



# Cognitive Science Program Psychology Department Philosophy Department

## **Explanation: The Good, The Bad and The Beautiful**

**Tania Lombrozo**

*Department of Psychology  
Princeton University*

Like scientists, children and adults are often motivated to explain the world around them, including why people behave in particular ways, why objects have some properties rather than others, and why events unfold as they do. Moreover, people have strong and systematic intuitions about what makes something a good (or beautiful) explanation. Why are we so driven to explain? And what accounts for our explanatory preferences? In this talk I'll present evidence that both children and adults prefer explanations that are simple and have broad scope, consistent with many accounts of explanation from philosophy of science. The good news is that a preference for simple and broad explanations can sometimes improve learning and support effective inferences. The bad news is that under some conditions, these preferences can systematically lead children and adults astray.

Tania Lombrozo received her PhD in Psychology from Harvard University in 2006. Her research focuses on topics at the intersection of psychology and philosophy, including how people learn by explaining the world around them. She is currently a professor at Princeton University.

**Thursday, September 27, 2018 | 4:10 p.m. | STEPS 280**

Follow us on

