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Section FK

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Environmental Protection Measures in China

Since the 20th century, China stepped to the industrial age. Using too many engines led to China suffering environmental problems due to pollution of the air and water. It is well known that the environmental quality in China is lower than the average of the world. We recognize the progress China, especially in industry, but China is still facing very serious environmental problems, it is an indisputable fact. Those environmental issues will cause climate anomalies. For example, in South China, the weather used to be warm and humid. However, in recent years, it always suffers from drought. Because of that, thousands of farms cannot grow crops and farmers lose money.

When facing such big environmental problems, there is no doubt that some people may think that they will do anything to protect our environment. Some of the environmental conservation actions or techniques that are widely used in China may cause secondary damage by polluting the environment again. We cannot deny that those actions or techniques will help to make a better climate initially; however, if we can combine with the principles under realistic conditions, we can avoid those unnecessary secondary damages.

One example of the advanced techniques widely used in China is artificial rainfall. China is a water scarce country. To stop drought in some parts of China, the government decided to use artificial rainfall. Artificial rainfall is a kind of chemical which can cause cloud seeding. The chemical will attempt to change the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air that serve as cloud condensation, which alter the microphysical processes in the cloud. When the chemicals react with cloud the temperature will decrease rapidly. Thus the water vapor will become to rain. However, the strategy has advantages and disadvantages. Dr. Victoria Ngomuo, Community Water and Demographer at the Water Resources Institute (WRI) in Dar es Salaam, said “The chemicals are most likely to affect the natural hydrological circle in the atmosphere. The chemicals used in the production of artificial rain could affect climatic patterns, ecosystem, water sources and the soil.” Overusing artificial rainfall will cause the chemical leaking from clouds. When the chemicals drop in to lakes and main rivers, it will pollute the sources of drinking water. Later she summarized, “The chemicals are catalysts which, when in microscopic particles, attract water vapor that condense to form droplets of water known as artificial rain. Excessive use of the chemicals will affect biodiversity and make the soil unproductive, besides being a water pollutant.” We can say that the idea of artificial rainfall is good and it can produce rainfall and stop drought in an effective way. A proper way to avoid the potential pollution is that scientists should figure out how many chemicals can be used in one time, and which places should be protected from the artificial rain chemicals.

Sometimes the government policy will cause a bigger environmental problem. Beijing is one of the most crowded cities in the world, and this is well known because of its traffic jams. Too many automobiles lead to air pollution. To reduce the emission of gas from vehicles, Beijing government made a decision: car restrictions starting from 2010. For example, if the last digit of your car license is one, you cannot drive on any Monday. If it is two, you cannot drive on Tuesdays. The rest can be done in the same manner, excluding holidays. Technically, by doing this, the emission will decline 20% every weekday. Paradoxically, the air pollution in Beijing is worse and worse. Some of the families, who can afford a second car, will buy another one. According to the journal of *China Daily* which was published on January 3rd, 2011, the capital's transport authorities stated “we received three times the monthly quota for new car license plate applications in the first two days of the year.” What is more, based on the data from *Beijing Daily* on January 30th, 2012, mathematically, the number of vehicles growth in Beijing satisfies an exponential function. It is easy to see that the number of cars in Beijing have increased rapidly after the Car Restriction Policy issued, which means the purpose of reducing gas emission has failed. We cannot force people to stop driving. The public transport should become a fundamental measure to solve the problem of urban air pollution.

Not only will some government policies have “side effects”, but some non-government organizations have improper actions as well. Every Arbor Day, China’s Green Peace Sector will call on all citizens to plant trees, and a variety of grasses. Recently, on March 10th 2012, Liu Bing, an environmentalist, pointed out “we should protect the forests which are existing rather than spending too much money on planting trees.” on *21st Century Business Herald.* He showed “the survival rate of tree planting in every Arbor Day is lower than fifty percent. We spend from 30RMB to 80 RMB (5 dollars to 16 dollars) to purchase a young tree. The sum of purchasing trees is higher than the natural forests protection fee from government. From this perspective, we are wasting money.” One of the reasons for the low survival rate is that some soils, such as weak acidic soil cannot grow trees. But for the Arbor Day, we still plant trees on it. The purpose of Arbor Day is to encourage people to be conscious of environmental protection and nature. However, when planting trees becomes a mere formality, we are just wasting time and money. Rather than planting new forests, we should stop cutting down forests.

Brennan Andrew and Lo Yeuk-Sze state environmental ethics on preface of the book *Environmental Ethics.* In Chapter 6, the authors state

“Anthropocentrism (human-centeredness) leads to environmentally damaging behaviors. Anthropocentrism is at the heart of the problem of environmental destructiveness. If anthropocentrism is the problem, then perhaps non-anthropocentrism is the solution. At this point, it may be helpful to separate two theses of non-anthropocentrism, ones that are not normally distinguished in the literature.”

Later, they explain the two related theses. The first thesis is evaluative thesis (of non-anthropocentrism). It is the claim that all natural nonhuman things have their own rights. All creatures are independent. The second thesis is psycho-behavioral thesis (of non-anthropocentrism). It is the claim that people who believe in the evaluative thesis of non-anthropocentrism are more likely to behave environmentally than those who do not. They behave in beneficial ways, or at least not in harmful ways, towards the environment. To protect our environment, we cannot just care about ourselves. By this I mean, we should consider more about ecological balance.

Based on the environmental ethics, we can be encouraged to think more than just human needs. We need to see the potential dangers of the techniques we create, rather than the immediate advantages of that technique. What is more, government and non-government organizations should consider the realistic social situation before issuing a policy or organizing an action. Only in this way, those environmental conservation policies, actions and techniques are not futile.

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