

The Future of Science

Scientific Progress. A Philosophical Essay on the Economics of Research in Natural Science. NICHOLAS RESCHER. Blackwell, Oxford, and University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1978. xiv, 278 pp., illus. \$18.95.

Nicholas Rescher prefaces this philosophical essay with the claim that "influential voices sound all around us with predictions of an imminent end to scientific progress." Readers who have not heard the alarm are likely to be surprised by Rescher's insistence that he addresses the question of limits to scientific progress at a time when the scientific community is suffering a "failure of nerve" and a "crisis of self-confidence" reminiscent of what beset the aristocracy on the eve of the French Revolution. Rescher grossly exaggerates its urgency, but the question he raises is nevertheless of considerable interest. His major contribution is to recognize the possibility that limits to the advance of science need not depend on the finitude of nature or on man's capacity to comprehend it. Instead, Rescher argues that the binding constraint on scientific progress is economic; he claims that the technology of producing scientific knowledge is subject to diminishing returns.

Rescher's central concern is to analyze the determinants of the rate of scientific progress. For a philosopher he pays surprisingly little attention to the more fundamental problem of defining what constitutes scientific progress. For purposes of his central argument he simply measures scientific progress by the number of "first-rate findings" in a given time period. This standard begs the obvious question of what is a first-rate finding, but, on the rather strong assumption that this criterion can be made operational, it offers two principal advantages. First, scientific progress is not identified with increase in the total volume of scientific publications; indeed, it is arguable that publications are a better measure of scientific input than of scientific output, since they are a requisite of career advancement rather like education. Second, Rescher's quantitative approach to measuring progress sidesteps the controversial issue of whether scientific knowledge is cumulative. It has become

orthodoxy among philosophers of science that scientific advance is not merely a matter of generalizing older theories to encompass a broader range of phenomena; often new theories annihilate older theories, changing utterly the context in which phenomena are perceived and interpreted. Measuring progress by first-rate discoveries is not inconsistent with this view, since first-rate discoveries may either extend an existing paradigm or overturn one.

Rescher's somewhat simple-minded operational measure seems adequate for his purpose, but he cannot resist the temptation to comment briefly on the deeper issues. He bows grudgingly to Thomas Kuhn by begging the question whether there has been "improvement" in the adequacy of scientific theories to comprehend the world, but he insists that scientific progress can also be understood as improvement in man's control over nature in a technological sense. This conflation of scientific and technological progress is wholly unilluminating.

Rescher seeks to explain the rate of scientific progress by constructing a theoretical model rather similar to models of economic growth. The structure of his model—and lamentably the arbitrariness of his crucial assumptions—suggests that his real source of inspiration was not an imminent crisis in the scientific community but the recent neo-Malthusian literature on the limits to economic growth. Rescher does not assume that the stock of potential scientific discoveries is finite, but he does postulate that the phenomena giving rise to significant findings are distributed logarithmically over parameter space. In other words, as technology extends the range of feasible experimental conditions (higher energy levels, lower temperatures, and so on), the maintenance of a constant flow of additions to the stock of first-rate findings requires a constant flow of order-of-magnitude extensions in the parameter range. While this "findings-distribution" assumption has some intuitive plausibility, Rescher offers no evidence to support it.

A second crucial link in the argument is the assertion that the cost of experimental apparatus rises more than pro-

portionately with extensions in the accessible range of parameter space. This premise, together with the assumption concerning the distribution of findings, suffices to assure that an exponential increase in the resources devoted to science will yield only a linear increase in first-rate findings. Over time a constant exponential growth of resources will thus produce a steady advance of science in the sense of a constant stream of first-rate findings per unit time. Rescher asserts that recent history confirms the validity of this proposition, but his evidence is fragmentary and not particularly compelling.

The final step of the argument is the most troublesome. Rescher simply assumes that economic growth will cease, and therefore that the resources annually devoted to scientific inquiry will reach an upper bound. Under such conditions, the prior two assumptions compel the conclusion that first-rate findings will be distributed logarithmically rather than uniformly over time; thus, first-rate findings will occur with decreasing frequency. Scientific progress will not end, but it will observe Rescher's "law of logarithmic retardation."

