

*I don't have enough* **FAITH**  
*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

## How Philosophy Helps Theology & Apologetics | with Dr. Richard Howe

(August 2023, 2024)

### **FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, what is the most important discipline you need to master if you want to defend the Christian faith? Certainly, the Bible is at the top of the list. But there's something else that you need to know in order to understand the Bible, and that is philosophy. Philosophy? Didn't Paul say in Colossians, see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental force, spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ?

Frank, how can you say philosophy is important? It seems like the Bible is saying we ought not get into philosophy. Well, to help us sort through all this is my friend, the great Richard G. Howe, who was my professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary and is still a professor there. SES.edu/Frank. You may get a scholarship. It's where you want to go if you really want to learn philosophy, apologetics, and theology. But why would we want to learn philosophy? The great Richard G. Howe, why would we want to do that?

### **RICHARD:**

Well, this verse is often brought up when this question comes up, and I love the translation you just read. I'm not sure which one that was, because I think it's a lot more the point of sort of...

### **FRANK:**

Let's see. What is this translation? This is the NIV, the nearly inspired version. Let me read it again.

### **RICHARD:**

The New Irrational Version [Laughter]

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**FRANK:**

Yeah, let me read it again. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and on the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

**RICHARD:**

So, in other words, the philosophy to avoid is the hollow and deceptive, not necessarily philosophy as such, just like Paul elsewhere talks about, avoid useless disputes. Not avoid disputes because they're useless but avoid the disputes that are useless.

**FRANK:**

Got it.

**RICHARD:**

Right? So, it's interesting because that verse in context, I've often asked crowds, do you know what the rest of Colossians 2 goes on to say? It's a specific philosophy that was plaguing the Colossians, namely a philosophy of Gnosticism. Taste not, touch not, handle not. He said, which have the appearance of religiosity but is of no use against the indulgences of the flesh.

So, I don't think he was even thinking in terms of philosophy as the discipline we identify today. Aristotle, Plato, you know, Aquinas or whatever, as much as there were particular kinds of ways of thinking that can sabotage one's Christian life, where they try to think sanctification is just an assemblage of legalistic rules, and that makes you sanctified.

So, I think the Colossians passage is easily dispensed with. That's why I like the translation you brought up. It's a philosophy that is empty and deceitful in that respect, but not because it's philosophy, but because of the content of that philosophy.

**FRANK:**

It's interesting, as you say. He goes on in the next verse to say, for in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. So, he's pointing out that, yes, Jesus was actually in a human body, a physical body, and the Gnostics didn't like the idea that we were in physical bodies. That was evil, and we had to go spiritual. So, the context is important here, ladies and

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gentlemen. As we've said before, there are no verses in the Bible. You need to read around the passage to see what's going on and to just pull one verse out without any context, you might get the wrong idea. So, Dr. Howe here, who again, teaches at Southern Evangelical Seminary, has a great website, which is...

**RICHARD:**

RichardGHowe.com.

**FRANK:**

RichardGHowe.com. There are so many great resources up on there, but what we're going to do today, friends, is we're going to have a discussion about what philosophy is and how you need it in order to be a good apologist and a good theologian. In fact, we're at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy as we speak right here in Charlotte, North Carolina. And you gave a presentation this morning on the importance of philosophy to theology. What is the essence of that presentation, Richard?

**RICHARD:**

So, I think a lot of the things that I would point out that philosophy services theology are probably things that for a long time in Church history, we didn't need to have to service those things. But it's only been since the 17th century. I mean, I'm oversimplifying, that a lot of toxic voices have come in to influence the church in a negative way, theologically. I'll give you one example.

I mean, even within my lifetime, you could have told someone, hey, I believe the Bible is true or Christianity is true, and everybody would know what you meant by that, even if they didn't think you were right, even if they thought it's not the case that it's true. They knew what you meant when you claimed it's true.

Now, you run the risk of saying, I think the Bible is true, and people don't even know what you mean by the word truth. You know, they will take truth as something just relative to other kinds of things. There's no such thing as objective truth. Well, what is truth? And is it always objective?

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Or are there some truths that are objective, some things that aren't, is by and large, a philosophical question. So, since the onset of, for example, postmodernism, we now find ourselves as Christians, have to appeal to the tools, and methods, and data points of philosophy, sound classical philosophy, I would argue.

Maybe we'll get to that specific thing, but we'd have to appeal to these things just to get the conversation up to a level where we can begin to make the claims of Christ known to our hearers. Dr. Geisler taught us that apologetics, basically, was, you lay the foundation of theism, and then once the theism is established and it gives you the possibility of miracles, then you give the evidence for Christian faith, the most notable evidence being the resurrection.

But when the foundation of that sound conversation gets corrupted, so to speak, where people don't even know what truth is, truth corresponds to reality, logic, or these kind of things, which are antecedents to even having the conversation about whether there is or isn't a God, and then whether Jesus did or doesn't rise from the dead, then at some point, there's going to be the need to appeal to these philosophical tools, and methods, and data points to set that foundation in place, and then we can proceed with the content of the Christian message.

