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# Circular Reasoning

circulus in demonstrando

(also known as: paradoxical thinking, circular argument, circular cause and consequence, reasoning in a circle)

**Description:** A type of reasoning in which the proposition is supported by the premises, which is supported by the proposition, creating a circle in reasoning where no useful information is being shared. This fallacy is often quite humorous.

# Logical Form:

*X is true because of Y. Y is true because of X.* 

# Example #1:

Pvt. Joe Bowers: What are these electrolytes? Do you even know? Secretary of State: They're... what they use to make Brawndo! Pvt. Joe Bowers: But why do they use them to make Brawndo? Secretary of Defense: [raises hand after a pause] Because Brawndo's got electrolytes.

**Explanation:** This example is from a favorite movie of mine, *Idiocracy*, where Pvt. Joe Bowers (played by Luke Wilson) is dealing with a bunch of not-very-smart guys from the future. Joe is not getting any useful information about electrolytes, no matter how hard he tries.

# Example #2:

The Bible is the Word of God because God tells us it is... in the Bible.

Argument from Silence Argument of the Beard Argument to Moderation Argument to the Purse Avoiding the Issue Base Rate Fallacy Begging the Question **Biased Sample Fallacy** Blind Authority Fallacy Broken Window Fallacy **Bulverism** Causal Reductionism **Cherry Picking Circular Definition Circular Reasoning** The Fallacies: Co–Ex The Fallacies: Fa-Hy The Fallacies: Id-Mu The Fallacies: Na-Ri The Fallacies: Sc-Wi

**Explanation:** This is a very serious circular argument on which many people base their entire lives. This is like getting an e-mail from a Nigerian prince, offering to give you his billion dollar fortune -- but only after you wire him a "good will" offering of \$50,000. Of course, you are skeptical until you read the final line in the e-mail that reads "*I, prince Nubadola, assure you that this is my message, and it is legitimate. You can trust this e-mail and any others that come from me."* Now you know it is legitimate... because it says so in the e-mail.

**Exception:** Some philosophies state that we can never escape circular reasoning because the arguments always come back to axioms or first principles, but in those cases, the circles are very large and do manage to share useful information in determining the truth of the proposition.

**Tip:** Do your best to avoid circular arguments, as it will help you reason better because better reasoning is often a result of avoiding circular arguments.

#### **References:**

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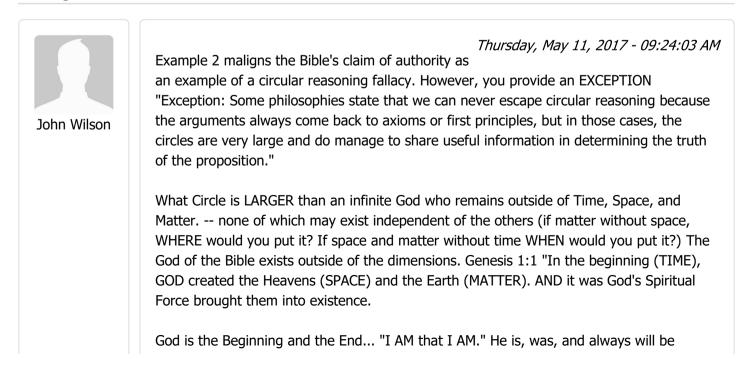
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Fallacies | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy



# Registered User Comments



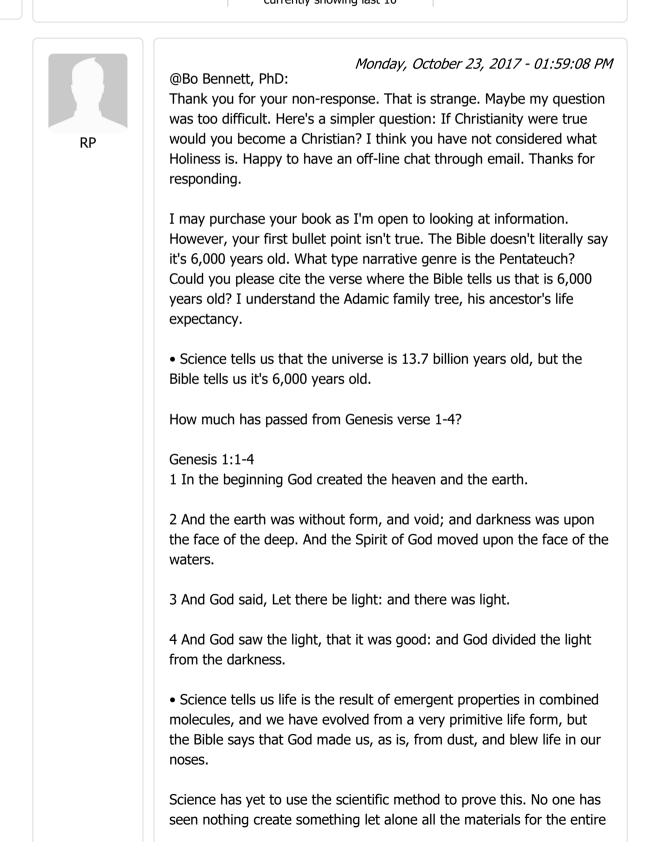
outside of the largest circle we can possibly imagine. He IS the source of every First Principle. Ergo, the God Who inspired the Bible is by nature a circular reasoning that reveals more than enough information to explain Immutable unchangeable, transcendent Truth. Without God, there can be no Truth OR Logic.

Therefore, the Bible's appeals to its own authority as God's Word because God said so is another large circle within the greatest Circle of all.

If THIS is not so, then there can be no exceptions to the Rule of Circular Reasoning.

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Show All 14 Replies currently showing last 10



universe. Then you need to explain how chemicals turned into life. Look up Abiogenesis and nucleosynthesis.			
In kindness.			
login to reply			0 votes



Bo Bennett, PhD *Monday, October 23, 2017 - 02:13:55 PM* @RP: Your question wasn't

too difficult; just not related to logical fallacies. I have spent 3 years of my life researching religion and debating. Unless you have some new arguments (nothing new in your post), then I suggest you call into the <u>Atheist Experience</u> and share your thoughts there.

As for the age of the earth and the bible, see <u>https://answersingenesis.org/age-of-the-earth/how-old-is-the-earth/</u>. Of course, people can use the Bible to "prove" virtually anything. But if you read my book you will know that :)

login to reply



@Bo Bennett, PhD:

Monday, October 23, 2017 - 02:33:27 PM

It doesn't matter how long you have been studying something that determines if you are right or wrong. Wouldn't science fall apart if that were true? Or, how many debates you have had. I applaud your engagement in these important questions. Are you being intellectually sincere? You seem to be searching for an authority, even claiming that I should accept your experiences as authority, The Atheist Experience, Ken Ham's ministry, etc. It's true because I someone said so. Isn't that point and case the **appeal to authority fallacy**?

I've never been able to find an atheist to reasonably answer this simple question. Give it a shot you are a highly decorated scholar:

If Christianity were true would you become a Christian?

login to reply

0 votes

1 votes



Bo Bennett, PhD

	Monaay, October 23, 2017 - 02:36:50 PM
@RP: Again, this is not the	<i>,,,</i> ,
place for theological debates.	Post your question here and I will
answer it: https://www.askahu	umanist.com. And I strongly suggest that
you clearly define "Christianity	" as well as "Christian".

