

## Alchemy and University – Alchemie und Universität

Conference at the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel  
November 20-22, 2019

The conference is organized by Ute Frietsch, HAB Wolfenbüttel/Humboldt Universität Berlin, in cooperation with Volkhard Wels, Freie Universität Berlin. It is funded by the DFG (German Research Foundation) as part of the project “Epistemischer Wandel: Stadien der frühneuzeitlichen Alchemie” (Epistemic Change: Stages of Early Modern Alchemy).

### Concept

For the historical examination and appraisal of alchemy, its relation to university has played a crucial role. General and persistent perception has seen alchemy as an occult practice divorced from European universities: In the Age of Enlightenment, this practice would definitely have been rejected by the emerging modern sciences and thus also excluded from the continued acceptance of the corpus of science, especially from modern chemistry.

The last decades, however, have seen groundbreaking and detailed research on social networks, terminology, procedures, instruments, pictures of alchemy as well as early chemistry by historians who have modified this simplistic view and described the rather gradual transformation of alchemy between the 16th and 18th centuries. Experts in this field today acknowledge that *medical* alchemy was in some way established in European universities in the 17th century, despite deep-seated conflicts and disputes between the concept of humours and the concept of *tria principia* and between plant-based and mineral-based medication. Until now, though, the relationship between alchemy and universities remains to be researched in more detail, and the analysis of their relationship in the 16th and 18th centuries remains a desideratum.

This conference aims to deepen and to extend our knowledge of alchemy and universities in early modern times, especially our understanding of the protagonists (as for example: Wecker, Zwinger, Tancke, Libavius, Hartmann, Sennert, Rolfinck, Wedel, Stahl), the theories (e.g. *tria principia*, humoral pathology, corpuscular theory, phlogiston theory), preferred substances (e.g. sulfur, mercury, salt, antimony, laudanum), practices (e.g. academic *disputationes*, laboratory research, practical training of students), driving forces and controversies. With regards to the historical development, the major point of focus will certainly lie on the academic discipline of medicine. Nonetheless, an analysis of alchemy's impact on other academic *scientiae* and *artes* (as for example theology, natural philosophy, astronomy, history) is equally important: How, for example, was an alchemically influenced theosophy discussed and practiced at early modern universities? And how broadly and freely could university professors, interested in alchemy, interpret the academic denomination of their chairs?

## Program

### Wednesday, November 20, Augusteerhalle

#### Öffentlicher Abendvortrag / Keynote Lecture

- 18.00 Peter Burschel: Begrüßung / Welcome  
Ute Frietsch & Volkhard Wels: Eröffnung / Opening remarks
- 18.20 Bruce T. Moran (University of Nevada/USA): The Experience of Things in the Making and the Abstractions of the Made Thing: Networks, Recipes, and the Contradictions of Alchemy between the Kassel Court and the Marburg Classroom
- 19.20 Wine Reception
- 20.00 Abendessen/Dinner: Ristorante La Domenica (auf Wunsch/optional)

### Thursday, November 21, Bibelsaal

#### Einführung / Introduction

- 09.15 Ute Frietsch: A Desideratum of Research: The Relationship between Alchemy and University
- 10.00 Volkhard Wels: Formatting chemical knowledge. Some introductory remarks
- 10.45 Kaffeepause / Coffee Break

#### Moderation / Chair: Volkhard Wels

- 11.15 Didier Kahn (CNRS, Paris): The first public/private courses of chemistry in Paris up to William Davisson
- 12.00 Thomas Hofmeier (Historisches Museum Basel): Alchemie an der Universität Basel im 16. Jahrhundert
- 12.45 Mittagspause / Lunch Break: Ristorante La Domenica (auf Wunsch/optional)

#### Moderation / Chair: John Christie (Oxford University)

- 14.00 Elisabeth Moreau (Princeton University): Physiology and the University of Marburg
- 14.45 Hiro Hirai (Columbia University): Daniel Sennert and theological debates at Wittenberg University
- 15.30 Kaspar von Greyerz (Universität Basel): Seventeenth-century English translations of Daniel Sennert's works
- 16.15 Kaffeepause / Coffee Break
- 16.30 Georgiana Hedesan (Oxford University): The Alchemical Philosophy of Jan Baptist Van Helmont in the Context of University Teaching in Leuven/Louvain
- 17.15 Anette Marquardt & Bettina Wahrig (Universität Braunschweig): The Schneider Collection
- 19.00 Abendessen / Dinner: Vinum Italicum (auf Wunsch/optional)

**Friday, November 22, Bibelsaal**

Moderation / Chair: Bettina Wahrig

09.15 Lawrence M. Principe (Johns Hopkins University): The Changing Visions of Chymistry at Seventeenth-Century Jena: Brendel, Rolfinck, Wedel, and Others

10.00 Marieke Hendriksen (Utrecht University): Alchemy in the kitchen: Blankaart's 'Borgerlyke Tafel' (1683)

10.45 Kaffeepause / Coffee Break

Moderation / Chair: Ute Frietsch

11.15 Kevin Chang (Taipei University): From University to Court: The Shift of Stahl's Positions on Alchemy

12.00 Christopher Halm (Universität Regensburg): Wallerius and the conception of agricultural chemistry at Uppsala University

12.45 Abschlussdiskussion / Final remarks