

Centre for Cultural Studies University of Graz
 European Phdnet „Literary and Cultural Studies“
 Doctoral Program “Culture – Text – Action” University of Graz

International Conference

WRITING FACTS

University of Graz
 11-12 November 2021

One of the most influential and crucial inventions of modern times is the concept of fact. It regulates the laws of private acting and communicating as well as rules for public performances and patterns of behavior. Thus, the idea of fact concerns moral and ethical codes. As such, it takes part in semantic fields like truth, honor, decency, and correctness. Not to lie and to be honest is one of the oldest moral and religious precepts of Western culture. But only with the wave of modern secularization and the rise of rationalism which go hand in hand with the idea of an autonomous subject and an objectively given real world, the question of fact or non-fact became a fundament of systems of knowledge and science. Or otherwise put, only with the rational notion of reality as the other of the subject the concept of fact as a given, a circumstance, and a real occurrence which can be certified through objectivity and characterized by verifiability and demonstrability, became possible. But already the 18th and 19th century recognized the huge number of complications around such a concept of fact and the associated claims coming with it. Especially in the 19th century new models of perception accompanied by the upcoming new media start rattling the self-assurance of positivist philosophy and science. Because of a productive interrelation between literature, art and sciences in realism and naturalism, it is particularly the arts that acknowledge the constructive force of visual and linguistic media and recognize the impact of emotions and individual modes of perception when it comes to the question of fact. Consequently, the 20th century found a fertile ground for fierce battles between rationalist and constructivist concepts of fact. Now, with the new digital formats, their open borders between private and public areas, between fiction, virtuality and reality accompanied with the overall mission of permanent self-performance the arts and sciences are again challenged when it comes to the question of fact or non-fact.

The conference aims at a discussion of the various notions of fact since the 17th century. This includes its function in the arts and the sciences and its impact on aesthetic models and the self-understanding of systems of knowledge. Such an approach recognizes the co-dependency of the arts and the sciences and touches the question of literature as knowledge on the one hand and a poetics of knowledge as a feature of science on the other. To contain the huge range of possible philosophical and aesthetic questions coming with “fact”, the conference wants to point at the impact and importance of processes of writing concerning the understanding and handling of “fact” in theory and practice. This concerns preparatory procedures as well as formal choices, models of argumentation and narrative patterns. The conference emphasizes that facts only become facts when constructed, legitimated, recognized, represented, and authenticated as such. Thus, “facts” are a result of both, of self- and other-perception, bodily and cognitive experiences as well as of strategies of representation, argumentation, description and narration of such perceptions and experiences. Writing facts is one of the most effective procedures to obtain, to realize, to recognize, and to understand facts. One of the basic theses of the conference is that any epistemological attribution is a result of discourses and practices alike. A look at processes of writing and their function and impact in the context of understanding the notion of fact allows a new look at the

powerful notion of fact from a historical, systematic, and theoretical perspective. The conference is open to all disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, law studies, and natural sciences.

It is the purpose of the symposium to confront writing and fact by considering the following questions:

- The impact of the cultural practice of writing concerning the construction and representation of “facts”,
- the medial dependency of “facts”,
- examples of poetics of “fact” and the function of writing coming with it,
- impacts and functions of the concept of fact since the 17th century – changes and reasons,
- interchanges between the arts and science in the context of “fact” – impact and interrelations of both,
- classes/classification of fact and the various modes of construction and description by writing processes (preparing and finishing procedures, formal, argumentative, rhetoric, and narrative patterns).

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