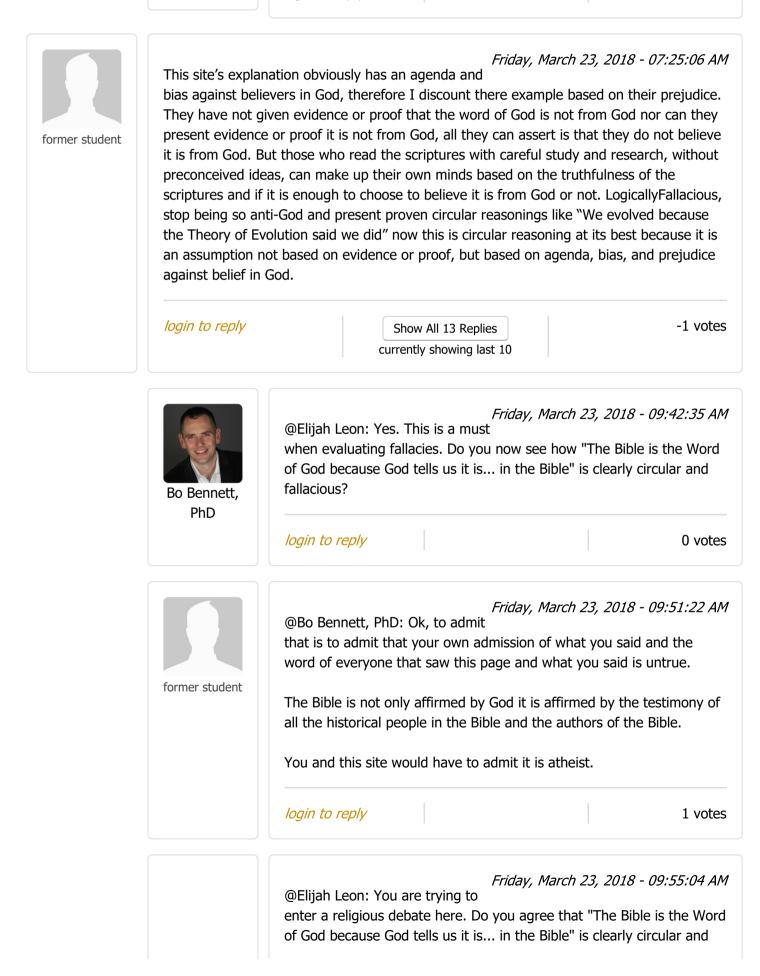
login to reply

	<pre>@Bo Bennett, PhD: Monday, October 23, 2017 - 02:47:56 PM Just purchased your book! :) Don't forget to sign it!</pre>				
RP	login to reply 0 votes				
	@RP: Thanks! Much appreciated :)				
Bo Bennett, PhD	login to reply 0 votes				
	<i>Saturday, February 10, 2018 - 12:12:15 PM</i> The axiom of Christianity is: All of the propositions of the 66 books of the Bible are true.				
Britton Cook	For someone to ask "How do you know the Bible is true?" is like asking someone to prove their axiom. This is logically absurd.				
	<i>login to reply</i> 0 votes				
Duh	<i>Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 04:57:16 AM</i> @RP: You realize you're giving way better reasons for why the Bible could be the word of God than the example given, which is like, the whole point The Bible is the word of God because there is "evidence from the early Church Fathers who knew Jesus' Disciples, the heretics of the faith, and the work Saint Luke did in interviewing eye witnesses" is not circular logic. "The Bible is the word of God because the Bible says it is," is. Is that so difficult to understand?				
	<i>login to reply</i> 0 votes				
	<i>Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 05:04:04 AM</i> @RP: where in the Bible does it say the universe is 6000 years old? Just curious				
Duh	login to reply 0 votes				
Duh	<i>Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 05:09:47 AM</i> I think you're confusing the idea that the Bible has an accurate description of God with the idea that the Bible is the word of God. "The Bible is true because it presents an accurate description of God" is not circular reasoning (though could				

be another fallacy, not sure). "The Bible is true because the Bible says

it is" is circular reasoning. It doesn't provide any compelling reasoning. I could say "I am right because it says right in my post that I am right." Do you think I'm right? Do you think that my reasoning is sound?

