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| <p><b>Institution:</b> University of Southampton</p> <p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32 Philosophy</p> <p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The chief route to impact that we have concentrated upon is public engagement, through activities aimed at audiences comprising a) sixth form students and their teachers and b) the general public, including participants in the many events that we have organized and audiences and readers of broadcast and print media. By these means, we have shared our research with well over two million people in the period under review.</p> <p>Any of our areas of research could, in principle, underpin such public engagement activities; but, in the present period, we have focussed the majority of our activities on two themes: aesthetics and its modern history; and Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the value of existence.</p> <p>By bringing our research on these themes to a wider public, we seek to awaken and/or reinforce interest in them in ways that prompt our interlocutors to new patterns of reflection on their own thoughts and experiences; that stimulate public debate with respect to those themes; and that, by way of those <i>desiderata</i>, enrich the culture within which our public engagement activities take place.</p> <p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Southampton philosophers have a long and proud record of public engagement. To share our work with a wider audience has always seemed to us to be worthwhile for its own sake, and we have acted on this conviction for many years. The approach set out here therefore represents, at least in part, the formalization of a pattern of activity that has been in place for several decades, albeit under a different description.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relationships.</i> Three different sorts of relationships have been key for us in the period. The first, although still developing, is of long standing. Generations of Philosophy Outreach Officers have forged and fostered links with A-level philosophy teachers throughout the south of England as part of our increasingly energetic outreach/recruitment programme. These links have allowed us many opportunities to discuss our research with 6<sup>th</sup> form students and their teachers, at events including conferences designed for the former and workshops designed for the latter.</li> </ul> <p>The second kind of relationship, which is of more recent vintage, is with the University's Lifelong Learning team. In collaboration with them, we have so far run two 'Cultural Days', one devoted to 'Nietzsche' (May 2012), the other to 'The Decline of Beauty' (April 2013) – events at which a series of short, thematically interrelated talks on topics emerging from our research provide the foundation for extended dialogue with a public of non-philosophers, numbering, on average, 65. Podcasts of these events have also been made available. Further Cultural Days are planned for 2014 and 2015.</p> <p>The third kind of relationship is also of more recent vintage. We have contacted and worked closely with the outreach/education officers of the two principal local art galleries – the John Hansard Gallery and Southampton City Art Gallery – and with the Lead Learning Projects Officer of Southampton City Council Arts and Heritage Department in order to identify further opportunities to bring our research to a public of non-philosophers in stimulating and non-academic environments.</p> <p>These latter relationships have quickly acquired momentum. The first of our series of monthly 'Philosophy Cafés', held at the John Hansard Gallery, began in April 2010, and has become an increasingly popular fixture in the local calendar, regularly attracting attendances of 30-40. (Podcasts are also made available.) Similarly, the success of our first series of public discussion sessions, 'Can Art Save Your Life?', held at the City Art Gallery in 2011, led to further series in 2012, 'Beauty and Tragedy: Art and the Great Philosophers', and in 2013, 'Philosophical Questions', each session routinely attracting attendances of over 60. As a direct upshot of these events, moreover, we have more recently formed a relationship with the Romsey University of the Third Age (U3A) Philosophy Group, several of whose members are regular participants in our City Gallery discussions, and who now, as a result of those sessions,</p> |
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have begun to invite us to come and discuss our research with them at greater length – in a different sort of environment again.

- *Follow-through.* Evidence of impact from our various activities has been solicited and collated in the form of written testimonials and completed questionnaires; while other forms of evidence – arising, e.g., from media appearances – are drawn from, for example, discussion websites linked to particular radio programmes.
- *Agility.* Perhaps the best evidence of our responsiveness to potentially impactful opportunities is already contained in the discussion of ‘relationships’, above. The success of our Philosophy Café series prompted us to recognize that the City Art Gallery presented a very promising opportunity to develop our public engagement activities in a different way. And the reception of our City Gallery series led directly to the opportunity to build closer links with the Romsey U3A Philosophy Group, of a sort that will, we believe, continue to provide a route to impact into the future.

Other relevant evidence relates to media appearances of various kinds, which often acquire their own momentum, as one appearance leads to further invitations to participate in related projects. Such invitations are always accepted, at however short notice, with covering-arrangements put in place as necessary. And, where possible, podcasts of and/or links to these and other of our presentations are made available through our website. Eight such opportunities have been of direct relevance to our case studies for REF 2014: three invitations to record ‘Philosophy Bites’ (podcasts of philosophers discussing their research for the benefit of a lay audience); four invitations to appear on radio programmes (including BBC and independent stations); and an invitation to contribute an article on an aspect of our research to the *Times Literary Supplement*.

