

*I don't have enough* **FAITH**  
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with Dr. Frank Turek      PODCAST

## Return of the God Hypothesis with Dr. Stephen Meyer – Part 2

(April 3, 2021)

Welcome to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. My guest, again, is Dr. Stephen Meyer. As you know, we had Steve on last week for the first of two installments on his brand new, excellent book called, *Return of the God Hypothesis*. Steve, I'm seeing the book is going up on Amazon quite well, it's getting very good reviews.

### Stephen:

Well, we had a great first day, and it's great to be back. And it was great to get to reach out to your audience last weekend. We saw a big movement in interest last weekend when the first of our two interviews aired on American Family Radio, so thanks for having me on.

### Frank:

Well, we're looking forward to the second interview here. You know, the first time we were on last week, Steve, we covered a little bit about the first of, what you call, three main arguments, or three main evidences, that theism looks like it's true. Can you just, kind of, go over the three briefly? And we'll spend a little bit of time on the first argument and then we'll delve more deeply into the next two.

**Stephen:** Yeah, exactly. The subtitle of the book is, *Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*, and the first of those discoveries is that is that, as best we can tell from both observational astronomy and from theoretical physics, the universe had a beginning, the physical universe had a beginning. The second discovery is that, from the beginning, and soon thereafter, the basic parameters of physics, the laws and constants of physics and the initial conditions of the universe, were set to allow for the possibility of life. And this is sometimes called the fine tuning evidence. And then the third discovery is that, since the beginning of the universe, there have been large bursts of new information, digital information in the molecules of the foundation of life, that are responsible for the origin of life and the

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origin of subsequent forms of life. So, we have the beginning of the universe, the fine tuning of the universe, and then the discovery of information in the molecules of the foundation of life.

**Frank:**

Now, Steve, last week, and our listeners are gonna have to go back and listen to last week's podcast, because we spent a lot of time, we talked a lot about the laws of nature themselves: Where do they come from? Do they cause anything? We also talked a little bit about the evidence for the beginning of the universe. One thing I've noticed is that, when atheists are claiming that you have evidence for the beginning of the universe from cosmology, they will come up and say, well, there's a new model coming up, or someone has proposed a new model that somehow gets rid of the beginning. What do you say to that?

**Stephen:**

Well, first of all, the new model they're talking about is something called, quantum cosmology and I have three chapters about that in the book, and they're among my favorites, in that what I show is that, even if quantum cosmology is the correct model of the origin of the universe, it too has theistic implications for several unappreciated reasons. That is, even though it's used in scientific atheist polemics it actually has theistic implications. The first thing about quantum cosmology is it doesn't actually get rid of the beginning. In all the quantum cosmological models, a singularity is presupposed that the universe comes out of a singularity.

The second thing is that what's actually going on with these models is that the physicists are using the mathematics of quantum mechanics to model the origin of the universe in consequence of something they call, the universal wave function, a mathematical expression that describes the different possible universes that could emerge with different gravitational fields. But the odd thing about this, as some of the quantum cosmologists themselves have noted, is that essentially, therefore, their modeling of the origin of matter, space, time and energy, coming out of pure mathematics. And as Alexander Vilenkin, one of the leading quantum cosmologists has observed, actually asked, he asks this rhetorical question at the end of, *Many Worlds in One*: What is the tablet upon which these laws could be written? Before there's matter, space and time, what tablet could these laws be written on? If mathematics is in the domain of the mind, are we really saying that mind predates matter? Mind predates the universe? And so, if true, quantum cosmology does not have materialistic implications, it has

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philosophically idealist, and arguably, theistic implications, because it implied mind before matter.

But there's an even deeper point to be made, which may be a little hard to follow in interview, but I'll give it a whirl anyway. And that is that this universal wave function...it has the symbol  $\Psi$  in quantum mechanics, that describes all the possible universes that could exist out of which our universe would come...is the consequence, or the product of solving a prior equation is called the Wheeler DeWitt equation, and it's the analog of the famous Schrödinger equation in regular quantum mechanics. But the interesting thing is that the Wheeler DeWitt equation has an infinite number of possible solutions unless mathematicians fix, very precisely, what are called boundary conditions, or boundary constraints. They are essentially limiting the degrees of mathematical freedom by their own intelligent choice.

