**Breaking out of the Circle**

**Abstract**. What’s wrong with begging the question? Some philosophers believe that question-begging arguments are inevitably fallacious and that their fallaciousness stems from a shared “formal” deficiency. In contrast, some philosophers, like Richard Robinson (1971) deny that begging the question is fallacious at all. And others characterize begging the question as an “informal” fallacy of reasoning that can only be understood with the aid of epistemic (as opposed to syntactic and semantic) notions. Roy Sorensen (1996) joins this last camp by offering a powerful argument against both Robinson’s skepticism and fully formal approaches to the phenomenon. According to Sorensen’s view, question-begging is fallacious because it compromises the rationality of the question-beggar’s position. Though his argument forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical position, it does little to elucidate the reasons why Robinson’s position is unstable and it fails to embody Sorensen’s own conception of rationally persuasive argumentation. I utilize this conception to show how Robinson is left with no easily identifiable grounds on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question. By advancing the dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson, I aim to show that our argumentative practices must take the perspectives of others seriously, whether or not those perspectives are rational.

**Key Words**: *Begging the Question, Self-Defeat, Dogmatism, Spinelessness*

What’s wrong with begging the question? Some philosophers believe that question-begging arguments are inevitably fallacious and that their fallaciousness stems from a shared “formal” deficiency.[[1]](#footnote-1) In contrast, some philosophers, like Richard Robinson (1971) deny that begging the question is fallacious at all.[[2]](#footnote-2) And others characterize begging the question as an “informal” fallacy of reasoning that can only be understood with the aid of epistemic (as opposed to syntactic and semantic) notions.[[3]](#footnote-3) Roy Sorensen (1996) joins this last camp by offering a powerful argument against both Robinson’s skepticism and fully formal approaches to the phenomenon. According to Sorensen’s view, question-begging is fallacious because it compromises the rationality of the question-beggar’s position.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In section 1, I lay out the complex dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson.[[5]](#footnote-5) Though Sorensen’s argument forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical position, it does little to elucidate the reasons why Robinson’s position is unstable and it fails to embody Sorensen’s own conception of rationally persuasive argumentation. In section 2, I improve upon Sorensen’s case by arguing that Robinson’s view is self-defeating. Robinson must either accept my argument or reject it, but he can do neither without endorsing a contradiction. His only other option is to abandon his formal characterization of fallacious argumentation. And this leaves Robinson no easily identifiable grounds on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question. By advancing the dialectic between Sorensen and Robinson, I aim to show that our argumentative practices must take the perspectives of others seriously, whether or not those perspectives are rational.

**1. Unbeggable Questions**

Richard Robinson (1971) argues that there is no fallacy of begging the question – that a prohibition on the practice is just a “rule of an old-fashioned competitive game” (116).[[6]](#footnote-6) Roy Sorensen (1996: 51) disagrees and propounds the following argument against Robinson:

1. There is a fallacy of begging the question.

Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

The basic idea is this: Robinson must either condemn (A) or accept it as a good argument. He cannot accept (A) as a good argument, as that would commit him to the content of A’s conclusion: the fallaciousness of begging the question. But if Robinson condemns (A), he must do so on the grounds that (A) begs the question or because (A) is either invalid or unsound. But if he condemned (A) on the grounds of begging the question he would have to acknowledge the fallaciousness of at least one question-begging argument and therein concede the point at issue. Robinson’s only option, then, is to reject (A)’s premise.[[7]](#footnote-7) I will argue (in section 2) that rejecting (A)’s premise does Robinson no favors. But before I do, I want to investigate Sorensen’s reasons for claiming that Robinson cannot condemn (A) on these grounds as (according to Sorensen) argument (A) does not beg the question.

***Argument Evaluation***

Sorensen (1996: 53) argues that (A) does not beg the question even though its single premise is reiterated as its single conclusion. He argues for this surprising claim as follows:

(1) To beg the question is to beg the question against someone.

(2) An argument can only beg the question against someone who would not agree with all of the argument's premises and conclusion.

(3) An argument can only beg the question against someone who can consistently object that the argument begs the question against him.

(4) If argument (A) begs the question against someone, then he either agrees with all of its premises and conclusions or he cannot consistently object that (A) begs the question against him.

