## Buddhism K

### 2AR 3---Util Straight turn

#### We turn value ethics.

Paul Conway 18, Assistant Professor at the University of Western Ontario and Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Cologne, Joshua D. Greene, Professor of Psychology, a member of the Center for Brain Science faculty, David Polacek, Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Florida State University, October 2018, “Sacrificial utilitarian judgments do reflect concern for the greater good: Clarification via process dissociation and the judgments of philosophers”, Cognition, Volume 179.

However, both of these claims rest upon research employing conventional sacrificial moral dilemmas that pit concerns about causing harm against concerns for the greater good. Such analyses remain ambiguous with respect to people’s motivations and traits. Level-1 utilitarian responses on conventional dilemmas may reflect either prosocial tendencies, a relatively strong desire to promote the greater good, or antisocial tendencies, a relatively weak desire to avoid harming people. Conventional analyses cannot distinguish between these possibilities. Thus, although evidence abounds that utilitarian sacrificial judgments are associated with antisocial traits (e.g., Bartels & Pizarro, 2011; Patil, & Silani, 2014; Miller et al., 2014), it remains unclear whether such findings truly reflects the psychology involved in maximizing good outcomes, or simply the absence of concerns about causing harm.

Moreover, further evidence is required to support the stronger claim that sacrificial judgments do not reflect prosocial tendencies—an argument based on null findings. Although null findings can indicate the absence of the effect, they can also result from suppression—the case where two same-direction effects cancel out when pitted against one another. There are reasons to believe that just such a suppression effect may occur for the relationship between measures of prosociality and conventional dilemma judgments. For example, Conway and Gawronski (2013) found that moral identity internalization positively predicted both utilitarian and deontological response tendencies, which cancelled out for relative judgments. Reynolds and Conway (2018) found a similar pattern for aversion to witnessing others’ suffering, and many other papers have documented simultaneous influences on dilemma responding that remain invisible to conventional dilemma analyses (e.g., Conway, Weiss, Burgmer, & Mussweiler, 2018; Muda, Niszczota, Bialek, & Conway, 2017). Therefore, conventional analyses may underestimate the extent to which sacrificial utilitarian judgments reflect prosocial motivations.3

### 2AR 4---Embrace Violence Bad

#### Viewing violence as endemic to society naturalizes it, which undermines our capacity to *mitigate* and *move beyond* violent social practices.

Jonathan Luke Austin 24, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Copenhagen and Director of the Centre for Advanced Security Theory,” 2024, “6: The Ecology of Violence,” in Routledge Handbook of the Future of Warfare, Eds. Artur Gruszczak and Sebastian Kaempf, Routledge, pp. 63-68.

Borrell’s speech was attacked for its seeming attachment to racist civilizational stereotypes that centre a Western European and North American metropole (the ‘garden’) in need of protection from the ‘jungle’ of ‘most of the rest of the world.’ Such rhetoric also echoes – however – a long intellectual history, still present within Political Science and International Relations, that has made similar claims. This ranges from long-standing controversy surrounding Huntington’s (1997) clash of civilizations thesis, towards Robert Kagan’s (2018) more recent claim that the ‘jungle grows back’ and, as such, neo-imperial action by the United States and its allies is a necessary part of maintaining the liberal international order. Setting aside the controversy surrounding remarks like these, they attest to the strength of a particular ‘ecological’ vision of world politics. Particularly when referencing violence, war, or conflict, frequent appeal is made to biological, natural, and cognate metaphors across history. These metaphors render political violence a systemic phenomenon (‘the jungle has a strong growth capacity’) embedded in natural processes. They have also proliferated, more recently, given the rise of environmentally-linked security concerns that render the planet itself a source of potential conflict and violence (Chandler, Cudworth & Hobden 2018).

In this chapter, I address the politics and implications of such ‘ecological’ understandings of (political) violence in three ways. First, I stress that while the rhetoric of Borrell or Kagan is disquieting, it tends to remain rhetoric. Here, analogies between political violence, conflict, or war and natural phenomena are essentially metaphorical. Although the consequences of such rhetoric can be severe, it must be distinguished from what I will refer to as ‘ecological ontologies’ of violence. Ecological ontologies of political violence can be traced to a mix of complexity, systems, and cybernetic theory, cross-fertilized with the insights of post-structuralist and post-modern philosophy (Coyne 2008). In general, such approaches are relational ontologies that foreground a post-humanist, distributed, and complexity-orientated understanding of social life. These ecological ontologies have – importantly – grown in influence both for the academic study of violence but also within military, security, and other agencies whose operational doctrines are now directly influenced by natural concepts in order to foreground warfare’s rhizomatic, symbiotic, fluid, embodied, and environmentally fluctuating qualities (Bousquet 2018; Öberg 2018; Austin 2019c, 2020a; Grove 2019).