There's all kinds of different outcomes they could get, all kinds of different wave functions describing the possible universes. But they choose the boundary conditions as they solve this big equation in order to get a particular outcome that will include our universes. One of the possibilities on that condition, they say, explain the origin of the universe. Well, what's actually going on? When you limit degrees of mathematical freedom, when you say, this, not that...this, not that, you're imparting information. And so, in the modeling of the origin of the universe, these quantum cosmologists are using their own intelligent design to input information to get an outcome that they want. So, I think what they're actually modeling is, as Stephen Hawking said, ironically, he didn't mean this in a literal sense, but they're modeling the mind of God.

**Frank:**

Yes, and I think that's a problem that you keep bringing up over and over again, in your book, Stephen, and that is that every time they try and explain information, they have to presuppose information already exists in order to actually answer the problem they're trying to get an answer to. Am I right?

**Stephen:**

Right. This was, for me, one of the big discoveries of this inquiry into quantum cosmology is, just as there's an information problem in biology...where does the new code come from that enables us to explain the origin of life or the origin of new forms of life...there's an information

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problem in cosmology as well. Because if we want to explain our universe with all its beautiful specificity, and by specificity we mean, it has these properties and not those properties, you have to have something that is responsible for those choices, if you will. And the physicists themselves model that choosing, they make the choices, in a mathematical apparatus, they choose certain sorts of constraints that give them the outcome they want, in order to model a universe like ours. But that just suggests that, even if they could explain the origin of matter and energy out of math alone, which is quite a trick, because math doesn't have those causal powers, they can't explain the origin of the information necessary to produce a universe like ours, and therefore, to explain our universe.

**Frank:**

Yeah. And it seems like they think that math can somehow cause things, and I think your point is, as you point out...and again, we're talking to Stephen Meyer. His brand new book, *Return of the God Hypothesis*, you need to get. Friends, we're covering less than 1% of what's in the book in these interviews, so you need to get the book. It's about 500 pages, well written, easy to understand. He goes into some depth on some of these issues, so you can track with him as we go. We can't cover it all here in the interview, so I highly recommend you get the book.

But Steve, I want to ask you one other thing. I need a point of clarification on the singularity, because I've heard the singularity described this way: a point of infinite density. That would seem to me to be a category mistake, if we're talking about a physical thing, because you can't have an infinitely dense physical thing. So, does this mean that, literally, when we're talking about a singularity, when we say infinite density, that, literally, we're talking about the creation out of nothing of all space, time and matter?

**Stephen:**

Well, if we assume general relativity as the operative physics in the earliest part of the universe, yes, this is what Stephen Hawking first showed in his 1966 PhD dissertation at Cambridge University, and then later proved with more mathematical rigor with first, Roger Penrose, the great Oxford physicist, and then George Ellis, the great South African physicist, who was a PhD student at Cambridge at the same time as Hawking. And if you go back, and this is actually quite conceptual, the math is difficult, but understand the concepts underlying the math, it's not difficult. If we have an expanding universe in the forward direction of time, and the black

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material is stretching, is getting further and further dilute, if you will, if you go back in time, the material stuff of all those galaxies, the galaxies will get closer and closer together and eventually, you'll get to the point where matter becomes infinitely compressed material. Substance corresponds in general relativity to an infinite curvature of space and infinite curvature corresponds to zero spatial volume.

**Frank:**

Hold the thought. We're coming up on a hard break, so hold that thought. We're gonna get right back with Dr. Stephen Meyer. The brand new book is, *Return of the God Hypothesis*. Don't go anywhere.

Welcome back to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). I want to mention I'm gonna be in Fort Worth, Texas this weekend. Go to our website for details. I'm speaking at a conference on Saturday and then on Sunday at a church there in Fort Worth. All the details are on our website, [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org), click on events, Frank Turek calendar, you'll see it there. I hope to see you there in Fort Worth.

I'm talking to my friend, Dr. Stephen Meyer, who's brand new book is sort of his magnum opus, *Return of the Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*. And Steve, just before the break we were talking about the fact that a singularity seems to indicate that the universe came, literally, from nothing. And you were describing how that could be so from general relativity. Could you pick it up right there?

**Stephen:**

Yeah, we were trying to explain general relativity and the solution to the field equations before the bumper music.

**Frank:**

That's right.

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**Stephen:**

All right, let's try it again. So, conceptually, in Einstein's theory of general relativity, a theory of gravity, dense concentrations of matter, actually curve, the fabric of space, or what he called space and time, because space and time are connected in relativity. So, you could think of a bowling ball on a trampoline, causing that the surface of the trampoline to create a, kind of depression. If you put a tennis ball on the edge of the trampoline it will roll towards the bowling ball. That's roughly the kind of concept Einstein has in mind except there's no trampoline surface, it's space itself that is curved.

And this is what Stephen Hawking was thinking about during his PhD dissertation, as a as a young PhD student in the 1960s. He's thinking about black holes, how they curved space so tightly that nothing, even light, can get out of them. But if you think about the expanding universe, where the galaxies are moving outward in the forward direction of time, and then back extrapolate in your mind's eye, the galaxies would be getting closer and closer and closer together, and eventually, the matter would all congeal, causing space to curve extremely tightly. And as you keep going back further in time, you reach a limiting case, where the curvature of space goes to an infinite. And infinite curvature, an infinitely tight curved space, corresponds to zero spatial volume. And at that point, that marks the beginning of time, but it also marks the beginning of space and the beginning of the universe itself, because as I used to ask my students, if there's no space, if there's no spatial volume, how much stuff can you put in that? How much stuff can you put in no space? Answer is none.

So, it's a picture of, essentially, creatio ex nihilo, the creation out of nothing physical. The British physicist, Paul Davies, has said that, before that singularity...the singularity marks is essentially the beginning of the universe...before which there's no possibility of physical reasoning, because there's no physics there, there's no matter, space, time or energy that could cause that origin. Now, that's the picture of the origin of the universe based on general relativity.

What we were talking about in the last segment, is another model of cosmological origins, called quantum cosmology, which was devised and has been devised, in a sense, to circumvent this problem of the ultimate beginning. And there is a physical justification for this, because we can't be absolutely sure that general relativity applies all the way back to the beginning, because when things are so small, then quantum effects would kick in, quantum fluctuations

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and the like. But then even on that other model of cosmological origins, there are these tacit theistic implications that you have a universe coming out of math alone, which is very weird, because math is conceptual and exists in the realm of mind and nowhere else. And to solve the math that you need to model the origin of the universe, there needs to be an input of information, which is always coming from the theoretical physicists, the modelers, coming from intelligent design. So, whether you take a strict general relativistic view of the origin of the universe, or a quantum cosmological view, in both cases you have...first of all, in both cases, you have a beginning. And secondly, you have theistic implications either way.

**Frank:**

Yes. And this is why, as you point out in the book, Steve, that if space, time and matter had a beginning, the cause must be spaceless, timeless and immaterial, because space, time and matter didn't exist. So, you must have some cause beyond the universe, beyond nature,

**Stephan:**

And yet capable of initiating a new event, of causing a change of states from, in this case, nothing physical to everything physical. So, that suggests that suggest the activity of the mind again.

**Frank:**

Yes. And you also point out that, even if the science changes on this, what doesn't change is the fact that you can't have an infinite number of days before today. You talk about that when you reference the column cosmological argument. Here again, the book is called, *Return of the God Hypothesis*. My guest is Dr. Stephen Meyer. So, I think it's quite well established that the universe had a beginning, and it seems therefore, it must have had a beginner. But Steve, let's move on to the second of the three great discoveries you talk about in this book, and that's the fine tuning of the universe. And I think there are at least two aspects of this, in my reading of it anyway. And that is, there are the initial conditions of the universe, which seem fine-tuned, and then there are the current conditions, or the natural laws and the constants that go into those natural laws. Can you start with the initial conditions? How do we know that the universe is fine-tuned from it's very inception?

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**Stephen:**

Well, Roger Penrose, whom I mentioned just a few minutes ago, made some very interesting calculations about...it's called the initial entropy fine tuning, where entropy relates to the whole concept of order and disorder, you know. So, we have a highly ordered universe now because there's been a massive amount of energy that has been released in causing the universe to expand through a force called the cosmological constant. If the universe is highly ordered, now, it must have been even more highly ordered at the beginning, in order to get that order. It'd be like, you know, think of a toddler through a room. After the toddler is done with it, it's gonna be more disordered. Or a tornado through a junkyard. So, if you're releasing energy to cause the expansion of the universe, the initial state must have been even more ordered than it is now, to give us the orderly state that makes that possible now.

Penrose made calculations as to just how orderly it must have been, and his calculations suggest that the tuning of the initial arrangement of matter and energy is hyper-exponentially precise. His calculation showed that the number was one part in 10 to the 10th raised to the 123rd power. Now, there aren't enough elementary particles in the universe to represent all the zeros in that number. And when we're talking about fine tuning, it might be helpful to, especially for engineers who are aware of the concept of tolerances, we're talking about getting something just right. The just right or Goldilocks universe, where, if certain forces are too strong or too weak by even a little bit in either direction, if the masses of the elementary particles are too heavy or too light, if the speed of light is too fast or too slow, if that expansion rate of the universe is too fast or too slow, or if the force governing that expansion is too strong or too weak, by even a tiny bit in each direction, we will not get a life conducive universe. And so, Fred Hoyle who discovered some of these first fine-tuning parameters, the ones that are necessary to account for the abundance of carbon in our universe, said that a commonsense interpretation of the data suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics and chemistry to make life possible. And so, for many physicists, the fine-tuning that seemed logically to lead to the need for a fine tuner, for an intelligent designer.