(5) Therefore, (A) does not beg the question.

The argument is valid. Premise (4) is a consequence of (1), the relevant auxiliary argument (A) and the relevant features of the dialectical situation between Robinson and Sorensen. And (5) follows from (2)-(4). By themselves, (2) and (3) imply that if an argument begs the question against someone, then he does not agree with all the argument’s premises and conclusion and he can consistently object that the argument begs the question against him. Accusing (A) of question-begging, however, precludes the possibility of satisfying both conjuncts of the consequent.

***Against (1)/(2)***

I take (2) to be obvious. What about (1)? One might think that one can beg the question against *oneself* and that this would undermine (1)’s plausibility. But begging the question against oneself would still amount to begging the question against *someone*. Plus, it isn’t clear that one could coherently beg the question against oneself. What would this entail? Well, for one, the subject *S* would propound the argument to herself, thereby committing herself to accepting the argument as rationally persuasive. But in accusing the argument of begging the question, *S* also rejects the argument as unpersuasive. *S* therein contradicts herself. Still, regardless of whether such an activity would be incoherent, in begging the question against herself *S* commits herself to all of the premises and conclusion of the argument, contradicting (2).

A position that viewed begging the question as a formal defect of the argument could at least get off the ground in its rejection of (1). One might, for instance, assert that all arguments of the form ‘P, therefore, P’ beg the question as they merely restate their premise as conclusion. If we can determine whether an argument is question-begging by appeals to its syntactic and semantic features only (and without appeals to the pragmatic features of argumentation) we might be tempted to say that such an argument begs the question full stop, regardlessof whether it was propounded *against* someone. If we could take the “perspective from nowhere” we would be able to evaluate arguments for the fallacy just like we do when we evaluate an argument’s validity.

There are, however, good reasons to reject formal models of the fallacy. Almost everyone agrees that question-begging arguments are rationally unpersuasive. But whether an argument is rationally persuasive depends on who the argument is intended to persuade. The rational persuasiveness of an argument is not a monadic property of an argument, like the argument’s validity or soundness, but is indexed to a time and a person.[[8]](#footnote-8) As such, any account of begging the question will have to take into account pragmatic features of argumentation, such as what is known by each of the interlocutors, the aims and goals of the dialogue, and other features that bear on whether the argument would be found rationally persuasive by one or more of these parties.

And there is another, independent reason to be dubious of formal accounts of the fallacy. Sorensen provides several examples of arguments that are of the form ‘P, therefore, P’ which seem not to beg the question. Consider just one such example:

(I) There is at least one argument typed in black ink

Therefore, there is at least one argument typed in black ink.

Acceptance of (I)’s premise confers justification on one’s belief in its conclusion because the argument *instantiates* the content of the conclusion. Sorensen thus concludes that there are instances of arguments of the form ‘P, therefore, P’ that are not circular, i.e., that are not question-begging. And since any formal view prohibits *every* instance of such an argument, the above example constitutes a counterexample to formal models of the fallacy. Any construal of the fallacy which prohibits appeals to pragmatic features of argumentation is implausible.[[9]](#footnote-9)

***Against (3)***

Someone might reject (3) because she thinks *no* arguments beg the question. If no arguments beg the question, the argument fails because (3) is vacuously true. Such a denial would be illegitimate, since it would render the above argument, which intends to show that (A) does not beg the question, superfluous. If a rejection of the argument requires one to assert that no arguments beg the question, then there is a much more straightforward argument to its conclusion: no arguments beg the question, therefore, (A) does not beg the question. So a response on behalf of Robinson along these lines fails because “attributing a defense that defeats the defender” is an explicit violation of the principle of charity.[[10]](#footnote-10)

***Perspective Shift in Argument***

Nevertheless, even if we grant that (A) does not beg the question, Sorensen’s argument fails to be rationally persuasive. To see this, consider what Sorensen calls “perspective shift in argument.”[[11]](#footnote-11) The person who advances the argument to another in good faith must do so in a manner that is rationally persuasive to this other party *from this party’s point of view*. This process of “simulation”, when done competently, can be said to have met an important goal of discursive rationality. The problem for Sorensen is that he fails to heed his own advice: he advances an argument he should have known would not persuade Robinson, since the falsity of its premise is entailed by Robinson’s position.

