

Suicide Statements

How do we respond to self refuting statements?

Today's goal is to learn to recognize and respond to some of the false reasoning that world uses to attack us. Many times in discussions or while witnessing, someone will shut you down with a statement that sounds good but is actually illogical and impedes further discussion. It's important to be able to overcome these obstacles kindly and continue the discussion. Remember too a lot of times it's not the person who is objecting who is your target; it may be one of the *other* listeners to the conversation that you will have the most effect on.

One of the ways this false thinking shows up is in something we call Suicide Statements. Suicide statements were made famous by (amongst others), Greg Koukl¹ of Stand to Reason in his excellent CD series **Tactics in Defending the Faith** (www.str.org). I recommend you get the set and listen to it. What I have done is take some of Greg's examples and a whole lot of other examples that I've run into to train you to recognize and respond to them.

This information is not a great secret; in fact feel free to pass this out to everyone on *both* sides of the discussion. After all if we can get our opponents thinking clearly then we will *all* be in a better position. Remember we are not afraid of clear thinking; clear thinking will invariably lead to the Author of logic and rationality... i.e. God.

What is a Suicide Statement?

A suicide statement is one that refutes itself just by being said.

Some simple examples are:

- I can't speak a word in English (said in English)
- This statement is a lie (think about this).
- I am the humblest man in the World.

However most Suicides statements are hidden and usually sound good and correct and may even sound kind and loving: E.g. It's wrong to force your moral values on other people. (I'll explain why this is a suicide statement further on).

Fortunately most Suicide Statements can be refuted with just one or two short statements. The key is to analyze what they are saying and ask yourself: Is what they said applicable all the time to everyone evenly and is it applicable to the statement itself and the person making the statement.

If we can learn to clarify and eliminate these suicide concepts then when people ask us these seemingly unanswerable questions, we can set them straight and ALSO not get confused ourselves. Note that often these suicide statements normally are the unsaid assumption behind many anti Christian complaints? E.g. It's wrong to evangelize. It's arrogant to think only you Christians have the right answer.

A common Suicide statement

Let's start with one of the most common Suicide statements as an example and I'll show you a quick response to it.

Suicide Statement A: There is no absolute truth.

Your quick Response: Um...is that...eh..... true?

Explanation: Because if it's true that there is **no** absolute truth then what you just said is **also** not absolutely true. Unless there is at least 1 absolute truth. And if there is one there surely could be others.

Let me expand: The statement "There is no Absolute truth" IS itself an absolute statement about **TRUTH**. So the statement refutes itself.

Try it yourself to sharpen your skills at recognizing Suicide Statements. Go over as many of these suicide statements as you can and do the following:

- a. Detect if they are suicide statements and if they are, figure out why they are
- b. Understand if there are any hidden insinuations and try to bring these out. E.g. Statement: *The problem is that you think you are right about this.* Also implies that there is something wrong with thinking you are right. It's always good to ask: What's wrong with thinking I'm right?
- c. Figure out a simple question to ask that shows the statement is a suicide statement as shown in the example of Statement A above. The response to "There is no absolute truth" is simply to ask: Is that true.
- d. Sometimes you have to ask a question to reveal the hidden assumption and then you can catch them. E.g. They say: *You are arrogant to think you know the truth.* Well it may take a few questions to clear things up. In this example it also sometimes helps to show an example that indicates this. E.g. Galileo claimed he knew the truth about the earth rotating around the sun. Was he being arrogant? Was he wrong? Was it a bad thing for him to believe he was right?

¹ Greg tends to delve into a finer analysis of each of the types of suicide statements. I've just lumped them all into one big basket.

Not many others believe that at the time. If nobody believes they are ever right what sort of a world would this be? With everybody running around thinking they are wrong.

- e. Sometimes the person will merely substitute less familiar words to try and work around the suicide statement. E.g. rather than say "Never say Never they'll say something like", "It *makes good practice* to not tell people they SHOULD do something". In which case you should ask them to clarify what they mean. I.e. are you saying I SHOULD not tell people they SHOULD do something?

The Easiest Answer:

The easiest way to answer all of these statements I'm going to present to you is to look at the statement as an entity itself. E.g. "There is no absolute truth."

And then ask: Is that statement a statement of an absolute truth itself?

Or for "I can't speak a word in English."

You'd ask: Is that statement a statement spoken in English?

The answers are at the end.