The virtue of this modeling effort is that it calls attention to some crucial determinants of the rate of scientific progress. In the language of economics, these are (i) the "supply" of potential scientific discoveries inherent in the structure of the natural world, (ii) the technology, or "production function," relating resource inputs to scientific outputs (findings), and (iii) the supply of resource inputs available for scientific inquiry, which depends on, among other things, the rate of growth of the economy as a whole. A principal defect of Rescher's work is that he makes highly restrictive, arbitrary, and empirically unsupported assumptions about the form of these supply and production functions. There are a wide variety of alternative assumptions that would not compel a conclusion of deceleration in scientific progress. Even if one accepts Rescher's unverified assumption about the distribution of potential discoveries, sufficiently rapid improvement in the technology of inquiry may offset for a considerable time any tendency toward deceleration of scientific progress. Rescher cites two examples of research apparatus (telescopes and particle accelerators) where costs have increased more rapidly than performance. But it is not difficult to cite powerful counter-examples, most notably the enormous reduction in the costs of computation. As in economic growth models from Ricardo to Meadows, it is

Scientific Progress A Philosophical Essay On The Economics Of Research In Natural Science

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Scientific Progress A Philosophical Essay On The Economics Of Research In Natural Science:

Scientific Progress Nicholas Rescher, 1978 This volume examines the future prospects for research in the natural sciences and provides reasons for the cost escalation of scientific work The Economics of Technological Progress Tonu Puu, Soren Wibe, 1980-12-11 Philosophy of Economics Uskali Mäki, 2012-06-12 Part of the Handbook of the Philosophy of Science Series edited by Dov M Gabbay King's College London UK Paul Thagard University of Waterloo Canada and John Woods University of British Columbia Canada Philosophy of Economics investigates the foundational concepts and methods of economics the social science that analyzes the production distribution and consumption of goods and services This groundbreaking collection the most thorough treatment of the philosophy of economics ever published brings together philosophers scientists and historians to map out the central topics in the field The articles are divided into two groups Chapters in the first group deal with various philosophical issues characteristic of economics in general including realism and Lakatos explanation and testing modeling and mathematics political ideology and feminist epistemology Chapters in the second group discuss particular methods theories and branches of economics including forecasting and measurement econometrics and experimentation rational choice and agency issues game theory and social choice behavioral economics and public choice geographical economics and evolutionary economics and finally the economics of scientific knowledge This volume serves as a detailed introduction for those new to the field as well as a rich source of new insights and potential research agendas for those already engaged with the philosophy of economics Provides a bridge between philosophy and current scientific findings Encourages multi disciplinary dialogue Covers theory and applications *The Economics of Scientific Misconduct* James R. Wible, 2022-08-18 The Economics of Scientific Misconduct explores episodes of misconduct in the natural and biomedical sciences and replication failure in economics and psychology over the past half century Here scientific misconduct is considered from the perspective of a single discipline such as economics likely for the first time in intellectual history Research misconduct has become an important concern across many natural medical and social sciences including economics over the past half century Initially a mainstream economic approach to science and scientific misconduct draws from conventional microeconomics and the theories of Becker Ehrlich and C S Peirce's economy of research Then the works of Peirce and Thorstein Veblen from the 19th century point toward contemporary debates over statistical inference in econometrics and the failure of recent macroeconomic models In more contemporary economics clashes regarding discrimination and harassment have led to a Code of Professional Conduct from the American Economic Association and a Code of Ethics from one of its members The last chapter considers research ethics matters related to the COVID 19 pandemic There has been an explosion of research and some retractions More generally a concern with research ethics contributes to scientific progress by making some of its most difficult problems more transparent and understandable and thus possibly more surmountable This book offers valuable insights for students and scholars of research ethics across