**Frank:**

Now Steve, they've tried to avert this, or get around this fine-tuning, by coming up with the multiple universe theory or the fact that there are other universes out there. First of all, let me ask you this question: Before the fine-tuning of the universe was known, and it started to be

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discovered, say, about 60-70 years ago, did anyone even suggest there were other universes out there?

**Stephen:**

Well, no, but there are justifications in certain physical theories for the concept of a multiverse. But once those were realized, people appropriated the multiverse as an explanation for the fine-tuning. The problem is that the multiverse doesn't actually explain away the ultimate fine-tuning of the universe. Let me explain. If you have all these other universes out there, the idea is, well then, therefore, eventually one like ours will have will emerge. Therefore, as improbable as all these parameters seem, from the vantage point of just the processes that work in our universe, if we have multiple billions of other universes out there, then we can render the fine-tuning parameters somewhere probable. We can say that eventually the right conditions would have to arise.

But if these other universes are causally disconnected from our own...and indeed, that's what we mean by universe, is a causally closed system, everything that that is in existence universes. But if they're not causally connected, then they don't affect anything in this universe, including the probabilities, the processes that would have set the fine-tuning parameters. So, in order to depict our universe as the winner of a cosmic lottery, the multiverse proponents have needed to formulate proposed universe generating mechanisms that would function as kind of common causes for the origin of all these universes so that then we could portray our universe as the lucky winner of a great cosmic lottery where lots of universes are being spit out all the time.

Now there are two different speculative cosmological models that generate these universe generating mechanisms. One is called, inflationary cosmology, and the other is called, string theory. And in both these cosmological models, the universe generating mechanisms themselves require prior, exquisite, unexplained fine-tuning. And so, you don't get rid of the fine-tuning, you just push back one generation and leave it unexplained. And yet, there isn't an explanation for what we mean by fine-tuning. If we talk about a French recipe, or an internal combustion engine, or a Swiss watch, or a section of digital code, and we say that's fine-tuned systems, we mean there's a whole bunch of independent parameters that are highly improbable, but yet collectively, the set of those parameters achieves a discernible function or

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outcome. And so fine-tuning, in our experience, is always the consequence in all those other examples of intelligent design of a mind. So, the only known explanation for fine-tuning is intelligence. The multiverse hasn't provided an ultimate explanation for fine-tuning, it leaves it unexplained, suggesting that even if the multiverse is true, we still have a powerful argument for intelligent design.

**Frank:**

Yeah, you know, the agnostic, Paul Davies, you mentioned him earlier, he's an astronomer. He calls the multiverse a dodge, because he realizes nobody would be suggesting this unless they were trying to explain away fine-tuning, the evidence for fine-tuning.

**Stephen:**

I had a conversation in private with one of my friendlier atheistic debating partners in a car ride back to the airport after the debate. He was telling me about his deconversion experience from Christianity to atheism, and he said it was because of the success of science. And I started asking him about the things that I think, you know, scientific discoveries that materialism doesn't explain, and he said, yeah, but there's the multiverse. And I said, yeah, but do you believe in the multiverse? He said, nah. Well, there's the Stanford physicist, Leonard Susskind, said, well, if we didn't have the multiverse, we'd be hard pressed to answer the ID critics. And so, I think there is a philosophical self-motivation for holding to the multiverse.

**Frank:**

Well, even if they've got the multiverse, they still can't answer you, because as you just mentioned, you would need some sort of fine-tuned universe generator to make it work anyway. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek and Dr. Stephen Meyer. His brand new book, *Return of the God Hypothesis*. A lot more right after the break. Don't go anywhere.

Welcome back to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. My guest today is Dr. Stephen Meyer. Second week in a row. And the reason we're doing two shows on this is because this seminal work needs to have a lot of attention given to it, because you're going to learn quite a bit about the evidence for God from three scientific discoveries that Steve says reveals the mind of God or reveals the mind

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behind the universe. As you probably already know, Steve has his PhD in Philosophy of Science from Cambridge University. He's written other great books like, *Signature in the Cell* and *Darwin's Doubt*, and this is sort of his magnum opus.

