



Seminar

**PETTER JOHANSSON**

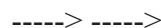
Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, SCAS.  
Researcher and Lecturer in Cognitive Science, Lund University

*Choice Blindness as an Instrument to Study  
Self-knowledge and Preference Change*

Tuesday, 18 February, 11:00 a.m. (NEW DATE)

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
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## ABOUT PETTER JOHANSSON

Petter Johansson received his Ph.D. in Cognitive Science from Lund University in 2006 with the thesis “Choice Blindness: the Incongruence of Intention, Action and Introspection”. He has since held a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Tokyo, a postdoctoral research position at Lund University, and a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship at University College London.

The main theme in Johansson’s research is the relationship between self-knowledge and intentional action. How much do we know about ourselves, and how do we come to acquire this knowledge? In order to study these questions, Johansson and his collaborators have developed an experimental paradigm referred to as ‘choice blindness’. The methodological twist in these experiments is that they surreptitiously manipulate the outcome of people’s choices, and then measure to what extent and in what ways people react to these changes. The general finding has been that participants often fail to detect when they receive the opposite of their choice, and when asked to explain their choices, they readily construct answers motivating a choice they only believe they intended to make. The effect has been demonstrated in choice experiments concerning topics such as facial attractiveness, consumer choice, and moral and political decision making.

Johansson’s most important contribution is the article “Failure to Detect Mismatches between Intention and Outcome in a Simple Decision Task” (*Science*, 2005). In addition, he has published articles in journals such as *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *Cognition*, and *Consciousness and Cognition*, as well as the book *Cognition, Education and Communication Technology* (with Peter Gärdenfors, 2005).

During his time as a *Pro Futura Scientia* Fellow, Johansson will focus on the theoretical implications of choice blindness, with a particular emphasis on the formation of preference as a consequence of making a choice.

## ABSTRACT

This presentation describe the finding that people may fail to notice even dramatic mismatches between what they want and what they get, a phenomenon my collaborators and I have named *choice blindness*.

In one of our experiments, the participants were asked to choose which of two pair-wise presented faces they found most attractive. Immediately after, they were also asked to describe the reasons for their choice. Unknown to the participants, on certain trials, a double-card ploy was used to covertly exchange one face for the other. Thus, on these trials, the outcome of the choice became the opposite of what they intended. Remarkably, in the great majority of trials, the participants were blind to the mismatch between choice and outcome, while nevertheless being prepared to offer introspectively derived reasons for their choices. We have further explored the choice blindness effect in a recent set of experiments, extending the basic phenomenon to other modalities than vision, to consumer choice, and to moral and political opinions.

By surreptitiously altering the outcome of people’s choices, and then measuring in what ways they react or respond to these changes, we can gain insight into self-knowledge and the process of confabulation, the representational nature of goals and intentions, and the effect of prior choices on preference formation. In the presentation, I will discuss both how this approach can be used as a general research tool, as well as describe how our experimental results fit within the broader theoretical context of self-knowledge and preference change.