The Suicide statements – Write a quick rebuttal question or statement.

1. There is no Absolute truth. (OK we already did this one but you can expand on this if you want).
2. It's wrong to force your moral values on other people.
3. It is wrong to send missionaries to another country to tell the locals that their local religions are wrong.
4. There is no black and white in life:
5. All truth is relative.
6. There are no absolutes.
7. That's true for you but not for me (referring to a Global Truth like God Exists).
8. Eastern type of thinking is this **AND** that, western type of thinking is this **OR** that. E.g. in the East we think the Christians can be right **AND** we can be right. We don't say the Christians are right **OR** we are right. –
9. We can't know anything at all for sure.
10. You should never tell someone they are wrong.
11. All truth is interpretive.
12. Truth is unavailable
13. You can't know anything for sure about God.
14. The problem is that you think you are right about this.
15. You are arrogant to think you know the truth. (or Christians are arrogant to think they are the **ONLY** ones with the right answer).
16. From JR (a guy on an email list who actually believes he's making sense when he says this): It makes good practice to avoid values like - never, always, and so on, including avoiding use of modals like should, need to, and if at all possible, avoid other dictates, like make sure.
17. Another from JR: Life, the universe, time and eternity can be seen conventionally as a wave, a flow, multidimensional. Can I say that, based on my faith and prayer, even God knows that? And I observe that in failing to grasp this, we turn life and all into some kind of linear, manichaeistic, **either-or** belief system.
18. Yet another from JR: I was recalling how we Americans reacted to anyone that seemed Iranian when they attacked and took over the US embassy in Tehran. We Americans do tend to oversimplify other peoples by their type- Muslims are viewed as all one of a kind, from Mahgreb to Indonesia. Seems that is pretty much of a "racialist" thing to do.
19. It's wrong to be intolerant of others.
20. There is no absolute reality or you can never know reality.
21. People who think they are right bother me.
22. Everything we know about reality is based on facts, everything we know about faith is based on feelings or is unknown. (This example was given to me by Brenda who had a friend make this claim)
23. From a Christian: You are using human reasoning to come to that conclusion and you are taking away from God's word.
24. You can't use your mind or logic to talk about things of God or Faith.
25. It's wrong to force your Religious Values on others.
26. Who are you to judge people?

The Answers:

Note in these answers I merely provide the responses without fanfare, but I think we should all make sure that we don't respond in an arrogant mean way, but respond in a kind and caring manner. I have not spent the time and effort to convert each response in this manner since we all have different ways to do it and I hope are capable of doing so.

Note also that there are some suicide statements that while being technically suicide statements still get the point across. For example: Never say Never. We all sort of know what they mean. Or No habla Espanol. The latter obviously means that we can't speak Spanish but we know these few words (note the difference between this and "I can't speak a **word** in English". The "English" example is specifically saying that we don't speak ANY **words** of English, which is obviously false. The Spanish just implies "I can't converse in Spanish").

1. There is no Absolute truth.

Ask yourself: Is that statement a statement of an absolute truth itself? Answer: Yes it is.

Response: Is that true? or Is that absolutely true?

To repeat: Because if it's true that there is **no** absolute truth then what you just said is **also** not absolutely true. In which case why did you say it? Unless there is at least 1 absolute truth. And if there is one there surely could be others.

Let me expand: The statement "There is no Absolute truth" IS itself an absolute statement about **TRUTH**. So the statement refutes itself.

And if you want to have fun you could go off on a fun tangent: So perhaps that statement is not Absolutely true but is only partially true, in which case can you tell me which part is true? The truth part or the absolute part? If you mean the absolute part is partially true did you mean really mean that "There is no Truth". In which case we are back to point 1...is that true...and so on and so forth.

2. It's wrong to force your moral values on other people.-

Ask yourself: Is that statement a statement about a moral value in itself? Answer: Yes it is.

But wait: Isn't that statement a statement of one of YOUR moral values? In which case why are you forcing THAT moral value on me? You see this statement IS a moral value.

The truth is that it's IS OK to force moral values on others. There's no way out of it. The question is really WHOSE moral values do you force? Hitler's moral values or Mother Teresa's moral values? Or some medium in between. So the argument is really about how to arrive at the moral values. Not cast it out altogether.

3. It is wrong to send missionaries to another country to tell the locals that their local religions are wrong.

Ask yourself: Is that statement a statement about a local religion itself? Answer: Yes it is.