**FRANK:**

Now, when we talk about the word philosophy, we know it means the love of wisdom. But in a more systematic way, when we're talking about philosophy and needing philosophy in order to interpret not just the Bible, but any text, actually, what do we mean by that? What does philosophy mean? What are the components of philosophy?

**RICHARD:**

Yeah, once I was doing a debate at University of North. I'm sorry, University of Georgia. Let me take that back. It was Georgia State University. Let me get that right. And I kept making this point. Well, the question about God's existence is a philosophical question. I made that several times. During the Q & A, this gentleman came up to me and said, well, who are you to say that it's a philosophical question?

And I was sort of taken aback by that, because it would be like asking, well, who are you to say that the study of plants is a botanical question? It's like, well, it's not like the botanist didn't

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have anything else to study, you know. Who hasn't gotten a thing assigned to them to study? Well, the botanists don't have anything. Okay, let's give them plants. I was like, well, no, it's the other way around. The people that study the plants, we just label botany.

So, the word philosophy now has become attached to a certain body of knowledge and a certain collection of methods and things that have developed over the course primarily of western civilization. So, it deals with fundamental questions about the nature of reality. Do things have natures? Like, is there such thing as human nature that the zygote has, the conceptus has instantly, and then it has potencies that eventually get actualized to a full grown human? Or is everything like an artifact?

That's a philosophical, metaphysical question. Questions about knowing. How do we know what's real? Can we trust our senses? Is there faculties that we have to knowing reality other than our seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling in our intellect? That kind of discussion is epistemology. And you could go down the list of philosophy of religion to deal with questions of God, philosophy of language, to study objectivity and meaning, political philosophy to talk about things like rights, which is a big thing, you know? The trans rights, and you press the question, well, what is a right? Where does that even come? That's a philosophical question.

So, here we are now, 2800 years of history from the ancient Greeks of this, dealing with these kind of questions, and we're standing on the shoulders. So, the church fathers really appeal to a lot of the categories and methods of the Greek philosophers to formulate foundational theology. And now that that stuff is beginning to get challenged in a way that it never has, we're finding ourselves, I think, having to appeal more and more to the tools and methods of philosophy.

**FRANK:**

Would logic be considered a category of philosophy?

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. It would be, yes.

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**FRANK:**

Just right thinking about reality is part of philosophy.

**RICHARD:**

That's right, yeah. If the logic is flawed, then everything downstream for that's going to be flawed to that same extent. So, logic is foundational for sure. And so, all of these things, I'm not suggesting that these things are easily accessible or they're easily that we can settle all the disputes, but there are the disputes, and there is a core truth about the nature of reality we've got to contend for. And for better or for worse, the discipline that's uniquely fitted to carry on that battle is philosophy.

**FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, we're talking to Dr. Richard G. Howe. We're examining philosophy today on the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. And if you're listening to this on the American Family Radio network, we also have a midweek podcast that is not broadcast on AFR. It comes out every Tuesday. Just go to wherever you find podcasts and look for the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. Or you can go to our website, [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org). For that and a lot more, I'm Frank Turek. Back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. As always, we're going to college campuses this fall. This time, we're calling our campaign the 'Truth Rising' campaign, asking questions no one is allowed to ask. And we're going to be doing the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist program and answering these questions that we think people no longer are allowed to ask. We're going to be first at the University of Texas at Dallas on September 5. Then the next night we're going to be at Calvary Chapel, Tucson, in between colleges with my friend Charlie Kirk and also the pastor, Robert Furrow.

Then on the 9th in Phoenix we'll be at Arizona State University. And there are many more coming up later in the semester. Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org) and click on events. You will see Frank Turek calendar there. And I don't often mention this, but all of these events on college campuses are supported by you. We don't charge students a dime to go to any of these.

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So, if you want to help reach kids on very dark college campuses, go to [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org). Click on donate and your donation will go to help us bring the truth to these very dark places in society. These places are so dark that you actually have people on these campuses supporting the new Nazis. They're called Hamas. We're going into that area and we're trying to bring the truth of Jesus there. So, if you can help us donate at [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org).

All right, let me go back to my friend, Dr. Richard G. Howe. We're talking about philosophy today. Now, Richard, we were talking about before the break, logic. And now logic is one category or one aspect of philosophy. We actually have a logic course that we teach to 6th to 8th graders. It's called 'Train Your Brain.' And that that course is actually coming up, ladies and gentlemen.

If you go to [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org) and click on online courses, you will see it there. But we're actually telling parents to take it, too, Richard, because most people haven't had a course in logic. And you teach logic at SES. What do you think one of the biggest mistakes that Christians today make when it comes to logic? What logical errors are out there in the world that Christians aren't able to correct?

**RICHARD:**

Wow, that's a tough one. The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about the challenges is how self-refuting statements can really trip people up, because they don't recognize that they are self-refuting.

**FRANK:**

Like what?

**RICHARD:**

Well, I mean, you know, an obvious example would be somebody that says, well, I can't say anything in English, and they say it in English.

**FRANK:**

Right. [Laughter]

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**RICHARD:**

Or there are no truths, and they say that it's truth, or you ought not tell people what they should do, but they're telling me what I ought to do, namely those kind of things. And so, would that they were all that obvious. And sometimes the self-refutation can be kind of spread out through a paragraph or so.

