Prof. Rex Li's Writings

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Title:	Reading Notes on Alison Gopnik (2010): *The Philosophical Babies* - Chapter 5: Who am I? Memory, Self
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Summary/ Abstract:	These are reading notes on Gopnik's *The Philosophical Babies:* Chapter 5: Who am I? Memory, Self

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Reading Notes on Alison Gopnik (2010): *The Philosophical Babies*
Chapter 5: Who am I? Memory, Self

As before in previous chapters, Gopnik outlined research on consciousness and memory, then presented her research and views on children's consciousness and self. Her main points are:

(1) Children are growing and need to learn as fast as possible in formation of ideas pragmatic to life. She doesn't have much fixed long-term memory: it is slowly forming.

(2) She has episodic memory but sometimes difficult to recall.

(3) She is living, conscious of environment and takes in as much as possible (learning of languages, spatial map, causal map, etc.)

(4) She has internal lantern consciousness, free association and much awareness, introspection (insight meditation).

(5) She is constantly updating her worldwide view (paradigm shift every few months).

(6) Slowly forming a coherent narrative-forming selfhood.

p.133 Nice introduction on consciousness: consciousness, memory, stream, inner dialogue, reflection, planning, updating and monitoring, inner observer (CEO), self.

> Consciousness isn't just our awareness of the outside world. It is a distinctive internal experience. Our consciousness is as dominated by our memories and plans, by our obsessions and fantasies, as it is by our experience of the world outside us. We time travel—moving back and forth from vivid visions of the past to glowing (or glowering) anticipations of the future. And we hear a constant "inner speech" monologue—that voice that natters on inside our heads. Often, more waking moments seem spent in these internal reflections than in registering the world outside.

p.135 HM no memory and self.

p.136 Episode/ autobiography memory = consciousness DVD drive (R: as an observer seeing a scene——lots of processing of decentering)

"We can even create detailed autobiographical memories that are completely false".

R: many as constructed and constantly updated.

p.139 Children may need clues——they recall only when they are suggested.

Good clued memory, poor free recall.

p.140 Conscious experience = index (content)

When/ how you know (what the events are)

↑ ↑

Source of knowledge

p.141 Experiment on "source amnesia" of consciousness:

> Very young children also have special difficulty remembering where their beliefs come from. For instance, in my lab we showed children a little cabinet with nine different objects inside different drawers: an egg, a pencil, and so on. Sometimes we actually pulled out the drawer and showed the children the object. Sometimes we simply said, "There's a pencil in this drawer," without opening it, and sometimes we said, "Let's see if you can figure out what's in this drawer—look, here's a clue, it goes in this egg carton." Then we closed all the drawers, pointed to each one, and immediately asked two questions: "What's in here?" and "How do you know? Did you see it or did I tell you about it, or did you figure it out from a clue?"
>
> All the children could remember what was in each drawer, but the three-year-olds had a great deal of difficulty remembering how they knew—they often said they had seen the egg in the drawer when they had been told about it or vice versa. The five-year-olds, on the other hand, could tell you both about what they knew and about the particular experiences that led to that knowledge.

R: 3-year-old don't remember index (source of knowledge).

5-year-old remember index (source of knowledge).

p.142-3 Children susceptible to suggestibility.

p.143 (1) Jessica Giles' "false belief" experiment: "they had entirely forgotten their earlier false belief" (a candy box with candies).

(2) Cracker-eating experiment: Children similar to HM.

Trying to imagine what it is like to be a child in these experiments is as dislocating as trying to imagine what it is like to be H.M. You look at the tightly closed drawer and clearly hear me say there's an egg inside it, you are shocked to discover that there are pencils in the box, you are ravenous for the crackers. But literally minutes later you blithely, confidently, and sincerely remember that you saw the egg, believed that the box was full of pencils all along, and never wanted the crackers. It would seem that nothing could be more self-evident than our immediately past conscious experiences. And yet three-year-olds, who can remember specific events like moon watching for months, can't seem to recapture the experiences they had minutes before.

R: It shows children don't remember immediate past conscious experience but they can have long-term memory.

p.144 Gopnik's China thoughts at 6-year-old and 16-year-old.

p.146 Danny Povineli's sticker experiment.

R: 3-year-old recognizes but doesn't link to present self.

4-year-old recognizes and relates to present self.

(ie. self with continuation to present develops around age 4).

but the three-year-olds were unfazed. They could recognize their present selves in a mirror, but they couldn't integrate the present and the past. Although they remarked that there was a sticker on their head in the video, they didn't seem to put that information about their past self together with their current self. They didn't seem to realize that having a sticker put on them five minutes ago meant that right now the sticker was still sitting on their forehead.

Tellingly, the three-year-olds also referred to the child on tape by using their own names, while the fours said that the child on the tape was "me." At three Johnny would say, "Look, Johnny has a sticker on his head," and make no attempt to touch his own head. At four he would say, "Look, I have a sticker on my head," and immediately reach to take it off. The younger children knew that the kid on the tape was them at an earlier time, but they

p.147 Summary of children's memory/ self:

- No coherent timeline
- Less indexing
- No memory of attitude
- No preference for direct experience
- No "inner autobiographer"
- No "me"
- Less free recall
- Need clues

