution is true, they're dependent on the four fundamental forces of nature. Why do those fundamental forces exist and why are they so goal directed and consistent? You can't answer that without an appeal to a mind, a mind that created and sustains these forces every single second. So, as we said earlier, this is not an argument for God way back when. There are arguments that do that, like the cosmological argument. This is an argument for a being right now, that is sustaining reality and directing it every single second.

I want to deal with one other issue before we go to our final issue, Tricia, and that's this. And you mention how materialism is madness, in your chapter here. I want to read a quote by CS Lewis I read on the show, probably a year ago, which I think is just so insightful. And it really drives the point home that materialism, the theory of reality that Dan Barker and other atheists hold to, really, not only makes science impossible, it makes reason itself impossible. Listen to this.

Here's what Lewis said. "Suppose there were no intelligence behind the universe. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. Thought is merely the by-product of some atoms within my skull." In other words, moist robot. "But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course, I can't trust the arguments leading to atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an atheist or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I can't believe in thought, so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God."

Boom. Yes, you would need a being like God to explain why you have a mind at all and why reality is orderly. If you're just driven by the laws of physics, you shouldn't trust your thoughts. But you do trust your thoughts. Why? Because your thoughts aren't just driven by the laws of physics. There's an immaterial reality out there that drives everything else.

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Now, Tricia, you also talk about Dan Barker, and other atheists, not wanting God to exist. Unpack that a little bit for us. Why do you say that he might not want God to exist?

**Tricia:**

Well, you know, one of the arguments that, especially the new atheists use against Christians is that, it's nice for them because they just want God to exist. So, he's a warm fuzzy Santa Claus and that's the Christian God. Of course, if it's the God of the book of Revelation, that's not the God that they are thinking of, because he's a God whose holiness requires judgment, as much as it does this love. At any rate, I tend to think that, because he's not dealt with the argument, honestly. So, either he being deceptive, or he's far more ignorant of the arguments than his rhetoric would seem to indicate. I say that because I just don't think he's been fully honest. He hasn't dealt with arguments on face value. He hasn't even stated them well, the arguments of Christians for Christianity, that is. So, I think that many atheists, like Barker, claim intellectual objection to God's existence when, perhaps in reality, they just don't want a sovereign, all powerful, and holy God interfering with their lives.

And I say this because people like Thomas Nagel, also an atheist, describes his own resistance to the possibility of God's existence as a fear of religion itself. He says, "I want atheism to be true". He says, "I'm made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and naturally hope I'm right in that belief." He says, "it's that I hope there is no God. I don't want there to be a God. I don't want the universe to be like that."

And we get a hint of this and Barker. He's either dishonest, or he's far more ignorant, as I said, than his rhetoric would suggest, because he says he went to Bible College, and all, and that he took an apologetics class. He says he didn't listen much to what was said. Honestly, I truly wish he had, because it might have given him a better understanding of the Christian faith and what it actually claims. And of course, our prayer is that Barker, you know, will come to his senses and that he'll recognize that the God he's fighting so hard, not only exists, but has paid for his sins through the sacrifice of Christ. It happened to the Apostle Paul, right. So, it can happen to Barker. I truly believe that and pray for that to happen.

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But even if it doesn't, I'm specifically concerned about the number of young people that he's deceived, because he's not thought through his claims. And he's coming out of Christianity saying that Christianity is false based on this argument against Christianity that responds to what he thinks are the true arguments Christians make for Christianity. And he's just mistaken. So, my prayer is that students, and their parents, and people of all ages will truly go on a relentless search for truth and not be satisfied until they have dug in and asked the hard questions, and really question their questions too. And that they access the numerous resources like yours, you know, on CrossExamined.org, and all the others that are out there, as well as this book. And they'll find this God. This God is explained through final causality, his existence is explained, and it's justified that our believing in this kind of God is the most reasonable response to the evidence that God is embedded in reality.

**Frank:**

Tricia, the book is called, *Answering the Music Man*. Where can people get the book, and your other books, because this is just one of many?

**Tricia:**

Just a highlight...I have written one book, LifeGivers Apologetics, and it's written in a woman's voice, very similar to a lot of other books that are written based on the classical arguments for God and Christianity but written in a voice for women. You can find these books on CrossExamined.org, if you click Store, and it will take you to the website called ImpactApologetics.com, where lots and lots of good resources are available.

**Frank:**

Now, do you have any events coming up, or any online events, where people can hear more or see more?

**Tricia:**

Well, right now I'm working madly on my dissertation, have carved out some time. I will be speaking, of course, at the National Conference on Christian Apologetics in October. And people will be excited to know that they can watch them online now. They don't have to pay travel costs. So, that's the upside of doing this online. And hope that they will start there and then just continue their diligent learning curve.

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**Frank:**

Well, Tricia, you're an inspiration because you started your PhD in your 60s. So, people who are listening out there...

**Tricia:**

Well, I started earlier, but it's taken me into my 60s.

**Frank:**

Well, that's all right. That's all right. You can start at any time. Tricia, thanks so much for being on the show and unpacking this argument of final causality for us.

**Tricia:**

Thank you so much.

**Frank:**

That's Tricia Scribner. Again, the book, *Answering the Music Man*. And as I say, there's so many other arguments that this book contains. You want to pick it up. I'm Frank Turek. Don't forget about the online courses starting next month. Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org), click on online courses. I'm teaching some, and so is Sean McDowell. I hope to see you here next week. God bless. See you then.

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