So, it's a skill. I think it's probably the most important skill someone can bring out of training and critical thinking, and which is not critical. You know, it's not the critical thinking, but we talk about the word critical. We use that in terms of critical race theory. It's a different use of the word critical. But when they're training and doing apologetics, is being able to recognize these self-refuting statements and not be scandalized by them when people make these kind of things.

Like, you know, probably what happens a lot in the political arena are people that traffic in categories that their own view of reality doesn't allow. So, they're just contradicting their own view of reality, like pandering for rights and clamoring for these things when they have a view of reality where there are any such thing as rights, for example. So, it's a skill that you could develop, and I think a great way to do it is take a logic class, take training logic, learn the basic laws of logic, non-contradiction, excluded middle and identity, and then principles of inference, syllogisms, and these things.

You know, the illustration I used to use in the logic classes when I taught at the seminary, and I still teach at the seminary, but I've lateraled off most of my logic classes now, was I had one of those little hand grip things that you squeeze that are, you know, built. Well, if you think about that and you're sitting there squeezing this thing for, you know, 20 minutes or whatever, it doesn't seem to do anything practical. It doesn't cook a meal, doesn't suture a wound, doesn't repair an automobile.

But what it does do is it develops muscles that, when it comes time to cook the meal, suture a wound, or repair a car, those muscles are ready. So, sitting in a logic class might strike people as like exercises, like doing Sudoku games or something. You're just doing these useless exercises. Doesn't really seem practical, but it's developing mental muscles.

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To be able to then skillfully critique ideas as they come down the pipeline through political campaigns or through religious events, services, sermons, podcasts, whatever it is that you take in ideas, you get those skills going to really pick up on, for example, the self-refuting statements, but other things as well.

**FRANK:**

I think you're right. Out of everything I've learned in seminary that had to do with philosophy, I think being able to identify self-defeating statements has been the most useful. In fact, the book 'Stealing from God' that I put together about nine years ago, the whole book is practically just looking at what atheists are saying and pointing out that what they're saying is self-refuting.

**RICHARD:**

Right, exactly.

**FRANK:**

It doesn't work by their own logic. I'll just give you one example. Lawrence Krauss, who is not just an atheist, but an anti-theist. He thinks that every cause is material. It's got to be a material cause. So, whatever created the universe has to be material itself. And so, one thing that I pointed out in the book was that if Lawrence Krauss is going to say every cause is material, that would mean that whatever caused the thought that he had that every cause is material, must also be material.

Well, you say he's got a brain. Yeah, I know he's got a brain. But if he doesn't have a mind distinct from the brain, or at least not identical to the brain, then why should he believe his thought is true? Because if his thoughts are driven completely by the laws of physics, then he shouldn't believe whatever he thinks is true, including the claim that all causes must be material.

**RICHARD:**

It's astounding that, having pointed that out to him, I suspect he still didn't get it. And I think one of the problems there is he's probably skilled as a scientist, dealing with these really narrowly rigid mathematical kinds of things, but not quite as adept at abstract reasoning that a

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good course in philosophy would have exercised him, those kind of muscles to do. So, he doesn't get the unavoidable conclusion that, well, the only reason he believes that everything is material is because he was caused to believe that, which means it could not be.

It could be possible that it's not true, because it'd be like asking, well, when water is boiling, is the boiling true? You go, no, the boiling is just the result of the heat. It doesn't make sense to say the boiling was true. You just say the boiling is from the heat applied to the water.

Well, it's the same thing. Then the thought that he has that, if you can even call it a thought, that every cause is material, is just caused by something prior to that as material, then it doesn't make sense to even talk about whether it is true or false. Those words end up being evacuated of any meaning. But I think he has trouble seeing that perhaps.

**FRANK:**

Right, right. And C.S. Lewis put it so well. He 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 byproduct of some atoms within my skull. 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.

**RICHARD:**

He does a great job of just putting these down cookies on the bottom shelf. And I love that. I mean, because then, you know, given what I would have understand to be just a standard view, then that would mean all of his thoughts were predetermined.

**FRANK:**

That's right.

**RICHARD:**

By just these fixed laws. But of course, if it's predetermined, then I think by any reasonable definition of reasonable, they aren't reasonable.

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**FRANK:**

No, they're just reacting.

**RICHARD:**

Is getting a tan reasonable when you're out in the sun? No, it's just what happens. It's not reasonable or unreasonable. It's just a cause and effect. So, if my thoughts are that, then they don't even fit the definition of being reasonable thoughts, which is odd then, because he thought the reason that you ought to believe Lawrence Krauss is that his views are reasonable. You would think? I mean, I'd like to think he thinks he's reasonable, but he couldn't be reasonable given the antecedents to all of the thoughts that he claims to be true.

**FRANK:**

Yes. In order for materialism to be true, you have to assume it's false so you can do the experiments to discover that it's true.

**RICHARD:**

That's right. Yeah. Yeah. [Laughter]

**FRANK:**

Because if you're just a molecular machine, a moist robot, how can you do an experiment that will give you a true result? You can't.

