

Choice blindness, self-knowledge, and the future of moral decision making...

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In this talk, I will start with a presentation of the choice blindness paradigm; what it is and where it came from theoretically. In the original choice blindness study (Johansson et al, 2005), participants were presented with pairs of faces, and had to decide which face in each pair they found the most attractive. Unbeknownst to the participants, the alternative they had *not* chosen was sometimes presented as the outcome of their choice. Common sense would suggest that such a reversal would be readily detected. However, not only did the participants seldom notice this manipulation, they also gave sincere and often elaborate explanations for why they preferred the alternative that they had actually rejected. The choice blindness effect has since been demonstrated in a variety of domains and for many different types of choices. I will discuss some of this work, with an emphasis on how it relates to research on moral decision making.

In the second part, I will also introduce some recent studies that may be of particular relevance to the field of Neuroethics. Advances in brain imaging have made it possible to decode and predict various aspects of mental processes directly from brain activity, without participants reporting how they think or feel. Potentially, these developments could become the ultimate invasion of human privacy, threatening our subjective agency and integrity. Or perhaps the converse is true, that brain reading will deepen our understanding of ourselves and others, and further our empathy and social connections? Unfortunately, these pressing questions are very difficult to investigate, as humans are ill equipped to forecast their psychological reactions to future events. To counter this, in Olsen et al., (2023) we used mentalism magic to *simulate* the psychological experiences of future brain reading. Mentalism is a genre of magic that specifically involves creating the appearance of supernormal powers. When mentalism tricks are paired with real brain imaging equipment (such as an EEG cap), we can create an extremely compelling illusion of actual mind reading. In this way, we can gain a unique window into how people will react and adapt to the new realities of brain reading before they arrive.

Olsen, J., Cyr, M., Artenie, D., Strandberg, T., Hall, L., Tompkins, M., Raz, A., & Johansson, P. (2023). Emulating future neurotechnology using magic. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 107, doi: 10.1016/j.concog.2022.103450