the sciences philosophy of science and social science and economic theory **The Philosophy of Nicholas Rescher** E. Sosa, 2012-12-06 When I entered the graduate program in philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh in 1961 Nicholas Rescher had just joined the department of philosophy to begin with Adolf Grunbaum the building of what is now a philosophy center of worldwide renown Very soon his exceptional energy and versatility were in evidence as he founded the American Philosophical Quarterly generated a constantly rising stack of preprints pursued important scholarly research in Arabic logic taught a staggering diversity of historical and thematic courses and obtained in cooperation with Kurt Baier a major grant for work in value theory That is all part of the record What may come as a surprise is that none of it was accomplished at the expense of his students Papers were returned in a matter of days often the next class meeting And so easily accessible was he for philosophical discussion that since inevitably we shared many philosophical interests I asked him to serve as my dissertation advisor My work in connection with this project led to a couple of journal articles while his characteristically led to a book Our discussions certainly helped me and while they may also have had some small influence on him in the end our views were quite distinct I was not only allowed complete independence but was positively encouraged to think of my own ideas and to develop them independently The length and breadth of Rescher's bibliography defy belief Is Science Progressive? I. Niiniluoto, 2013-04-17 This collection brings together several essays which have been written between the years 1975 and 1983 During that period I have been occupied with the attempt to find a satisfactory explicate for the notion of truthlikeness or verisimilitude The technical results of this search have partly appeared elsewhere and I am also working on a systematic presentation of them in a companion volume to this book Truthlikeness forthcoming hopefully in 1985 The essays collected in this book are less formal and more philosophical they all explore various aspects of the idea that progress in science is associated with an increase in the truthlikeness of its results Even though they do not exhaust the problem area of scientific change together they constitute a step in the direction which I find most promising in the defence of critical scientific realism Chapter 1 appeared originally in Finnish as the opening article of a new journal Tiede 2000 no 1 I 1980 a Finnish counterpart to journals such as Science and Scientific American This explains its programmatic character It tries to give a compact answer to the question What is science and serves therefore as an introduction to the problem area of the later chapters Chapter 2 is a revised translation of my inaugural lecture for the chair of Theoretical Philosophy in the University of Helsinki on April 8 1981 It appeared in Finnish in Parnasso 31 1981 pp **Conceptual Revolutions** Wenceslao J. González, 2011 **Critical Scientific Realism** Ilkka Niiniluoto, 1999-12-09 Ilkka Niiniluoto comes to the rescue of scientific realism showing that reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated Philosophical realism holds that the aim of a particular discourse is to make true statements about its subject matter Niiniluoto surveys the different varieties of realism in ontology semantics epistemology theory construction and methodology He then sets out his own original version and defends it against competing theories in the philosophy of science Niiniluoto's critical scientific realism is founded upon the

notion of truth as correspondence between language and reality and characterizes scientific progress in terms of increasing truthlikeness This makes it possible not only to take seriously but also to make precise the troublesome idea that scientific theories typically are false but nevertheless close to the truth **Epistemology and the Social** ,2015-06-29 Epistemology had to come to terms with the social on two different occasions The first was represented by the dispute about the epistemological status of the social sciences and in this case the already well established epistemology of the natural sciences seemed to have the right to dictate the conditions for a discipline to be a science But the social sciences could successfully vindicate the legitimacy of their specific criteria for scientificity More recently the impact of social factors on the construction of our knowledge including scientific knowledge has reversed in a certain sense the old position and promoted social inquiry to the role of a criterion for evaluating the purport of cognitive including scientific statements But this has undermined the traditional characteristics of objectivity and rigor that seem constitutive of science Moreover in order to establish the real extent to which social conditionings have an impact on scientific knowledge one must credit sociology with a sound ground of reliability and this is not possible without a preliminary epistemological assessment These are some of the topics discussed in this book both theoretically and with reference to concrete cases *General Technical Report RM.* ,1988

The Way the Wind Blows Roderick J. McIntosh,Joseph A. Tainter,Susan Keech McIntosh,2012-07-24 Robert W Harms Yale University **Reason, Truth, and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective** Paul D. Murray,2004 In this work Paul Murray explores which style of rationality is most appropriate to Christian theology in the contemporary pluralist postfoundationalist postmodern context At its heart is a fresh consideration of the American pragmatist tradition focussing on the writings of Richard Rorty and Nicholas Rescher Where Rorty correctly diagnoses the failures of foundationalist objectivism Rescher s pragmatic idealism is presented as healing the ills in Rorty s own neo pragmatism The significant resonance between Rescher s view of rationality and Christian understanding of the trinity is explored In turn Donald MacKinnon s influential writings are presented as exemplifying just such an approach to theology Murray both articulates an enriched form of Christian postliberalism committed to receiving and learning from other traditions of thought and practice and probes the claim that the dynamics of human rationality can be expected to reflect the Trinitarian dynamics of God s being Paul Murray presents us here with an exhaustive and insightful study of recent pragmatic theory in which he sets up rhythms of healing and completion as well as interrogation particularly remarkable is his exploration of Christianity as the deep and in some sense final interlocutor of pragmatic tradition I strongly recommend this book Olivier Davis Professor of Christian Doctrine King s College London This is a mature wide ranging work that by uniting the intellectual and the practical carries both rational and ethical conviction It does equal justice to the classic teachings of Christianity and to the challenges to rethink them in dialogue with modern and postmodern approaches The result is a conception of Christianity both generously orthodox and deeply engaged with contemporary life and thought It is especially good to see the profound