**RICHARD:**

That's right. And so, what that highlights already is there's a distinction to be drawn between the material and the immaterial. And the intellect of a human being, as Aristotle understood, and certainly the church fathers, and all the way down understood, that there's an immaterial aspect to our being as a human being, our rationality, that enables us to be able to reason about reality and not constrained by the physical laws of the reality that we're reasoning about.

**FRANK:**

You see what we're doing here, friends? We're using philosophy. We're using the laws of logic and applying them to things people say and pointing out that they don't have in their worldview

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the resources to say what they say. And if they are saying what they're saying and what they're really saying is true, they have no warrant to believe it's true.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. And that is just straightforward apologetics is what that is, in this case, using the tools of philosophy and methods of philosophy to push the argument down. So, it's just classic, classic apologetic method here.

**FRANK:**

It's also true when we point out that someone in the public square, as you just mentioned, Richard, they argue for rights, and then you ask them, what is the source of these rights? And if they're atheists, they don't have a foundation that can give them rights. Because if atheism's true, there's no purpose to life. There's no objective purpose, which means there's no objective right or wrong way to live life, which means there are no rights.

It's just your opinion against somebody else's opinion. And pointing this out is just using the law of non-contradiction, using the laws of logic to point out that you're stealing, if you're an atheist, you're stealing a standard from the theistic worldview in order to make your atheistic worldview work. And you don't have that.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. You know, you have to ask yourself, how did this stuff get such traction?

**FRANK:**

How did it?

**RICHARD:**

And it didn't happen overnight. But when you, when a culture becomes so driven by emotion and feelings, I feel like I'm a woman, for example, when a man says that. Then the emotions or the feelings are driving the actions and the conclusions, rather than the principles of logic, and reason, and sound understanding of the nature of reality and such. Then it, that takes a while to, I think, really see the, it sort of get its grip on the general culture.

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And that's what we're dealing with in so many quarters now. Didn't happen overnight, won't be reversed overnight, but can be reversed overnight in individual people. And sometimes students, some of my students, might seemingly get overwhelmed by the daunting task of going therefore, into all the world and make disciples.

But I think Jesus meant one mind at a time, one soul at a time. Whatever sphere of influence you have in your life, whether it's your immediate family, an extended family, work, friends, whatever, that's the thing over which we need to find ourselves being faithful.

**FRANK:**

And by the way, if you're mad over anything we've said, you're assuming a moral standard. Where are you getting that moral standard from if you're not a theist? Much more with Dr. Richard G. Howe. We're talking philosophy today and its importance on being an apologist, and being a good theologian, and reaching the world. Don't go anywhere. We're back in two minutes. I'm Frank Turek.

Ladies and gentlemen, what would it be like to take a VIP trip to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to see the evidence for the Exodus right in Egypt, including all the other amazing sites in Egypt, and then go to the real Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia? That's where we think it is, and actually climb Mount Sinai. You can do so if you come with me to Egypt and Saudi Arabia this December. Go to [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org). Click on events. You will see it there.

We're taking a small group. It is going to be amazing. Hope to see you in Egypt and on the real Mount Sinai this December. Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio network. What good is philosophy? Well, I actually have a philosophy about that. It's very important. And my guest today, Dr. Richard G. Howe, professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary, SES.edu, a great place to go to school. You can take all your courses online. Check it out. And if you go to [SES.edu/Frank](http://SES.edu/Frank), you might get a scholarship for taking certain apologetic courses. So, check all that out.

Richard, we've been talking about the benefit of philosophy, particularly logic, to defending the faith. And not only defending the faith but pointing out that what other people say about their worldview doesn't work logically. We've uncovered some false statements that have been

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made, some self-referential or self-refuting statements. We call them sometimes self-defeating statements like, I can't speak a word in English, right? Or there is no truth. Is that true? And so many people say things like that. What about, though, this concept? We've talked a little bit about logic. Let's talk about ontology. What is ontology?

**RICHARD:**

So, I think in my experience today, the word ontology is the same as the word metaphysics. Okay? For the most part. There's a historical distinction to be drawn, but I think it's not worth exploring necessarily. So, ontology or metaphysics will deal... It's that branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of things, of reality itself. So, we had mentioned a Lawrence Krauss, who's a materialist.

So, that's a metaphysic in a sense. That's an ontology. He's operating with this idea that all of reality is just material or whatever. So, those kind of questions about the nature of reality, is that branch of philosophy primarily referred to as metaphysics. Or sometimes the grammar may require the word ontology. Basically, I think those are synonymous.

**FRANK:**

And it seems to me that one of the biggest mistakes that atheists make, I see this over and over again, is they confuse ontology and epistemology, particularly when it comes to the moral argument. They try and say, well, are you saying I can't be moral without God? Or are you saying I don't know morality without God? And that's not what we're saying.

**RICHARD:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

What are we saying?

**RICHARD:**

Yeah. And that distinction is so critical because the objections sometimes will be objections about the questions of knowledge of morality, and they put them forth as if they somehow are addressing the nature of morality itself. Right? So, because I can't maybe know whether one

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thing or the other is moral or immoral in this specific situation, that therefore morality itself is a thing that's not knowable or whatever.