Earlier I said that there are three responses Robinson could give to Sorensen’s argument (A). In accepting (A) he concedes the point. If he were to reject (A) on the grounds that it begs the question, he would also concede the point. The only plausible response he could give, then, would be to reject (A)’s premise. And why not? After all, Robinson’s position commits him to a denial of the existence of the fallacy of begging the question, i.e., its truth entails the falsity of (A)’s premise. There is good reason to think that any argument which purports to persuade someone of the irrationality of her position and utilizes a premise the falsity of which is entailed by her stated view is an argument she need not take seriously. For her stated position would already rule out the argument as unsound.

Now, some believe that Sorensen mischaracterizes the dispute between him and Robinson as a dispute about the *existence* of the fallacy of begging the question. Teng (1997), for instance, believes the dispute is really about whether begging the question is fallacious: Robinson thinks no, Sorensen thinks yes.[[12]](#footnote-12) And Truncellito (2004) thinks the dispute revolves around the *nature* of the fallacy: Robinson takes it to be a logical fallacy, whereas Sorensen takes it to be rhetorical.[[13]](#footnote-13) I will not take these issues up here, since there is a live option on the table for Robinson that does not involve a re-construal of the dispute. Robinson can simply reject (A)’s premise and condemn (A) on the grounds that it is unsound.

The dialectic thus far looks something like this:

R: There is no fallacy of begging the question

S: (A) There is a fallacy of begging the question.

Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

R: (A)’s premise is false.

Still, though rejecting A’s premise is Robinson’s best strategy, in the next section I argue that Robinson’s extraordinarily restrictive position on when we can properly condemn an argument prevents him from executing this maneuver. Robinson believes that there are only two ways to properly condemn an argument: either an argument should be condemned on the grounds that it is invalid, or else the argument should be condemned on the grounds that it has a false premise, i.e., that it is unsound. All other condemnations of an argument are, according to Robinson, improper. By advancing an argument he cannot consistently reject, I show why Robinson’s position is unstable *from his perspective*.

**2. The Rational Persuasion of Robinson**

We can all agree with Robinson that “[i]t is absurd…to condemn an argument because its premise entails its conclusion…” Our accusations of question-begging are not forceful if we base them on the entailment of conclusion by premises, or else any valid argument would count as question-begging. This is why we should reject any account that implies an argument begs the question so long as its conclusion is “contained” in its premises.[[14]](#footnote-14) But Robinson should be wary of anti-deductivist paranoia. Though he is right that sometimes people mistakenly condemn an argument as question-begging *“*just *because* [the] premise necessitates [the] conclusion”it is unfair to suspect that a person who condemns an argument for begging the question does so *because* it implies the falsity of their own view. I hope that my argument below, which can be condemned for reasons *other* than being invalid or unsound, helps stave off this paranoia.

Robinson’s position regarding the fallacy of begging the question is parasitic on a claim he makes about what it is to properly condemn an argument. My argument is only effective against someone who endorses his stated position on this broader issue. As such, it shows why abandoning this overly narrow position is paramount. Consider what Robinson says in response to someone who condemns an argument as question-begging.

There are only two proper ways of condemning an argument. One is to say that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The other is to say that you do not accept the premises as true. Your begging the question appears to be neither of these. So it is not a proper accusation. (Robinson, 114)

I reply that accepting Robinson’s minimalist position on when an argument can be properly condemned commits him to endorsing the following paradoxical argument:

1. 1. A deduction can be properly condemned just in case it is either invalid or unsound.

2. This deduction can be properly condemned.

Therefore,

3. This deduction is either invalid or unsound.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Clearly the argument is valid, as (3) follows by Modus Ponens from (2) and the left to right conditional of (1). Is it sound? If Robinson wants to properly condemn the argument, he must do so by rejecting one of the premises. He cannot consistently reject premise (1) because he would thereby give up his definition of “bad deduction.” By rejecting premise (1), he would thereby concede the point that a deductive argument can be properly condemned on the basis of something other than its being invalid or unsound.

