Distinguished Lecture

Strangers to Ourselves: The Origins and Limits of Self-Knowledge

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The study of self-knowledge—how well people know their own attitudes, beliefs, feelings, motives, and traits—has had a checkered history in psychology, but has become a well-researched topic with important theoretical and practical implications. Researchers have examined three types of self-knowledge: Knowing one’s past self (e.g., recalling one’s past attitudes and beliefs), knowing one’s present self (e.g., current internal states), and knowing one’s future self (e.g., predicting emotional reactions to future events). I will discuss the limits of each type of self-knowledge, why people sometimes fail to know themselves, and the consequences (good and bad) of poor self-knowledge.

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