So, yeah, what it is to be moral, and what do we mean when we say something is moral is a different question than how is it that we know what is moral? How do we discover what is moral? And they're obviously not disconnected completely, but they have to be understood separately enough to grasp, okay, what's at stake when we're talking about what morality is versus what's all the protocols and stuff about how I may know what is moral in any given situation.

**FRANK:**

So, how, you know, is epistemology. That's one aspect of philosophy. And the thing you're trying to know is what ontology studies.

**RICHARD:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

You know, an illustration I've given before is you could be driving down the street and know that the speed limit sign says 70 miles an hour, and you can deny there's a traffic authority. Right? So, you know what the speed limit is? You can obey the speed limit while you're denying that there's a traffic authority. But there would be no speed limit sign to know unless there was a traffic authority. And similarly, you can know what the right thing to do is. You can actually be moral, but there would be no moral standard, objective moral standard, unless God existed, just like there'd be no speed limit unless a traffic authority existed.

**RICHARD:**

You know, I think it highlights something that we can leverage, and you do a good job of leveraging this in advancing the case for Christianity. And that is, evidently that some things are right or wrong is more obvious to people than God's existence. So, we're already connected with them the fact that they know some things are right or wrong, we might disagree on some, but by and large, you know, although it is getting harder and harder to pick out something that we think everybody would agree.

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**FRANK:**

Torturing babies for fun.

**RICHARD:**

Yeah, you can't even use Hitler anymore. I mean, it's like, well, what? But at any rate, so far, we maybe slavery, that would be still a good thing to use. Rape, perhaps. But at any rate, people know that certain things are wrong, and we leverage that knowledge that they have to the fact that there wouldn't be a such thing as something being wrong were it not for the fact that there's a God who made the world the way that he did. And that's part of the moral argument for God's existence.

So, it works to our advantage that despite the fact that we may disagree on major things like whether abortion is right or wrong or whatever, there's some place, unless a person is just totally psychopathic or whatever, whatever the word is, that we can connect with him on these questions of morality and leverage that back to an argument for the God of the Bible.

**FRANK:**

If there is no God, then nothing is ultimately right or wrong. It's just your opinion. In fact, there was a debate many years ago between William Lane Craig and Louise Anthony, who was an atheist. And she admitted something at the end of the debate. I have this in the book, 'Stealing from God.' When she said something like this, I'm paraphrasing, she said that any argument for atheism will be built on weaker premises than... And the intuition I have that say torturing babies for fun is wrong, right? Or that murder is wrong, or that rape is wrong. S

he knows, in other words, with more certainty that rape is wrong, then she knows that atheism's true. So, why would she ever conclude that atheism's true? And that was an admission that she made. In fact, here's something that we probably should talk about, Richard. The necessity of philosophy to do science, because you always hear atheists and others saying, oh, well, you know, science can prove everything, and science is supreme, and we get all our truth from science. What's the problem with that claim?

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**RICHARD:**

So, it's interesting, I'm reminded of a, not really a debate, but you could juxtapose three thinkers with respect to this question. Stephen Jay Gould was famous. He was a paleontologist at Harvard University, very well regarded scientist. And he had this notion of what he called NOMA, which was non-overlapping magisterium. And he offered that as a solution to the supposed conflict between religion and science. And he thought, the reason why there's a conflict is invariably one or the other ventures into areas that's not their domain.

Good fences make great neighbors, right? If everybody just stayed in their silos, there wouldn't be any conflict. And then Alistair McGrath, I think, had the right answer when he said, well, I opt for a partially overlapping. The NOMA, by the way, was non-overlapping magisterium. That was what the acronym stood for. McGrath came along and said, well, I for a partially overlapping magisterium - POMA, which means sometimes science talks about things that the theologian's totally indifferent about. Sometimes the theologian talks about things the scientist is totally indifferent about.

But there may be some things they both talk about that have impact for each other, like, say, the information content of the DNA. That's a scientific issue, but information content now is going to have implications for the design argument. Right? And stuff.

Well, Richard Dawkins, both in his 'Blind Watchmaker' and in 'The God Delusion,' opts for what I call just a completely overlapping magisterium, or COMA, if you will. In other words, he actually argues, or I shouldn't say argues, he actually asserts that all of these questions about God and morality, miracles, whatever, are all scientific questions. The problem is, that statement, "all of these questions are scientific questions", is itself a philosophical statement.

**FRANK:**

It's not a scientific statement.

**RICHARD:**

It's not a scientific statement.

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**FRANK:**

Yeah. You can't go in the laboratory and prove it.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. There's no Bunsen Burner you can put under a beaker that all of a sudden is going to bubble up that statement. Right? It just is self-refuted. And again, I mean, Richard Dawkins is consummate scientist. I mean, he's a brilliant human being. Like, why doesn't he see this? And as self-serving as it is, like, yeah, well, he should have taken some philosophy when he was training as a scientist to think a little bit more abstractly about being able to see the self-refuting nature of all you know, science can answer every question. Well, that question itself is not answered by science.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, Einstein said that the man of science is a very poor philosopher, but in order to be a good scientist, you need to know philosophy, because science doesn't say anything. Scientists do. And they have to gather and interpret the data. Science doesn't do that. Scientists do that. And if they've ruled out, say, intelligent causes before they look at the evidence, which is what many atheists do, not all, but many do.

