

Philosophizing Through the Value Labyrinth: How Does the Good Life Fare in the Age of Big Science?

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Since World War II, America has been the *locus classicus* of big science. Vannevar Bush's influential report to President Roosevelt, *Science The Endless Frontier*, instantiated a number of assumptions regarding the nature of the relation between science and society that remain prominent in scientific and broader culture. Perhaps the most important of Bush's contentions was of the apolitical nature of the scientific enterprise, and, thus, the importance of insulating the institution of science from the country's ever-shifting political climate. Far from pertaining only to science itself, the mantra of 'value-free' became a scientific ideal and has begun to color not only science policy, but large swaths of society.

Big science, however, also means big technology, and vast socio-techno-scientific systems that span nations, ethnicities, and cultural histories. Necessarily, values that were previously nonnegotiable must be reoriented in light of a continual exchange of information from around the world. Science can no longer operate as if it were a value-free endeavor. This panel explores issues relating to science policy and external pressures on science to be accountable for its societal benefits to the general public. Participants particularly focus on philosophical questions salient to the current state of science policy, questions such as whether the process of democratic deliberation over societal values is helped or hindered by scientific and technological development, or how what is valued as the good life is constituted by science and technology. Of utmost concern are the processes by which we come to value institutions such as science or negotiate what counts as public good and societal benefits from science.

The 'Sciencing' of Science Policy

Kelli Barr

Modern society is inundated with measurement. Value is primarily measured in numerical terms, whether through capital in economics or quantitative metrics in science policy. Implicit in advocacy for metrics of research quality and its societal impacts, however, is a tacit commitment to 'sciencing' science policy, in terms of adopting science's epistemic criteria of objectivity and rigor for the sake of adjudicating policy claims and tensions. The push for more and better metrics to measure the societal impacts of basic research is not simply a science policy fad, but indicative of what is currently guiding the trajectory of scientific and technological development.

Science and Technology Policymaking

Fábio Valenti Possamai

Technology, as much embodied by people as it is machines, has for some time defined the relation between human beings and the world, and the general behavior of contemporary society. Whereas the question concerning technology is a philosophical inquiry, the technology itself does not appear immediately problematic upon reflection. Technologies are thought to be automatic – they simply work or not – and themselves morally neutral. What is important to consider, nonetheless, is who decides the direction of developments in science and technology? The question at stake is what it means to be a human being in a time where technology has become more important to society than individual people themselves.

Humanities policy and Persuasive Technology

Wei Zhang

Humanities policy is a new approach in science policy study that attempts to transform the positive tradition of science policy by introducing normative perspectives into the policy process. It takes the broad social impacts of science and technology as the prominent issue for consideration in making science policy, signaling the return of a culture that is attentive to questions concerning the good life. That is, further developments in science and technology ought to take into account the quality of human life they confer. Persuasive technology, which is a new kind of technology that helps people improve their lifestyle by influencing attitudes and behaviors toward tasks and habits, is in line with the spirit of humanities policy.