contribution of Donald MacKinnon understood and developed with such perception and relevance David F Ford Regius Professor of Divinity University of Cambridge Paul Murray is currently Lecturer in Systematic Theology within the Department of Theology at the University of Durham England He has previously held posts at St Cuthbert's Seminary Ushaw College Durham and Newman College of Higher Education Birmingham Essays of his exploring issues in philosophical theology science and theology and contemporary Roman Catholic theology have appeared in leading journals and edited collections This is his first monograph **Drilling Down** Joseph A. Tainter, Tadeusz W. Patzek, 2011-09-18 For more than a century oil has been the engine of growth for a society that delivers an unprecedented standard of living to many We now take for granted that economic growth is good necessary and even inevitable but also feel a sense of unease about the simultaneous growth of complexity in the processes and institutions that generate and manage that growth As societies grow more complex through the bounty of cheap energy they also confront problems that seem to increase in number and severity In this era of fossil fuels cheap energy and increasing complexity have been in a mutually reinforcing spiral The more energy we have and the more problems our societies confront the more we grow complex and require still more energy How did our demand for energy our technological prowess the resulting need for complex problem solving and the end of easy oil conspire to make the Deepwater Horizon oil spill increasingly likely if not inevitable This book explains the real causal factors leading up to the worst environmental catastrophe in U S history a disaster from which it will take decades to recover

The Believing Primate Jeffrey Schloss, Michael Murray, 2009-03-12 Over the last two decades scientific accounts of religion have received a great deal of scholarly and popular attention both because of their intrinsic interest and because they are widely seen as potentially constituting a threat to the religion they analyse *The Believing Primate* aims to describe and discuss these scientific accounts as well as to assess their implications The volume begins with essays by leading scientists in the field describing these accounts and discussing evidence in their favour Philosophical and theological reflections on these accounts follow offered by leading philosophers theologians and scientists This diverse group of scholars address some fascinating underlying questions Do scientific accounts of religion undermine the justification of religious belief Do such accounts show religion to be an accidental by product of our evolutionary development And whilst we seem naturally disposed toward religion would we fare better or worse without it Bringing together dissenting perspectives this provocative collection will serve to freshly illuminate ongoing debate on these perennial questions *The Limits of Science* Wenceslao J. Gonzalez, 2016-10-05 The problem of the limits of science is twofold First there is the problem of demarcation i.e. the boundaries or barriers between what is science and what is not science Second there is the problem of the ceiling of scientific activity which leads to the confines of this human enterprise These two faces of the problem of the limits the barriers and the confines of science require a new analysis which is the task of this book The authors take into account the Kantian roots but they are focused on the current stage of the philosophical and methodological analyses of science This

vision looks to supersede the Kantian approach in order to reach a richer conception of science *Signs of Logic*

Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, 2006-08-25 Charles Sanders Peirce 1839 1914 the principal subject of this book was one of the most profound and prolific thinkers and scientists to have come out of the United States His pragmatic logic and scientific methodology largely represent the application of interactive and intercommunicative triadic processes best viewed as strategic and dialogic conceptualisations of logical aspects of thought reasoning and action These viewpoints also involve pragmatic issues in communicating linguistic signs and are unified in his diagrammatic logic of existential graphs The various game theoretic approaches to the semantics and pragmatics of signs and language to the theory of communication and to the evolutionary emergence of signs provide a contemporary toolkit the relevance of which Peirce envisioned to a wondrous extent This work sheds considerable new light on these and other aspects of Peirce's philosophy and his pragmatic theory of meaning Many of his most significant writings in this context reflect his later thinking covering roughly the last 15-20 years of his life and they are still unpublished Drawing comprehensively from his unpublished manuscripts the book offers a fresh and rich picture of this remarkable man's original involvement with logical aspects of thought in action Development

