

Edited by
Dieter Enders and Karl-Erich Jaeger

 WILEY-VCH

Asymmetric Synthesis with Chemical and Biological Methods

Foreword by Günter Helmchen



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WILEY-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co. KGaA

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Library of Congress Card No.:
applied for

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <<http://dnb.d-nb.de>>.

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Weinheim

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Typesetting SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd.,
Hong Kong

Printing betz-druck GmbH, Darmstadt

Binding Litges & Dopf GmbH, Heppenheim

Cover Design Adam Design, Weinheim

Wiley Bicentennial Logo Richard J. Pacifico

Printed in the Federal Republic of Germany

Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN: 978-3-527-31473-7

**Asymmetric Synthesis with
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1807–2007 Knowledge for Generations

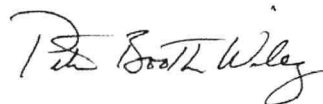
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Foreword

Stereochemistry has been an important topic for more than a hundred years. Nevertheless, as far as the chemist's everyday life was concerned, it was mainly of interest to natural product chemists for most of the time. This changed in the 1950s when synthetic chemists, following the example of R. B. Woodward, G. Stork and others, began to boldly address complex natural product targets. At this time the racemic compound was targeted, i.e. it was diastereoselectivity that counted. In the 1970s it became increasingly clear that biological activities of enantiomers could differ to the extent that one member of a pair is toxic or generally harmful. In this respect, the Contergan disaster was a signal. Pharmacologic testing of both individual enantiomers rather than the racemic agent became a common practice.

Demand created interest in the development of new methods for syntheses of *enantiomerically pure compounds*, termed *EPC-syntheses* by Dieter Seebach. First auxiliary controlled, stoichiometric asymmetric synthesis began to flourish in the second half of the 1970s. Dieter Enders, the spiritus rector of this book, with his SAMP/RAMP method, was one of the pioneers of this field. At about the same time the potential of enzyme-catalyzed enantioselective reactions became more and more visible, not least through pioneering early work of the M. R. Kula/C. Wandrey team in Düsseldorf/Jülich and of Hans-Joachim Gais in Darmstadt, later Aachen. In the 1980s, very few people dared to address transition metal catalyzed asymmetric synthesis. This changed in the 1990s after work of Kagan, Knowles, Sharpless, Noyori and others had shown that results useful for organic synthesis can be obtained.

Thus, in the early 1990s the stage was set for an Aachen/Jülich group of chemists to launch a collaborative program in the field of EPC synthesis that led to a prestigious Collaborative Research Center (Sonderforschungsbereich, SFB) "Asymmetric Syntheses with Chemical and Biological Methods", which was to become operative for 12 years (1994–2005). In this book the main results, obtained by ca. 20 research groups, are reviewed. A very large and colorful landscape of methods and applications is presented.

The first part of the book is devoted to auxiliary controlled reactions using the SAMP/ RAMP method (D. Enders) and metallated allylsulfoximines (H.-J. Gais).

Syntheses of an impressive array of natural products, including medicinally interesting alkaloids, underline the usefulness of these methods. The following part deals with enantioselective reactions catalyzed by transition metal complexes. Chiral ligands with a modular make-up are of crucial importance here and many new classes are described: phosphines containing an arenechromium-tricarbonyl moiety ("Daniphos" ligands, A. Salzer), phosphoferrocenes (C. Ganter), sulfoximine-based N,N- and P,N-ligands (C. Bolm), P,C- and N,O-ligands containing a [2,2]paracyclophane skeleton (C. Bolm, S. Bräse) and phosphines based on dihydroquinolines ("Quinaphos" ligands, W. Leitner). Catalyst immobilization on or in a zeolite matrix was much debated in the SFB; finally, W. F. Hoelderich's group has been able to obtain highly active, reusable hydrogenation as well as Jacobsen type epoxidation catalysts.

The next part of the book deals with enzyme catalysis and bioorganic synthesis. An important aim of this research has been the preparation of enantiomerically pure small molecules that are useful in general organic synthesis and as intermediates in drug process synthesis. It is apparent that there has been fruitful and remarkably successful collaboration between ca. 10 groups, led by established as well as junior group leaders. The first three articles, with authors from the groups of K.-E. Jaeger, M.-R. Kula, M. Pohl, M. Müller and G. A. Sprenger, deal with applications of techniques of enzyme biochemistry, for example site-directed mutagenesis and directed evolution based on recombinant DNA technology. The following articles describe asymmetric syntheses of a large variety of chiral alcohols using *R*-specific alcohol dehydrogenases (W. Hummel), aldolases and related types of C-C bond forming enzymes (W.-D. Fessner) as well as sucrose synthase I (L. Elling). An article naming 17 authors on asymmetric synthesis of 1,3-diols and propargylic alcohols concludes the section.

An asset of the Aachen/Jülich bioorganic synthesis approach is technology transfer, which is testified by no less than five start-up companies. Scale-up requires stable and highly efficient enzymes as well as appropriate reaction technology. The development of membrane reactors has been a key to success. Reaction technology is outlined by C. Wandrey and co-workers in the final article.

Reading this book is worthwhile for anybody seeking an impression of the state of the art of the entire field of asymmetric synthesis. A lot of interesting material is offered to the expert from academia or industry as well as to the student looking for an interesting field of graduate research.

