Source	*NUNCIUS* (*Journal of the history of science*) vol. XXIII
Date	January 2008
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The volume collects the lectures of physics, chemistry and natural history delivered at the École Normale of Paris in 1795. The establishment of the École Normale was one of the most important effects of the revolutionary reforms of French public education, and the publication of these courses offers crucial evidence of the appreciation of the changing role of science in higher education. Moreover, these documents testify to the radical changes introduced by the end of the century in physics, chemistry and, to a lesser degree, natural history. The volume collects the texts of the courses in physics by René Just Haüy, in chemistry by Claude Louis Berthollet and in natural history by Louis Jean Marie Daubenton. Each section is provided with a historical introduction edited and annotated by a team of experts. A general bibliography and the index conclude the volume.

Haüy's lectures brought a new agenda into the teaching of physics. Although he was educated in the Nolletian tradition of experimental physics, his insights show a keen preference for the theoretical systematization of data and observations, and his course leaves no relevant traces of the recent past. Haüy began his course with two lectures on the physical composition of matter, and immediately passed on to a survey on crystallography, a field in which he had been a pioneer and which was intimately tied to the structure of molecules. He then followed up with a survey on the nature of heat (taken from the experiments by Laplace and Lavoisier) and the dilatation of bodies, the vaporisation and the instruments and machines related to it and the phenomena (and apparatus) related to freezing. The following examinations of the weight of gases and the balloons were also the effect of an assessment of the revolutionary results obtained in recent pneumatic chemistry. The course concluded (quite surprisingly) with the examination of electrical phenomena (and apparatus) and with the theory of magnetism set forth by Coulomb just a few years earlier.

Equally centred on the most recent acquisitions of French science were the chemistry lectures delivered by Berthollet. The caloric theory of Laplace and Lavoisier was taken as a point of departure to deal with Berthollet's favourite topic, i.e. chemical affinities. He thought that the expansive force of heat played a fundamental role in the determination of the chemical affinities between different substances. To put it in Berthollet's own words : « L'attraction chimique luttant contre la force expansive du calorique est donc le principe de tous les phénomènes chimiques » (p. 256). The editors point out that this opinion diverged quite substantially from Lavoisier's scepticism (expressed in the preliminary discourse of his *Traité élémentaire de chimie* - 1789) on the possibility of gaining exact knowledge of chemical reactions by taking affinities into consideration. However, thanks to the fresh views brought to the subject by Armand Seguin in the early 1790s, Lavoisier changed his mind and worked with his laboratory assistant on a series of memoirs on heat and affinity which were supposed to be published in a work entitled *Mémoires de physique et de chimie*. The work was in press in 1793 and Berthollet was probably able to get the two complete and the half-printed volumes by Seguin sometime between 1794 and 1798. In light of several points of convergence between the lectures and the text printed in the *Mémoires*, it is likely in my view that Berthollet was inspired by Lavoisier's and Seguin's work but that the death of the former and the lower social status of the latter led him to hide his source. Berthollet provided a detailed and highly original account of the experiments on the composition and decomposition of water made by French scientists, and the editors provide an interesting contextualisation of them. Equally interesting is the account of Lavoisier's and Seguin's experiments on respiration.

The last series of lectures, devoted to natural history, was delivered by Daubenton, in principle the most traditionalist scientist of the three, who provided the survey of the discipline with a rigour and precision that was unknown to Buffon and more aligned with Linnaeus. However, though Daubenton also paid tribute, at the time surprisingly so, to the importance of the new chemistry in natural history, little trace of the Lamarckian revolution is detectable in his lectures.

As a whole, the present work represents a landmark of the history of science during the French Revolution. The useful and detailed editorial notes and introductions are the work of Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Michel Blay, Christine Blondel, Patrice Bret, Cédric Crémière, Pere Grapi, Nicole Hulin, Bernard Maittie, Laurent Pinon and Stéphane Schmitt.

It is regrettable that the publisher used a minuscule typeface, thus making the reading of this book an exceedingly difficult task.