Now, Steve, prior to the break we were talking about the fine-tuning argument and the atheist don't really have a good counter argument for that. In fact, Christopher Hitchens, who I had the opportunity debate a couple of times said, yeah, the fine-tuning argument is the hardest problem to answer. But it also seems that there's information and fine-tuning in the third discovery that you sort of made famous with your, *Signature in the Cell*, book. Why don't you tell us a little bit about that, the information we find in biology?

**Stephen:**

Right. In fact, I would argue that the fine-tuning and biology, as represented by that information, is even more compelling as an evidence for a prior intelligence. As finely tuned as the universe is in its basic physics, the complexity and the informational complexity of biological organisms actually exceeds that. Life is, in a sense, the culmination of the whole process. Yeah, well, the story really starts in 1953. Watson and Crick elucidate the structure of DNA in their famous paper that they published in *Nature*, the great British science publication, a 900 word article, but a hugely important idea, and they elucidate the structure of DNA. In 1957-1958, Crick formulates something called, the sequence hypothesis, where he suggests that the chemical subunits that run along the interior of the DNA molecule...so you got the double helix, but then there are these subunits called nucleotide bases that run along the interior of the helix and they form a long linear array of these chemicals. He proposes that these bases are functioning like alphabetic characters in a written language, or the digital characters like zeros and ones that we would use in software, which is to say that they do not perform a function biologically in virtue of their physical properties, their shapes or their molecular weights, or anything else, but instead because of their arrangement in accord with an independent symbol convention. And he suggests that the arrangement of these bases are providing instructions for directing the construction of proteins.

Now, by 1965, his sequence hypothesis is confirmed. And what is revealed is that, yes indeed, there is a symbol convention. We now call it the genetic code. So, we have a code and we also have a text. And the information in DNA being translated by the code is directing the

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construction of proteins. So, what is discovered is something akin to what we now use in modern manufacturing, where computers are running the show, called CAD/CAM (computer assisted design and engineering). For example, the Boeing plant here in Seattle, you might have an engineer sitting at a console writing code for building an airplane wing, the code would go down a wire, we translate it into a machine code that could be read at the manufacturing center, and then that information would be used, in the Boeing case, to put rivets on the airplane wing in accord with the engineer specifications. That's precisely the kind of technology that's at work in the tiniest recesses of even the simplest cells, we have digital information directing the construction of mechanical parts, or mechanical systems, proteins and protein machines that are necessary to maintain cellular life. So, we have digital information and a complex information transmission storage and processing system at the foundation of every living cell.

Now that is a mind blowing level of integrated complexity that no one anticipated. And based on our experience, our uniform and repeated experience, we know of only one cause for the origin of information. Bill Gates, our local hero here in Seattle says, DNA is like a software program, but much more complex than any we've ever devised. Richard Dawkins himself acknowledges that the DNA contains machine code. Leroy Hood, the great biotech pioneer, also here in our area, simply describes DNA as containing digital code. Well, where does such digital information always come from in our experience? Programs always come from programmers. And in fact, whenever we see information, especially in a digital or an alphabetic form, and we trace it back to its source, we always come to a mind, not a material process, whether we're talking about computer program, or a section of text in a book, or a hieroglyphic inscription, or information and radio signal information. The hallmark of mind always comes from intelligence.

In fact, one of the early pioneers in the application of information theory to molecular biology said, the creation of new information is habitually associated with conscious activity. So, the discovery of information at the foundation of life in these great biomacromolecules is evidence, I argue, first in, *Signature in the Cell*, but I reprise that argument in this book. It's evidence of the activity of a designing intelligence in the origin and in the history of life.

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**Frank:**

Now Steve, I can hear the atheists and skeptics already saying, you're just engaged in a God of the Gaps argument, Dr. Meyer. That doesn't work. Now, you have a whole chapter in, *Return of the God Hypothesis*, about the God of the Gaps argument. Give us a couple minutes on why that charge against this argument does not hold water.

**Stephen:**

Right. Well, God of the Gaps arguments are from a standpoint of informal logical fallacies. They would be what are called, arguments from ignorance. It would be an argument of the following form. Well, I think that this particular physical phenomenon, I can show that it was not caused by this proposed cause A, therefore B must have done it. Well, that would be an argument from ignorance, because you're not providing positive evidence for this alternative cause B as the reason for that physical phenomenon. That's not the kind of argument that intelligent design makes. In the case of the DNA, and the information in DNA, I go very carefully through the different models of, for example, of the chemical evolutionary origin of the information in DNA and the origin of life. And I show that, in each case, these different models fail, for very specific scientific reasons, to account for that information.

