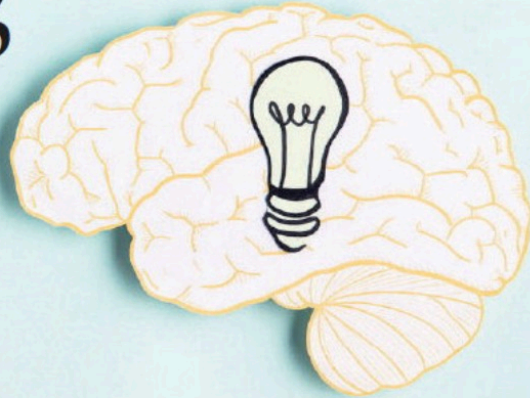


Yes, thinking critically really is that deep



MAGNIFIC

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OPINION

LATELY, I've encountered a pernicious four-word comment that pops up every time anyone tries to challenge something online, such as a harmful beauty standard, maybe, or a stereotype in a comedy bit, or the ills of generative AI.

"It's not that deep." Usually accompanied by an annoying little "lol" tacked on the end of it.

When did people become so incurious? Is this think-piece fatigue from the 2010s when everything was analyzed to death? I understand wanting to turn off a busy, bombarded brain that's on all the time — cue my favourite satirical headline from *The Onion: Woman Takes Short Half-Hour Break From Being Feminist To Enjoy TV Show* — which is maybe what's going on here: how dare you force me to use my mind during this, my mindless scroll!

But the "it's not that deep" stance is actually deeply concerning, especially among younger people. It's a phrase deployed to kill all conversation and critical thought.

The most effective way it does this is by making people feel like humourless scolds — an internet original sin. That's a weapon long been wielded against women in particular; millennial women grew up being told they should be Cool Girls, chill girls, girls who can hang, girls who can take a joke. Gen Z women grew up living in mortal fear of being "cringe" and what's more cringe than caring? It's implied in the "lol": you're a ridiculous clown for

believing, passionately, that this matters, and we're laughing at you.

This detached posture is everywhere online, the result, no doubt, of how much raw media we're taking to the dome every day via social media. Horrific war imagery is followed by a Get Ready With Me video, is followed by a vlog about romanticizing your 9 to 5, is followed by a meme, is followed by, is followed by.

We're all just user names and avatars, which is reflected in how people speak to each other (mean!). Of course, in this environment, apathy reigns. Online culture is increasingly surface level — surface-level interactions, surface-level content — because that's all we have the time and attention span for.

But I also think "it's not that deep" is another byproduct of our ongoing quest to be a frictionless society, in which we can order anything via an app and outsource tasks to voice assistants and chatbots who agree with us.

By nature, critical thought — and criticism in general — provides friction, because it forces your mind to be active instead of passive. So when I see "it's not that deep lol," it doesn't tell me that this person doesn't want to think deeply about this subject. It tells me that this person doesn't want other people to think deeply about this subject, for whatever reason. If it was a matter of simply not caring about the subject, then they'd simply scroll on. "It's not that deep lol" is a statement meant to convince other people not to care.

Critical thinking skills atrophy with underuse, and people who lack them are more vulnerable to misinformation and scams. Do we really want to become a no-thoughts-only-vibes society that passively buys what it's sold and accepts what it's told because "it's not that deep lol"?

Because yes, actually, this is that deep.

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