

Dissertation Title : Nicholas Rescher on Pragmatic Idealism: A Defense
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ABSTRACT

Nicholas Rescher's pragmatic idealism is aimed at knowledge of reality. Its approach is (a) idealistic because it regards the constructive contribution of the inquiring mind as essential to knowledge, then takes systematic coherence as the criterion of truth; (b) fallibilistic because it reminds us of the imperfect and incomplete status of science altogether with the evident thesis that science is not such a stable system but a dynamic process; and (c) pragmatic because it affirms that this picture of reality under the framework of mind-supplied purpose is actually not an arbitrary construction; but it is standardly controlled by the method of science- by success or failure in practice. Accordingly, based upon the proficient background of rationality as the intelligent pursuit of appropriate end, we recognize that the pilot product (finished by the scientist) is actually in need to be pushed into the production line (manufacturer, factory) and then into the market (via salesperson) to cope with the real demand-drive or our planned target customers. Our project must not end up with some abstract papers on shelf but the real concrete finished product to be sold in the store is obligatory. Broadly speaking, "Pragmatic Idealism" needs the principle "One of the Three" :

The Head : the scientist, the researcher, R&D Department in the organization, academy or government sector;

The Hand : manufacturer, factory; and

The Heart : the (professional) marketing and salesperson.

In this connection, only the project that can yield the appropriate ends : “not for me or for us, but for them” (for human in general, other sentient beings, especially including environmental concern) is our required target to pursue. Since all the three agents altogether have significant roles in accomplishing the desirable end of each inquiring project, it is thus important to let them recognize the necessity of each other for their kind co-operation and understanding. Eventually, through this system of pragmatic idealism, the overall outcome of our empirical inquiry turns out to be a viable compromising synthesis between the two distinctive longstanding incompatible positions: realism and idealism which not only provides our better understanding of the proper stance in this world, but also equips us with certain expected end-results as we long for.