Betrayed Richard B Norgaard, 2006-05-18 Modernity promised control over nature through science material abundance through technology and effective government through rational social organization Instead of leading to this promised land it has brought us to the brink of environmental and cultural disaster Why has there been this gap between modernity's aspirations and its achievements *Development Betrayed* offers a powerful answer to this question Development with its unshakeable commitment to the idea of progress is rooted in modernism and has been betrayed by each of its major tenets Attempts to control nature have led to the brink of environmental catastrophe Western technologies have proved inappropriate for the needs of the South and governments are unable to respond effectively to the crises that have resulted Offering a thorough and lively critique of the ideas behind development Richard Norgaard also offers an alternative co-evolutionary paradigm in which development is portrayed as a co-evolution between cultural and ecological systems Rather than a future with all peoples merging to one best way of knowing and doing things he envisions a future of a patchwork quilt of cultures with real possibilities for harmony **User-Innovation**

Viktor Braun, Cornelius Herstatt, 2009-06-06 Economic growth is highly dependent on technological progress and innovation yet the sources from which these innovations originate are still largely misunderstood and untapped Recent research has demonstrated that users rather than manufacturers are often a critical source of innovation in numerous fields from extreme sports to medical devices to software This book systematically identifies the most important barriers to user innovation and critically evaluates the democratization of innovation argument by critically assessing the main legal economic technological and societal barriers to user innovation for the first time and proposing alternative possibilities Through original research the author reveals the dynamics of user innovation and offers strategies for minimizing those factors that inhibit and stifle the spread of this phenomenon From this

analysis it becomes clear that user innovation has become more difficult over time and that the problem is now of how manufacturers can enable users to overcome the discussed barriers and simultaneously benefit from such consumer driven activities Arguing that licenses are not just an important technology commercialization instrument but are tools critical to generating innovations the author explains how licenses can in certain situations be employed to help users overcome some of the barriers to user innovation User Innovation Barriers to Democratization and IP Licensing is a practical guidebook as well as a startlingly original work of scholarship that will be essential reading for years to come **Reader's Guide to the History of Science** Arne Hessenbruch,2013-12-16 The Reader s Guide to the History of Science looks at the literature of science in some 550 entries on individuals Einstein institutions and disciplines Mathematics general themes Romantic Science and central concepts Paradigm and Fact The history of science is construed widely to include the history of medicine and technology as is reflected in the range of disciplines from which the international team of 200 contributors are drawn

Understanding Ignorance Daniel R. Denicola,2018-09-04 An exploration of what we can know about what we don t know why ignorance is more than simply a lack of knowledge Ignorance is trending Politicians boast I m not a scientist Angry citizens object to a proposed state motto because it is in Latin and This is America not Mexico or Latin America Lack of experience not expertise becomes a credential Fake news and repeated falsehoods are accepted and shape firm belief Ignorance about American government and history is so alarming that the ideal of an informed citizenry now seems quaint Conspiracy theories and false knowledge thrive This may be the Information Age but we do not seem to be well informed In this book philosopher Daniel DeNicola explores ignorance its abundance its endurance and its consequences DeNicola aims to understand ignorance which seems at first paradoxical How can the unknown become known and still be unknown But he argues that ignorance is more than a lack or a void and that it has dynamic and complex interactions with knowledge Taking a broadly philosophical approach DeNicola examines many forms of ignorance using the metaphors of ignorance as place boundary limit and horizon He treats willful ignorance and describes the culture in which ignorance becomes an ideological stance He discusses the ethics of ignorance including the right not to know considers the supposed virtues of ignorance and concludes that there are situations in which ignorance is morally good Ignorance is neither pure nor simple It is both an accusation and a defense You are ignorant Yes but I didn t know Its practical effects range from the inconsequential to the momentous It is a scourge but DeNicola argues daringly it may also be a refuge a value even an accompaniment to virtue

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