But wait whose idea is THAT? Isn't that statement a religious statement about religion. Isn't that a value YOU have about religion?

And since my own concept about religion says that it is right to do that (go as a missionary to other countries)...why are you being a hypocrite and telling me my religious concepts are wrong (which is what you said was WRONG to do).

Some times they phrase it as so: The old fashioned ethnocentric idea of sending missionaries to another country to tell them that what they believe is wrong is unacceptable today. To which you can say: But wait isn't that someone's ethnocentric idea itself? Because it's not my culture's idea. So why isn't that idea unacceptable itself? To clarify - you are telling me that my culture's view that it's OK to send missionaries to other countries is wrong. But that's your culture's view. Or that's a view that someone holds. Why is that view any less valid than my view and if it's wrong for me to tell you that your views are wrong, why is isn't it wrong for you to tell me my views are wrong. This sword cuts both ways.

4. There is no black and white in life:

Ask yourself: Isn't that a black and white statement?

5. All truth is relative²:

Ask yourself: Is that statement a statement about truth itself? Answer: Yes it is.

Response: Is that a relative truth that you just stated? In which case why isn't the truth that all truths are relative ALSO a relative truth, thus implying some truths are **not** relative.

² Next 3 are from Turek & Geisler, "I don't have enough faith to be an Atheist"

6. There are no absolutes:

Ask yourself: Is that statement a statement about absolutes itself? Answer: Yes it is.

Are you absolutely sure? Or: Isn't that statement you just made an absolute statement?

Note that in most of the above cases you also do the "if one then maybe others" response. It goes like this. You said there are no absolutes, but you stated an absolute in stating that. That means that there is at least 1 absolute and if there is 1 then maybe there are other absolutes as well. So the argument becomes how do we determine what are absolutes not whether they exist or not.

7. It's true for you but not for me:

Is that statement true for just you or is it true for everyone? Here's an easier way to think about it. Call "It's true for you but not for me" statement A. Ask them this: Is that statement A that you are claiming true? And if so is it true for both of us? Because if statement A is **not** true for me then why are you trying to tell me it's true?

Also you could try a practical example, say: "Try that with the bank teller. Tell him that it may be true for him that you don't have a million bucks in your account but it's not true for you. Reality is reality."

8. Eastern type of thinking is this AND that, western type of thinking is this OR that. E.g. in the East we think the Christians can be right AND we can be right. We don't say the Christians are right OR we are right. –

Ans: Wait- are you saying that the Western way of thinking is wrong? And aren't you are saying that either the Eastern way is right **OR** the Western way is Right? This is identical to the last example.

Also Ravi Zacharias has a great example. He says in India when an Indian crosses a busy street, he looks **BOTH** ways. Why? Because he knows it's either him or the oncoming bus, not both.

9. We can't know anything at all for sure.

Ans: Is that something we know? Because if it is, then you are incorrect because we at least know one thing.

10. You should never tell someone they are wrong.

Ans: Are you saying I am wrong to tell someone that?

11. All truth is interpretive.

Ans: Is that an interpretive truth?

12. Truth is unavailable

Ans: Is that truth available?

13. You can't know anything for sure about God.

Ans: That's something about God, how do you know that for sure then? Obviously if you know that for sure then there may be other things we can know for sure.

14. The problem is that you think you are right about this.

Ans: Are you saying you are right about what you just said? Why do you not find THAT to be a problem? Or "don't you have a problem knowing that you're right about me having a problem with being right?" Why is it that you can think you are right about me having a problem and that is not a problem for you?

But further more how many people go around actively thinking they are wrong and then not caring.

15. You are arrogant to think you know the truth. (or Christians are arrogant to think they are the ONLY ones with the right answer).

Response: Hmm, do you think that's true? When they say yes: Then you say: Then why are you being arrogant?

Or aren't you being arrogant to think you know it's arrogant to know the truth?

OK OK In case you didn't catch it- the very fact that the original statement was a truth claim, itself shows that the statement was violating it OWN principles in making a truth statement. The person who claims I am arrogant for thinking I know the truth is arrogant himself because he's making a truth claim as well. He is claiming that it's arrogant to say I know the truth). The answer is that it's not arrogant to think you know the truth. Many of us think we know lots of truths about lots of things. It would be arrogant to think we know ALL truth. As mentioned earlier: there's nothing wrong in thinking we know the truth, after all Galileo claimed he knew the truth about the earth not being flat, was he being arrogant? Not many others seemed to agree with him at the time. And if you think he was, is that wrong in that case? So how can you say I am arrogant to think I know the truth UNLESS you can disprove what I am saying?

