

<b>Institution: University of East Anglia</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy</b>
<b>Title of case study: Putting Research on Presocratic Philosophy to Work.</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research on Presocratic philosophy by Catherine Rowett (formerly Osborne) has had impact on the wider public, both at home and abroad, in two key areas: (a) it has helped to satisfy the intellectual and cultural curiosity of people in the UK and beyond; and (b) it has extended public understanding of the potential risks and rewards of stock-market investments. Impact (a) is achieved (i) via public engagement, including publication and distribution of a book for the popular market, both in English and in translation, and via public lectures and talks, and (ii) by inspiring others to use the results in for example, radio broadcasting. Impact (b) is achieved by way of a guidebook for those new to investment in stocks and shares, underpinned by (among other things) Rowett's work on Presocratic Philosophy.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><i>For RR references see Section 3 (Research References); For IS references see Section 5 (Impact Sources).</i></p> <p>The author (Catherine Rowett) is described as "Osborne" for works published under that name.</p> <p>Rowett is internationally renowned for her research on Presocratic philosophy, to which she has devoted much of her academic career both before and after her arrival at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in 2003. To date she has twelve research publications on the Presocratics. About half of them, including many recent publications, expose the importance of these thinkers in the Western intellectual heritage, including Christianity, Neoplatonism, Cambridge Platonism, 17<sup>th</sup> Century European philosophy and 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> Century history of ideas. The significance of Presocratic thought to all periods of Western thought, including our own, is the most exciting finding here: for in every generation we repeatedly repossess the earliest ideas in recorded western thought, and make them our own. This has ramifications for understanding the philosophical motivations of many later texts, including major works in the canon of great classics of Western civilization.</p> <p>In 'Was there an Eleatic Revolution?' (RR2) Osborne traced the origins of the current Anglo-American habit of treating Parmenides as a turning point in Presocratic philosophy, and regarding Heraclitus as earlier, less inspired, even muddled. By contrast, in the continental tradition, Heraclitus is celebrated as the most inspirational thinker - post-Parmenides and in conversation with him. RR2 was written for the AHRC project 'Rethinking Revolutions'. It underpins Osborne's popular <i>Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford University Press 2004) (IS1) which was commissioned by the Open University Press in 2003 on the basis of Osborne's existing reputation for high quality research in this field. IS1 is the medium by which the above research is achieving impact: for instance IS1 was among the works read by Raymond Tallis, which inspired him to focus a BBC Radio 3 Nightwaves programme (IS6) on that very question, "Is Parmenides the turning point?"; and it was IS1 that inspired Alexander Davidson (IS7, IS8).</p> <p>Alexander Davidson (IS7) was particularly influenced by Osborne's assessment of the Sophists as "spin doctors" and sellers of education as a commodity. This line of argument is developed not only in her Presocratics research but also in some of Rowett's recent work on Plato, particularly her analysis the philosophical views of the character Protagoras in Plato's <i>Protagoras</i> and <i>Theaetetus</i> (RR6). Some of the research that went into these publications was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the AHRB/AHRC.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>This is an ongoing programme of research. Selected references from the last ten years (since appointment at UEA):</p> <p>RR1. Catherine Osborne 'Sin and moral responsibility in Empedocles's cosmic cycle', in <i>The Empedoclean Κόσμος": Structure, Process and the Question of Cyclicity</i>, edited by Apostolos L. Pierris, Institute for Philosophical Research Patras, Patras 2005, pp. 283-308 (ISBN 960-</p>

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- RR2. Catherine Osborne 'Was there an Eleatic Revolution in philosophy?', in R. Osborne and S. Goldhill (edd). *Rethinking Revolutions*, Cambridge University Press 2006, pp. 218-45 [ISBN-13: 978-052186212 7; ISBN-10: 052186212 4]
- RR3. Philoponus *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics Book 1 (Volume 1, chapters 1-3, Volume 2, chapters 4-9)* two volumes, translated with introduction and notes by Catherine Osborne. Duckworth, 2006 and 2009. [ISBN 0 7156 3409 7]
- RR4. Catherine Osborne "If all things were to turn to smoke, it'd be the nostrils would tell them apart." in *Nuevos Ensayos Sobre Heráclito: Actas Del Segundo Symposium Heracliteum* edited by Enrique Hülsz Piccone Proceedings Mexico, UNAM 2009, pp. 415-41 (published in 2010).
- RR5. Catherine Osborne 'Ralph Cudworth: *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*' in Oliver Primavesi and Katharina Luchner (ed) *The Presocratics from the Latin Middle Ages to Hermann Diels*, Steiner Verlag, 2011, pp. 215-235.
- RR6. Catherine Rowett 'Relativism in Plato's *Protagoras*' in *Politeia*, ed Verity Harte and Melissa Lane, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 191-211.

