

A (RE)VIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY OF THE NATURE OF WATER: A PLEA FOR IBE (?)

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<https://iiit-ac-in.zoom.us/j/93997563252>

In this essay, I focus on the debate between Antoine Lavoisier and Joseph Priestley regarding the nature of water (a compound or an element) in the light of recent historiographical investigations (Schofield, 2004, Osiris, 2017, Blumenthal, 2019, e.g.) in eighteenth century chemistry. My aim is two folds. First, I want to explore in a nuanced way the arguments between Lavoisier and Priestley although seen through a Priestleyan lens. I suggest that the debate throws up the need for performing experiments to lay bare causal mechanisms. It also shows that the debate was sophisticated and yet unresolved. The second, I try to suggest that the causal explanations of the phenomena the experiments generate play a role towards the confirmation of the hypothesis / phenomenon in question.



Prajit K. Basu was trained in Chemistry and Philosophy. He worked at I.I.T Delhi, I.I.T Bombay, and University of Hyderabad from where he retired. His interests have been in History and Philosophy of Science, Epistemology, and Science, Technology and Society Studies especially for the last twenty years.