Must he accept premise (2)? Suppose premise (2) is true. If premise (2) is true, the argument’s conclusion follows from its premises via Modus Ponens. So let us suppose that the argument’s conclusion is true. The argument’s conclusion says that the argument is invalid or unsound. Since we have already concluded that its premises are true, we can conclude that the argument is invalid. (This follows from the definition of ”soundness.”) But the argument consists in a single application of modus ponens. Thus, to deny the argument’s validity, Robinson would have to reject the validity of modus ponens. And this is a high price to pay. Indeed, even if there are exceptions to modus ponens (as has been argued by Forbes), these putative exceptions all involve the interaction of tense and various operators.[[16]](#footnote-16) To allege that the above argument begs the question is highly unintuitive.

Suppose, to explore the other fork of our dilemma; that premise (2) is false. If premise (2) is false, what it says is false, and what it says is that the deduction above can be properly condemned. We can therein conclude that the deduction above cannot be properly condemned. But if we conjoin this claim with premise (1), simple first-order reasoning (utilizing biconditional elimination) allows us to conclude that the deduction is neither invalid nor unsound. Equivalently, the deduction is both valid and sound. But applying the classic definition of “soundness” allows us to conclude that the deduction has true premises. This, however, contradicts the assumption that premise (2) of the deduction is false.

To sum up, the argument can be used to derive a contradiction from Robinson’s definition of “bad argument.” Robinson is unable to condemn arguments on any grounds other than their being invalid or unsound. This forces him to accept arguments against this very conception that others might reject. Since he cannot reject (1) without giving up his definition of “bad deduction” and he cannot reject (2) without generating a contradiction, his only plausible remaining option is to accept that the argument is a good deduction because rejecting Modus Ponens is implausible. But if he were to accept (B) as a good deduction, Robinson would be committed to the conclusion that (B) is either invalid or unsound. Back around the circle he goes.

So: Either Robinson accepts (2) and so must reject a clearly good instance of MP or else he rejects it and must endorse the contradiction that (B) is both sound and unsound. Neither option is rationally acceptable. The argument (B) clearly must be condemned, but I have just shown that Robinson cannot condemn it for being either invalid or unsound. What we have here is a deduction that is clearly condemnable, but because it is sound if unsound and unsound if sound. We ought to condemn such arguments because they are *self-defeating*.[[17]](#footnote-17)

***The Liar[[18]](#footnote-18)***

Earlier I said that (B) is valid. But is it? Can Robinson reject (B) on the grounds that its self-referential second premise does not denote a proposition and that this renders the argument invalid?

To answer this question, first consider the traditional ‘liar’ sentence: “this sentence is false.” Suppose Robinson were to deny that the ‘liar’ denotes a proposition because it is neither true nor false. Such a view relies on an assumption of bivalence. Under the assumption of bivalence, then, Robinson might reason as follows: “Since (2) cannot be true or false, (2) fails to denote a proposition. But since MP relates propositions to propositions, (B) cannot involve an instance of MP. But if (B) does not involve an instance of MP, then (B) is invalid. Thus, (B) is invalid.”

But this line of reasoning also depends on Robinson’s acceptance of (1), which ultimately blinds him from seeing the possibility that (2) is true. As I have argued, there is a far simpler way to condemn (B): condemn it on the grounds that it’s self-defeating. If I’m right, then (2) is true and I need not make any controversial claims about liar sentences and their connections (or lack thereof) to propositions.

***The Mean***

Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean says that a virtue is the mean between two extremes: one, which is an excess, and the other a deficiency in a given magnitude.[[19]](#footnote-19) I hypothesize that we can extend this idea from moral practice to the practice of argumentation and say that a good *arguer* finds the mean between two extremes: dogmatism and spinelessness. The former is reflected in question-begging arguments, whose acceptance results in a deficiency of humility (or, equivalently, excessive confidence). The latter is reflected in self-defeating arguments, whose acceptance results in an excess of humility (or, equivalently, a deficiency of confidence). This conception might be endorsed by Sorensen, who posits a fallacy “opposite” to question-begging:

Often my adversary has inferential resources that I lack. That means I can rationally persuade him by appealing to premises that I do not believe and inferential rules I do not accept. The argument will be rationally persuasive from his perspective, not mine. After all, the relevant resource base is his, not mine.[[20]](#footnote-20)

But Sorensen fails to heed his own advice. He propounds an argument which is obviously unsound from Robinson’s perspective, since the falsity of its premise is entailed by Robinson’s position.

