

Conflict Theory and Biosphere Annihilation

By [Robert J. Burrowes](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

Global Research, May 30, 2018

In a recent article titled [‘Challenges for Resolving Complex Conflicts’](#), I pointed out that existing conflict theory pays little attention to the extinction-causing conflict being ongoingly generated by human over-consumption in the finite planetary biosphere (and, among other outcomes, currently resulting in 200 species extinctions daily). I also mentioned that this conflict is sometimes inadequately identified as a conflict caused by capitalism’s drive for unending economic growth in a finite environment.

I would like to explain the psychological origin of this biosphere-annihilating conflict and how this origin has nurtured the incredibly destructive aspects of capitalism (and socialism, for that matter) from the beginning. I would also like to explain what we can do about it.

Before I do, however, let me briefly illustrate why this particular conflict configuration is so important by offering you a taste of the most recent research evidence in relation to the climate catastrophe and biosphere annihilation and why the time to resolve this conflict is rapidly running out (assuming, problematically, that we can avert nuclear war in the meantime).

In an article reporting a recent speech by Professor James G. Anderson of Harvard University, whose research led to the Montreal Protocol in 1987 to mitigate CFC damage to the Ozone Layer, environmental journalist Robert Hunizker summarizes Anderson’s position as follows: ‘the chance of permanent ice remaining in the Arctic after 2022 is zero. Already, 80% is gone. The problem: Without an ice shield to protect frozen methane hydrates in place for millennia, the Arctic turns into a methane nightmare.’ See [‘There Is No Time Left’](#).

But if you think that sounds drastic, other recent research has drawn attention to the fact that the ‘alarming loss of insects will likely take down humanity before global warming hits maximum velocity.... The worldwide loss of insects is simply staggering with some reports of 75% up to 90%, happening much faster than the paleoclimate record rate of the past five major extinction events’. Without insects ‘burrowing, forming new soil, aerating soil, pollinating food crops...’ and providing food for many bird species, the biosphere simply collapses. See [‘Insect Decimation Upstages Global Warming’](#).

So, if we are in the process of annihilating Earth’s biosphere, which will precipitate human extinction in the near term, why aren’t we paying much more attention to the origin of this fundamental conflict? And then developing a precisely focused strategy for transcending it?

The answer to these two questions is simply this: the origin of this conflict is particularly unpalatable and, from my careful observation, most people, including conflict theorists, aren’t anxious to focus on it.

So why are human beings over-consuming in the finite planetary biosphere? Or more

accurately, why are human beings who have the opportunity to do so (which doesn't include those impoverished people living in Africa, Asia, Central/South America or anywhere else) over-consuming in the finite planetary biosphere?

They are doing so because they were terrorized into unconsciously equating consumption with a meaningful life by parents and other adults who had already internalized this same 'learning'.

Let me explain how this happens.

At the moment of birth, a baby is genetically programmed to feel and express their feelings in response to the stimuli, both internal and external, that the baby registers. For example, as soon after birth as a baby feels hungry, they will signal that need, usually by crying or screaming. An attentive parent (or other suitable adult) will usually respond to this need by feeding the baby and the baby will express their satisfaction with this outcome, perhaps with a facial expression, in a way that most aware parents and adults will have no difficulty identifying. Similarly, if the baby is cold, in pain or experiencing any other stimulus, the baby will express their need, probably by making a loud noise. Given that babies cannot immediately use a cultural language, they use the language that was given to them by evolution: particularly audibly expressed noise of various types that an aware adult will quickly learn to interpret.

Of course, from the initial moments after birth and throughout the next few months, a baby will experience an increasing range of stimuli - including internal stimuli such as the needs for listening, understanding and love, as well as external stimuli ranging from a wet nappy to a diverse set of parental, social, climate and environmental stimuli - and will develop a diverse and expanding range of ways, now including a wider range of emotional expression but eventually starting to include spoken language, of expressing their responses, including satisfaction and enjoyment if appropriate, to these stimuli.

At some vital point, however, and certainly within the child's first eighteen months, the child's parents and the other significant adults in the child's life, will start to routinely and actively interfere with the child's emotional expression (and thus deny them satisfaction of the unique needs being expressed in each case) in order to compel the child to do as the parent/adult wishes. Of course, this is essential if you want the child to be obedient - a socially compliant slave - rather than to follow their own Self-will.

