

rels, passe ensuite à la phase magique, qui est l'exploitation intelligente des potentialités de la nature (stimulants, psychomimétiques et inébriants), pour arriver, enfin, à la médecine, avec l'exploitation la plus fine des ressources de la nature, que l'auteur considère être à l'origine de la pharmacologie actuelle. Bibliographie, index des termes scientifiques et index analytique clôturent cet ouvrage que, selon les appellations consacrées, on appellera un essai stimulant.

Alain Touwaide

WOLPERT L., *The unnatural nature of science*. Faber and Faber, London-Boston, 1992, pp. 191.

This agreeable book discusses the question of what science is and what science is not, starting from the birth of science among the Ionian natural philosophers (Thales, leap) and its rebirth in the Renaissance, down to present day relationships between science and society.

The question is if science is unique or if there are *science* and *applications of science*. Science is different from technology, says Wolpert, because technology produces usable objects, whereas science produces ideas. The general public is often unable to understand scientific theories, which are not based on ordinary common sense. Some of this misunderstanding may be traced to the dichotomy between science and the arts and humanities, *derived from Nietzsche's claim that science, with its reductionism and materialism, has deprived man of his special status* (p. xi). Thus, modern science is *unnatural* (not against nature, of course!), because scientific ideas are generally counter-intuitive and *they cannot be acquired by simple inspection of phenomena and are often outside everyday experience*. Technology, which

is much older than science, from primitive agriculture to the steam engine, has always had practical applications, whereas scientific creativity includes ideas often arising initially from very little evidence, and offering only partial explanations of the world. On the boundary of science, or in the world of *non-science*, there are tribal mythology, psychoanalysis, paranormal phenomena, religious belief, which are at most only weakly based on scientific principles.

Wolpert maintains that it is difficult to give an exact definition of the scientific method. Science is a blend of ideas and research, a quest for new discoveries, that is, a creative activity, according to this book, which concludes that science is *as essential today as it was in Ionia*, the scene of Thales' revolution, twentyfive centuries ago.

Pauline Webber

TISSOT Samuel, *Avis au peuple sur sa santé*, (édition du 1782), Re-édition présentée par Daniel Teyssere et Corinne Verry-Jolivet, Quai Voltaire, Edima, Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris, 1993, pp. 432.

In concomitanza con l'anno mondiale della sanità, viene riproposta la pubblicazione di questa opera che fin dalla sua prima apparizione nel 1761, ebbe grande diffusione e riscosse un notevole successo nelle diverse classi sociali. In un secolo, quello definito dei *Lumi*, in cui la divulgazione del sapere assunse un ruolo particolare, le opere di rapida ed agile consultazione che rendevano possibile portare una serie di conoscenze dalla ristretta cerchia degli specialisti ad un numero maggiore di persone di diversa estrazione sociale e livello culturale, ebbero un notevole incremento. Il testo di Tissot, in particolare, si inserisce nella tradizione de la *Médecines des pauvres*, genere scientifico-letterario del XVI secolo che si sviluppò nell'arco di