

## **Sciences lead astray ?**

A year ago, Dr Ioannidis published a rather controversial paper claiming that most of the scientific reports published in the most prestigious journals are likely to be wrong. His reasoning was grounded on several papers widely quoted he had studied himself. He noticed that within a few years, other studies had invalidated them.

Unfortunately, his proof was lacking in all scientific merit, for he had left out a crucial aspect of the problem. The papers published in well-known journals are of course widely spread among the scientific community. They reach a broader audience than other reports. Therefore, there are many more people liable to discover shortcomings in those papers. Hence, it's no surprise to find out they are often criticized, all the more so as their achievement attracts jealousy.

The calling into question of those papers is nothing but a logical cause of their success. Nevertheless, this unavoidable fact is none the more compromising to the progress of science. This discipline has always relied on the competition between wise minds, whose arguments were really productive. The human spirit has never been able to embrace the whole nature of the object he has studied through the times and that's why research has progress slowly and blindly, with trials and errors. Mistakes seem to be deeply rooted in the core of the developement of sciences. Those we know now as geniuses were widely discredited and proved wrong many times. Scientific progress lies in ratiounality, which come more often out of corrections than claims.

This important misstatement beeing underlined, we cannot nonetheless ignore the point he was trying to make. Despite his rigour-lacking demonstration, Dr Ioannidis has intuited a major problem of modern sciences. The roots of this issue lie in social values, which reflect on sciences even though this area is often considered as somewhat withdrawn from the rest of the world. Under the pressure from the capitalist system, productivity has become one of the major values of our society.

Quantity has taken over quality as the whole world became thrilled by the power enabled by technological progress. The relentless craving for improvement has put an overwhelming pressure on the whole scientific world, aggravated by the weight of the responsibilities linked to the ethic problems those progress have raised. The outburst of information technologies has dramatically increased the number of scientific publication, and deeply shifted the world of research.

When the whole world has its eyes set on scientists, longing for breakthroughs or a miracle solution to save an endangered planet, we should really worry about the health of sciences. Alienated by this yearning for success, they might just lose their deep purpose. Let's not forget that science means wisdom, and not results.