

Saturday 28 June

9h00 Welcoming

Session 7 – Aesthetics

Chair: Gergely Főrizs (Institute for Literary Studies, Budapest)

9h30 – Stefan Uhlig (University of California, Davis)
Aesthetic Utility in Smith, Hogarth, and Kant

10h00 – Alessandro Nannini (IZEA, Halle)
Useful Uselessness. The Interesting as In-Between in the Aesthetics of the 18th Century

10h30 – Piroska Balogh (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)
Utilitas aesthetica? A discourse on Johann Ludwig Schiedius' experiment to reconcile aesthetic value and social utility

11h00 –Break

Session 8 – Dissemination and publication

Chair: Benjamin Marschke (California State Polytechnic University Humboldt / University of Trier)

11h30 – Martin Urmann (Free University, Berlin)
Useful Sciences and Idle Paradoxes. An Epistemological Debate in the Rhetorical Prize Contests of the French Academies

12h00 – Alfonso Calderón Argelich (University of Lleida)
The Contested Meanings of Utility in the Spanish responses to the Encyclopédie Méthodique (1782-1788)

12h30 – Thibault Debail (EHESS, Paris)
What's the use? Encyclopaedic knowledge and consultation reading in the eighteenth century (Western Europe, 1720-1780)

13h00 – General discussion and conclusion of the conference



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MARTIN-LUTHER-UNIVERSITÄT
HALLE-WITTENBERG

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Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für die Erforschung
der Europäischen Aufklärung



International Conference: The Useful Enlightenment



Theories, Practices and Representations of Usefulness in the long Eighteenth Century

26.-28. June 2025
Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für die
Erforschung der Europäischen Aufklärung
MLU Halle-Wittenberg
Franckeplatz 1 // Haus 54
06110 Halle (Saale)

Thursday 26 June

14h00 – Conference Welcome

14h15 – Elisabeth Décultot (Director of the IZEA, Halle)
Jean-Alexandre Perras (IZEA, Halle): Introduction

Session 1 – Learned societies

Chair: Jean-Alexandre Perras

14h30 – Marie Thébaud-Sorger (Centre Alexandre-Koyré, CNRS, Paris)
The invisible network of French sociabilities promoting the ‘arts’ in the 1780

15h00 – Giovanni Lista (IZEA, Halle)
The Accademia etrusca in Cortona: What public utility?

15h30 – Damiano Bardelli (EHESS, Paris)
Learned Sociability as a ‘Useful Recreation’. Ideals and Practices of the Lausanne Literary Society

16h – Break

Session 2 – Chinese perspective

Chair: Despina Magkanari (Halle)

16h30 – Bichen Yan (Tsinghua University, Beijing / MPWIG, Berlin)
The Failure of Usefulness: A Case of the Dissemination of Western Mining Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century China

17h00 – Monica Klasing Chen (Heidelberg University)
Printed Garment Patterns in Late Imperial China: Textual Genres and Social Function

17h30 – Shih-Pei Chen (MPWIG, Berlin)
From Elite to Common Knowledge: Tracing the Source Material of Chinese Daily-Use Encyclopedias with Digital Methods

Friday 27 June

8h30 – Welcoming

Session 3 – Ethics

Chair: Nicholas Cronk (University of Oxford)

9h00 – Kerstin Maria Pahl (MPIGD, Berlin)
The Moral Ends of “Useful Facts”: Statistical Accounts and Emotional Discourse in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain

9h30 – Malcolm Quinn (U. Arts, London)
For Your Pleasure: Private Utility and Ethical Self-Knowledge

10h00 – Sándor Hites (Research Center for the Humanities, Budapest)
An Apology for Unproductivity: Evaluating Intellectual Labor in Classical Political Economy

10h30 Break

Session 4 – Useful knowledge

Chair: Mikkel Jensen (IZEA, Halle)

11h00 – Martin Stuber (University of Bern)
Usefulness as criterion for evaluating knowledge. The reviewer Albrecht von Haller in the transition to the scientific community

11h30 – Patrycja Bąkowska (University of Poznań)
(Truly) useful knowledge: On the Conversations and the Journeys of the Father and his Two Sons by Józef Wybicki

12h00 – Michèle Crogiez Labarthe (University of Bern)
Botany and politics: when Malesherbes combined useful knowledge with the public good

Friday 27 June

12h30 – Lunch (IZEA)

Session 5 – Politics of usefulness

Chair: Giovanni Lista (IZEA)

14h00 – Andrew Kahn (University of Oxford)
Virtue and Utility in the Russia of Catherine the Great

14h30 – Benjamin Marschke (California State University / University of Trier)
The Useful and the Useless: Theories, Practices, and Representations of Usefulness in King Frederick William I’s Prussia, 1713-1740

15h – Tibor Bodnár-Király (Ludovica University of Public Service, Budapest)
Enlightenment Usefulness and the Practicalisation of Political Knowledge in the Mid- Eighteenth-Century Sciences of the State

15h30 Break

Session 6 – Economic Enlightenment

Chair: Martin Stuber (University of Bern)

16h00 – Regina Dauser (Augsburg University)
‘Useful’ technologies for agrarian improvement at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences

16h30 – Lothar Schilling (Augsburg University)
Optimizing Land Use: Abolishing Fallows and Draining Wetlands as ‘Useful’ Practices of the Economic Enlightenment

17h00 – Jeffrey Wolf (Free University, Brussels)
Utility and Improvement in the Applied Chemistry of Dr. William Cullen (1710-1790)