

FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM ZUR WISSENSCHAFTSGESCHICHTE

This talk is co-organized by Prof. Dr. Friedrich Steinle (History of Science)
and Prof. Dr. Thomas Gil (Philosophy)

Hasok Chang

(Univ. of Cambridge)

The Chemical Revolution Revisited: Theory-Choice, Incommensurability and Pluralism

I re-examine the history of the Chemical Revolution, with particular attention to the way it has been used in the discussion of some key issues in the philosophy of science. My assessment, made on the basis of a comprehensive list of epistemic values, reaches the verdict that there was no compelling rational reason for 18th-century chemists to discard phlogiston. There was a strong degree of methodological incommensurability, as Kuhn had suggested, in the choice between the phlogiston paradigm and the oxygen paradigm. I also argue that there would have been significant benefits in retaining (or reviving) phlogiston chemistry alongside oxygen chemistry. With the help of this illustrative case I will also outline general arguments in favour of pluralism in science.

Prof. Dr. Hasok Chang is Hans Rausing Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. His research is focusing on: history and philosophy of chemistry and physics from the 18th century onward; philosophy of scientific practice; other topics in the philosophy of science, including measurement, realism, evidence, pluralism and pragmatism.

Mittwoch, 12. Dezember 2012
18 Uhr
Raum H 0111