Second, I discuss the ethico-political questions that are raised when such ecological ontologies are deployed. In theory, ecological ontologies are normatively neutral, and should be sharply distinguished from the risk of civilizational, racist, and neo-imperialist tropes that are frequently associated with the use of ecological metaphors. Nonetheless, these ontologies do risk presenting social life in a ‘naturalized’ form that raises multiple ethico-political questions. This includes the question of attributing responsibility for the use of political violence, the risk of a further naturalization of the use of literally posthuman forms of warfare (autonomous weapons systems, etc.), and – ultimately – the return to a naturalized cosmology of violence that sees the presence of violence as integral to (post)human society. The third focus of this discussion seeks to address these concerns. It does so by stepping outside the realm of political violence to see how ecological ontologies/approaches have been deployed within the field of public health to prevent harm. My goal there is to stress how similar methods of intervening-in/against political violence can be imagined within the scope of ecological ontologies, but that doing so requires a sustained shift away from a contemporary preoccupation with legal and ideational approaches to violence prevention. My final focus here is thus on teasing out an agenda for what such a future – in line with the goals of this handbook – of violence prevention might look like. A future, to put it simply, of designing-against ecologies of violence.

Metaphor or ontology?

Political violence has a long history of being spoken about through natural metaphors. Indeed, one might argue that earlier explanations for the persistence of organized violence in human society embraced a naturalistic view in which for evolutionary, theological, or other reasons, such violence was an inevitable part of the circle of life (Keeley 1996; Collins 2008). Slowly, such cosmologies of violence as a natural phenomenon – akin to the winds and tides – declined as an ethico-political imperative to avoid the ravages of total war took hold in the 20th century. Nonetheless, the metaphorical appeal to natural, ecological, or cognate concepts continues. Israel, for instance, speaks of its military activities in occupied Palestine as ‘mowing the grass’ (Inbar & Shamir 2014). The United States developed a ‘Human Terrain’ system in Iraq, with the hope of better capturing the ‘hearts and minds’ of Iraqis, implicitly equating physical, natural, and human ‘terrains’ or ‘landscapes’ to be conquered (Zehfuss 2012). More generally, violence, conflict, and war have been suffused with bodily metaphors of health and disease: with enemies described as cancerous cells and those to be protected as bodies (Wilcox 2015). Such metaphors are important, as in any sphere of social life. Metaphorical reasoning allows for the production of concepts that help us make sense of the complexity of the world and – therefore – to act within it more or less ‘effectively’ (Chilton 1996).

Nonetheless, as many have noted, these use of naturalistic metaphors to explain violence, conflict, and war is frequently a depoliticizing move (Bell 2012). By taking phenomena fundamentally connected to human society and its political disjunctures, but reading them through ecological metaphors, we seem to take them away from the sphere of political debate and contestation. Such a depoliticizing tendency has been especially evident in security politics after the Cold War, for example, as well as in the rise of concepts like ‘resilience’ within peace-building discourse (Neocleous 2011, 2022; Duffield 2019). When Borrell describes Europe as a garden, and the rest of the world as a jungle, he appears (despite his denials1 ) to endorse a naturalized status quo in which Europe’s intervention elsewhere in the world is not a political move but simply a pragmatic response that addresses the dynamics of a ‘naturalized’ international order. It is important to stress, however, that when these processes are left at a metaphorical level, critique of such depoliticization remains possible. We can critique a military commander for using such metaphors during a counter-insurgency campaign, as critiques of US doctrine in Iraq, or any other case, make clear. Equally, we can critique a politician who declares their enemy to be a subhuman, cancerous, plague on the nation. And Borrell’s remarks were indeed met with immediate – and harsh – critique. Put simply, while metaphors can work to depoliticize, the possibility of re-politicization remains open at this discursive-rhetorical level.