In contrast, I have followed Sorensen’s advice (rather than his practice) by advancing an argument that utilizes resources that I lack but Robinson possesses, namely, the acceptance of (B)’s premise. The argument is rationally persuasive from his perspective because it undermines his position about what it is to properly condemn an argument. I have shown that his only rational option is to abandon his formal characterization of fallacious argumentation, and this leaves him with no obvious basis on which to deny the fallaciousness of begging the question.

**Conclusion**

Am I irrational in advancing argument (B) against Robinson, since I do not accept its (false) first premise? In response to this question, all I can say is that I am doing all I can do to embody Robinson’s perspective, one that turns out to be irrational, in an attempt to persuade him to abandon his position. It is not always possible to propound a sound argument (or even a good argument) in order to persuade someone of its conclusion. Sometimes, in our attempts to persuade, rationality requires that we simulate what are in fact irrational positions.

Sorensen’s response does not hold up in the face of scrutiny, but his idea of perspective shift in argument helps shed light on the nature of the fallacy. In section 1, I characterized the dispute between Sorensen and Robinson as being a dispute about the existence of the fallacy of begging the question. Something like:

R: There is no fallacy of begging the question.

S: (A)

R: (A)’s premise is false (i.e., there is no fallacy of begging the question).

I said earlier that I think Robinson would be wrong to reject (A) by denying its premise. I *do* think this, but Sorensen’s argument fails to show it. His response forces Robinson into a peculiar dialectical situation where the only rational thing for him to do is reject (A)’s premise. But Robinson would be wrong in doing so, as rejecting (A)’s premise amounts to asserting (without argument) that there is no fallacy of begging the question. Robinson would display objectionable dogmatism if he were to reject (A)’s premise. He would, essentially, beg the question. Sorensen, of course, could not say this once he advanced (A), for his criticism would hold no weight from Robinson’s point of view. But I can, because I am not committed to accepting Sorensen’s argument, nor am I committed to accepting his argument to the claim that (A) does not beg the question.

My response to Robinson’s skeptical thesis about begging the question can be summed up in the following argument:

If there is no fallacy of begging the question, then Robinson’s response to Sorensen is legitimate.

Robinson’s response to Sorensen is illegitimate.

1. Therefore, there is a fallacy of begging the question.

The argument is valid and I see no reason why Robinson would ever dream of rejecting (i). It avoids self-defeat and it avoids inducing a paradox to the evaluator of the argument. What about the truth of (ii)? I’ve already argued that Robinson’s asserting his position is his most rational response to Sorensen but that in doing so Robinson commits himself to an unstable position. Sorensen’s argument forces Robinson into a state of overconfidence, one that is irrational even from Robinson’s point of view. Thus, a rejection of (ii) just amounts to Robinson maintaining his overconfidence.

I have argued that Robinson ought to abandon his position about what it is to properly condemn an argument. If he were to abandon this minimalist position, no obvious obstruction would stand in his way of admitting that begging the question is fallacious. His attempts to evaluate my argument lead to contradiction because his position permits for the construction of faulty arguments whose faultiness cannot be detected from his avowedly minimalist perspective on the evaluation of deductions. If he realizes that my argument undermines his position and he wishes to be rational, he ought to abandon his position. Once he abandons his position, maybe he will be open to the idea that question-begging is more than just a ‘rule of an old-fashioned competitive game,’ that, in fact, it is an act of objectionable dogmatism associated with a failure to appreciate the perspective of others in rational discourse.[[21]](#footnote-21) And sometimes the only way of being rational is to simulate the irrational: we must break out of our circles so we can pull others in.[[22]](#footnote-22)

