Exercise 7.2: Tone of Debate

You submit a patch to an **OSS** project and it engenders some strong critiques. Some of the technical questions raised deserve a good and productive debate. However, one of the reviewers is rather harsh, and uses rather strong language, some of which could be interpreted as ad hominem personal attacks. How should you respond?

✅ Solution 7.2

Some of the choices are:

1. Ignore the over the top attacks and just answer the technical points.

2. Directly confront the inappropriate tenor of the remarks and respectfully ask the project member to tone it down. Do this as a preface to answering the technical points.

3. Respond in kind to the bully and slap them down.

4. Rely on senior project members to reach out to the offending commenter, and take action as needed, including expulsion from the project.

There is no easy answer to this question. This kind of situation happens with varying frequency on **OSS** projects. Nobody wants lengthy non-productive digressions and nobody wants to feed **trolls**. The only clear answer is one should not respond in kind and accelerate the conflict. Within a given project there is probably an explicit code of conduct and senior maintainers, and these are what set the framework for dealing with such uncomfortable matters.