

GREEN IDEOLOGY

The four main commitments of Green ideology, or ecologism which are ecological restructuring, radical democratisation, ecological law, and non-violence as a principle of action are explored below.

Ecological Restructuring

This is the notion that the interplay between nature and humanity has to radically change from the way it is presently. Green ideology provides a description of the present state of humanity's association with the natural world as well as how this relationship developed and is perpetuated. The general consensus within the ideology is a call for a holistic, as opposed to atomised, approach to reality in which humans see themselves as a part of the whole. A liberal worldview, they contend, is built on an atomistic premise where each individual has full autonomy which in turn makes it easier to conceptualise oneself as removed from and above nature. Another element of ecological reconstruction is the belief that we must think of and utilise nature as a model in our relations with nature and non-humans as well in our human socialisation; ecology illustrates the value of symbiosis and collaboration. The desired outcome of this ecological restructuring for Green advocates is sustainability with the understanding that the current human/non-human relationship is exploitative and cannot be maintained as it is.

Radical Democratisation

This is Green ideology's commitment towards decentralisation and forms of participatory democratic organisation which usually help make it distinct from authoritarian brands of forms of environmentalism. Participatory democracy would be more achievable in smaller communities and this fuels the Greens' motivation towards decentralisation. The underpinning explanation is that should people have a greater sense of belonging to a place that is geographically fixed, they will better relate to nature.

Ecological Law

This third commitment of Green ideology is the idea of a natural or a greater form of law that can rationalise action taken outside of the sphere of established state law. Ecology marks out laws that humans are subject to independently of our will ('five laws of ecology'); while it is possible to ignore these laws, it is impossible to circumvent their consequences. It follows then that it may be required to take measures that breach conventional laws for the upkeep of ecological law. This commitment to a concept of ecological law comes in helpful when at times direct action by Green movement activists cite a greater moral law when clashing societal law and order norms.

Non-Violence

A commitment to non-violence is a key tenet of green ideology. This is not because it is thought to be more effective but as a matter of principle. Non-violence as a matter of principle is still quite abstract as it is not clear whether Green ideology has yet decided whether assaults on property constitutes violence. The destruction of an oil refinery may well be termed just an attack on inanimate property, but it could just as well constitute part of a continuous drive of harassment that merits being called violence.

Tensions and Problems

Environmental Scepticism: Lomborg believes that the “environmental litany,” the narrative that ecologists recount so that they can garner support, is profoundly distorted. The litany tells of the fall from a state of environmental grace through man-made action leading to catastrophe, all of which Lomborg states is biased and deceptive, if not simply false. He contends that examples are selectively used to uphold the political stance that the Greens take. This is not unusual in ideological dissemination but as Greens wish to see their core values realised in policy, it can be very detrimental to have policy based on skewed empirical beliefs. For instance, a policy of deindustrialisation will cause great deprivations for all societies. Lomborg endorses a more rational attitude to environmental policy using a cost-benefit analysis and through a scheme to lift human welfare in general than in narrow ecological terms.

Death of Environmentalism: Nordhaus and Shellenberger believe that the “environmental paradigm” of 1960-70s is now obsolete and that we conceptualise a new “post-environmental” politics. Their attack is against the inadequate, pollution-oriented framework of ecology and the proponents of deindustrialisation and politics of limits to growth as a response to ecological change. They contend further that the Greens have not confronted the fact that the reason the West has espoused environmental causes and values is because of the prosperity afforded by industrialisation, which Greens are very inclined to attack.

Post-Ecologism

Blühdorn raises scepticism from a social constructivist perspective. He states that the idea of “environmental crisis” is always “discursively constructed and politically negotiated.” This does not contradict that empirical data on various ecological changes are factual but that their characterising such phenomena as crises is a discursive choice to problematize it politically and give it urgency. Environmentalists have not succeeded in converting the crisis concept into meaningful political action, instead having normalised the crisis now as the backdrop to all our lives. According to Blühdorn, environmentalism is not a radical set of values to transform life, just a dying ideology that promised to better modernity but failed to do so.

Adapted from Mathew Humphrey, 'Green Ideology' in Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargeant and Marc Stears (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (OUP 2013)