Günter Helmchen

Preface

After the pioneering work of Louis Pasteur and Emil Fischer in the middle and at the end of the nineteenth century, respectively, it still took more than fifty years before chemists started to discuss transition state models together with polar and steric effects to gain more insight into the phenomenon of asymmetric induction. Even first observations in organic synthesis of enantioselectivities comparable to those of enzymes in the late fifties and sixties of the 20th century did not convince the chemical community and the term “asymmetric synthesis” was regarded a mechanistic curiosity rather than a practical way to synthesize compounds of high enantiomeric purity.

In the mid-seventies, with the development of generally applicable stoichiometric asymmetric syntheses, especially the Meyers oxazoline methodology as the first one, the scientific community began to believe that asymmetric synthesis really worked resulting in an explosive growth of this new field. Later on, and mainly driven by the fact that the biological activity of enantiomers is usually different, dozens of new chemical companies were founded all over the world in a newly created area called “chirotechnology”.

Around that time and after intensive discussions several professors of the RWTH Aachen University and the nearby Jülich Research Center decided to apply at the German Research Council for a so-called Collaborative Research Center on the topic of asymmetric synthesis. Looking back, it was truly a seminal event when the Professors D. Enders, W. Keim, M.-R. Kula, H. Sahm and C. Wandrey stopped their cars at the highway station Köln-Frechen and nailed down the proposed research topic as “Asymmetric Synthesis with Chemical and Biological Methods”. After Professor E. Winterfeldt, as an advisor, saw this new initiative “under a good star”, indeed the new “Sonderforschungsbereich 380” was funded and started in 1994.

From the very beginning of this long term research endeavor, the aim has been to cover *all* aspects of the *entire* field of asymmetric synthesis including stoichiometric and catalytic asymmetric syntheses with chemical and biological methods as well as the development of new reaction technologies. The interdisciplinary cooperation among the areas of classical organic and inorganic chemistry as well as technical chemistry (RWTH Aachen University) and the various fields of

enzyme technology and biotechnology (Research Center Jülich, HHU Düsseldorf) resulted in efficient asymmetric syntheses of synthetic building blocks, fine chemicals, natural products and biologically active compounds in general. Mechanistic and theoretical aspects, organic synthesis, organometallic chemistry, homogeneous and heterogeneous transition metal catalysis, microbiology, enzyme- and biotechnology were all employed and used for stereoselective C-H-, C-C-, and C-heteroatom bond formations.

Besides the scientific success of this Collaborative Research Center as measured in publications, patents and foundation of start-up companies, it should be mentioned that a high percentage of the younger scientific members received and accepted calls for full professorships including D. Vogt (Eindhoven), W.-D. Fessner (Darmstadt), U. Kragl (Rostock), A. Liese (Hamburg), S. Bräse (Karlsruhe), G. Sprenger (Stuttgart) and M. Müller (Freiburg) and also associate professorships as C. Ganter (Düsseldorf), L. Elling (Aachen), M. Ansorge-Schumacher (Berlin) and M. Pohl (Privatdozent, Düsseldorf). A highlight during the twelve years of funding was the “Deutsche Zukunftspreis” awarded by the Federal President of Germany to Prof. Kula and Dr. Pohl and presented in a spectacular nationwide television show broadcasted from Berlin in 2002. Professor Maria-Regina Kula, herself being a chemist, was always aware of the necessity to combine biological and chemical catalytic methods. As her 70th birthday coincides with the appearance of this book, the editors would like to express their warm congratulations and best wishes for her future.

We thank the German Research Council (“Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft”) for the generous financial support of the Collaborative Research Center “Sonderforschungsbereich, SFB 380” over a period of twelve years. In particular, we are thankful to Dr. H. H. Lindner and Dr. A. Pollex-Krüger as well as Dr. W. Rohe, Dr. P. Schmitz-Möller and Dr. H. Schruff for their organizational help during the course of the priority programme. In addition, on behalf of all participants of the Collaborative Research Center, we would like to thank the scientific referees, the Professors M. Ballauff (Bayreuth), J. E. Bäckvall (Stockholm), A. Böck (München), H. Brunner (Regensburg), H. Buchholz (Erlangen-Nürnberg), W. Buckel (Marburg), G. Dziuk (Freiburg), F. Effenberger (Stuttgart), H. Eschrig (Dresden), H. Fischer (Konstanz), W. Francke (Hamburg), G. Gottschalk (Göttingen), H. Griengl (Graz), G. Helmchen (Heidelberg), U. Kazmaier (Saarbrücken), H. Kessler (München), H. Kunz (Mainz), E. P. Kündig (Genf), J. Mulzer (Wien), H.-U. Reißig (Berlin), K. Sandhoff (Bonn), G. Schulz-Eckloff (Bremen), H. Simon (München), W. Spiess (Mainz), J. Thiem (Hamburg), H. Tschesche (Bielefeld), H. Vahrenkamp (Freiburg), and H. Waldmann (Dortmund) for their help, advice and the many fruitful discussions.

We hope that this book will be useful and a source of inspiration for all those interested in the chemical, biological and technical aspects of asymmetric synthesis in general and will stimulate new ideas and research activities among the young scientists in this rapidly growing field.

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