

Where is the Azure Firmament?

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I can vaguely remember that when I was small, I relished looking skyward because the colour of the sky was agreeable. Looking at it, I felt like I was going to the heavenly Utopia — the place I desire to live in. However, owing to the overwhelmingly tremendous amount of homework and tests, the frequency I looked skyward got less. Nevertheless, I was still under the impression that the sky was azure. Until one day, I raised my head and gazed at the sky, I found that the sky was not as blue as before. Instead, it was overshadowed by grey smog.

‘Why has the sky become such an ugly eyesore?’ A question crossed my mind. Hardly had I come up with this question when I commenced seeking the answer. Even though I knew that this problem was called ‘air pollution’, I just had a heavy heart to see it and wanted to help keep this shadow out of the sky.

Now, I know more. There are numerous chemicals in the air. When certain kinds of harmful chemicals are too much, they severely affect organisms and the earth: this is called ‘air pollution’. Chemicals causing air pollution are called air pollutants. Indeed, they are no good to the world.

So, what are the effects of air pollution? In the first place, it brings a myriad of unfavourable effects on our environment. For example, carbon dioxide causes global warming and thus, the rise of sea levels. That is why the temperature of Hong Kong as well as other places has been getting higher and higher. For another example, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide are causes of acid rain. Acid rain makes the soil acidic, which is not suitable for cultivation of vegetation, and upsets the ecosystem. Still another example is when smog overshadows the

sky and prevents sunlight on the ground. You know? Air pollution has eliminated the azure sky. Can anything be worse than that? Worst of all, not only will air pollution cause bad effects on the environment, but also our health. To cite some instances, carbon monoxide, lead particles and suspended particulates (RSP) are problems: carbon monoxide is exceedingly harmful to our health as it causes fainting and worse still, death; lead particles are equally harmful, and lead is toxic, so it can affect our mental development and nervous system. In particular, children are likely to suffer from hyperactivity if breathing in too many lead particles. RSP may cause respiratory diseases and irritate our sensory organs such as the eyes. Even if you don't care much about the environment, you should know that air pollution has a number of negative effects on our health. You don't want it to worsen, do you?

Undoubtedly, there must be reasons causing air pollution — human activity. If you take a look at history books, there is nothing about air pollution. Or if you ask a senior person about the sky, he may answer you the former sky was as blue and beautiful as a sapphire. As a result, a conclusion can be drawn that air pollution may be caused by modern human activity.

In Hong Kong, the vast majority of air pollutants are released by cars. Needless to say, cars burn fuel but during burning, various air pollutants are produced such as carbon particles, carbon dioxide, lead particles, etc. As everyone knows, the roads in Hong Kong are overcrowded; for example there are frequently countless moving cars on the road. 'Many a little make a fickle.' When so many cars gather together on the road and release air pollutants, how can the air be clean and fresh? Another major reason for the air pollution in Hong Kong is industry and power stations that produce and release a gigantic amount of air pollutants everyday, threatening the cleanliness of the air. Thirdly, the effect of industry in China has become a major cause of air pollution in Hong Kong in recent years. It is well known that the industrial

advancement in China has been extraordinarily fast. Thousands of industries are in Guangdong province. Unavoidably, industry usually produces many air pollutants. Consequently, the aforementioned pollutants are blown to Hong Kong with the breeze, especially in winter. Accordingly, the problem of air pollution in Hong Kong has become grave and this trend will go on if we don't tackle it.

Fortunately, every cloud has a silver lining. There are some ways to tackle the problem. 'Replace taking transport by walking,' 'Turn off the fans and air-conditioners when not needed,' 'The government should communicate and co-operate with the Guangdong government.' These are monotonous and never-changing 'solutions' to air pollution. Nonetheless, how many people are willing to do something? It seems to me that the promotion of government to raise the people's consciousness of tackling air pollution is not enough. Moreover, how can people not perceive and not care about the seriousness of air pollution, and be unmoved despite all the promotion? How could this happen? I believe that the first most effective and fundamental solution to air pollution is education. From my recollection, I have only learnt a little about air pollution in geography and biology and this topic (air pollution) was not the highlight of the subjects. I think this is why students nowadays do not consider air pollution serious. Therefore, in my opinion, the government ought to reinforce and enhance the education of environmental protection. After all, education is the fundamental support of the society. Secondly, making people feel nature is fabulous is also crucial because as a matter of course, if you love something, you will cherish it. Similarly, if people relish nature, they will protect it. How can we achieve this aim? From my point of view, the government should co-operate with tourist agencies to promote ecotourism. When people feel the coziness and bliss of nature, as well as recognize that what they are doing will damage nature, they will try to stop! Also, our elders can share with their younger generations how

azure and amazing the skies were before and how the air can be refreshing and even fragrant in the country. As a student knowing innumerable mechanical and other means to 'tackle' air pollution, I feel from the bottom of my heart that promotion by emotionless slogans is not sufficient to eliminate air pollution as people cannot feel the amazement of nature. They do not consider air pollution as their top priority. Instead, altering people's values should be the primary mission, getting at the root of this problem. In this way, citizens will be willing to change into more environment-loving people. Perhaps it is not a swift method and frankly speaking this must take a prolonged time; nevertheless, this must be the most effective and viable method.

Sometimes, I think I am really lucky. I loved watching the brilliant sky in my youth, so I believe having opportunities to look at the azure firmament is a kind of well-being. Because of this, I have the chance to share my feelings about air pollution and nature with all my friends, teachers and family members. Maybe this is the most meaningful and constructive thing I have done for Hong Kong so far. You, the wise, can you recall in your memory the dazzlingly charming sky? Perhaps, the future is in our hands. It is time: we need to make a choice — everlasting natural blue sky or enjoyment of man-made appliances and transport? Personally, I would choose blue sky, since I dare not imagine how revolting a world without blue sky will be.

You, the wise, what is your choice?