

SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PRESENTS

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## WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A BABY?

PROFESSOR ALISON GOPNIK

### ABSTRACT

What is baby consciousness like? And what can that tell us about consciousness in general? I will argue that different kinds of consciousness are associated with different functions. In particular, I contrast the standard focused attention associated with 'exploit' functions such as goal-directed planning, with a much more diffuse but intense kind of experience associated with 'explore' functions like plasticity and learning. I suggest that the latter kind of experience is more like the experience of babies and young children. Adult states that replicate those functions, like travel, meditation, and some psychedelic experiences, may give us a hint of what children's consciousness is like.

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*Professor Alison Gopnik is the author or coauthor of over 100 journal articles and several books including Words, Thoughts, and Theories and the bestselling and critically acclaimed popular books The Scientist in the Crib, The Philosophical Baby, and The Gardener and the Carpenter. She has also written widely about cognitive science and psychology for Science, The New York Times, Scientific American, The Atlantic, The New Yorker, The Times Literary Supplement, The New York Review of Books, New Scientist, and Slate, among others.*



**Alison Gopnik** is a professor of psychology and affiliate professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. She received her BA from McGill University and her PhD from Oxford University. She is an internationally recognized leader in the study of children's learning and development and was one of the founders of the field of 'theory of mind', an originator of the 'theory theory' of children's development, and more recently introduced the idea that probabilistic models and Bayesian inference could be applied to children's learning.

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**For more information please contact:**

<http://events.arts.monash.edu/alisongopnik>

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**Free event but registration is required**

**DATE:** 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

**TIME:** 6.15PM - 7.45PM

**RECEPTION:** 7.45PM - 8.30PM

**VENUE:** STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA  
328 Swanston St, Melbourne VIC 3000

Organised by Professor Tim Bayne, Dept of Philosophy, Monash University.  
Sponsored by the *Australian Research Council*, *Monash Neuroscience of Consciousness*, and the *Consciousness Research Network* between the University of Melbourne and Monash University.