But I'm not arguing for intelligent design solely based on the failure of materialistic evolutionary explanations to explain the origin of information, but rather also because we have positive independent evidence of the power of intelligent agents to generate the kind of information that we find in living cells. The kind of information in DNA that we find is not what's called Shannon information...engineers will know what that's about. It's essentially a merely complex arrangement of characters that isn't necessarily functional. But what we find in DNA is specified and functional information. And it is, in fact, conveyed in a digital form. Now information of that type, in our experience, always arises from a mind. So, we have, based on our uniform and repeated experience, the basis of all scientific reasoning. We have independent knowledge of the causal powers of intelligent agents to generate information of the kind that we find in life, absent the ability to go back and look at exactly what happened to cause it. The best explanation for that, therefore, is intelligent design.

Here's a little thought experiment people could do. Imagine you go into a cave in Antarctica, and you're an archaeologist, and you assume that because of the very cold temperatures there,

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no people have ever lived in Antarctica. But you go into a cave and inside the cave you find hieroglyphic inscriptions, pictures of prehistoric animals. And underneath the inscriptions you find little characters, and after a while, you're able to decode and see the associations between the characters in the pictures and you realize, oh, this is a written language. Now, what should you infer, even though you didn't know that there had ever been intelligent life in Antarctica? If you found such a thing, because you know there's only one cause of the origin of information, you're going to infer that there was an intelligent form of life there prior to your arrival. And that's essentially what we found, not in the cave, but in the recesses of the cell, that information in a digital form. And again, not an argument from ignorance. We wouldn't say the archaeologist was guilty of a, scribes of the gap argument. The archaeologists who decoded the Rosetta Stone were not guilty of, the scribes of the gap. They were using their positive knowledge of cause and effect, to infer the most likely explanation. So, this is an argument based on knowledge of cause and effect, not ignorance, not gaps.

**Frank:**

Yes. Now, as you point out in the book...again, the book is called, *Return of the God Hypothesis*...we're arguing from effect to cause. We have an effect known as a digital code and so, we're trying to discover what could have caused that effect. And as you point out, in all of our experience, when you get a code like that, when you get a message, when you get what looks like a software program, you know a mind must be behind it. And in another part of the book, I'm looking right now on page 240...again, the book, *Return of the God Hypothesis*...you're having a discussion, that discussion you mentioned earlier with one of your atheist interlocutors, you were debating him, and you point out, and I think this is a very good insight that maybe you can unpack further for us, you say that scientists have done a great job of explaining how the universe and life operate, but it did not offered adequate materialistic explanations for the origin of life, mind or the universe. What is this distinction between how things operate and how they originated?

**Stephen:**

Well, we see these wonderful regularities in nature, in which we characterize using the laws of nature by explaining where for example, biological systems came from, or where the universe came from. These are the types of events that are not explicable by reference to natural laws. Laws describe regular patterns of antecedent and consequent cause and effect, but they don't

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with Dr. Frank Turek      **PODCAST**

explain where the systems came from in the first place. And so, the study of origins has been one of the things that has really put the materialistic approach to science on notice that there may be something more at work than just matter and energy.

And we're seeing, when we look at, for example, the origin of life, we're seeing indicators that we would, in any other realm of experience, immediately recognize as the product of mind or intelligence. And these indicators, for example, the irreducibly complex molecular machines, or the circuitry that we find in cells, or the information storage transmission and processing system that we've been talking about, these are indicators of intelligence that any other realm of experience would point to a mind. And yet, they have not been explained by any materialistic evolutionary theory. And therefore, what I argue is that the inference to intelligent design provides the best explanation for those indicators. The method of reasoning I use is called, inference to the best explanation. It's not an argument from ignorance or gaps argument. It's an established method of scientific reasoning that we've applied to these questions of ultimate origin. And the method suggests intelligent design is, indeed, the best explanation.

**Frank:**

When we come back from the break, we're going to take an overview of these three discoveries that are well explained. And again, the book called, *Return of the God Hypothesis*, by Dr. Stephen Meyer. We're going to get into how they come together and where they lead us. Where do these three discoveries lead us? What kind of conclusions can we draw from these three discoveries about whether God exists or not, or intelligence exists or not? So, don't miss it. We're back in just two minutes. I'm Frank Turek. The show is called, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. My guest is Dr. Stephen Meyer of the Discovery Institute. [Discovery.org](http://Discovery.org). Back in two.

