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# Book Reviews

***Introduction to Prenatal Psychology*** by Stephen M. Maret, Ph.D. 2009. New Providence, New Jersey: Church Gate Books. 194 pages. (No ISBN)

I was first introduced to Dr. Maret when he presented his comprehensive and critical review of Frank Lake's work, which was the capstone effort of his doctoral studies. Since then I have followed his professional activities and subsequent presentations. But it was not until I asked him for a copy of his CV, to qualify him to serve as an external reviewer for a student's dissertation, that I saw this book listed on it. As I teach an introductory course in prenatal and perinatal psychology at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, I ordered a copy immediately.

Dr. Maret's book is an overview of all-things-prenatal that begins with a history of thought starting with the classic Greek philosophy on embryos, and yes, the effects of the mother's personality and experience on the developing child. I was convinced after reading the first chapter that the ancient Greeks did begin the discussion of this field from several centuries BCE along with the Romans, and Eastern traditions of embryology and the lifelong effects from that period, that Dr. Maret's book also includes.

Looking broadly, the book has a strong foundation of biology, which is somewhat overlooked in our discipline's focus on psychology I think, yet it is the basis of life and the originating point for other human capabilities, such as, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and neurological. Though steeped in biology, the psychological piece is always woven through the chapters, including the reproductive and fetal development processes that are included. This strategy culminates with the final chapter, *Fetal Psychological Development*, which caps this effort with a step-by-step look at fetal movement, the developing senses (tactile, vestibular, gustatory, olfactory, auditory, visual) as well as learning and memory, emotions, and the womb environment. There is also a chapter on Frank Lake's work, that Dr. Maret is so familiar with, that is a welcome addition as this information also isn't typically

as available or well known to American audiences.

The mother's development over her pregnancy period, preconception then month by month including the teratogens is included as well, and parallels the chapters on fetal development. In short, this book skillfully takes developmental psychology one step earlier, while at the same time addresses psychological life from the beginning. Kudos to technology, especially 3D and 4D sonography, that has made the womb, and thus prenatal behavior in utero, observable to make such a book possible.

The attractive book has as its cover Leonardo da Vinci's most famous anatomical drawing "Embryo in the Womb". The text was written, as Dr. Maret mentioned to me, for undergraduates (also good for graduate students). Thus, the material is in a scholarly, yet readable format, and well referenced. For anyone interested in having on their shelf the latest in the biological and psychological foundations of prenatal psychology, this book offers just that.

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**The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Mind Tell Us About Truth, Love, and the Meaning of Life** by Alison Gopnik. 2009. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (www.fsgbooks.com). 288 pp. ISBN-13:978-0-374-23196-5.

What is it like to be inside the brain of a baby or toddler? How is their interaction with the world different from the consciousness of an adult? These are the questions that cognitive scientists like Alison Gopnik ponder and research to discover the answers.

The main premise of this book is that according to evolutionary psychology the main purpose for the period of time from birth to age five is an intense period of learning and change. Gopnik argues that our genes do not tell the whole picture of the human being we are to become. By studying babies and young children, she has come to appreciate this human ability to change through interacting with our environment, especially other people in our environment. During the early years, our brain can engage in continuous experimentation and great creativity. As neuroscience has shown, the baby's brain has more neural pathways than an adult brain and through experience pruning of unused or little used pathways will occur. In this way, babies' can adapt to the particular cultural milieu into which they are born.

As a cognitive psychologist, Gopnik applies what has been learned