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| Nota di contenuto | The philosophical and historiographical terrain -- Positivism, Whiggism and the chemical revolution -- Postpositivism and the history of science -- Postpositivist interpretations of the chemical revolution -- From modernism to postmodernism: changing philosophical images of science -- The sociology of scientific knowledge and the history of science -- Postmodernist and sociological interpretations of the chemical revolution -- The chemical revolution as history. |
| Sommario/riassunto | Until recently, the Chemical Revolution was the Cinderella of scientific revolutions, demurely wedged between her noisier and more noticeable sisters - the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century (which saw the birth of modern science), and the Darwinian Revolution of the nineteenth century (which evoked passionate debates about the origin of life and human destiny) - the more prosaic issues associated with the Chemical Revolution attracted the interest of only a handful of historians and historically minded chemists. The last fifty years, however, have witnessed almost as many studies of the Chemical Revolution as occurred in the preceding century. This study offers a |

critical survey of past and present interpretations of the Chemical Revolution designed to lend clarity and direction to the current ferment of views. Concerned with interpretive patterns rather than particulars, it relates this sequence of interpretive styles - positivism, post-positivism and the sociology of scientific knowledge - to the emergence and development of philosophical and sociological models of science. It explores within this framework a range of different interpretations of the Chemical Revolution, noting conflicts and tensions between rationalist and relativist, realist and antirealist, materialist and idealist, and essentialist and nominalist philosophical sensibilities. Finally, it outlines an alternative, historical interpretation of the Chemical Revolution, highlighting continuity and discontinuity, identity and difference, permanence and mutability, in the phenomenon of scientific change.