But what occurs when the use of natural or ecological terminology is meant ontologically, rather than metaphorically? Increasingly, ecological or natural terms are not deployed analogically, but with the goal of expressing a distinct ontological understanding of social reality. For example, in Jairus Grove’s Savage Ecology, he defines an ecological approach to politics as involving a:

Form of analysis characterized by inhuman encounters and deep relational processes across geographical scales rather than a form of political thinking that relies on discreteness, causality, and an exceptional notion of human agency (Grove 2019, p. 10)

He stresses that this is not “a metaphor for analysing the world” but, instead, something that emerges from “empirical scrutiny” (Grove 2019, p. 14). Such ecological ontological thinking can be traced to numerous social theoretical traditions, but especially those inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as earlier work within complex systems, chaos, and cybernetic theory, and which have coalesced today into work around assemblage theory, actornetwork theory, new materialism, and cognate work.2 The precepts of such ecological social theory are diverse. But, broadly speaking, they share some common assumptions. First, ecological ontologies are – ultimately – relational understandings of social life that deny any object (human or non-human) possesses an autonomous ‘essence’ that exists outside its relational ties to other objects. In this view, social phenomena are produced through entangled relations between objects, which can be assembled, reassembled, or disassembled in an infinite number of ways (Best et al. 2013). Second, ecological ontologies generally follow a ‘symmetry’ principle in which agency can be attributed to non-human actors, including technologies, tools, landscapes, atmospheres, etc. These non-human entities possess agency because their presence or absence within ecological relations fundamentally changes the nature of social reality (Sayes 2014). Third, because of this symmetry principle, agency is also seen as a ‘distributed effect’ in which no single actor can possess autonomous agency in the world: their capacity to act is, instead, reliant on the agency of other human and non-human things. In this reading, actions taken by specific individuals, groups, or objects cannot be said to have entirely originated within those objects. Instead, the potential for these actions to occur relied upon agency distributed across other persons, objects, and things.

Ecological-relational ontologies have a long history of being deployed to study social and political events. However, their use in the academic study of (political) violence is relatively nascent. The accounts that exist are generally preoccupied with the ‘posthuman’ understanding of violence that emerges from ecological ontologies, in large part because this aspect of such ontologies is most disruptive for our typically humanist understanding of the mechanics of violence. For example, Austin (2016, 2019b) describes how the practice of torture emerges through a globalized set of relations that bind individual human perpetrators into a historically sedimented set of techniques of violence that are materialized in both banal and everyday (chairs, whips) and more high-technological (internet platforms, etc.) material infrastructures. At the broader level of ‘war’ itself, Bousquet, Grove and Shah (2020, p. 104) describe how “war is both a thing and a process, a unity and an assembly, an event and an ecology of relations.” In this, their focus – alongside others – is on the distributed agentic drivers of war and violence (De Landa 1991; Der Derian 2009). Naturally, much attention has also been focused on how an ecological ontology can unpack the emergence of, and potential effects of, autonomous weapons systems. Especially notably, this literature focuses on how the rise of the drone is radically changing the nature of warfare, both from the perspective of those who perpetrate violence and the communities who fall under the gaze of the drone by drawing – in particular – on the focus on ‘affect’ within ecological ontologies (Walters 2014; Chamayou 2015; Austin 2020b; Malaviya 2020).

Practice and purpose

The status of ecological ontologies for exploring political violence is not an academic question. Indeed, academic research in this area has followed work within military science and practice. Weizmann discussed this development in 2006 when exploring how the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) drew on post-modern social theory to re-think military action, deploying concepts such as inverse geometry, swarming, emergence, connectivity, and beyond to augment their capacity to (violently) control Palestinian space. As he notes, this represents a paradoxical situation in which concepts from “the humanities, [which are] often believed to be the best lasting weapon with which to combat imperialism… [have] been adopted as imperialism’s own weapon” (Weizman 2007, p. 15). Indeed, a sustained ‘military design’ movement has developed across the world, predicated on deploying variants of ecological ontologies to augment military capacity (Öberg 2018). These developments are relatively unsurprising given a long lineage of military thinking preoccupied with the logistics of organizing large-scale operations, which lead to an interest in cybernetics and complex systems theory from an early stage (Lawson 2011; Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2017; Bousquet 2018). The ‘reality’ of the deployment of ecological ontologies of violence in practice is important because it moves us away from the realm of pure intellectual reflection. All ontological claims are contestable, but their impact becomes acutely felt when they are taken to be ‘real’ by those who deploy them in practice and for specific purposes. In her classical Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals – for instance – Carol Cohn described how US defence professionals were immersed in a (linguistic) world that legitimized a rationalist ontology of conflict, risking nuclear catastrophe. As she put it:

Those of us who find US nuclear policy desperately misguided… faced a serious quandary. If we refuse to learn the language [of a rationalist ontology], we are virtually guaranteed that our voices will remain outside the ‘politically relevant’ spectrum of opinion. Yet, if we do learn and speak it, we not only severely limit what we can say but we also invite the transformation, the militarization, of our own thinking. (Cohn 1987, p. 716)

When taken as ‘reality’ and put ‘into practice’ ontologies have real effects that limit our capacity to think differently. Thus, when Grove (2019) describes ecological ontologies as not simply one contestable ontology among another but as an observable truth that “accretes from reality,” he is simultaneously referencing the way this ontology aligns with what we see in the world analytically and its deployment by violence workers of all kinds in practice. This unusually practicallyembedded ‘reality’ of ecological ontologies is important because it raises several serious ethical and political implications that are – in many ways – more acute than those that emerge from the simple use of contestable ecological metaphors seen above.

