

Pere Grapí

Inspiring air

A history of air-related science

SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

"This volume is a relevant scholarly achievement as it deals with instruments that were substantially neglected: eudiometers are instruments that most likely every chemist, and also quite a number of historians of science, have heard of and maybe even used. However, to most people, both the instrument and the related practice appear to be straightforward. As we learn from Grapí's analysis, this is not the case: there is a long and complex history behind these instruments. A substantial achievement lies in making the complexity of the contexts in gas research accessible – this was relevant in biological, medical, and chemical contexts and also affected natural philosophy. The broad use of primary sources (and here are also instruments that survived to be mentioned) as well as secondary sources results in a very dense and comprehensive volume. It should be stressed that the author develops a clear and accessible narration that is despite being dense still very accessible. The study is highly relevant to historians of science and of scientific experimentation. It may also be relevant to some scholars that focus on material culture studies."

Prof. Dr. Peter Heering,
Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany

Summary

Eudiometers were instruments originally devised for checking the 'goodness' of common air. Seeking to be more than just a chronological inventory of eudiometers, this book presents a unique retrospective of these fascinating apparatuses from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century.

By paying particular attention to the experimental procedures involved over the course of the test, this book aims to understand and explore how eudiometers function, to describe the materials used in making them and the different reagents employed in each eudiometrical test. Importantly, eudiometers were employed within a variety of spheres including human and animal health, gas analysis, chemical theory, plant and animal physiology, atmospheric composition, chemical compound composition, gas lighting, chemical revolution and experimental demonstration.

Finally, this book looks to redress the existing imbalance in the history of chemistry regarding the attention given to theoretical aspects of chemistry in comparison to chemical practice and apparatus. The few existing accounts of chemical devices written in the past century have not been

sufficiently helpful for the understanding of experimental practice in chemistry. Until now no work that deals exclusively with eudiometers and gas analysis from a historical standpoint has been published. Thus, this book will not only cast new light on the subject, but will also contribute to further research on the history of chemical instruments.



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