

The Big Problem with You and Your Thing

(Or: Sad-Funny Intellectual Comments Bingo)

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Here are some sad, funny things that writers, intellectuals, scholars, and artists say in response to other people's creations in written comments or workshop settings that, for some reason, sound to them like valuable, incisive engagements, but really, really aren't.

- 1) "The problem with your thing is the *kind* of thing it is, and I don't like that kind of thing, so that is a big problem for you and your thing."
- 2) "Your thing brings to mind this *other* thing, which I don't like, so I don't like your thing."
- 3) "Your thing is misguided, badly executed and a waste of time because it is not what I am doing, which is what you should also be doing, if not as well."
- 4) "Your thing left me feeling weird (unsettled, angry, afraid, etc.), and I can't say exactly how, but my feeling weird is a big problem for you and your thing."
- 5) "Your thing is clear enough, but I still found it hard to engage with, which is a big problem for you and your thing."
- 6) "Your thing is substantive and significant, but it did not amuse me as much as it needed to."

7) “Your thing is expressed clearly, but I still couldn’t understand it, which is a big problem for you and your thing.”

8) “Apart from the question of the merits of your thing, people like you aren’t allowed to make this kind of thing; who do you think you *are* making such a thing?”

9) “Your thing is not what other people I pay attention to are doing right now, and that is a huge problem for you and your thing.”

10) “Your thing is irrelevant and meaningless because doesn’t speak directly to present-day realities as I define them.”

11) “I fully acknowledge that I have absolutely no knowledge about your thing, what kind of thing it is, or what your thing is trying to do, so here are my very strong opinions about your thing.”

12) “Your thing is elitist and pretentious because it is not fully and easily comprehensible to every single member of society, especially me.”

13) “Your thing is different from *other* things you’ve done before; I *know* you, and this isn’t *you*, and it’s annoying that you are implicitly asking me to keep track of the different kinds of things you do.”

14) “If you squint hard enough, I’ve done *exactly* the same thing as your thing, but you haven’t acknowledged that enough in your thing, and you also probably got it from me.”

15) “Your thing doesn’t speak to the topics, themes or issues I care about, so the thing is worthless and badly done.”

16) “I can’t tell you where exactly to cut or trim your thing, but I didn’t make it to the end because it didn’t hold my attention relative to lots of other things, so that is a big problem for you and your thing.”

17) “Your thing seems to remind me of other things, which means it is derivative of those things, and that maybe you are a plagiarist.”

18) “Even though your thing didn’t say x explicitly (or even though maybe it even said the opposite of x), the thing still seems to *imply* x, and since I don’t like x, I’m just going to reply to that instead.”

19) “What I’m about to say about your thing is what I always say in any given context, so I’m going to find the teeniest, dangling, insignificant fringe of what it seems like you are talking about, even if it’s loosely related to the thing I always say, and I’m going to grab hold of that fringe and shake it *real hard*, and maybe the fact that I am shaking it real hard, with great passion and conviction, will not only manage to convey to everyone how much I know about something completely different from your thing, but it may manage to convince other people that this niggling trifle is somehow less irrelevant to your thing than it obviously is.”

20) “Your thing is going to make me rethink everything, which is just a huge pain in my ass.”

If commentators restrained themselves and spared others these insights, it would theoretically open more time for actual comments. But this would also mean that most intellectual, artistic, and scholarly commentary as we know it would vanish from the earth.