One of the critically important ways in which this denial of emotional expression occurs seems benign enough: Children who are crying, angry or frightened are scared into not expressing their feelings and offered material items - such as food or a toy - to distract them instead. Unfortunately, the distractive items become addictive drugs. Unable to have their emotional needs met, the child learns to seek relief by acquiring the material substitutes offered by the parent. But as this emotional deprivation endlessly expands because the child has been denied the listening, understanding and love to develop the capacity to listen to, love and understand themselves, so too does the 'need' for material acquisition endlessly expand.

As an aside, this explains why most violence is overtly directed at gaining control of material, rather than emotional, resources. The material resource becomes a dysfunctional and quite inadequate replacement for satisfaction of the emotional need. And, because the

material resource cannot 'work' to meet an emotional need, the individual is most likely to keep using direct and/or structural violence to gain control of more material resources in an unconscious and utterly futile attempt to meet unidentified emotional needs. *In essence, no amount of money and other assets can replace the love denied a child that would allow them to feel and act on their feelings.*

Of course, the individual who consumes more than they need and uses direct violence, or simply takes advantage of structural violence, to do so is never aware of their deeply suppressed emotional needs and of the functional ways of having these needs met. Although, I admit, this is not easy to do given that listening, understanding and love are not readily available from others who have themselves been denied these needs. Consequently, with their emotional needs now unconsciously 'hidden' from the individual, they will endlessly project that the needs they want met are, in fact, material.

This is the reason why members of the Rothschild family, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Amancio Ortega, Mark Zuckerberg, Carlos Slim, the Walton family and the Koch brothers, as well as the world's other billionaires and millionaires, seek material wealth and are willing to do so by taking advantage of structures of exploitation held in place by the US military. They are certainly wealthy in the material sense; unfortunately, they are emotional voids who were never loved and do not know how to love themselves or others now.

Tragically, however, this fate is not exclusive to the world's wealthy even if they illustrate the point most graphically. As indicated above, virtually all people who live in material cultures have suffered this fate and this is readily illustrated by their ongoing excessive consumption - especially their meat-eating, fossil-fueled travel and acquisition of an endless stream of assets - in a planetary biosphere that has long been signaling 'Enough!'

As an aside, governments that use military violence to gain control of material resources are simply governments composed of many individuals with this dysfunctionality, which is very common in industrialized countries that promote materialism. Thus, cultures that unconsciously allow and encourage this dysfunctional projection (that an emotional need is met by material acquisition) are the most violent both domestically and internationally. This also explains why industrialized (material) countries use military violence to maintain political and economic structures that allow ongoing exploitation of non-industrialized countries in Africa, Asia and Central/South America.

In summary, the individual who has all of their emotional needs met requires only the intellectual and few material resources necessary to maintain this fulfilling life: anything beyond this is not only useless, it is a burden.

If you want to read (a great deal) more detail of the explanation presented above, you will find it in ['Why Violence?'](#) and ['Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice'](#).

So what can we do?

Well, I would start by profoundly changing our conception of sound parenting by emphasizing the importance of nisteling to children - see ['Nisteling: The Art of Deep Listening'](#) - and making ['My Promise to Children'](#).

For those adults who feel incapable of nisteling or living out such a promise, I encourage you

to consider doing the emotional healing necessary by [‘Putting Feelings First’](#).

If you already feel capable of responding powerfully to this extinction-threatening conflict between human consumption and the Earth’s biosphere, you are welcome to consider joining those who are participating in the fifteen-year strategy to reduce consumption and achieve self-reliance explained in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#) and/or to consider using sound nonviolent strategy to conduct your climate or environment campaign. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#).

You are also welcome to consider signing the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#).

As the material simplicity of Mohandas K. Gandhi demonstrated: Consumption is not life.

If you are not able to emulate Gandhi (at least ‘in spirit’) by living modestly, it is your own emotional dysfunctionality – particularly unconscious fear – that is the problem that needs to be addressed.

Robert J. Burrowes has a lifetime commitment to understanding and ending human violence. He has done extensive research since 1966 in an effort to understand why human beings are violent and has been a nonviolent activist since 1981. He is the author of ‘Why Violence?’ <http://tinyurl.com/whyviolence> His email address is flametree@riseup.net and his website is here. <http://robertjburrowes.wordpress.com>

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Robert J. Burrowes](#), Global Research, 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Robert J. Burrowes](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca