

**Human Welfare Ecology: Ideological Perspective on Environmentalism the World Should
Adopt to Best Mitigate the 'Tragedy of the Commons' of Climate Change**

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Finding the solution to best mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’ of climate change is crucial for the sake of the environment and people. Hardin (1968) explains the ‘tragedy of the commons’ as to imagine a field available to everyone. Naturally, each farmer will want to graze as much livestock as possible on this common field as they seek to maximize this resource. Now, with every farmer trying to utilize the same field by adding more livestock gives both benefits and dilemmas to everyone. It is beneficial because each farmer earns more profit from the added livestock, but a dilemma because the field is now overgrazed, and there are fewer resources, such as grass, for each livestock. As farmers only notice the increase in profits and are only concerned in their interest, they will continue to add more livestock. Every farmer is trapped in this shared commons, making it a tragedy. The likeness of the example above and the current environmental situation are palpable. Natural resources such as the ocean, rivers, lakes, and the atmosphere are the commons of this society. Every human, user and polluter benefits from these commons, but the dilemma is with everyone dumping their waste and using resources, as if it is unlimited, puts an enormous threat to the environment which results in climate change (Dickerson et al., 2010). There are many environmental ideological perspectives that strives to best mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’ of the climate change, one of them is human welfare ecology. The ideology of human welfare ecology is a sustainable development approach that incorporates the notions of environmental conservation, economic development, and social inclusion. This is the ideological perspective on environmentalism that the world should adopt to best mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’ of climate change. Human welfare ecology: 1) espouses strong sustainability that is considerate of maintaining natural resources for both present and future generations; 2)

discourages self-interested actions in favour of considering the collective welfare, and; 3) includes social justice alongside environmental sustainability, which can materialize an inclusive, equitable, progressive politics that is needed to address the issue of climate change.

Human Welfare Ecology is For All Generations

Human welfare ecology developed from the ideologies of conservationism. It then extends to the economic factor by acknowledging the environmental impact on human lives and overall well-being. From its beginning that is mainly concern of the effects of pesticides on the reproduction of birds, human welfare ecology has grown to also address other concerns such as global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, waste disposals, carcinogens, the quality of air and water, and more. Largely, its interest is on the welfare of humanity in relation to environmental degradation. Under those circumstances, the human welfare ecology was able to open a path in creating environmental legislation, regulatory processes for studying environmental impact, departments of environment, and overall consulting the environmental consequences of any major projects (Dickerson et al., 2010). Therefore, human welfare ecology advocates strong sustainability, which according to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p.16). It consolidates both the current population and posterities to be sustainable for environmental affairs, economic resources, and social justice.

With human welfare ecology, tradeoffs can only be carried out according to the capacity of the resource stock. These concepts are important because a perspective on maintaining existing natural resources for others, is a concept that the ‘tragedy of the commons’ has struggled to employ (Martens et al., 2004). In comparison, the ideologies of deep ecology, and ecocentric perspective, have put environmental affairs as the main priority. Its advocates believe in

preserving the natural resources in an “uncompromising form” (Dickerson et al., 2010, p.200) and that any other environmental ideologies, being anthropocentric, are unfeasible for the true preservation of the environment and everything in the ecosphere (Martens et al., 2004). It is true that deep ecology can be considered as a stronger approach for the environment. However, this belief contradicts the perspective of human welfare ecology in accommodating generations of the future, especially the present. Deep ecology seems to neglect the social and economic conditions of the current impoverished people who require the developmental process of the economy in order to at least meet the basic needs of humanity. Unfortunately, social inequality will persevere and a sustainable future will be harder to attain if the world adopts deep ecology for its ideological perspective (Martens et al., 2004). In order to mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’, it is also important to consider how an ideology can affect the equality that should exist within the ‘commons’.

Human Welfare Ecology Supports Collective Welfare

For a successful sustainable development, the ideological perspective of human welfare ecology is in favour of actions that are beneficial for the collective welfare which focuses on stabilizing and reducing the production and consumption of natural resources. In the film, *Before the Flood* (2016), Leonardo Di Caprio meets with Sunita Narain, from the Centre for Science and Environment, to discuss the overwhelming consumption of an American compared to the rest of the world. Narain infers: “the fact is we need to put the issue of lifestyle and consumption at the centre of climate negotiations” (36:15 - 36:51). A solution by human welfare ecology for consumers is to have a look at their lifestyles and propose to re-evaluate the unnecessary standards of living and to go past the consumerism and materialism needs of the society. Consumerism and materialism are what fuels the energy-intensive industries. The use of fossil

fuels, mining, petroleum extraction, and manufacturing, among others, are the main contributors to greenhouse gas emissions that lead to global warming and climate change (Dickerson et al., 2010). On the other hand, the ideological perspective of ecological modernization argues that despite the increased of resources and waste, there is still a room for ‘decoupling’ of growth and resource using technological innovation such as energy-efficient materials and reusing waste (Dobson, 2009). However, it is a delusional approach by capitalist leaders in an attempt to “greenwash” and disguise a traditional industry investment as “eco-friendly”. It’s a weaker approach to sustainability that undermines the actual need for ecological interdependence, as it disregards the social aspect of sustainability and what it means to the present, especially the poor, and future generations. (Martens et al., 2004). If the ideological perspective of human welfare ecology and its concept of reducing consumption becomes adopted, the ‘tragedy of the commons’ of climate change can be mitigated as the commons takes the responsibility for the collective welfare of any generation.

Human Welfare Ecology Includes Social Justice Alongside Environmental Sustainability for Progressive Politics

Sustainable development, following the ideologies of human welfare ecology, understands that it does not only concern a number of generations but also what it means to all nations. According to Martens (2004), compared to other environmental ideologies, this ideology gives special importance to the social aspects of environmentalism and implores for proper political participation to have real improvements. With those same intentions, the Paris Agreement has brought all countries with a common goal of fighting climate change to reinforce a global response and to understand how to handle the existing environmental impact. It is structured to be able to support the most vulnerable nations with the expectation that all groups

will provide their utmost part (United Nations Climate Change, 2020). The success of the Paris Agreement will mainly be based on the actions and the given respect of the participants to the accord. States, international organizations, and other non-state actors can further cooperate by going beyond the conversation and genuinely putting words into movements. This positively ambitious gathering for the environment, with action, would also paved the way for an enhanced social justice. In addition, human welfare ecology emphasizes that economic development is only a means and environmental sustainability and social justice are the key factors to real sustainability (Martens et al., 2004). To mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’, human welfare ecology consolidates these principal actors for sustainable development.

Each environmental ideological perspective shows great effort to give solutions to climate change that undoubtedly challenge the very economic and political systems that are central to the traditional ideologies. This is because natural resources have been overly exploited that these new ideologies are required to create a dramatic shift against the most brutal case of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ that is global warming and climate change. To best mitigate the ‘tragedy of the commons’ of climate change, the world should adopt the ideological perspective of human welfare ecology. It is a sustainable development approach that presents the integration of environmental conservation, economic development, and social inclusion. Human welfare ecology is the very notion of a strong sustainability that prioritizes the preservation of natural resources for present and future generations. It is against self-interested actions, which the ‘tragedy of the commons’ encompasses, and promotes collective welfare by addressing the aggressive production and consumption of society. Lastly, social justice and environmental sustainability is the foundation and goals of human welfare ecology that actualizes progressive politics to address the issue of climate change.

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