

## First World Problems are Just as Important!

Shôn Ellerton, January 24, 2023

*If something seems trivial or merely a first-world problem, should it be dismissed in favour of a more important one?*



Has anyone said to you, ‘That’s a first world problem’, in response to something you, perhaps, complained about?

If so, you are not the only one. The implication here is that what you complained about is not sufficiently important enough to be complaining about while there are far worse problems happening in the world. Such big-ticket items like famine and access to clean water, war, climate, energy, disease and who’s going to win the World Cup are far more important topics to complain about according to those who belittle so-called first-world problems. Personally, I could care less who’s going to win the next World Cup, but there are many soccer fanatics who will complain and raise hell should the manager of the team make an unpopular decision or if one of the sports players refuses to ‘take the knee’ to show off his grand skills of virtual signalling. Sports does not impact us the same way as famine, war and hunger, but sports fanatics may disagree.

Declaring an issue as a first-world problem in response to a complaint in a derogatory manner is, at best, quite insulting. But most importantly, it is often done out of ignorance. Yes, there *are* first-world problems, but should they be belittled? I don’t think they should be. Allow me to elaborate on this.

Take the situation of having been served food in a restaurant and let’s just say, that the service was under par, food was a little cold, and you were given a dirty fork. The first ethical thing one would do is to complain directly with the

establishment, rather than to openly complain to others. My favourite example here is the difference between American and British service. Americans tend to enjoy better service than their British counterparts because the typical American is more apt to complain there and then with the restaurant, whereas the typical Brit will grin and bear it and moan later to others about the establishment. You don't need to be a genius to work out this is the reason why Americans enjoy better service than the Brits. If someone tells you what you are doing wrong. You fix it. If someone tells *others* what you're doing wrong but not *you*, how would you know what to fix?

Now that we've got that out of the way. Let's take the scenario when the restaurant does *not* listen to you or make any effort to improve its service. By all accounts, I think you are at total liberty to openly complain and make others aware of the bad service. You could write a little article about it and publish it, or leave a review on a social media site, or just spread the word through friends and acquaintances.

If one takes the path of writing a full-blown article about the situation in public, I guarantee there will be some who will dismiss the issue as merely a first-world problem, implying that you should be writing about more important issues. However, the question is this. *Should* you be writing about more important issues and if so, *why* are you writing on such trivial matters? The answer is 'yes', and I will tell you why.

Not long ago, I wrote an [article](#) about near-empty restaurants and cafés with Gestapo-like waitresses forbidding you to sit where you like. One of them went out of business due to being unpopular which didn't surprise me in the least. Someone commented that this was a first-world problem, although, I don't think it was given as being derogatory on this occasion. Technically speaking, it *really* is a first-world problem, because I have no doubt that *any* restaurant in the third world would treat its customers with far more deference and respect than many in the first world like Australia or northern Europe. Knowing that *your* business is supremely important, you might be treated like royalty. I've been to nearly empty restaurants in the third world, and I was treated as if they've never had a customer for days. The food and service were sublime, and I expressed my thanks in the form of a substantial tip and a promise of recommendation to others should they pass that way. The substandard experience of being served in a restaurant in which you feel that you are a mere inconvenience is, indeed, a first-world problem.

So why write an article about not being allowed to sit where you like in a near empty restaurant or café? Or why write about shopping mall trolleys which don't have those foot levers you lift to stop them rolling down slanty pavements? Or why write about escalators which are too slow? Or why write an article on the unhygienic state of the public toilets in the town square? Undeniably, they *are* trivial matters, but they *should* be addressed and not simply dismissed as something not worthy to write about, being considered mere first-world problems.

Take a good look around you. Most of you reading this article are living in a world with all the modern conveniences of a comfortable life. Electricity. Laptops. Refrigerators. LED lighting. Air conditioning. Smooth road pavements. Supermarkets with fully laden shelves to buy things from. A Bluetooth connection so you can play your latest tunes in the car with.

Where does all this come from? Did it spring to being overnight? Did it just miraculously come out of thin air?

Of course not. Our technology, and the modern comfort it gives us, has been created over a long period of time. It has evolved through the ingenuity of mankind over the centuries. Dismissing trivial matters is akin to *reversing* the little things that make our lives better which we take for granted. Writing about trivial matters which some purport as being dismissible first-world problems, may not realise that this is part of evolving and improving our living standards. The collective result of addressing trivial matters, rather than dismissing them, can make a substantial difference in the quality of our lives. If we do *not* address trivial matters deemed as mere first-world problems, then we will regress towards third-world living. Look at, for example, how societies under corrupt, communist or totalitarian regimes deteriorate with respect to standards of living. For example, it's unlikely that the citizenry of the former Soviet Union or mainland China would pay any attention to the cleanliness of public conveniences. It's not because of reasons of who's going to pay for it, but of the mentality of being brought up in a society in which little trivial things much coveted in the world of 'evil' capitalism isn't considered to be as important as those big initiatives and grand plans of the State shoved into people's brains by the media propaganda machine every night on the news. In short, if one wants to advance society, then the little trivial first-world problems and issues need to be addressed.

There are also undesirable first-world problems which do *not* contribute to a more comfortable society. Such problems are unnecessarily addressed born out of a

lifestyle which becomes *too* comfortable with little to complain about. Such problems can only exist in affluent and well-to-do societies like the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. Good examples of first-world problems that *should* be dismissed and *not* be addressed include identity politics, ‘safe spaces’, and other matters of political correctness. In simple terms, they only exist because life has become too comfortable with far less to complain about. Humans *always* need something to complain about. Such problems have no place, of course, in a third-world society in which knowing where your next meal is coming from is of paramount importance.

On a final note, there is a school of thought that many trivial items are more worthwhile of discussing and addressing than big ticket items. I once wrote about this subject in an article titled, [\*There’s Nothing Wrong with Writing About Trivial Things\*](#). I recount Gilligan’s Island Syndrome, a coin termed by Steven Novella, the author of *The Skeptics Guide to the Universe* in which he outlines the scenario of a stranded few on an island. The issues of world hunger, war, climate change and the spread of a global pandemic are the least of concern to those living on the island. However, those issues which many of us living in our comfortable society would be considered as a mere triviality, might be of profound consequence to those living on a remote island or some other society.

From a writer’s perspective, many choose to ignore the trivial and head straight to the big issues but by doing so, they are at risk of being drowned in a proverbial ocean littered with many thousands of other writers doing the same thing. As of writing, I have published over 220 articles and, interestingly, the one that’s generated the most interest is one discussing the problems and merits of what [fountain pen colour](#) to use. Now surely that is a first-world problem and very trivial!