We're talking to Stephen Meyer today about his brand new magnum opus called, *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*. And Steve, and your first two books, which were seminal books in the field of intelligent design, *Signature in the Cell* and *Darwin's Doubt*, you point to the fact that there has to be an intelligence out there. That's where the evidence is pointing. You've got these great effects in cosmology and biology and they're pointing back to some sort of intelligence. But you never

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really got to the point where you explain who you thought the intelligence was. In this book you do. Why don't you tell us a little bit about that?

**Stephen:**

Well, right. The first two books were about the importance of information, biological systems built to explain the origin of the first life and to explain subsequent forms of life. If you want to give your computer a new function, we know that you've got provide new code, and it turns out to be the same in biology. If you want to explain the origin first life, or the origin of subsequent forms of life, new information needs to be provided. And I argued that the only plausible explanation for the origin of information, based on our knowledge of cause and effect, is an intelligence of some kind. Now, I didn't identify the designing intelligence, I acknowledged at the end of the book that I thought it had theistic implications. But I also acknowledged that there were other possible explanations for the origin of that information to the origin of life.

One that had been proposed was the idea that there was an imminent intelligence within the cosmos, effectively, a space alien of some kind. And as fanciful as that might seem to some, no less a personage than Francis Crick himself floated this idea in a book called, *Life Itself*, because he recognized the difficulty of explaining the origin of life on earth. And he suggested that maybe life had arisen on some other planet out in space, and then eventually that life form had evolved into a complex higher intelligence, and then that intelligent agent in space seeded life, first on Earth, it was sent here somehow. Richard Dawkins actually floated the same idea in an interview at the end of a film called, *Expelled*, in 2008. So, it's an idea that's out there but I think it's implausible for two reasons.

First, it may be an understatement, but here we go. First is that, in order to get life going somewhere else in the universe, it's all the information problem. And so, to get life to originate on some other planet you'd have to get something that could contain information, that can specify the arrangements of parts that would make for a biological system. And so, you've just pushed the information problem back out into space without answering it.

But secondly, and this is what I do in the new book, if you broaden the scope of inquiry to include physics and cosmology, you find evidence that clearly the imminent intelligence hypothesis can't explain. It certainly can't explain the origin of the fine-tuning of the universe

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from very beginning and or very soon after, upon which the origin and evolution of that alien intelligence would have depended. In other words, the fine tuning of the universe precedes the presumed evolution of some imminent intelligence within the cosmos, and therefore, that alien intelligence doesn't explain the fine-tuning that precedes it. And certainly, the alien intelligence can't explain the origin of the universe that contains the alien intelligence.

So, neither of those two evidences are explained by the imminence intelligence hypothesis. Similarly, deism might explain the origin of the universe and the origin of fine-tuning but the deistic God, by definition, doesn't act after the beginning. And yet, we have evidence of design arising long after the beginning in the Earth's biosphere, with the digital code, and DNA, and so forth. Materialism doesn't explain any of the three big evidences; the evidence from cosmology of the beginning, the evidence for the fine-tuning, or the evidence that we have of design and biology with digital code.

And similarly, pantheism, the Eastern philosophy, which conceives of God, not as a conscious agent or as a person, but rather as a kind of mystical force that binds everything together in some kind of a unity. That concept of God also lacks explanatory power, because the deistic God is coextensive with matter and energy. God is in the material world, the material world is God, and so, before there was a material world, there was no God, there was no god of a pantheistic kind to do any causing. It would lack causal power to explain the origin of the universe because the pantheistic God doesn't have a mind or conscious awareness. It's not the right kind of entity to explain the fine-tuning, which implies a conscious intelligence. It similarly wouldn't explain the digital code.

So, when you look at these, the several great metaphysical systems of belief, as well as the panspermia idea, the imminent intelligence idea, none of them provide are causally adequate to explain the three pieces of evidence that we have. But instead, classical theism with its affirmation of an intelligent agent who is also active in the creation, but also who transcends the creation, and can therefore act as a cause outside of nature to bring nature into existence. Only classical theism has the causal powers and the relevant attributes. It affirms a God with relevant attributes to explain all three of these evidences; the universe had a beginning, was fine-tuned from the beginning, and then the emergence of information long after the beginning in the biosphere.

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**Frank:**

So, Steve, what are the attributes of this being then? We know we can't get all the way to Jesus, just from natural revelation, which is what your book talks about, but we can get a being that could be Jesus, that could be the God of the Bible. So, what attributes can you learn from the three great discoveries?