And the only game in town has got to be a non-intelligent cause, a natural cause, is it any wonder they always say it's got to be a natural cause? Is it any wonder they say that, you know, we got here through non-intelligent processes, just natural laws working overtime on nonliving materials. Is there any wonder why they came to that conclusion? It's the only option they've given themselves philosophically.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. And again, that didn't happen overnight either. You know, it's been a war of attrition at that level. And now this is the cumulative effect where you have somebody as smart as a Richard Dawkins or Lawrence Krauss who can't even see the wall that's right in front of them, so to speak. You know, they've blinded themselves. They're like people out on the beach arguing there's no seashells because their metal detector didn't catch anything, you know? [Laughter]

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**FRANK:**

Right.

**RICHARD:**

Yeah. And you go, no, they're made out of calcium carbonate, they're not made out of metal. Your method already is excluding a lot of the data. Now, they might say, well, I don't think my method is excluding the data. Okay, but then now we're doing philosophy to have that argument. Whether the method is or isn't illicitly selecting the data is itself a philosophical question.

**FRANK:**

It is. And that's what people don't get, that you have to have philosophy in order to do science. The question is, are you using proper philosophy or are you using poor philosophy? You know, Hawking famously said, philosophy is dead. I guess that was his philosophy.

**RICHARD:**

I guess so. I suppose his colleagues at Cambridge philosophy department would be surprised.

**FRANK:**

They closed. [Laughter]

**RICHARD:**

They've got their pink slip as soon as Hawking said that.

**FRANK:**

Remember, friends, when somebody says, all truth comes from science, simply ask them, does that truth come from science? Here is applying the law of non-contradiction, an example of applying the law of non-contradiction. Because that claim that all truth comes from science is itself not a scientific truth. You don't come to that conclusion in the laboratory. That's not a statement of science. That's a statement about science. Now we're back to philosophy.

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**RICHARD:**

Absolutely.

**FRANK:**

It's unavoidable.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. And, you know, maybe in a future podcast we could explore the difference between good and bad philosophy, because there are bad philosophies out there, in my opinion. And some lines we could draw are very, very, very broad. You know, that philosophy is like a materialism, that everything, those are easier to see. But then it can get kind of subtle and technical in some disputes, even among Christians there.

Maybe that's one of those things that we don't need to major on the minors, perhaps, but at other times it might come in handy to be aware of some of those distinctions of good and bad philosophy. There was a tradition of philosophy that really, I would argue, undergirded western civilization, including the church that we picked up from the ancient Greeks, that has largely begun to arise primarily in Protestantism since the 17th century. And I think that's what gave rise to some of these kind of materialist, scientific scientism.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, scientism, the idea that you get all your truth from science. But that truth doesn't come from science, so it can't be true ladies and gentlemen. We've got a lot more with Dr. Richard Howe. RichardGHowe.com, a lot of great resources up there. Check him out there. And we will be back in just two minutes. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist on the American Family Radio network. This is also a podcast. See you back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, what is just as important as teaching your kids the Bible? Logic, how to think. Because if they don't know logic, they're probably not going to understand the Bible very well. And we don't teach logic in public school anymore. Instead of teaching kids how to think, we're teaching them what to feel. And that can be dangerous, because if you start following your emotions, your feelings, without the check of reason and logic, you're going to wind up in a very dark place, and so is anybody that does that, young or old.

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Well, we've got two courses that are starting September 9. One is called 'Train Your Brain.' That's all about how to think better. And the other is called 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' Now, there are two tracks to 'Train Your Brain.' One is for 6th to 8th graders, and the other track is for everybody else. So, if you want to learn how to think better or have your kid learn to think better, and not be persuaded by the seductive slogans of our culture, enroll them and enroll yourself in 'Train Your Brain.'

I'll also be teaching 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' for high schoolers and college kids. And that starts on September 9 as well. So, we've got two great courses. 'Train Your Brain' and also 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' Go to [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org). Click on online courses. You will see them there. Sign up soon because we have limited seating. Again, [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org). Click on online courses for 'Train Your Brain' and/or 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' I hope to see you in both of those courses.

Ladies and gentlemen, what good is philosophy? That's what we're talking about today with the great Dr. Richard G. Howe. [RichardGHowe.com](http://RichardGHowe.com). A lot of great resources up there. Check it out. How do we use philosophy, though, to interpret the Bible? Here's a philosophical question. It's a hermeneutical question as well, which is part of philosophy, and that is, Dr. Howe, do you take the Bible literally?

**RICHARD:**

Wow. Okay. So, people use the word literally at least two different ways. If they mean literally that you take it to mean what it means. Okay, fine. Then yes, I take it literally. If it means x, then I take it to mean x. Okay, fine. But more commonly, people would take literally to mean something as opposed to, say, a figure of speech. In that respect, then I don't take the Bible always literally. When Isaiah 55 says, talking about the celebration at the end of times, the trees will clap their hands, it doesn't mean that trees literally have hands physically, but metaphorically.