login to reply



Bo Bennett, PhD	fallacious? It doesn't matter if this an "atheist site" or if "God affirmed the Bible". I am sure there are many arguments for why one should think the Bible is the word of God. But "The Bible is the Word of God because God tells us it is in the Bible" is a fallacious argument. Can you see that?				
	login to reply			0 votes	
former student	@Bo Bennett, PhD: I am not entering an You are a person an Let us trade God for This quote is from B Now argue that that <i>login to reply</i>	nd you spok ' you. Bo Bennett b	e words. Decause Bo Bennett said it		
				1 10103	
Bo Bennett,	<i>Friday, March 23, 2018 - 10:03:31 AM</i> @Elijah Leon: You are clearly not answering my question. We are done here. Please don't post any more.				
PhD	login to reply			1 votes	
EARL ANTHONY MERTZ	"definition/example	Bennett, it of circular r definition -	<i>Sunday, July 15, 2018</i> did not, it came from the easoning", how does the o therefore since it meets ing	questioned	
	login to reply			0 votes	
EARL ANTHONY MERTZ	fallacious logic using bearings) it is not a	religious poi g religion as Religious ai Ind how cou	<i>Sunday, July 15, 2018</i> at nt, since this discussions p an example (it could of u rgument the point is you Ild an all powerful all know	point is sed ball ur argument is	
	login to reply			0 votes	

	<i>Sunday, July 15, 2018 -</i> @Bo Bennett, PhD: He is gaslighting/and using double speak ?	09:55:36 PM
EARL ANTHONY MERTZ	login to reply	0 votes
Josh	Friday, August 03, 2018 - @Bo Bennett, PhD: "virtually all Christians who value reason would agree." All other issues with this thread aside, have to call out what blatant manipulation, false assumption, and a bit of implied hominem - that the vast majority of Christians would agreed (not that they have been asked or can weigh in) and if you you lack reason, and are arguing against the vast majority believers. All this made a bit more silly by the fact that you could not have interacted with a statistically significant population will against the measure of 'all Christians' to be able to make the with any certainty.	at is a pretty d ad e with me d don't then of fellow
	login to reply	-1 votes
Duh	<i>Thursday, March 21, 2019</i> - Yes, both the example given and "We evolved because the Theory of Evolution said we equally fallacious. There could be many compelling reasons Bible is the word of God, but "because it is written in the B one of them. It is written in the Koran that the Koran is the God, so do you now believe that the Koran is the word of C all a compelling argument? The example doesn't touch on whether God exists. For example, if you said "The Bible is the God because I met God and he told me it was," that would circular reasoning (maybe it would not be reliable, but that another discussion).	did" are s why the bible" is not e word of God? Is it at the idea of the word of I not be
	login to reply	0 votes

*Thursday, August 02, 2018 - 09:14:14 PM* 

Honestly surprised no one has mentioned the obvious fallacy in example 2. Using that as an example presupposes that God does not exist. A very obvious bias exhibited by the site owner.

Josh

It also handily ignores the presponderance of evidence of the veracity of the Bible.

#### However, bias often makes for potent blindspots in reason.

#### login to reply

5 replies



Bo Bennett, PhD *Friday, August 03, 2018 - 07:30:28 AM*  **56** However, bias often makes for potent blindspots in reason.

I completely agree. Now, to your claim about the "obvious fallacy" in example #2. Let's use the Nigerian Prince scam e-mail:

"We can trust the Nigerian Prince because it says to trust him in the email he sent."

Perhaps Nigerian Prince supporters will be angry with me and claiming that I have an "obvious bias" against the Nigerian Prince because my example presupposes that the Nigerian Prince is not honestly trying to send me 50 million dollars. This doesn't matter. This might be true, and there could be a "preponderance of evidence" that the Nigerian Prince is a legitimate business man as well the fact that e-mail was really sent by him, **but the argument made is still circular, fallacious, and greatly problematic.** Look at the form of the argument and don't allow your emotions to blind you here because of the content of the argument:

X is true because of Y. Y is true because of X.

X = "The Bible is the Word of God" Y = "It says so in the Bible"

The Bible is the Word of God because it says so in the Bible. Why can we believe what the Bible says? Because it is the Word of God.

We can trust the Nigerian Prince because it says to trust him in the email.

Why should we trust what the e-mail says? Because it was written by the Nigerian Prince.

Both of these are fallacious arguments. No question about it.