**Stephen:**

Well, I think you can infer the need for a transcendent cause that was also intelligent, and which was in possession of freewill to cause a change of state. And I think you can also infer an agent that was active in the creation and did not confine his activity to the very beginning, as deism would imply. In the book of Romans in the New Testament, it affirms that from the things that are made, the unseen qualities of the Creator are clearly manifest, and then lists the two qualities; his eternal power and divine nature, sometimes translated in older translations as wisdom. You have in the Hebrew Bible, the concept that, by wisdom thou has created all things in Psalm 104.

And so, I think the biblical view is that you can infer the wisdom and power of God from the creation, the heavens declare the glory of God, but you cannot get the whole of the message of revealed scripture from nature. Theologians have made a distinction, both Jewish and Christian theologians, have made a distinction between what's called special revelation, the revelation that you only get from the Scripture, and general revelation. So, I think there are limits to what you can know from nature, but I've pushed the argument, I think, to those limits, and with ample justification. I think we can infer the intelligence, and the power, and the activity of the Creator, both the beginning and after the beginning. And that, I think, gives you a strong indicator of the reality of a God of the kind that classical theism or biblical theism affirms.

**Frank:**

The book is called, *Return of the God Hypothesis*. It's a must read. We're covering less than 1% of what's in the book, obviously, on the air here. Steve, I want to ask you one other question because I know that some people, some ardent atheists and skeptics, are going to naysay this book for whatever reason. They might say, well, your evidence isn't good, you don't have enough evidence, this and that. That's obviously not the case. But talk a little bit about, if you would, Steve...because you talk about this in the book...about the very fact that there's

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evidence for anything, that this is a rational world, that we have rational minds that can ascertain truths about the real world. Seems to me, anyway, to be an argument for theism as well. What would you say about this?

**Stephen:**

Yeah, this is something I address in the very last chapter of the book. It's in the field of philosophy called epistemology. How do we know what we know? How can we justify knowledge? This has been the huge problem in philosophy since the late enlightenment. How do we justify our belief in the reliability of the mind? Because, if our minds aren't reliable, then we can't know the world reliably.

**Frank:**

Right.

**Stephen:**

And so, science depends upon presuppositions that gives us confidence in the reliability of the mind. If we don't have that confidence, we can't be confident in science. And it turns out that theism uniquely provides a justification for belief in the reliability of the mind, because it says, hey, the mind was designed by a rational creator in a way that is constructed with certain sets of assumptions that we all bring to our study of nature. For example, the assumption of the uniformity of nature, the assumption of causality, that allow us to make sense of the world around us, these assumptions do. And if those assumptions that our minds instinctively and necessarily make are reliable, then we can know the world. If they're wrong, we can't. And so, if the mind was designed in a way that allows us to know the world reliably, then we can have good confidence in science.

And theism provides a good reason for thinking the mind was designed reliably, whereas, what's called naturalistic epistemology, with the idea that the mind evolved, and it was, you know, what we think was, sort of, programmed into us by the evolutionary process, that ends up creating some big problems because evolution maximizes survival, it doesn't necessarily maximize the truth seeking ability of the mind. And there are some very good examples of how those two things can divert. So anyway, this was an argument that had tremendous impact on me as an undergraduate in philosophy and I've, kind of, come back to it and later years. I

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actually shared it with a prominent atheistic philosopher in a conversation and he said, hey, you don't need to explain this to me. There's no question that theism [unintelligible] of intellectual problems.

In addition to the big three discoveries in science; the universe had a beginning, it's fine-tuning, and problem of the origin of information, I think there are big philosophical questions that theism uniquely answers. One is, it helps explain the reliability of the mind and, therefore, gives us confidence in the whole scientific enterprise. Another is our instinctive belief in objective morality, which all of us reveal by our actions, even if we deny it in our philosophy. And I think theism is uniquely positioned to give an account of what we mean by ought or should, as opposed to just, "is ought" distinction, I think, is adequately explained by theism. So, I think theism as a worldview has unique and broad ranging explanatory power and it's one good reason to believe it.

**Frank:**

Well, Steve, tell folks about the website. We only got 20 seconds left. Tell them where they can go to find more information.

**Stephen:**

Yeah, absolutely. The book is available on all the online sellers, Barnes and Noble, Amazon, indie books, all those folks. And there's a brand new website that our team at Discovery has created for this book, [ReturnOfTheGodHypothesis.com](http://ReturnOfTheGodHypothesis.com), and you can navigate from that website. So, the other books that I've done, and we've got videos, and debate clips, and we'll be posting this interview and others up there very soon too.

**Frank:**

Great stuff, Steve. That's Stephen Meyer. Friends, great being with you. See you next week.

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