Sometimes it may take a few questions to clear things up. In this example it also sometimes helps to show an example that indicates that there is no arrogance. But it's better not to use a too obvious of an example. E.g. Do you think it's true that you can't walk thru that wall over there? Because they may claim that this is a truth that everybody knows and is obvious and you have to argue that. So use the Galileo example.

Note there's a variation on this that's a bit more complex. Let's say someone was a bit more specific and said:
You are arrogant to think you know the truth **about God**.

Let's break this down:

1. When you say I am arrogant you obviously are implying that I am wrong about God. Because if I am not wrong then your statement becomes "You are right about God but you are arrogant to think that", which doesn't really make sense does it. Is a doctor arrogant to think that you have diabetes when you really do? No obviously not.
2. So what's left is what you really meant: "You are wrong about God and you are arrogant enough to think you are right."
3. BUT hopefully you've seen the suicide statement here. What you just said was a statement about God that *you* think is true. You think I am wrong about God and you think you know the truth which is that I am wrong about God. But then aren't you ALSO being arrogant?

Obviously it's NOT arrogant to think that you know the truth about God or anything - specially if you think you can prove it. The issue isn't arrogance. The issue is truth and you are not really seeking the truth if you are so willing to run around calling people arrogant when they think they've found it.

16. From JR (who actually believes he's making sense when he says this): "It makes good practice to avoid values like - never, always, and so on, including avoiding use of modals like should, need to, and if at all possible, avoid other dictates, like make sure."

Response: This is quite a crafty statement. JR (having been burnt by his suicide statements to me before) is trying to avoid saying **always** and **should** and **need to**. But what is he telling us? He's saying we "should" or "need to" always avoid saying "should, never and always and need to" It's a pure suicide statement but he's vainly trying to squeeze around it by saying "It makes good practice". But doesn't that mean that he's telling us that "we SHOULD avoid values like should and never?"

Here's part of what JR is really saying: "You **should never** use the words **should** and **never**." It's quite funny actually when you see through it. He basically said "Never say never." So watch out for when people get the notion that just by not using certain words but still implying them they can avoid refuting themselves. For instance: Rather than saying: "Never say never," you may hear: "You should not ever say never." OK that's a bit too easy to spot. So they will try: "It makes good practice to avoid saying values like never." They build from there and make a very complex convoluted sentence. But at the end of the day it still MEANS "Never say never."

If you want to beat on this topic a bit more:

Note though that JR could have prevented himself from making a suicide statement if he'd merely said: "Try to avoid saying Never." Why? Because he's just saying that we should not use "Never" too often not that we should NEVER use it. Note also that we can give him grace if he just said "Avoid saying Never," but that's because we think he really means "Try to avoid saying never" but in reality "Avoid saying never" is still a suicide statement because at the end of the day it technically means: Never say never.

Note however that the statement "Avoid saying should" is a pure unadulterated suicide statement because the should is IMPLIED. I.e. what he really means is "**You should** avoid saying should" and just has bad grammar.

17. Another from JR: Life, the universe, time and eternity can be seen conventionally as a wave, a flow, multidimensional. Can I say that, based on my faith and prayer, even God knows that? And I observe that in failing to grasp this, we turn life and all into some kind of linear, manichaeistic, either-or belief system. (note manichaeistic means: clear cut black vs. white).

Responses:

1. "JR are you saying that you **believe** life can be seen as **either** a flow **or** as a linear non-flow and that one of them is wrong?" Notice how I used his OWN words back to rephrase what he was really saying. He's made an **either-or** belief statement telling us that it's not good to have an either-or belief systems.
2. "JR are you saying that if I believe the opposite of what you said that means I'm WRONG?" You see JR could never say this and gets irritated and hunts around for new words or refuses to respond when the ball is hit back in his court.

18. Yet another from JR: I was recalling how we Americans reacted to anyone that seemed Iranian when they attacked and took over the US embassy in Tehran. We Americans do tend to oversimplify other peoples by their type-Muslims are viewed as all one of a kind, from Mahgreb to Indonesia. Seems that is pretty much of a "racialist" thing to do.

