

Hedge's Modernized Rules of Honorable Controversy

Hedge's Modernized Rules of Honorable Controversy[1. Thanks to Maha Ahmed for helping modernize these rules.]

Rule 1st:

Once respect is lost so is the argument.

Rule 2nd:

Both parties are equally allowed to hold their own opinion of the argument.

Rule 3rd:

Side comments only distract the parties from the discussion at hand.

Rule 4th:

Do not use your personal bias against the other party as a factor in the argument.

Rule 5th:

Do not debate the motive behind one's stance on the issue. Questioning one's sincerity is hurtful.

Rule 6th:

The result of the debate does not exclusively fall on the winning party unless one claims it. It is a safe assumption the winning party would have accommodated for the other one out of courtesy.

Rule 7th:

Do not condescend your opponent.

Bro, chill.

Hedge's Rules of Honorable Controversy (Original)

1. The terms, in which the question in debate is expressed, and the precise point at issue, should be so clearly defined, that there could be no misunderstanding respecting them.

If this is not done, the dispute is liable to be, in a great degree, verbal. Arguments will be misapplied, and the controversy protracted, because the parties engaged in it have different apprehensions of the question.

2. The parties should mutually consider each other, as standing on a footing of equality in respect to the subject in debate. Each should regard the other as possessing equal talents, knowledge, and desire for truth, with himself; and that it is possible, therefore, that he may be in the wrong, and his adversary in the right.

In the heat of controversy, men are apt to forget the numberless sources of error, which exist in every controverted subject, especially of theology and metaphysics. Hence arise presumptions, confidence, and arrogant language; all which obstruct the discovery of truth.

3. All expressions, which are unmeaning, or without effect in regard to the subject in debate, should be strictly avoided.

All expressions may be considered as unmeaning, which contribute nothing to the proof or the question; such as desultory remarks and declamatory expressions...

4. Personal reflections on an adversary should in no instance be indulged....

Personal reflections are not only destitute of effect, in respect to the question in discussion, but they are productive of real evil... They indicate in him, who uses them, a mind hostile to the truth; for they prevent even solid arguments from receiving the attention to which they are justly entitled.

5. No one has a right to accuse his adversary of indirect motive.

Arguments are to be answered, whether he, who offers them, be sincere or not; especially as his want of sincerity, if real, could not be ascertained. To inquire into his motives, then, is useless. To ascribe indirect ones to him is ... hurtful.

6. The consequences of any doctrine are not to be charged on him who maintains it, unless he expressly avows them.

If an absurd consequence be fairly deductible from any doctrine, it is rightly concluded that the doctrine itself is false; but it is not rightly concluded that he who advances it, supports the absurd consequence. The charitable presumption, in such a case, would be, that he had never made the deduction; and that, if he had made it, he would have abandoned the original doctrine.

7. As truth, and not victory, is the professed object of controversy, whatever proofs may be advanced, on either side, should be examined with fairness and candor; and any attempt to ensnare an adversary by the arts of sophistry, or to lessen the force of his reasoning, by wit, caviling, or ridicule, is a violation of the rules of honorable controversy.

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