- *Support and recognition.* The chief form of support for colleagues engaged in impact-related activities consists in Departmental sharing of good practice. Different audiences can be drawn into dialogue in different ways, and a standing agenda item at our monthly Board meetings allows colleagues to share their increasingly wide experience of fostering genuine engagement with publics of a variety of kinds. The contribution of colleagues engaged in impact-related activities is now recognized in our internal workload tariff; and it is explicitly noted at University-level in our probation, appraisal and promotions procedures.

The University has a variety of other procedures and structures in place designed to enable its research to have impact. In the present period, our most fruitful contacts have been with the University’s Lifelong Learning and Marketing teams, the former of whom, as noted above, assisted in the organization of our ‘Cultural Days’, while both played an important role in collating our evidence of impact. We expect to develop these and other relationships within the institution in the years to come.

### c. Strategy and plans

The approach described in section b has been successful. It has given impact to our research of a kind that it would not otherwise have had, and we anticipate that public engagement activities will continue to be significant to us in this context. Given which, it is of clear strategic importance to:

- Build public engagement activities into our research as a matter of course and from the outset, rather than adding them later as bolt-ons or after-thoughts. (For example, a 2015 ‘Cultural Day’ has already been built into our new AHRC project, ‘Normativity: Epistemic and Practical’, 2014-2016.) This will be facilitated by building upon and extending the range of relationships such as those described in section b, above.
- Identify, at an early stage, research projects whose public engagement dimension has the potential to lead not only to impact, but to impact of particular reach and/or significance. This will allow us pro-actively to tailor the programmes of public engagement integral to those projects in such a way as to maximize that potential, while at the same time allowing us to peg those programmes more perspicuously to the key research insights for which impact will be claimed.

Our research also has more specific potential for impact, however; and we are developing

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strategies to realize it. For example, some of our ongoing work in normative ethics has direct public policy implications, and we are keen that these should be made explicit in contexts and fora capable of leading to real practical effect. We are therefore seeking to:

- Create new relationships with partners closer to the front line of public policy formation. As a first step in this direction, we have set up the Southampton Ethics Centre, including colleagues from Law, Medicine and Business, with a view to exploiting synergies between their research and ours in ways that will make our work more visible to policy makers. Several collaborative bids for research funding, for projects with the potential to have substantial impact, are also under design, and we anticipate that the Centre will play an increasingly important role in this dimension of our activities in the years to come.

Equally, our experience of public engagement indicates that some of our ongoing work in aesthetics may be of genuine practical significance to creative artists, a significance probably better realized through activities designed in consultation with the practitioners themselves than through general-purpose public discussion events. We are therefore seeking to:

- Develop new links and partnerships with groups of practicing artists, with a view to designing research-informed programmes of activity whose results – impacts – will include not only original works of art, but reflections on these by their creators and the responses to them of gallery-goers. By these means, we believe, a more exciting and multi-layered form of cultural enrichment should be achievable than through public engagement *simpliciter*.

The strategies and plans detailed here have grown out of reflection upon the approach set out in section b, and we will develop them further. The headline news, though, is that while we intend to continue to share our research with the public in general – this strikes us as good in itself – we also intend to maximize the impact of our work by targeting specific constituencies, such as those mentioned above.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

*Case Study 1.* This focusses primarily, although not exclusively, on face-to-face forms of public engagement. Its constituent activities include 6<sup>th</sup> form conferences, a 'Cultural Day', 'Philosophy Cafés' at the John Hansard Gallery, two series of talks at the Southampton City Art Gallery, and discussion with the Romsey U3A Philosophy Group. The case study thus exemplifies our creative relationships with the partners mentioned in section b.

*Case Study 2.* This focusses primarily, although not exclusively, on public engagement by way of broadcast and print media. Its constituent activities include contributions to 'In Our Time' (Radio 4), 'Honest Doubt' (Radio 4), 'Representing Arthur Schopenhauer' (Resonance FM), 'Wagner and Philosophy' (Radio 3) and the *Times Literary Supplement*. The case study also exemplifies the 'follow-through' and 'agility' mentioned in section b.

Both programmes of public engagement informed the approach set out in section b, most particularly with respect to key relationships and to methods of evidence-gathering. They have also informed the development of the strategy described in section c, principally in indicating ways in which our research and its routes to impact might be more closely integrated and in encouraging us to reflect upon the beneficiaries whom we might most fruitfully attempt to reach.