In a talk that I do, I've identified for myself at least eleven different ways that a statement can correspond to reality, because corresponding to reality is what we mean by a statement being

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true. So, if somebody said, well, I don't believe the Bible is true, why? Because Isaiah says the trees will clap their hands.

And it's not true that trees have hands. I go, it's not literally true they have hands, but it's metaphorically true. So, you can identify metaphors, similes, synecdoches, metonymies, informal statements, round numbers, things like that. Lot of different ways. In other words, the Bible talks the way normal human beings talk, right? So, I take it literally if you mean, you take it to mean what it means, or I don't take it literally if that means to the exclusion of figures of speech.

**FRANK:**

So, everything in the Bible is literally true, but not everything is expressed literally.

**RICHARD:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

Okay, so the trees clapping their hands means something else because they don't have hands.

**RICHARD:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

But so, when we read, well, how do we know we shouldn't believe that the trees have hands?

**RICHARD:**

Okay, so to me--

**FRANK:**

How do we know that God doesn't have eyes? Because His eyes go to and fro.

**RICHARD:**

That's right.

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**FRANK:**

How do we know that?

**RICHARD:**

Well, I love the Isaiah passage because it does tee up the more complicated question about God. And that is the reason we know that trees don't literally have hands, but only metaphorically, or that the text is speaking metaphorically, is that we have been able to come to know as an adult, you learn enough about the nature of a tree so that when someone ascribes hands to it, you know they're speaking poetically. All right?

So, that's the way we do with everything that we learn. We learn about, you know, what a tree is, what a human is, whatever. And so, we can understand what are true or false statements if they don't correspond to that thing or what our figures of speech, if they correspond literally, versus or sorry, metaphorically or something like that. Right? So, you transfer that to the question of God's existence.

As you said, the eyes of the Lord roam to and fro in the earth. Genesis 3, God's walking around in the garden. I asked a friend of mine, do you think God has legs? And he said, no, I don't think He does. Well, it says He's walking. Snakes don't walk. They don't have legs. How's God walking around the garden? So, why don't you believe He has legs? He said, well, I believe that God is a spirit. John 4 says, God is spirit. I said, so what do you do with the Genesis 3 passage?

He said, I take it as a figure of speech. And I said, well, how do you know the John 4 passage isn't the figure of speech? It doesn't say it's a figure of speech. It's just says that God is spirit. The other says, God is walking. Second Samuel 7, God's moving around in the tent. He said, when are you going to build me a house? I've been moving around this tent. Wait a minute. I thought God was omnipresent, or Abraham's about to kill Isaac.

The knife is about to come down. The angel stops him. God says, now I know. You go, I thought he was omniscient. Now He knows, like he didn't know before? And so, I think we see all throughout the Bible that it describes God, I can't think of one exception. It describes God along the categories of the finite created world.

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So, the question is, okay, so how do we know these things aren't literally true about God? That's what the Dake Study Bible does. God literally? Very influential in the Word of Faith movement. Like Benny Hinn's nine members of the Trinity. You remember that kind of heresy he went into for a while? He gets that from Dake.

So, and I think the question raises the issue of we have to be able to know enough about the nature of God in order to be able to judge when the Scriptures are speaking properly or literally versus figuratively. And the key verse to me that gives, I think, us the prerogative to do this is Romans 1:20, that says that the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen being understood through the things that are made. All right?

So, somehow, we can go from what we see, hear, taste, touch, or smell, in the created world, and be able to reason to what the maker of the sea, of the what we can see, hear, taste, touch or smell, must be like, as omnipotent, omniscient, timeless, spaceless. And interestingly Frank, it kind of connected even more down to the mundane, is later on in that same chapter in Romans, when Paul indicts homosexuality, he doesn't appeal to Leviticus 20. He appeals to nature, man. Men doing that which is against nature.

Because while the Romans might have had, you might have expected them to not give much credence to Leviticus. Maybe as Gentiles they didn't know what a Leviticus was. They can't ignore nature because they can't excuse themselves from the world that they're in. So, my argument is that we can start from what you see, hear, taste, touch, or smell, and prove the God of the Bible. And when somebody says, what does that look like? I go, take my classical philosophy class at Southern Evangelical Seminary and we get a start on.

**FRANK:**

Well, the short answer is, we know God by His effects as Aquinas said.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. That's right.

**FRANK:**

So, we've got a creation. That's the effect. Reason back to a cause, a creator.

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**RICHARD:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

Design effect, reason back to a cause, a designer. Moral law, effect. Reason back to a cause, a moral law giver, etc. If time had a beginning, if time is an effect, whatever created time must be outside of time. In other words, the cause must be timeless. And we know time had to have a beginning. If it didn't, today never would have gotten here. So, there are ways you can think about nature, natural revelation, that will help us understand God in the Bible. So, here we are bringing philosophy to the text. It's unavoidable. You have to bring philosophy of some kind.

