



Editor's Note

Despite having done it for years, I have only recently realised that complaining is a team sport. There might only be one contributor at any given instance, but those listening are just as vital to the conversation. A man complaining in solitude is never soothed; his frustration only aggravates. As far as he's concerned, two's company and three's an upgrade; the more the merrier.

Another oft-overlooked prerequisite for this sport is relatability. Talking to someone who does not on any level relate to your gripes is even worse than being alone. Their vaguely sympathetic gaze, straining in the attempt to find something in your rant that they can use as a foothold to finally engage themselves in the conversation, is an excruciating sight. It's almost as bad being on the other end of this situation; the hollowness of your responses rings in your ears, as you sit there wondering whether to be happy or sad that you haven't been through what they have.

I like to think that the adage, "There's no place like home" was first said by an incensed expat who had just raged about something from their native country, only to see several pairs of eyes staring blankly back at them.



Belonging, after all, isn't just citizenship and a passport - it's knowing intimately the system you're part of, flaws and all. It's being able to, all love aside, poke into those flaws. And, most importantly, it's being around people who know exactly what you're talking about when you do. Oh, look at the time - it's past 12. I should be landing any moment now.

Mini Pakistan, I'm home.

A guide to being a pretty decent Samaritan

Give a bowl of rice to a man and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to grow his own rice and you will save his life.

It's generally held that Confucius said this in all his altruistic wisdom. Maximise the benefits of helping each other: get to the root of the problem instead of providing single-use solutions. Cut to the present day and the quote's still widely popular, particularly amongst schoolteachers trying to convince students that teaching them the peers the concepts beats just showing them the answers.

What we don't consider, however, is that perhaps Confucius had a much more personal reason to popularise this idea. Given that his fame was by no means posthumous, the man was presumably flooded with pleas for help on a daily basis. Confucius was doubtless a more patient man than most, but even he must have, at some point, hit his limit. Desperate for a break from the stream of hapless citizens, the poor soul probably realised that it benefited them as much as it did him to teach them to solve their problems altogether rather than simply doing it for them a number of times.

Four (multo ante meridiem)

No child on earth's been spared
The tale of the early bird-
Of how it awoke with barely a yawn.
But one hardly hears
Of the worm that slept in
And thus escaped the snapping beak of dawn.

I apologise for the profanity. Confucius would disapprove. On that note, though, I find it interesting that profanity is referred to as 'fruity language' given the highly inoffensive nature of fruits. A sentence full of deep and intelligent-sounding words, on the other hand, is termed 'meaty'. Unfortunately, this does not mean that being called a meathead is a compliment. The 'meat' in meathead is far less eloquent; in fact, it is just a piece of meat, as opposed to a functioning human brain. But a brain is indeed a piece of meat if separated from the body. So is it the body that makes the brain or the other way round? A brain without a body is perhaps like a general without a platoon. A brain with a body is, well, overworked. Perhaps things would be a lot easier if it just taught the other organ systems what to do and then sat back for the rest of the time. Rather like - you guessed it - Confucius.



Not only would it make him look even wiser (which would be saying something), it would ensure that, for a while at least, people would get off his back.

This interpretation, however wrong it may be, gives me some peace of mind. In a world split between those who are utterly selfish and those worrying constantly whether their attempts at selflessness are, in some convoluted way, ultimately self-serving, imagining Confucius to be as human as the rest of us - willing to help and yet accommodative of his own wants - is a breath of fresh air* nice change.

I can vouch for this approach to life. You want me to find you a movie or an ebook? No, but here's the website I use - check it out yourself. I've been told that this leaves me wide open to exploitation; why give them the whole database in one click, when I had to spend ages scouring the internet for the perfect, ad-free, virus-free site? Let them work for it too. Fair, but on the other hand, showing them the source instead of giving them just what they specifically need pre-empts all similar requests they would otherwise pester me with in future. Gatekeeping has responsibilities that I'm in no mood to fulfil. But I don't want to be horrible and just refuse to help either. So here you go, I say - take the map, find your treasure and leave me the fuck alone.

*Refer Complaint Therapy #1