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Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744–1829). Mineraly, istoty żywe i łącząca je koncepcja chemiczna

Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744–1829). Minerals, living beings and the chemical conception as their binding element

SUMMARY

The starting point for the presented in this article considerations on the links between the inorganic and organic world, within the biological theory of Lamarck, has become a widespread in the historical literature opinion of a fundamental turn, which allegedly took place in Lamarck's views of about 1800. This turn was to abandon the belief of the immutability of species and on the existence of the insurmountable hiatus between the inorganic and the organic world, and to adopt the view of species mutability and the existence of spontaneous generation, and therefore, the existence of a link between the two worlds. From the thesis on the existence of the above hiatus there were some completely false endeavours to deduce Lamarck's view on the eternity of life (without any clear documented evidence proving the confirmation of this view), and the thesis itself was attempted to be bound with the adopted by Lamarck theory of chemistry, according to which, complex inorganic materials are the product of the process of life.

The article traces the origins of the conception of hiatus, the conception of substantial quality differences separating the inorganic and organic world, and identifies the alleged motives that could lead to the adoption by Lamarck of so alien to his own worldview idea. By reference to the texts of Lamarck himself and testimonies of Sainte-Beuve, one could notice the total groundlessness of combining with this conception the idea of eternal life and making Lamarck its supporter, and thus, treating year 1800 as the absolute turning point in the development of the views of the French naturalist.

The article puts an emphasis on the analysis of the conception taken up by Lamarck, according to which, complex inorganic substances are of organogenic nature, and the connecting with the above conception of an important philosophical and theoretical issue, namely, which was the original one – the living or the inanimate matter. This conception is part of a little-known, general, very peculiar chemical theory by Lamarck, which explained the mechanism of creating of complex compounds in general, both inorganic, which had not spontaneously arise in inanimate nature, but could spontaneously only resolve, as well as the organic ones. At least a sketchy reconstruction of this theory turned out to be indispensable.

Finally, the author points out the hypothetical source of Lamarckian idea, which prompted him to recognize the organic body as an environment in which the mineral compound inorganic body is created, and at the same time, as the cause of the actuation of its process of creation. This concerns a dispute within the plant physiology, which was taking place up to the mid-19th century, and dates back to the 2nd half of the 18th century, concerning the

mineral nutrition of plants. The aim was to explain how the substances were being exchanged between the plant and its environment, and to identify those substances which were exchanged – penetrating into the plant's body, generating in the plant and abandoning it. It is difficult to rule out the possibility that the above mentioned Lamarckian idea has its origin in the said dispute, constitutes its resonance and is a partial attempt to resolve it. The article presents the history of this little-known dispute and its final conclusion.

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