

Je ne regrette rien...

Under the entry 'undergraduate', *Roget's Thesaurus* (1985) offers 'student' and 'immature', while the entry for 'psychology' offers 'insanity', 'affections' and 'psychics'. Perhaps if I had consulted my *Thesaurus* before applying for entry to a BSc psychology degree course, I might have opted for business studies instead. In fact, I can well remember my A-level psychology tutor making a peculiar choking noise when I told him I had been accepted as a psychology undergraduate, before he grinned sheepishly and informed me I would be 'tainted for life'.

As an ancient contender ('mature student' being a contradiction in terms, according to Roget) I can recall looking around the lecture theatre during induction week and being struck with the horror of realising I was old enough to be the mother of 100+ aspiring psychologists. When I confided these misgivings to my personal tutor, however, he assured me that my years of extra experience meant I would 'get more out of it'. Get more out of what, I could have been justified in asking – affections, psychics, insanity? Psychically, I just couldn't see it. Retrospectively, I can confirm the latter. Quantitatively speaking for the former, however, as far as psychology goes, I would have to admit a downward trend.

In fact, within the phrase 'quantitatively speaking' lies one cause of my current ambivalence towards psychology. The other day, in reply to the innocent question, 'How are you?' I found myself saying, 'Oh, about 6.75 out of 10.' This strange effect does not seem to apply to probability, however. I have noticed that the mere word 'probability' results only in a derisive snort on my part – no doubt born from my being totally unable to work up any enthusiasm whatsoever for probabilities of any kind – realistic possibilities being much more in my line.

This links to another cause of ambivalence. Correlationally speaking, the whole world has opened up. I lie awake at night wondering if there is any correlation between studying correlations and lying awake at night. I sit in the bath, toying with the possibility that the number of hours spent in a bath correlates with an inherent soap fetish. I slump in lecture theatres, convinced that there is a positive correlation between the desire to be a psychology undergraduate and masochism.

The compulsion to analyse also seems to be ingrained. I believe I have become one of the many who now suffer from 'compulsive reactive analytic psychology' disorder. While this might be an advantage in an academic environment, the benefits of hypothesising why some people appear to derive actual pleasure from watching *Gladiators*, or why other people are positively driven to iron their underwear, can be a little tedious.

So, have I ever regretted going into psychology? One regret is that I wasn't psychic enough 20 years ago to realise I would harbour an insane affection for psychology in my (alleged) post-immature years. However, if I had known about statistical analysis, I could be deep into business studies at this very moment – but that's insane...

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