

Visions in conflict (descriptions)



Visions may be moral, political, economic, religious, or social. In these or other realms, we sacrifice for our visions and sometimes, if need be, face ruin rather than betray them. Where visions conflict irreconcilably, whole societies may be torn apart. Conflicts of interests dominate the short run, but conflicts of visions dominate history. We will do almost anything for our visions, except think about them.”

Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, xii.

Visions in Conflict Vol. 1 presents a collection of empirical studies intended to address topics of understanding, forgiveness, and creative conflict resolution with respect to national and international crises. Featuring the works of Rudy Scholaert, Ervin Staub, Mark Van Vugt, Valarie Vat Kamatsiko, and William Clough, this volume investigates the visions at the heart of the world’s conflicts. These studies investigate the good work being done in the field of conflict resolution and peace building around the world particularly in the arenas of acknowledgement and understanding of the “ other” (including interfaith dialogue) and communication through conflict and forgiveness. Conflict, even of the life and death sort, is apparently inevitable in this world. The source of much of this conflict is conveyed through religion in its tendency to teach its followers that they belong to specific epistemological and ontological categories. The real issue, therefore, is how to shift the methodology of conflict from a military standpoint to political, persuasive, and, maybe, economic standpoints that strive to find areas of cooperation and collusion rather than violence and coercion. The emphasis of these essays is in finding some of these points of collusion and potential cooperation in various geographical positions throughout the world.

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The presentation of these discussions is not intended to be the final answer to the theological dilemmas and conflicts of our time, but is instead intended to open up a new dialogue. In the new global society of the modern age, we can either continue to emphasize our differences in religious dogma, already proven to foster continuing conflict, or we can begin to seek out those areas in which we can agree and perhaps find new means of solving our points of contention. Visions in Conflict Vol. 1 is intended to begin this discussion but, it is hoped, will not be the final word toward global understanding.

The concept of the 'other' is widely used and discussed in modern times thanks to our ever-increasing association with global inhabitants. In its most correct sense, this term is used by philosophers to describe the mental constructs people use to stigmatize others, especially through racism, nationalism, and sexism. Psychoanalysts use it more precisely to refer to how the human need for relationships plays out in our projections and introjections of actual people. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Theologians use it to refer to the ultimate 'other', God or Ultimate Reality. One thing remains clear through all of these constructions, human beings will never feel fully comfortable with the idea of 'other' until they become more familiar with it. Visions in Conflict Vol. 2 is intended to provide some of this closer familiarity.

The book consists of a series of personal essays from writers such as Steve Handwerker, Basil Pillay, Catherine O'Keefe and Elisa Levy among others, all of whom attempt to provide, through biographical reflection, some sense of their personal culture, worldview and social understandings. Henry David Thoreau once said, "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us, and when we bring what is within

us out into the world, miracles happen..." By sharing what is within them, these authors hope to foster a stronger world understanding and a bringing together of the various factions of conflict into a more harmonious and lasting peace.

In conjunction with Visions in Conflict Vol. 1, Visions in Conflict Vol. 2 is intended to open up discussions of differences between cultures by seeking out those points of agreement or similarity. Rather than presenting a definitive answer to the world's dilemmas, these authors present their stories and viewpoints as a means of opening the global discussion into those visions and beliefs that continue to plunge the world into conflict and find new means of resolution.