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1. Defenders of the formal approach include Walton (1994) and Woods (1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R. Robinson. 1971. Begging the question. *Analysis* 31: 113-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Defenders of the epistemic approach, which rely on pragmatic features like knowledge, belief, justification, and presuppositions, include Sanford (1972) and Ritola (2006). Wright’s (2000) approach, which focuses on the argument’s *cogency*, i.e., its ability to rationally persuade, probably falls into this camp as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. R. Sorensen. 1996. Unbeggable questions. *Analysis* 56: 51-55. R. Sorensen. 1999. An empathic theory of circularity. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77: 498-509. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sorensen. Cf. Teng, Truncellito and Ritola. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Robinson is talking here of Aristotle’s dialogical game *Elenchus*, in which the activity of the interlocutors engaged in rational inquiry is governed by a set of rules that permit certain moves and prohibit others. Aristotle gives two accounts of the fallacy: one in the *Prior Analytics* and the other in *Topics*. Aristotle’s first account can be loosely associated with informal (epistemic) approaches to diagnosing the fallacy. His second account can be loosely associated with more formal (dialectical) approaches. Robinson takes both accounts to be mistaken: “…Aristotle’s *Analytics* account is a failure, and his *Topics* account makes it merely a rule of a game which nobody plays any more…” Robinson thinks that since both accounts fail, the use of the phrase “begging the question” is “nearly always a muddle, or improper, or both” (117). For helpful discussions of the distinction between the two approaches, see Walton (1994) and Hazlett (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In “Unbeggable Questions,” Sorensen suggests as much: “After all, Robinson has a viable reply to my argument. He should simply deny my premise” (51). But he fails to follow up on this admittedly “viable reply” to his argument and in doing so fails to follow his own advice in taking seriously Robinson’s perspective. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Of course, the same relativity to speaker and time affects the validity and soundness of arguments that contain indexicals, demonstratives, tenses and other “context sensitive” features, but these complications won’t arise in what follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sorensen. 1991: 248. Per an anonymous reviewer, a slightly more ambitious example from Sorensen (1999: 498): (II) Some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular. Therefore, some deductive arguments do not reason from general to particular. Both arguments (I) and (II) work for my purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sorensen. 1996: 51. The *principle of charity* is a principle constrained by our communicative and interpretive practices. Roughly, charity requires us to interpret our audience as rational. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sorensen. 1991: 505. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. N. Teng. 1997. Sorensen on begging the question. *Analysis* 57: 220-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. D. Truncellito. 2004. Running in circles about begging the question. *Argumentation* 18: 325-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I here pass over the notorious difficulties that plague attempts to explicate the intended notion of containment. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Argument (B) bears a resemblance to the pseudo-scotus puzzle. D. Jaquette. 2003. The soundness paradox. *Logic Journal of the IGPL* 11: 547-556. The pseudo-scouts puzzle, also known as the Validity Paradox, is generated from attempting to evaluate the following argument, (V): Argument (V) is deductively valid. Therefore, Argument (V) is deductively invalid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. G. Forbes. 1983. Thisness and vagueness. *Synthese* 54: 235–59. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Silva (2013) offers a definition of what he calls ‘epistemically self-defeating arguments’. “An argument is epistemically self-defeating when either the truth of an argument’s conclusion or belief in an argument’s conclusion defeats one’s justification to believe at least one of the argument’s premises.” P. Silva. 2013. Epistemically self-defeating arguments and skepticism about intuition. *Philosophical Studies* 164:579-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Although I make the ultimate connection from argument (B) to the Liar, there may be intermediate steps through Curry’s Paradox. H. Curry. 1942. The inconsistency of certain formal logics. *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 7: 115-117. One formulation of Curry’s paradox includes a list of sentences, where one sentence – let’s suppose the third sentence – says “If the third sentence in the List is true, then every sentence is true.” The paradox is generated in one’s attempts to determine the truth value of the third sentence in the list. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Aristotle. *Nicomachean ethics*:1106a26-b28. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. R. Sorensen. An empathic theory of circularity. 508-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. One might object to my characterization of begging the question as objectionable dogmatism. Can’t an audience reject a premise without justification without therein manifesting dogmatism? I hypothesize that in all such cases, there is some substantive reason why the audience cannot take the time and effort to inquire into the speaker’s grounds, reasons and point of view. Pragmatic considerations often warrant our sacrificing discursive norms and ideals. Dogmatism is sometimes the “lesser of evils.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. To Aaron Zimmerman, Dillon Schultz, and graduate students from various UC campuses: Thanks for spinning in circles with me. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)