

# ...with Dame Glynis Breakwell

Professor of Psychology and Vice Chancellor at the University of Bath

## One inspiration

Serge Moscovici, who proposed the theory of social representations, a great theorist and an innovative experimentalist. He has a way of encouraging people to think beyond the given wisdoms. He does not believe academics should only be active in academe.

## One early memory of *The Psychologist*

A fabulous series of Myers Lectures were published in the early issues that illustrated beautifully that psychology could be applied to effect in policy-building in any number of areas.

## One treasured possession

A battered old copy of William McDougall's 1908 *Social Psychology*. I picked it up in an Oxford second-hand bookshop on a wet Friday. Much annotated, it has been owned by many people, and part of its charm is the insight these margin scribbles give about the way social

psychology has been seen over more than a century.

## One misunderstood aspect of the Vice-Chancellor role

People think that you have to stop being an active researcher when you become a Vice-Chancellor. You do not. If you continue, it just means you have to cope on less sleep.

## One book that you think all psychologists should read

*The Interpretation of Dreams* by Freud. It was the first psychology book I read, having borrowed it from the library at the age of 15. By the end of it I was convinced dreams were the 'royal road to the unconscious' and that psychology was for me.

## One moment that changed the course of your career

Giving up a tenured lectureship to take a Prize Fellowship at Nuffield College, Oxford. There I found myself surrounded by great contemporary social scientists like Sen, Goldthorpe

and Halsey and my eyes were opened to the diversity outside of psychology in theoretical preoccupations and in methodological preferences.

## One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Learn how to use statistical techniques and how to interpret statistics.

## One challenge psychology faces

The big challenge is to accumulate findings in a systematic fashion across researchers so that we can evolve theory that is coherent. Psychology has been too subject to fads and fashions and ghettos of activity.

## One alternative career path

I might have chosen to be an artist – a painter. It has always intrigued me how I cannot write and paint in the same period of time. It is as if there is a specific quantum of creative energy, and if I use it

in one way I cannot use it in another. Yet I still paint.

## One cultural recommendation

The film *The Illusionist*. I like films that keep me guessing right to the end.

## One psychological superpower

Super-memory. I'd like to be able to remember everything at will. Note I do not want – Midas-like – to be unable to turn it off when I need to.

## One final thought

As they say in *Game of Thrones*, 'winter is coming'.



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Psychologists will have a hard time getting financial support for their research over the next few years. One survival strategy will be to work in multidisciplinary teams. But psychologists do need to get themselves into positions of greater influence so that they can shape funding policy.

More online at [www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk)

### resource

Breakwell, G.M. (2007). *The psychology of risk*. Cambridge University Press.

'It summarised much of the research that I had done on risk over 20 years. There is a second edition due out in 2013!'

### coming soon

Articles on the paradoxical brain, theories of love, dyslexia, sex, and much more...

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