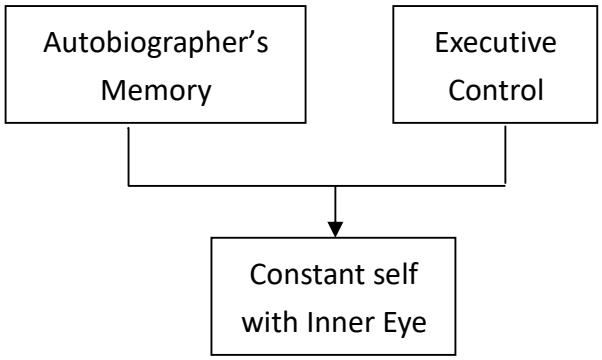
episodic memory but not autobiographical memory. Although they are very good at remembering specific events in the past, they don't put these events into a single coherent timeline, don't remember how they know about the events, and don't remember their past attitudes toward events. They also don't privilege events that they have directly experienced over events they have learned about in other ways. And they don't have a single "inner autobiographer," a self who links their past and present mental states. They don't experience the "me" who used to think that there were pencils in the box, or who wanted the crackers before receiving the snack, or who had the sticker put on his head.

Christine Atance's experienment: Sunglass vs. Thick Coat.

3-year-old: not much future sense

4-year-old: choose and plan

p.150 According to Gopnik, inner consciousness is:



p.151 4-year-old version on thinking

thing. One four-year-old summarized it this way: "Every time you think for a little while, something goes on and something goes off. Sometimes something goes on for a couple of minutes and then for a few minutes there is nothing going on." This is very different

p.153 Gopnik argued that 3-year-olds "don't seem to have the experience of the inner observer, the autobiographer, the executive in the way that adults do."

Summary of children's consciousness with "some" self:

So what is it like to be this way? I think that young children's consciousness includes all the elements of adult consciousness. There are images of past events, visions of intended goals, counterfactuals like the bizarre fantasies of pretend play, even abstract thoughts. Children can recognize the difference between these types of mental events, between present perceptions and past memories, current fantasies and future goals. But for three-year-olds

these events aren't organized into a single timeline, with memories in the past and intentions in the future (and fictions and fantasies off to one side). And children may not have the experience of a single inner executive. Instead, the memories, images, and thoughts pop in and out of consciousness as they are cued by present events, or by other memories, images, and thoughts.

Just as attention in children is more like a lantern, their inner consciousness may be more like wandering than voyaging—a journey of exploration rather than conquest. They paddle in the pond of consciousness instead of coursing down that rushing stream.

p.154 Summary of adut self——spotlight and path:

If for adults external consciousness is like a spotlight, internal consciousness is like a path. It is my own particular path, the track that I make as I move through the world. I can look back at it and see where I've been and look forward to peer, however dimly, toward my destination. The path pulls us forward and gives our lives their peculiar momentum. This path can, of course, easily become a rut, a narrow track that we endlessly and obsessively traverse.

p.155 Free Association

R: Children won't have much content for free association, the rich sea of unconsciousness by turning off autobiographic memory and control (inner monlogue).

apparent rhyme or reason. But it also becomes surprisingly rich; we may be startled to see how rare and strange the contents of our minds can be. The image of a convoluted purple flower morphs into a childhood memory of hiding under the table, which transforms into a sudden sensation of formless anxiety. Just as turning off the attentional spotlight can make us realize the variety and richness of our external perceptions, turning off executive

control can make us realize the surprising variety of our internal experience. We can let our minds wander, as we say, and see where they go.

R: Gopnik bridging subject consciousness with science.

p.156 Age 6: Children becoming more like little adults.

By the time they are six or so children seem to have developed the basics of autobiographical memory, executive control, and the inner observer. They have a roughly adult understanding of conscious-

p.157 Jerry Fodor's inner voice.

R: languages/ concept as double-edge sword; it helps you see/ feel more but your felt sense (consciousness) without languages diminishes (something of value there?)

p.159 Baby innovation/ creativity lies in the sea of consciousness for free association!

way to encourage new ideas. Babies are all about innovation and creativity. These experiences may be the phenomenological markers of an underlying thought process that puts together ideas and information in new ways, just as vivid attention seems to be a phenomenological marker of learning and plasticity.

Delayed gratification → better self control → more mature and competent/ less impulsive → higher SAT (Michael Chandler).

p.160-3 Reviewing consciousness and children:

These contradictions have led some philosophers, notably Daniel Dennett, to argue that consciousness doesn't really exist at all. That's a pretty extreme view. But Dennett holds down one end of a continuum. This continuum runs from "anticonsciousness" philosophers such as Dennett or Paul and Patricia Churchland to "proconsciousness" philosophers such as John Searle and David Chalmers. The first camp emphasizes the changeable and contradictory nature of conscious experience. The second camp emphasizes the special first-person certainty of consciousness. For

Looking at children doesn't explain away consciousness but it does weigh in on Dennett's side of the argument. Thinking about

dren tells us that consciousness is not a single unitary phenomenon with special features. Our vivid awareness of the external world may be different from our sense of an executive "I," which may be different from the capacity to fantasize or to recapture past events. Children are conscious but their consciousness seems very different from ours.

perience. When we change the way we think, we also change the way thinking feels to us. When what we know changes, our experience changes too. Consciousness isn't a transparent and lucid Cartesian stream. Instead it's a turbulent, muddy mess. Philosophers may have to resign themselves to just playing in the mud for a while yet. At least children can tell us it might be fun.

R: A good summary of the history: Hume, Descartes, Wundt, James, Dennett, Churchlard, Searle, Chalmers. It apperas Dennett and Churchlard are winning.

R: Lanugages may create consciousness and impede "mindful" thoughts/ feelings.