First, ethical questions of adjudicating responsibility emerge especially strongly via ecological ontologies. While natural metaphors depoliticize, natural ontologies radically diffuse questions of responsibility for violence. This is true at multiple scales. At the macro-level, ecological theories appear to make it difficult to adjudicate ‘why’ a war began, as its dynamics would be rooted in complex emergent relations without a linear causal path to trace (De Landa 1991; Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020). In and of itself, this may not be entirely problematical: even within more traditional ontologies of social life, adjudicating responsibility for macro-level events is exceptionally difficult. The challenge – however – is that the solution to this indeterminacy has often rested on addressing ‘conduct’ in situations of conflict or war, and assuming the capacity of individuals – whether political leaders or soldiers – to be held accountable for their actions once an ‘event’ has occurred (Sikkink 2011). An ecological perspective – taken to its logical conclusion – however, also undermines our capacity to see individual beings as fully agentic actors in control of their conduct: whether violent or not. Principles of distributed agency equally imply that the presence of material objects or technologies, the affective conditions of the environments in which our actions occur, and so on, all dilute the autonomous capacity of human beings. In this regard, ecological ontologies radicalize the older ‘banality of evil’ thesis by extending its focus on the ideationally, bureaucratically, and/or culturally produced ‘thoughtlessness’ underlying mass violence towards a focus on how material infrastructures and affective atmospheres make thinking against violence frequently impossible (c.f. Haraway 2016; Arendt 1963). Under this reading – to put it simply – we can locate ‘responsibility’ for violence neither at an individual nor structural level of social reality. Instead, violence becomes a ‘subjectless’ thing (Austin 2020a).

Second, if ecological ontologies are embraced as reflecting social reality, they also seem likely to contribute to the rise of literally post-humanist modes of violence. Debates over the place of autonomous weapons systems in warfare, for instance, are usually situated in a dichotomy that compares their affordances, capacities, and effects to those of human beings engaging in acts of violence. There is the capacity to claim, for instance, that emerging technologies might comply more closely with international human rights and humanitarian law than human beings are capable of, or vice versa (Müller 2016). But if ecological perspectives stress that war always-already-hasbeen posthuman, and human violence is inextricably shaped by material, environmental, atmospheric, etc. conditions, then this comparison dissolves. Indeed, if violence is accepted to already be driven by our ecological entanglement with non-human agency, then different justifications for deploying more advanced technologies can be developed. For example, the post-humanist sensibilities of ecological ontologies would imply that the capacity of human beings to act ‘ethically’ or in compliance with international law can be augmented through their further enmeshing with material-technological infrastructures. In this reading, an ethical imperative to deploy novel technological modes of warfare might emerge through the practical acceptance of ecological ontologies as reflecting social reality.

Third, the above factors, alongside others, combine to – in essence – take us back in time to older ‘natural’ cosmologies of violence. For example, Bousquet, Shah, and Grove (Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020, pp. 103, 112) describe how though the ‘radical empiricism’ through which they engage the study of violence risks “downplaying its abominable destructive consequences,” they are ultimately forced to “insist on the inherently generative powers of war – its intimate affinity to the pre-personal flux of becoming.” In their view, this is necessary because ecological ontologies describe “the world as it is, not as we wish it were” (Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020). Indeed, though ecological ontologies tend to stress the indeterminacy, flux, and non-linear nature of social reality – thus appearing to be the opposite of a ‘naturalizing’ framework – their focus on intense relational complexity and distributed agency can often make it as difficult to imagine a world without violence as it was in earlier theological or evolutionary perspectives on its place in human society. It was, in part, for this reason that distinct ontological and epistemological perspectives on war, violence, and conflict came to prominence in the 20th century. The rise of human rights discourse and humanitarian law, for instance, stems directly from theories of normativity and contestation that more radically embrace the capacity for human beings to make change in and/on the world (Sikkink 2011). By contrast, within ecological ontologies, violence risks becoming seen as being a ‘viscous plasma’ that encompasses such a vast proportion of human (and non-human) history that escaping the hold of its relational entanglements appears impossible (Austin 2023).