Response: This is quite simple – JR is lumping all Americans into a group which he says is the wrong thing to do. Yes it's true SOME Americans treated all Iranians the same, but it is NOT true that “we Americans” did that. JR does exactly what he says we should not do.

19. It's wrong to be Intolerant of people.

Response: Wait but aren't you then being intolerant of my intolerance? Isn't intolerance of intolerance also intolerance? Was it OK to be intolerant of Hitler killing the Jews? Was it OK to be intolerant of Hitler being intolerant? Sure it was. So we see that if it's OK to be intolerant of at least one thing (i.e. other intolerant people) then the issue isn't intolerance, for obviously we now agree that being intolerant of SOME THINGS are OK. The issue now is how to determine *what* to be intolerant of....and who gets to determine what they are. Which is followed by the obvious question of: Why do you get to decide it and not others? The point here is to get beyond this silliness and discuss what sort of things it's OK to be intolerant of. E.g. can we agree that it's OK to be intolerant of racism?

20. There is no absolute reality or You can never know reality.

Response: Same as the others: If there is no absolute reality, is that statement you stated a statement based on reality? If it is, then there's at least one absolute reality or at least one reality that we know of. And if there is one there can be more. So we should continue to determine what is reality and what is not since we know there are some absolute realities that we know of.

21. People who think they are right bother me.

Response: Do you think you are right about that statement? Do you bother yourself?

Or Are you saying this because you KNOW I am wrong? In which case are you right about me being wrong? And of course how many people go about making statements that they believe are not right. Obviously you made that statement because you thought YOU were right, so why is it OK for you to think you are right but bad for ME to think I am right.

22. Everything we know about reality is based on facts and everything we know about faith is based on feelings or is unknown.

Response: Is that a fact? You see that statement is a claim to some knowledge about faith. So we must ask: Is that statement itself based on feelings then? If it is based on feelings, it is true or factual or is it a fact itself? If it's not a fact then why state it. And then of course how do you know this statement is true if statements about faith are unknown?

Also note that this statement makes an assertion that faith is not reality. How does he know that? How can he prove that? And of course we must ask: Is this statement about faith “a reality?”

22. From a Christian: You are using human reasoning to come to that conclusion and you are taking away from God's word.

Response: BUT how did YOU come to that conclusion? Did YOU use your OWN HUMAN reasoning to conclude that I was using human reasoning?

I think that is very key because you are implying that when *YOU* look at the Bible and figure it out it's God's wisdom but when *I* look at the Bible and figure it out it is Man's wisdom. My next question would be: why do you think that you have a direct line to God and I don't?

Or to say the same thing another way: You implied that I was using human reasoning to take away from God's word, but you obviously used your own human reasoning to conclude I was using human reasoning. Don't you see the problem there?

But more importantly, look carefully at the statement. It's actually a very very arrogant statement. As mentioned the person is basically stating that HE personally has a direct line to God and knows what God means in the Bible without using his mind or logic. But us, we poor miserable putzes have NO directly link to God and must feebly dawdle along hoping that he (the statement maker) will come to your aid and correct our feeble logic. I find it useful to mention this when someone hits me with it. Say it nicely of course. While we know that it is God who enables us to accept His love, what He does is remove our sinful barriers. It's never an issue of a lack of logic on God's part,

but an issue of pride on our part, because Paul says that the evidence for the Creator is apparent to all of us. The logic is there, but our sinful nature and pride make us reject it.

23. You can't use your mind or logic to talk about things of God or Faith.

Response: Almost identical to the last one: How did YOU come to that conclusion? Did YOU use your mind or did you use logic to arrive at that conclusion? Wasn't what you just said some THING about God AND Faith? How do you know that what you said was true? Do you know that without using your mind? Remember God is the author of Logic and reasoning. He uses words to reach us thru the Gospel message. Saying that using your mind is not Godly is a version of the Gnostic Heresy.

24. It's wrong to force your Religious Values on others.

Response: Wait, isn't that a value you have about Religion? Then why are you forcing that value about religion on me? This is very similar to the Moral Values statement above.

25. Who are you to Judge people?

Response: If I judge people are am I wrong? In which case aren't you judging me? Of course it's OK to judge people, we do it all the time. When Jesus said Judge not lest ye be judged, he was saying don't be a Hypocrite and judge someone else while ignoring the wrong you are doing.

Other types of statements in the same vein and a short discussion of them.

