

The nature of consciousness And yes, it IS different for children

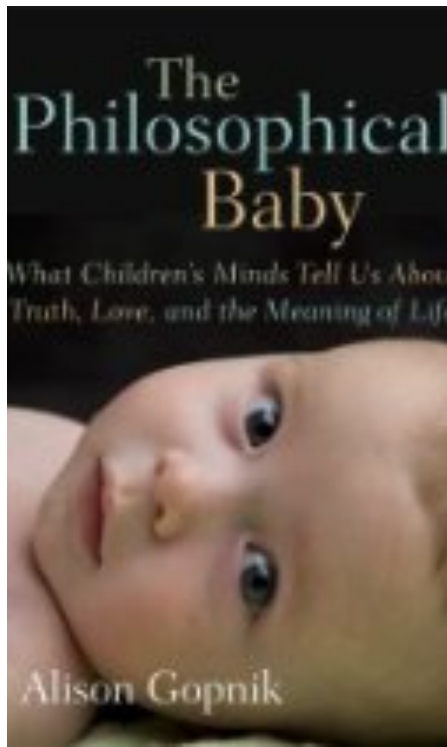
By Marie Hindle

I was lucky enough to attend this years Resources for Infant Educators (RIE) Conference in Los Angeles in April. The keynote speaker was Alison Gopnik, author of *The Philosophical Baby* and *The Scientist in the Crib*, and *How Babies Think: The Science of Childhood*.

Alison is a professor of psychology and affiliate professor of Philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. She is an internationally recognised leader in the study of children's learning and development.

In May 2012 Alison gave a series of three lectures at Auckland University and a lot of the team at TLC attended.

I have to say it was wonderful! One of my big 'take aways' from these lectures, was that children (well actually those under 26 years of age) have a different quality of consciousness ... in summary (and I hope that I get this right) she argues that there is an evolutionary imperative for our human young to learn as much as quickly as possible, and that to do this they pay attention to everything, particularly new, information rich events, rather



What's it like to be a baby? It's like being in love in Paris for the first time after you've had three double espressos."

Alison Gopnik

than just paying attention to what is immediately useful or relevant.

This has real implications for how they go about 'learning' and our (i.e. us adults over 26) expectations of their learning. At the RIE conference, in the question and answer section, Alison argued that the child directed learning approach of early childhood is more aligned to children's actual, natural way of learning, than the 'academic' adult directed 'teaching' model that most education systems around the world, and most parents, assume is the 'right way', or even 'the only way' for children to learn. Alison quipped that that narrow academic approach might be just about appropriate for university age learners, but maybe not even then!

There was some baffling (for me anyway) talk about brain functioning (I do remember that

the prefrontal cortex, referred to executive control, dominates the consciousness of adults, but not of children.

In fact, it is not just children who benefit from this awareness of the extra information available in the environment but it seems that adults who are creative or good problem solvers do as well.

"Creative people remain in contact with the extra information constantly streaming from the environment," confirmed Jordan Peterson at the University of Toronto.

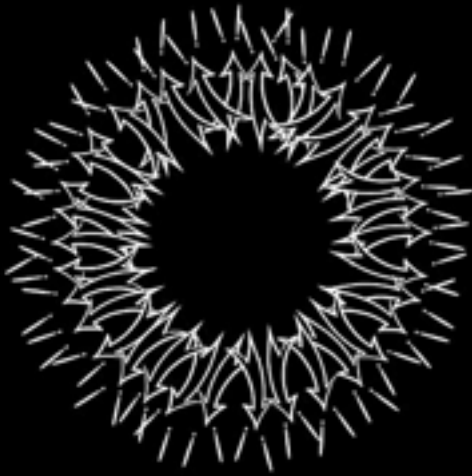
Shelly Carson, at Harvard University, believes high achievers are less likely to disregard seemingly irrelevant information. That allows them to be more open to novel ideas and strategies.

source: (Daydreaming is good - try not to think about it)

TLC recommends:

http://www.ted.com/talks/alison_gopnik_what_do_babies_think.html?quote=1106

The Infant Lantern



The Adult Spotlight



Consciousness narrows as a function of age.

As we know more, we see less.

- Alison Gopnik & Alvy Ray Smith

Source:

<http://alisongopnik.com/>