Remember that just because an argument is fallacious, it doesn't make the conclusion wrong. The Bible may be the word of God, but "because it says so in the Bible" is a still a prime example of a circular argument.

login to reply



Josh

humorously obvious attempt to deceive and steal tells me a lot. Of course you don't know me, so you can't know that I do not argue from an emotional basis, but as it needs to be said. I am not blinded

the response. Your comparison of God to an instance of an almost

@Bo Bennett, PhD: Thanks for

from an emotional basis, but as it needs to be said, I am not blinded by emotion in pointing out a serious flaw in your attempt to provide an example of circular logic.

The second irony is that your attempt to define circular logic is based itself on circular logic, it pre-supposes what it seeks to prove to validate itself. Specifically that "OP example above" equals circular logic, why? because God is a liar or does not exist, why? because "OP example of circular logic above."

I can understand where you are coming from, and we certainly like to use hypotheticals to separate our argument, from unfortunate counter evidence, but logic and reason are an exercise in comprehending both conceptual and physical phenomena within this universe we inhabit.

While we can be happily assured in the inerrancy of our deductions in a hypothetical vacuum where there is only an X and a Y; reality consists of an infinite number of variables all interacting with each other as well as X and Y.

I have to point out a certain amusement in that this discussion is framed by a symbol of infinity, but I suppose when finite beings attempt to comprehend infinite phenomena, their choices are to attack it or accept it.

Appreciate the civility and openness in continued discussion, I do have to ask if you are surprised by the number of religious objections, when you are indirectly attacking God?

#### login to reply

@Josh:

-1 votes



Bo Bennett

for the response. Vour comparison of Cod to an

Saturday, August 04, 2018 - 05:47:04 AM

**66** Thanks for the response. Your comparison of God to an instance of an almost humorously obvious attempt to deceive and steal tells me a lot.

I am afraid you are missing the point. The comparison is in the FORM of the argument, not the content.

**66** *I am not blinded by emotion in pointing out a serious flaw in your attempt to provide an example of circular logic.* 

Google bias blindspot.

Your alleged "flaw" is completely irrelevant. I am guessing your are new to logical fallacies, please, read about them and what they are first. Presuppositions don't excuse fallacious reasoning.

**66** The second irony is that your attempt to define circular logic is based itself on circular logic...

You do understand that I did not create this fallacy, right? It has been used by logicians for hundreds of years.

**55** but logic and reason are an exercise in comprehending both conceptual and physical phenomena within this universe we inhabit.

Again, you are missing the point. Fallacies in form, such as this one, does not give a hoot about "conceptual and physical phenomena within this universe we inhabit." If one claims that A is true because of B and B is true because of A, this is circular.

**66** but I suppose when finite beings attempt to comprehend infinite phenomena, their choices are to attack it or accept it.

Special pleading. If I understanding you correctly, you are saying that arguments made about God are allowed to break the rules of logic, because we can't possibly understand God. This is wrong in so many ways.

**L** *I* do have to ask if you are surprised by the number of religious objections, when you are indirectly attacking God?

To be clear, in the arguments to which you are referring, I am attacking bad arguments made by select believers in God. And no, I am not at all surprised that people who believe that they are specifically called upon by the creator of universe to defend this creator will do so at any expense, even when the existence of this being is not called into question, but only the bad arguments for him are. Speaking as an atheist now, I am doing you and other Christians a favor by helping you identify bad arguments for God so you can avoid those and use better ones. You're welcome.

Please consider the object of your initial objection: "The Bible is the Word of God because it says so in the Bible." You clearly won't take this on my authority, so take this to some philosophy of religion groups or forums, where the majority of members are Christian. Perhaps they will be more convincing to you than I managed to be.

If you do want to continue this, or even ask our members about this (thousands, many of whom are Christian), then feel free to post a question at

https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/tools/qa/Bo/LogicalFallacies . Thank you.

login to reply



Saturday, August 04, 2018 - 10:27:04 AM 66 Honestly surprised no one has mentioned the obvious fallacy in example 2. Using that as an example presupposes that God does not exist. A very obvious bias exhibited by the site owner.

2 votes

Josh, the veracity of the claim has nothing to do with whether this is a logical fallacy or not; the fact is that you cannot reasonably cite the bible as evidence that the bible is true, and this is a very clear example of circular reasoning.