A. There are exceptions to every rule.

This is actually a complex statement and not really a suicide statement. Why? Because you could easily say that there are exceptions to every rule and this rule is the exception to itself. However remember just because this is not a suicide statement, it does not mean it is true. There MAY be exceptions to every rule, but someone needs to prove it.

Here's one that I'm working on. It seems like it isn't a suicide statement on its own, but it strikes me that it has some suicide pre-concepts.

B. I respect the holding of any belief as long as it does not harm anyone. (Unsaid: You are wrong to force your beliefs on me).

Responses: OK My belief is that your other beliefs are harmful to you. I.e. Those other beliefs will send you to hell. Do you now respect my belief? If you do respect my belief then why are you not taking it seriously? If you don't respect my belief it must be because you think my belief will harm someone. In which case you'd have to prove to me that it does (this usually gets into a hairy argument about all the bad things "Christians" have done in the past – which can actually be argued effectively – see my paper on What if Jesus had never been born).

C. You can't use logic or reason or the mind to bring someone into the Kingdom of God

This is not a suicide statement; it's just a false statement (unless you are talking about Predestination which is a different conversation completely and addressed briefly below). After all how do you talk to someone to preach the gospel to them? Through their mind obviously (even if they are blind or deaf), their mind must logically process what you tell them about Sin and Salvation. And they have to understand that they are sinners and deserve damnation. They have to understand that Christ saves them. What part of the mind are we bypassing here? Yes it's true that their mind and anger and pride may STOP them from accepting God, but that's what witnessing is all about (and what the doctrine of predestination refers to – the fact that God needs to overcome their rebellion, pride and sin nature). But despite where you stand on predestination, breaking through the barriers is what witnessing is all about. So the mind is critical. And isn't that exactly what Paul was doing in the marketplace in Greece and what he was doing witnessing to Felix and Agrippa? He was appealing to their mind. That's what Peter was doing when he preached his first sermon and told them that David's grave was full, but Jesus' grave was empty in Acts 2. He was showing them that what he was saying was the truth working through their intelligence and thinking process.

D. Provided by a friend named Donna who sees it all the time. **Let's think outside the box.**

This is a suicide statement because the fact that you were able to think about thinking outside the box makes thinking outside the box so common that it is *inside* the box. In other words isn't thinking outside the box inside the box now? But of course we all sort of know what the speaker is trying to communicate so it can be forgiven.

Other responses

Most folks will soon wise up and will attempt to temper their suicide statements and say things like: **It's usually wrong to be intolerant of people.**

But we are fine with that statement and in fact we agree with that statement. Why? Because that's a perfectly reasonable and valid way of thinking. Jump on that and say: "AMEN I agree. After all what we need to discuss is WHEN is it OK to be intolerant, and WHO should we be intolerant of and WHY." What we are objecting to is the irrational and silly idea that you should **never** be intolerant.

In fact once you get people thinking like this, half the battle has been won. Why do I say that? Because most of the time we are attacked for even suggesting an alternative idea, and if we can get them to accept the fact that sometimes intolerance is OK, we can then argue about WHEN is intolerance acceptable and when it isn't and then see if we have an acceptable or unacceptable stance. It's the foot in the door.

Others like JR will fumble around and try to use big words to confuse you. Just rephrase with simpler words and you should see the fallacies pop out if they exist.

Homework:

Try to spot 2 suicide statements this next week. Keep looking for them in the media, in conversations, on the web etc. And if you find any suicide statements out there that I don't have listed here. Mail them to me at suicidesstatements@neilmammen.com.

In Conclusion:

Greg Koukl of www.str.org explains all this in a great way.

Here is a statement: **All views are equally valid.**

No view is better than another.

Is this true?

How about this statement: **Jesus is the Messiah**

Jews are wrong for rejecting him

The minute you say that all views are valid you realize that this last statement is A VIEW. And if all views are valid, then this view must also be valid.

But the truth is that ALL views are NOT valid. I believe this one IS. But the first one wasn't.

Remember there ARE bad ideas e.g. Racism and Slavery.

So the conclusion is that as Greg says:

Be Elitist about ideas

Be Egalitarian about People.

In other words treat all people equally, but treat their ideas with extreme caution. To elaborate, evaluate all people's ideas with the same standards, toss out all bad ones. Don't hang on to bad ideas because someone famous said it and don't ignore good ideas because someone not known for good ideas said it.