

**CLaS / MACCS Talk****Professor Alison Gopnik**

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 the first to argue that children's minds could help us understand deep philosophical questions. She is the author of over 100 journal articles and several books including "Words, thoughts and theories" (coauthored with Andrew Meltzoff), MIT Press, 1997, and the bestselling and critically acclaimed popular books "The Scientist in the Crib" (coauthored with Andrew Meltzoff and Patricia Kuhl) William Morrow, 1999, and "The Philosophical Baby; What children's minds tell us about love, truth and the meaning of life" Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009. She has also written widely about cognitive science and psychology for Science, The Times Literary Supplement, The New York Review of Books, The New York Times, New Scientist and Slate, among others. And she has frequently appeared on TV and radio including "The Charlie Rose Show" and "The Colbert Report". She has three sons and lives in Berkeley, California with her husband Alvy Ray Smith.

**Date: 16th of Feb (Wed) 2011****Time : 11:00am to 12:30 pm****Venue: Bldg. X5B Room 012****Topic for Talk 2: Childhood dependence and adult intelligence: Children as the Research and Development Division.****Abstract:**

One of the most striking generalizations in evolutionary psychology is the correlation between sophisticated and flexible learning-based knowledge in adult organisms and a long protected period of immaturity in the young. In terms of the classic altricial vs. precocial, or r vs. k distinction in evolutionary biology, the altricial species are more likely to rely on learned information as adults. Human beings, of course, have a particularly extended childhood, and are particularly marked by their reliance on learning. This fact suggests that there may be a kind of cognitive division of labor between children and adults. Children are, as it were, the research and development division of the human species, while adults are production and marketing. Children are designed to be particularly good at learning and exploration and adults are designed to exploit the information they have learned as children for purposes of planning. I will review a wide range of developmental and neuroscientific evidence that supports this hypothesis, including some very recent studies in our lab that empirically show that children may be better causal learners than adults. In particular, I will discuss this idea in light of recent work on the computational bases of cognitive development using ideas about probabilistic models and Bayesian learning.