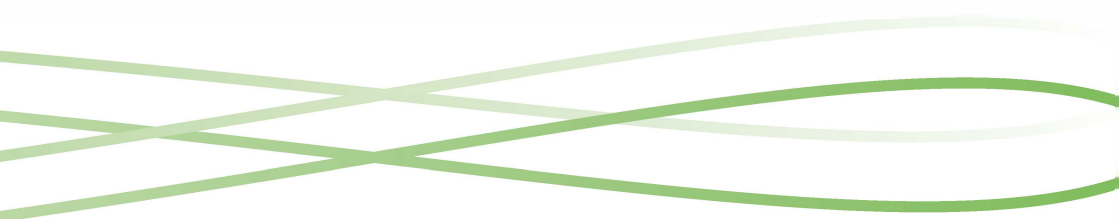




NATURAL SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

Einstein, Kafka and Houellebecq

Bernd Neumann, George Chabert (Eds.)



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Natural Science and Literature
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POLYGON

Schriftenreihe zu einer Dritten Kultur

Hrsg. von Bernd Neumann
in Zusammenarbeit mit George Chabert

Band 9

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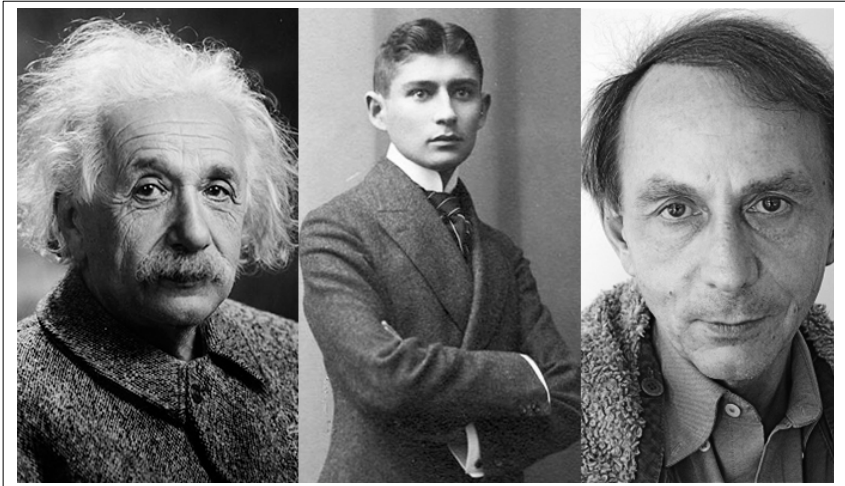
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NATURAL SCIENCE AND LITERATURE:

EINSTEIN, KAFKA AND
HOUELLEBECQ



Edited by Bernd Neumann *and* George Chabert

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Preface

This volume is a result of the 2018 symposium “Science and Literature: Einstein, Kafka and Houellebecq” that took place at the Literature House in Trondheim, Norway. The participants have revised their contributions and Barbara di Noi and Ralf Neumann provided two additional articles.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Norway’s only technical university, has an explicit interdisciplinary mission that encourages work mediating between what Percy C. Snow called Two Cultures, the humanities and the natural sciences, with an eye on the constitution of a Third Culture founded on transdisciplinarity.

The latter is precisely the central focus of the Trondheim research group “Features of a Third Culture”, an interdisciplinary project headed by a nuclear physicist (Prof. Dr Michael Kachelriess, Department of Physics), an historian (Prof. Dr George Chabert, Department of Social Modern History), and a philologist (project leader Prof. Dr Bernd Neumann, Department of Language and Literature).

This project, symposium, and volume is about interdisciplinarity. Werner Heisenberg wrote a book on the topic, *Der Teil und das Ganze*. Heisenberg’s father, a typical 19th century German intellectual, mastered classical Greek better than German and had an intimate knowledge of Aristotle. The son thus became the one truly classical scholar among all modern nuclear physicists. For him, the classical humanities and the natural sciences of our day did not exist as epistemological separate areas, but rather as related parts of a Third Culture.

Heisenberg’s starting point was the insight that already with Aristotle, energy could become matter and vice versa; Aristotle obliterated the original Greek idea of the atom as the paradigmatically indivisible. The centre of our transdisciplinary subject lies in the following considerations: not only can energy become matter and matter become energy, which Aristotle established and Einstein and Heisenberg experimentally confirmed, the humanities and natural sciences (and especially physics) have also become inter-connected. The same unsettling change is at the centre of our project about Kafka, Houellebecq, Einstein, and Heisenberg.

That the symposium took place and this book can be published is thanks to NTNU’s head of Department of Language and Literature, Lars August Fodstad. And a special thanks to my wife Marit.

Bernd Neuman