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Taking Choice Seriously

What does it mean to take choice seriously?  As I will suggest in this talk, answering this question requires answering a set of philosophical questions which lie at the intersection of institutional ethics, economics and cognitive science.  Some of these questions are empirical while others are not.  For example, is it possible to control one’s own frame when it comes to framing effects and other cognitive biases and what implications does this have for the responsibility we should have for our choices?  (I will show you a piece of software I have cooked up which takes a step towards investigating this question.)  Similarly, if the two-streams hypothesis is true, then which do we want in a just society and healthy economic markets: informed consent or efficacious choice?  Moreover, if distributions of goods and bads result from the aggregate of our choices and our choices are a function of our mental states, including our beliefs, then what is a just allocation of information costs?  Come help me brainstorm in the neighborhood of these important questions so that my philosophical research in value theory remains grounded in empirical fact and my philosophical intuitions keep a true north.

Dr. Braynen's completed a BS in Computer Science, Applied Math, and Statistics at SUNY Stony Brook, an MA in Philosophy at Stony Brook, and a Ph.D. in Philosophy with a minor in Cognitive Science at University of Arizona in 2012.  He is currently a postdoc in the Department of Philosophy at Stanford. In his work, wearing the hats of a philosopher and a technologist, he investigates questions of choice and information in the context of distributive justice.