Foreword

This publication is a part of a broader attempt to revisit the place and role of contemporary science, especially the humanities and social sciences, in face of an increasing socio-political condition of conflict. More specifically, it is an attempt to call into question our basic epistemic approach to conflicts, our basic understanding of the nature of conflicts. This inquiry does so by explicitly asking about the epistemology of conflicts, and by formulating the fundamental question of such an epistemology: what are conflicts — social, political, cultural, religious, cognitive, emotional, moral — as events of knowledge?

One central characteristic in the common perception of contemporary conflicts, which lends them their specific gravity, is the sense of irreconcilability. It is the sense of lack of common ground that appears to generate the specific threat perceived in inter-cultural and most paradigmatically in inter-religious conflicts. The apparently irreconcilable nature of conflicts may be said to lie precisely in the fact that they do *not* arise from knowledge, or that they lie beyond or before knowledge, and concern rather values, beliefs, vital needs, which, unlike knowledge, are not a question of reason but of conviction, decision, or affects.

However, the present inquiry is guided by the assumption that, be the origin of social conflicts as it may, what renders their original irreconcilability socio-politically meaningful is that it gives rise to incommensurable systems – conceptions, performances, institutions — of knowledge. Social conflicts are extreme when they are conflicts between radically different systems of knowledge or different — to speak with Foucault — *epistemes*. The project underlying the present collection thus examines social conflicts as conflicts between different epistemes: as *inter-epistemic conflicts*.

This publication offers for examination a basic premise. According to this premise, a fundamental feature of inter-epistemic conflicts, which renders their underlying disagreement so extreme, is that such conflicts do not simply consist in contradicting claims to the same thing, but more basically in divergent perceptions concerning the nature of the specific conflict, the exact issue in dispute, and even more fundamentally – in different conceptions of conflict, namely in different understanding of what a conflict is, when it occurs and how it is handled. The premise explored by this collective publication is that social conflicts, as inter-epistemic conflicts, are first and foremost conflicts on the nature of conflict: *conflicting conflicts*.

The underlying inquiry has received its first formulations, questions and directions in the framework of a still on-going research project on "Disagreement between Religions. Epistemology of Interreligious Conflicts," which commenced in 2018 in the Theology Department at the University of Bern (Switzerland), as part of the Interfaculty Research Cooperation (IRC) "Religious Conflicts and Coping Strategies." The project is conducted in cooperation with the Institute for Globalizing Civilizations at Zhejiang University (China), and the basic concept of this publication, as well as some of the contributions, were developed in a conference on "Conflicting Conflicts" that has taken place at Zhejiang University on October 11-14, 2018.

This collection assembles works of scholars working in different disciplines and fields, whose contributions explore the notion of conflicting conflicts as an analytic tool for studying various conceptual, theoretical and historical configurations of conflict. In their turn, the different contexts and case studies articulate various aspects of the idea of conflicting conceptions and situations of conflicts.

The contributions are ordered, for the sake of presentation, from the most historically concrete to the most theoretical investigation. In the first essay, which reflects the embeddedness of the inquiry guiding this collection in the study of inter-religious conflicts, **Luca Di Blasi** looks at the recent resuscitation of the theological conflict between Christianity and Judaism in Benedict XVI's disputed text "Grace and Vocation Without Remorse: Comments on the Treatise '*De Iudaeis*'" from 2018, and how it signals the conceptual limits of inter-religious dialogue. **Anoush Ganjipour** moves the discussion to modern Islam. Analyzing the endeavors of modern Muslim reformists to transform Islam into the religion of modernity, he opens a perspective on the relations between Islam and modernity not simply as a conflict between religion to secularism, but as "A Conflict of Enlightenments."

Elad Lapidot's essay leads the investigation to the theory of conflicts, focusing on the work of Carl Schmitt. Lapidot analyzes Schmitt's project as arising from a conflict between two concepts of conflict, war vs. discussion, and indicates the significations of these "Warring Wars" for Schmitt's political theology and theory of state and international law. Extending the theoretical questioning to the works of Rancière, Glissant, Blanchot, and Esposito, **Bruno Besana** engages in the conflict on the nature of conflicts. In contrast to the common notion that conflict resolution requires common ground, Besana argues that it is rather by having parties to conflicts invalidate their common logic, which determines their identities and structures their differences, that conflicts may be constructively overcome.

Sabeen Ahmed offers a new lens through which to consider Hegel's 'rabble problem,' namely the conflict between the rabble and the State. Her essay contrasts two conflicting Hegelian accounts of this conflict, namely its common description as arising from a failure of institutional recognition versus the novel analysis of this conflict as arising from a failure of intersubjective recognition, from which Ahmed draws a right of resistance. The collection concludes with **Dominik Finkelde**'s discussion of epistemological conflicts. Drawing on Speculative Realism, Finkelde introduces the innovative category of "non-wakefulness," designating a "Parallax between Dreaming and Awakening," to account for conflicts both in individual and collective experiences.

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