#### Evidence for the quality of the research:

Research grants funding this research include: Rowett's Leverhulme Research Fellowship 2007-9 (£25k), "Plato on Knowledge and Truth"; Rowett's AHRB Research Leave 2004 (£13.5k), "Ancient Philosophers and Animals". An AHRC project *Rethinking Revolutions* (Cambridge University) which funded the conference for which RR2 was written; Oliver Primavesi, Leibniz-Preis der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft which funded the conference *The Presocratics from the Latin Middle Ages to Hermann Diels* for which RR5 was written.

RR2 is in a collection peer-reviewed by a distinguished University Press. The two volumes listed as RR3 were commissioned as part of "The most extraordinary feat of British Scholarship, ever" (*Business Insider*, December 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com/richard-sorabjis-great-achievement-2012-12>), namely Sorabji's series of translations of the Ancient Commentators, funded by repeated AHRC and British Academy Grants. RR4 was an invited paper for an international conference funded by Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. RR5 was an invited paper for an international meeting of the Symposium Praesocraticum and is published by an eminent German Press. RR6 is a peer-reviewed paper in a volume published by a distinguished University Press.

#### 4. Details of the impact

As Rowett has shown, Presocratic philosophy continually inspires new ideas in its readers in every period of Western thought. This is no less true now, as is evident in the recent thought-provoking effect of her work on a variety of readerships beyond the academy, in the UK and abroad. It should be noted that making people think is itself the impact - not so much the content of what they think, since the point is not just to inform readers about the philosophy of the past, but to provoke them to engage in thinking afresh, about the questions that past philosophers raise. The impact on intellectual life is found in the very fact of people becoming interested in what the Presocratics said, and in their being caused to reflect on how those sayings apply to their own life experiences.

Rowett's work in this field has generated two kinds of impact:

(a) *Benefits to cultural and intellectual life in the UK and abroad, particularly making people think about philosophical ideas.*

Osborne's *Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (IS1) has been widely distributed, and succeeds in transmitting the questions and puzzles opened for discussion in the above research (particularly RR2) to audiences outside academia. This generates awareness of the riches of the early history of western thought and of its relevance to the reader's own concerns. Readers include both the interested layman, and some of the people whom the REF calls "users" of philosophical research, evidenced (in this case) by Raymond Tallis (IS5), who then provides further routes to cultural and intellectual impact, particularly in his work for BBC Radio (IS5, IS6). In addition, public engagement achieves local impact in the UK: note particularly Rowett's 2012 Public Lecture in the

UEA Public Lectures on Philosophy and the Economic Crisis series, funded by the Royal Institute of Philosophy (IS10). Audience participation at the time (available on the podcast) evidences the activity of genuine open-minded thinking, including asking important questions about current affairs and policy, actually going on live in the lecture room on this occasion, provoked by a lecture that drew upon Presocratic ideas.

#### Reach:

We measure the *reach* of this intellectual impact by (i) sales of IS1 (on the basis that with each book bought, someone's thirst for knowledge of their cultural heritage is slaked and their ability to think philosophically is provoked), (ii) the demand for translations of IS1 for markets beyond the UK and America, and (iii) audience numbers at public events (IS3, IS4, IS10).

(i) Sales of IS1 in English currently exceed 10,000 (approaching 13,500 in 2013). For some years it has been the best-selling book about Presocratic Philosophy on Amazon.com (not counting translations of the texts). Customer reviews on Amazon show that the readers are actively engaging with the research issues presented - that they are being made to think. Some respond enthusiastically, others more reluctantly, to that challenge: both reactions show that the challenge is working.

(ii) Free distribution of a Greek translation of IS1 in 2006 to over 40,000 readers of the Greek daily newspaper has led to further translations being envisaged, e.g. Portuguese, Vietnamese. Further Francophone audiences are reached via Osborne's chapter in *Histoire de la Philosophie* ed. Jean François Pradeau, (IS2) for which sales currently stand at over 5,000.