**66** It also handily ignores the presponderance of evidence of the veracity of the Bible.

Whilst this is completely irrelevant to the fact that the example was indeed a logical fallacy as described, and the fact that no claim was made regarding the veracity of the bible, there is zero evidence that the bible is true, to claim otherwise suggests you don't understand what evidence means.

**Solution** Your comparison of God to an instance of an almost humorously obvious attempt to deceive and steal tells me a lot.

It tells you a lot and yet you completely miss the logic in implicit in it.

**G** Of course you don't know me, so you can't know that I do not argue from an emotional basis, but as it needs to be said, I am not blinded by emotion in pointing out a serious flaw in your attempt to provide an example of circular logic.

I'm not sure what it is you're blinded by, bias or comprehension (I'd include ignorance but you've had it explained), but you clearly don't

understand simple logic.

**56** The second irony is that your attempt to define circular logic is based itself on circular logic, it pre-supposes what it seeks to prove to validate itself.

What you're suggesting would be <u>begging the question</u>, however there's no assumptions made in Bo's example, so you're off the mark on that one, and the only validation involved is that in the example the bible is validating the claims of the bible.

**66** Specifically that "OP example above" equals circular logic, why?

I don't know what you think is specific about repeating what you just claimed already.

**66** because God is a liar or does not exist, why? because "OP example of circular logic above."

I would call this a straw man but by Bo's definition of a logical fallacy it needs to be able to fool people reading it, and anyone with basic comprehension skills should clearly see that there was no implications about god at all. I'd say nice try, but it was an awful try.

And then you make the same argument for the third time in a small paragraph; I think that would count as <u>argumentum ad nauseam</u>

**66** I can understand where you are coming from, and we certainly like to use hypotheticals to separate our argument, from unfortunate counter evidence, but logic and reason are an exercise in comprehending both conceptual and physical phenomena within this universe we inhabit.

And yet everything you say would suggest you don't know where he's coming from. Logic has nothing whatsoever to do with comprehending phenomena, it can be described as:

"reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity"

By definition a phenomena's cause or explanation is in question, and drawing conclusions without sufficient data is simple guessing, and if the guess is asserted on the basis of a lack of other suggested explanations that would actually be an example of an <u>argument from</u>

<u>ignorance</u>, or if it's asserted on the basis of being unable to imagine what else could be the cause that is an <u>argument from incredulity</u>.

**66** While we can be happily assured in the inerrancy of our deductions in a hypothetical vacuum where there is only an X and a Y; reality consists of an infinite number of variables all interacting with each other as well as X and Y.

I have to point out a certain amusement in that this discussion is framed by a symbol of infinity, but I suppose when finite beings attempt to comprehend infinite phenomena, their choices are to attack it or accept it.

And this is relevant to the topic how?

**66** Appreciate the civility and openness in continued discussion, I do have to ask if you are surprised by the number of religious objections, when you are indirectly attacking God?

I can't speak for Bo but I find it surprising that people are unable to follow simple logic. Probably a little less surprised that people who have irrational beliefs see attacks and criticism where it doesn't exist. And there really are plenty of places that attacks and criticism do exist, so you'd be better served discussing such things there, like I do.

Also it has occurred to me that people are being directed here for the purpose of such off topic discussion. Perhaps something for Bo to look at, as I believe web admins can see where people are being redirected from.

