

Talk-16

Mega-Narratives of Scientific Technology: A Time of Crisis.

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Abstract

The implicit basis for many discussions in the philosophy of technology and technology policy is a deeper story, a mega-narrative, that situates the actions of persons and whole societies, endowing them with dramatic significance. For several centuries the widely cherished story of modern civilization has been that of “progress,” a scenario reformulated in a number of variants. Recently, an accumulation of disturbing evidence running directly contrary to classic triumphalist themes and power fantasies has produced a crisis of self-confidence, inspiring numerous attempts to write new scripts to guide our action. Among the post-progress mega-narratives are “Innovation” and “Sustainability,” ones that try to help us understand the drama in which we take part, as well as the role that scientific technologies play in the unfolding story.