**RICHARD:**

At least in this respect, because I think, you know, not to oversimplify it again, but in the best case scenario, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork. If you show somebody, say, hey, you know, the universe hasn't always existed. That's what the scientists say. So, it must have been caused by something outside the universe. I think most people go, well, that sounds like God to me. I mean, who else is in the business of making universes?

It's only because of these really toxic influences of bad philosophy since the 17th century, and primarily in Protestantism, being more vulnerable to it, in my judgment, that now what might have been obvious to a normal human being, you can now see a Lawrence Krauss stare right into the heavens and not see the glory of God that the heavens declare, because he's been so scandalized by bad thinking, like a materialism or whatever.

So, now the philosophy has to come in to triage the conversation, to peel back the scabs, or intellectual scabs that have been building for centuries in recent history, say, the last few centuries at least, in order to get back to this place where people can connect the dots, that there's a heavens, therefore there's a heavens maker out there. And then we go downstream from that to show that He's the God who's revealed Himself to Moses, ultimately incarnated in the Lord Jesus.

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**FRANK:**

Well said. And you said it through metaphor. Scabs.

**RICHARD:**

Yeah

**FRANK:**

Intellectual scabs, right? You're speaking in a metaphorical way just like the Bible does.

**RICHARD:**

Absolutely. If the Bible didn't speak the way people talk, that would be the thing the critics would criticize. It's so odd. When it does speak the way people talk, and they criticize it for that, you know? Giving God hands or eyes or whatever. No, it's just a normal way we talk. But we know God doesn't have these things literally, because we can know from the effect what the cause must be like.

**FRANK:**

So, we're bringing our sort of general concept of a creator to the text. That's what Paul is saying in Romans 1, there's this natural revelation that we have from the creation and from conscience, we can know that this being has certain attributes. So, when we read in the Bible that God has eyes or the arm of the Lord does this or that, we know it's not a physical representation. It's a metaphorical representation of God.

**RICHARD:**

Although the, you know, it also says He has hair. And now, and I was a little, kind of tempted there to maybe, maybe they've got something.

**FRANK:**

For those of you who can't see, this, Dr. Richard G. Howe is 100% bald. And your life verse is?

**RICHARD:**

Leviticus 13:40.

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**FRANK:**

Which says?

**RICHARD:**

It's a great verse to live by. As for the man whose hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, but he is clean. I like the "but he is clean" because we're in suspension, disbelief. I'm not so sure about this guy. No, no, no, it's okay. He's clean. [Laughter]

**FRANK:**

He's clean. That's right. That's right. So, we're using philosophy, no matter whether you're an atheist or a Christian, you're using philosophy to judge reality. And part of judging reality are the laws of logic, which is part of philosophy.

**RICHARD:**

Yes, absolutely.

**FRANK:**

And so, you can't get away from it. Now, you can use bad philosophy and come to wrong conclusions. As C.S. Lewis famously said, good philosophy must exist if for no other reason, to correct bad philosophy.

**RICHARD:**

That's right. Yeah, and he's echoing Aquinas there. It says because at times, the teacher of the sacred scripture must at times oppose the philosophers, he must make use of philosophy. And we're not saying if somebody walks outside and he sees a sunny sky that's on, you know, a bright sunny day, he's not doing astronomy. But if you're going to do an in depth analysis of the bright sun in the sky, then you're doing, you know, astronomy.

So, what we're saying is it's not just these things that are obvious things that normal humans know to be true. It's when these things begin to be compromised, then the in depth analysis and defense of some of these things will require philosophy to rescue them.

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**FRANK:**

I use a lot of philosophy in the book 'Stealing from God' friends. So, if you want to see how it's applied to the contemporary issues of the day, check out the book 'Stealing from God.' What other resources are out there, Richard, that you might recommend?

**RICHARD:**

So, one that I like, just ran across recently, even though it was written almost before I was born. We won't go into when that was, by Daniel Sullivan. It's called--

**FRANK:**

It's called 'An Introduction to Philosophy: Perennial Principles of the Classical Realist Tradition.' The paperback edition came out in 1992, but he originally wrote it in 1957.

**RICHARD:**

Yeah.

**FRANK:**

So, it's almost a classic itself.

**RICHARD:**

It is. And it's a book that I require. I'm just now reading through and I'm requiring it for my students in my classical philosophy class. Also it's a little like Ed Fazer's 'Last Superstition.'

**FRANK:**

Yes.

**RICHARD:**

It's a little, little feisty, a little heavy handed, but it's fun. If he's on your side, then the sarcasm worked. You know, he knows about it as much as Richard Dawson when he's talking about Richard Dawkins. [Laughter]

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**FRANK:**

Richard Dawson, he calls him. He knows about, as much about philosophy as Richard Dawson does. Most of you don't even know who Richard Dawson was. The Price is Right! No, it wasn't the Price is Right. He was on the 'Family Feud.' Anyway, running out of time, Richard. A great program. Ladies and gentlemen, go to RichardGHowe.com and go to SES.edu/Frank. Take a class in apologetics. Also, don't forget, I'm going to be at UT Dallas on the fifth, Calvary Chapel, Tucson on the 6th of September, and then Arizona State on the 9th of September. Hope to see you out there. God bless.

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