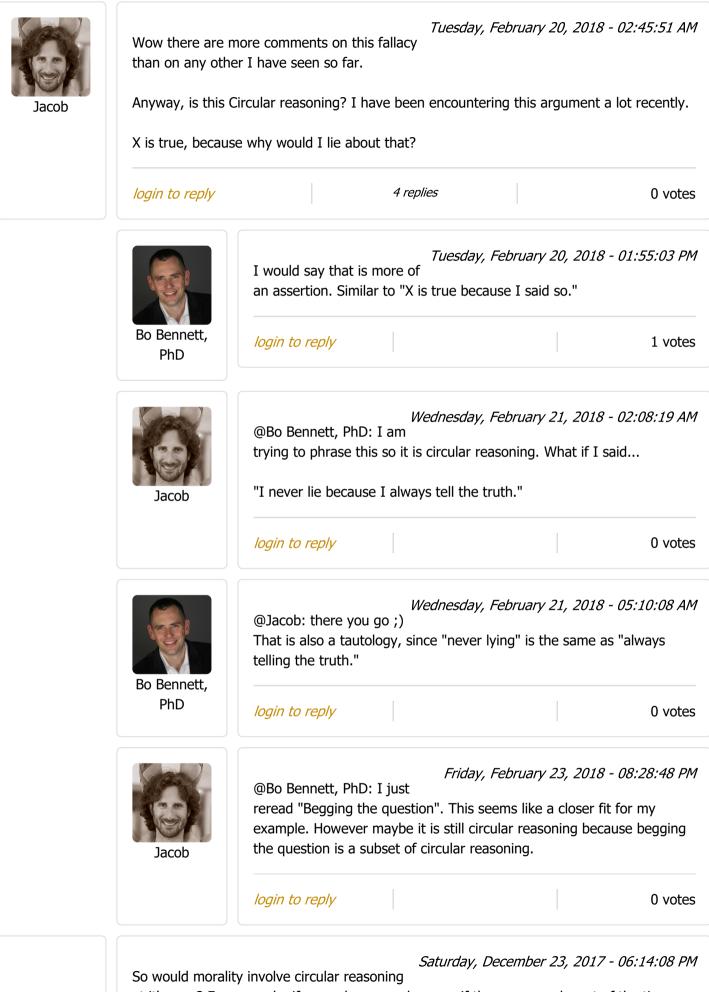
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Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 04:46:25 AM

3 votes

This doesn't presuppose that God does not exist. It doesn't even claim that the Bible is not the word of God, it just shows that "The Bible is true because the Bible says it is" does not provide an adequate reason for proving that the Bible is true, and is clearly circular logic. If you said "the Bible is the word of God because I've been saved by the transformative grace of God while reading the Bible," this would not be circular reasoning. "I've been saved by the transformative grace of God while reading the Bible," is a much better argument for the Bible being the word of God than "because the Bible says it is." Is that so difficult to understand? Many other religious texts claim to be the word of God, but you wouldn't accept them as such just because it is written in those books, would you?

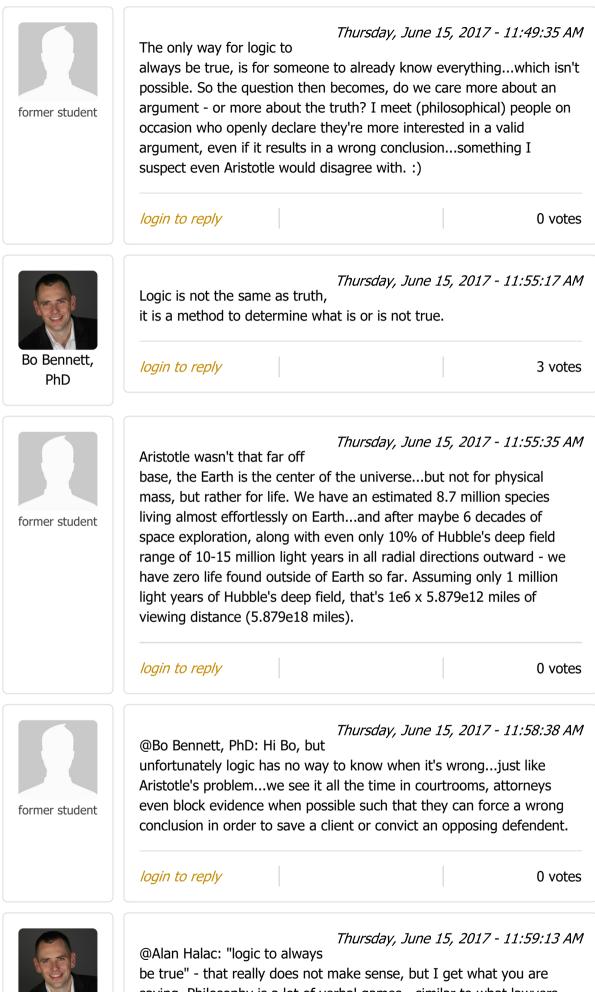


at it's core? For example, if you ask a normal person if they are moral most of the time, they will probably say yes. If you ask them why, there is no better answer than "because

