



Alison Gopnik

Topics

Education, Health and Wellness, Mind and Brain, Outside the Box, TED Talks

Travels From

California

Bio

Dr. Alison Gopnik is a professor of psychology and affiliate professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. 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. She received her BA from McGill University and her Ph.D. from Oxford University. She has held a Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences Fellowship, the Moore Distinguished Scholar fellowship at the California Institute of Technology, the All Souls College Distinguished Visiting Fellowship at Oxford, and King's College Distinguished Visiting Fellowship at Cambridge. She is an elected member of the Society of Experimental Psychologists and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a fellow of the Cognitive Science Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She has been continuously supported by the NSF and was PI on a 2.5 million dollar interdisciplinary collaborative

grant on causal learning from the McDonnell Foundation. Dr. 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*, and *The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Minds Tell Us About Love, Truth and the Meaning of Life*. Her latest book, *The Gardener and the Carpenter: What the New Science of Child Development Tells Us About the Relationship Between Parents and Children*, was released in August 2016. *The Philosophical Baby* and *The Gardener and the Carpenter* each won the Cognitive Development Society Best Book Prize in 2009 and 2016. She writes widely about cognitive science and psychology for *Science*, *The New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, *New Scientist*, and *Slate*, among others. Her TED talk on her work has been viewed more than 2.9 million times, and she has frequently appeared on TV and radio including *The Colbert Report*. Since 2013, she has written the Mind and Matter column for *The Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband Alvy Ray Smith, and has three children and three grandchildren. You can follow Dr. Allison Gopnik on [Twitter](#).

SPEECHES

The Scientist in the Crib: Why Children are the Best Learners in the Universe Alison argues that developmental psychology shows that children use the same learning techniques as the greatest scientists, and outlines in detail just what those learning methods are like.

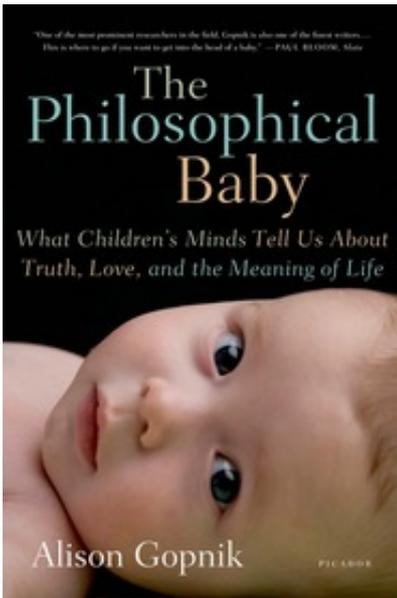
What it's Like to be a Baby Are babies more conscious than we are? Conventional wisdom suggests that babies are less conscious than we are if they are conscious at all. Alison argues on the contrary that recent neuroscientific discoveries suggest that babies are more aware of more of the world than we are.

Baby Love: What the Experience of Parenting Tells us about Morality, Identity and the Meaning of Life For most parents, having a baby is one of the most morally and spiritually profound, and unique, experiences of their lives. And yet philosophers and theologians have said very little about children. Alison outlines some of what caring for children tells us about the human condition.

The Science of Imagination and Imagination as Science Children spend many of their waking hours off in the crazy world of pretend play. What function does the wild imagination of childhood serve? Alison shows how the imagination of children's play underpins adult science, culture and technology.

BOOKS

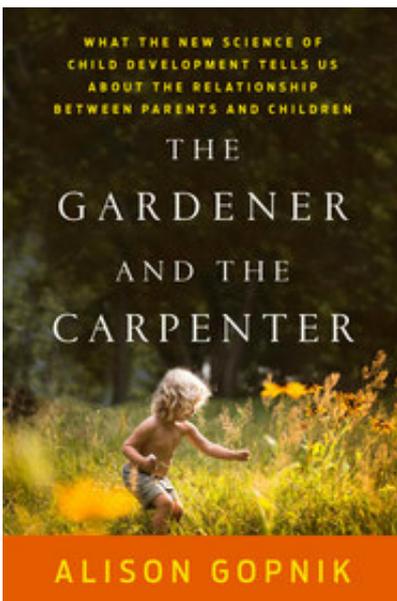
[The Philosophical Baby](#) What Children's Minds Tell Us About Truth, Love, and the Meaning of Life



Picador

In a lively and accessible tour of the groundbreaking new psychological, neuroscientific, and philosophical developments, Gopnik offers new insight into how babies see the world, and in turn promotes a deeper appreciation for the role of parents in shaping the lives of their children.

Trade Paperback



Hardcover

[The Gardener and the Carpenter](#) What the New Science of Child Development Tells Us About the Relationship Between Parents and Children

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Drawing on the study of human evolution and her own cutting-edge scientific research into how

children learn, Gopnik shows that although caring for children is profoundly important, it is not a matter of shaping them to turn out a particular way. Children are designed to be messy and unpredictable, playful and imaginative, and to be very different both from their parents and from each other. The variability and flexibility of childhood lets them innovate, create, and survive in an unpredictable world. “Parenting” won’t make children learn—but caring parents let children learn by creating a secure, loving environment.

REVIEWS: Praise for *The Gardener and the Carpenter* “What a relief to find a book that takes a stand against the practice of “helicopter parenting” so prevalent today . . . [The Gardener and the Carpenter] not only dispels the myth of a single best model for good parenting but also backs up its proposals with real-life examples and research studies . . . This book will provide helpful inspiration for parents and may prompt some to rethink their strategies.”

—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

Praise for *The Philosophical Baby*

“[Gopnik’s] account of what the science of recent decades has had to say about infants’ minds tells a fascinating story of how we become the grown-ups that we are.”

—*The New York Times*

“One of our best writers, Alison Gopnik reveals the inner workings of those minds that have been wrapped in mystery for all of human time: our children’s.”

—Daniel Levitin, author of *This Is Your Brain on Music*

“[A] fascinating and thought-provoking new book . . . For all the heavy subject matter, *The Philosophical Baby* is never ponderous. In fact, Gopnik explores the subject of how children think with a fresh, enthusiastic and wry voice . . . Fun and fascinating, *The Philosophical Baby* is a must-read for anyone who wants to better understand child development and what it means to be human.”

—Amy Scribner, *Bookpage*

“Gopnik is a fine writer, and her wit enlivens a subject that could easily veer into the overly abstract . . . She is also passionate about her subject. *The Philosophical Baby* isn’t simply a summary of recent research on young minds. Rather, Gopnik seeks to place early childhood in the context of 2,500 years of Western philosophy.”

—Mark Sloan, *San Francisco Chronicle*



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