

...with Paul Broks

Senior Clinical Lecturer at the University of Plymouth

One person who inspired you

Perhaps the negative inspiration of the grammar school physics teacher who threw me out of the class – bodily – for innocently asking whether thoughts consumed calories. Those were the days.

One moment that changed the course of your career

Opening a copy of *New Scientist* a few years ago and seeing an advertisement about the Wellcome Prize for science writing. I was commuting, forlornly, between Sheffield and Birmingham at the time and my first thought was utterly practical – if I won the £25K prize it could buy me out of the day job for a while. I was a runner-up, but one member of the judging panel, a distinguished publisher, came straight out with the offer of a book contract. Writing has since become a parallel career. I'm working on film, theatre and book projects, and I have a regular column for *The Times*.

One book that you think all psychologists should read

Julian Jaynes's 1976 cult classic *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, which makes the startling claim that subjective consciousness (in the sense of internalised mind space) arose a mere 3000 years ago through the development of metaphorical language, process itself driven by increasing social and cultural complexity. Some of the historical and classical scholarship may be dubious and the neuropsychology is sketchy, but the book is a wonderful imaginative achievement, a pioneering attempt to fuse ancient history, psychology and neuroscience.

One cultural recommendation

Learn to love jazz.

One thing that you would change about psychology

I've always felt that clinical psychology trainers should

take neuropsychology more seriously. Brain function is a crucial dimension of clinical formulation across a number of specialties, yet many clinical psychologists are ignorant of even the basics of neuropsychological theory and practice.

One proud moment

Serving, fleetingly, as Les Paul's roadie (see picture). The 93-year-old musician and inventor of the solid body electric guitar still performs regularly at the Iridium Jazz Club on Broadway. I interviewed him backstage for a film I've just made about another jazz guitar legend, Pat Martino. The interview over-ran, with the house manager rapidly turning homicidal. When Les finally ambled off towards the stage I realised he'd left his guitar behind.

One challenge for psychology

We know quite a bit about specific domains of brain function, but we've scarcely begun to figure out how these processes converge to create a unified sense of self.

One regret

Not taking up writing sooner.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Don't define yourself by your career. Picture yourself on your deathbed wondering did

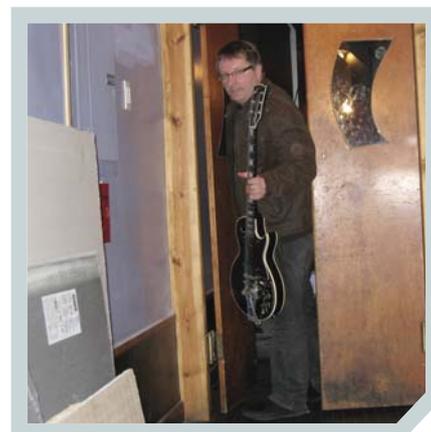
I spend enough time in the lab/clinic/committee room? I've worked with some brilliant scientists and clinicians over the years and some rather dull ones. The former usually have an emotional and intellectual hinterland – a life beyond professional psychology.

One alternative career path you might have chosen

Professional football.

One hero from psychology

I'll choose a philosopher rather than a psychologist. David Hume, leading light of the Scottish Enlightenment, is a major figure in the history of psychology but his ideas



Paul Broks
P.Broks@plymouth.ac.uk

may yet come to influence our thinking about the relation between brain and mind in the century ahead. The kernel of the problem of consciousness is, I believe, contained within his famous maxim: An object may exist, and yet be nowhere.

More online at
www.thepsychologist.org.uk

resource

Broks, P. (2004). *Into the silent land: Travels in neuropsychology*. London: Atlantic Books.

'My first attempt to explore the fragilities of mind and selfhood through stories rather than science.'

coming soon

An 'opinion special' takes us beyond cognitive therapy; we look at 26 ways to improve psychological science; bootstrapping; and much more...

Send your comments about *The Psychologist* to the editor, Dr Jon Sutton, on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk, +44 116 252 9573 or to the Leicester office address

To advertise in *The Psychologist*: psyadvert@bps.org.uk, +44 116 252 9552

For jobs in the Appointments section: psychapp@bps.org.uk, +44 116 252 9550

contribute

Think you can do better? Want to see your area of psychology represented more?

See the inside front cover for how you can contribute and reach 45,000 colleagues into the bargain, or just e-mail your suggestions to jon.sutton@bps.org.uk