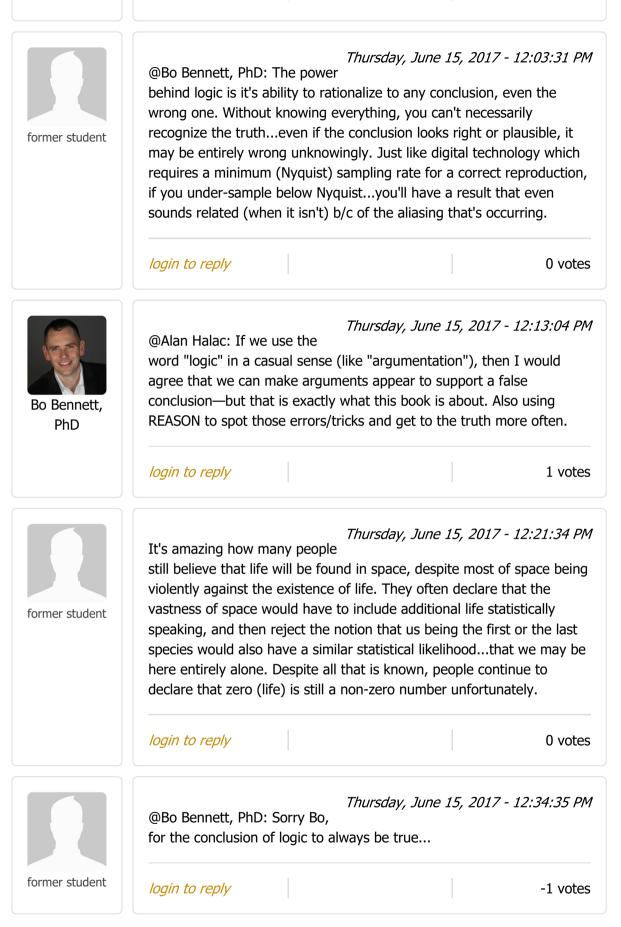


my morals say I should be moral". There is no other reason to be moral most of the time, because doing immoral things for personal gain will usually satisfy you more than moral things, unless it upsets your morals (which would count as a bad thing), where this train of logic loops back into why you value your morals above all else.

JUIII JIIIUI						
	login to reply			1 reply		1 votes
	Bo Bennett, PhD	involves is circular were to e "because circular. directed feels goo	Saturday, December 23, 2017 - 09:23:24 PM say that nothing c circular reasoning "at it's core," because it isn't a "thing" that ar, but the reasoning used to explain the thing. If someone explain why they are "moral" and they answered with e my morals say I should be moral," then that is indeed As humans, a large part of what we do and how we act is by biology. Rather than honestly say "I do good because it od and don't do bad because it feels bad," we rationalize and rocess, we fall into circular reasoning.			
		login to i	reply			0 votes
	Some have said I think therefore I am is circular reasoning. Is this true?					
Andrew Stitt	login to reply			1 reply		0 votes
			Monday, November 06, 2017 - 06:43:09 PM Only if they followed with "I am therefore I think" perhaps.			
	Bo Bennett, PhD	login to i	reply			0 votes
Bean	I really love this people are seeking intellectually. WA	ng for inforn	nation, an	ne d even when the	ey disagree, the	<i>2, 2017 - 11:27:47 PM</i> ey ack politely and e.
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former student		clared the Ea ly 1900 yea	arth to be rs if I reca	father of the center of the all correctly. If log	e universe whi gic were alway	<i>5, 2017 - 11:43:23 AM</i> ch people wrongfully ys true, it wouldn't
	login to reply			9 replies		0 votes



Bo Bennett, PhD saying. Philosophy is a lot of verbal games - similar to what lawyers use to argue that their guilty client is innocent. Logic, reason, and philosophy are all very different, however.



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