(iii) Public engagement activities featuring Presocratic Philosophy have been frequent, starting with the first UEA public lecture series. Rowett's inaugural lecture in 2009 drew a mixed audience of over 100. In April 2012 Rowett featured along with primatologist Professor Volker Sommer and anthropologist Professor Ruth Mace in a panel discussing the "origins of humanity" at the LSE (podcast available, IS4), part of a popular programme for the public organised by the Forum for European Philosophy, with 200+ in the audience. Podcast hits in five months, May-Sept 2012 totalled 14,260 (*NB this measure is hits recorded by the server, not downloads or viewings.*) Rowett co-tutored an extra-mural weekend school for the Oxford Department for Continuing Education at Rewley House, with Malcolm Schofield, on *The Origins of Metaphysics in Presocratic Philosophy* in May 2012 (IS3). There were 46 resident attenders, and the podcasts were then circulated to 330 members of the Oxford Philosophical Society. In Autumn 2012, Rowett's lecture 'Learning from Greece: thinking about austerity and monetary union in Pythagorean and Platonic politics' in the UEA Philosophy Public Lectures series on the Economic Crisis drew an audience of c.70, and explored the roots of the economic crisis and possible solutions and revaluations by way of reflections on Pythagorean and Platonic political thought. (Podcast available: IS10).

#### Significance:

Quantifiable measures of the significance of this work include statistical measures of the uptake of the various events and publications, such as book sales, audience numbers and podcast visitors. These give some indication of the importance that people attach in their lives to such intellectual activity, by quantifying their commitment in terms of the time and money that they will spend on improving their understanding and engaging with the cultural heritage of Western thought. Another key marker of significance is the extent to which these topics feature in public debate, e.g. on BBC Radio, Oxford Literary Festival, Hay on Wye Festival, European Forum, etc. Raymond Tallis reports (IS5) that he found Rowett's work very useful for situating Parmenides, in preparing his Continuum 2007 book *The Enduring Legacy of Parmenides: Unthinkable Thought*, and that "this fed into various popular outlets: articles in *Philosophy Now* and *Prospect* and *Night Waves* and a very well attended talk at the Hay Festival." The *Night Waves* programme (IS6) chaired by Philip Dodd, (BBC Radio 3, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2011), investigated Rowett's key question about the significance of Parmenides in Western Philosophy, problematised in RR2 and disseminated to non-academic users via IS1. Tallis also has a podcast on this topic, on Philosophybites.com, which has had 1,596 viewers on YouTube (IS5). The choice of "Presocratic Metaphysics" as a topic for IS3 (Oxford Extra-Mural weekend School) testifies to the importance this ancient wisdom has for those outside professional philosophy, for whom philosophy is (as it always has been) an authentic way of life.

(b) *Impact on new investors on the stock exchange*

Rowett's work on the *Sophists*, has been adopted by the Reuters journalist Alexander Davidson. His book *The Money Myth: A Classic Introduction to the Modern World of Finance and Investing*, commissioned by FT Pearson (IS7), is a guide for beginners planning to invest in stocks and shares. It warns them of the risks of untrustworthy advisers. Of the significance of Rowett's work, Alexander Davidson writes (IS8) "This book was my 'eureka' moment as a financial journalist. By showing that the ancient Greek sophists were just like our spin-doctors, Osborne proves there is nothing new about the propagandist techniques that helped to crash the City in the Credit Crunch but then rescued it. I read this book in one sitting – and it gave me in return a cutting edge seminar in ancient philosophy and its modern messages. More questions than answers for the City and politics, but, at last, I am thinking solutions."

The *reach* of this impact is measured by sales figures of *The Money Myth* (IS7), currently in excess of 2,000, foreign language editions (currently includes a Japanese translation already out), and uptake of articles and reviews that discuss its message (examples in IS9).

Its *significance* might be measured by the success of its readers' investing practices, and the monetary value of their investment in enterprises that yield economic growth. Customer reviews (IS9) and readers' correspondence would testify to a rather small part of this.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- IS1. Catherine Osborne *Presocratic Philosophy: a very short introduction*, Oxford 2004. pp. xviii + 144. [ISBN 0-19-284094-0] (Προσωκρατική Φιλοσοφία· Ολα όσα πρέπει να γνωρίζετε trans. Alexandros-Stamatios Antoniou, Athens 2006 [ISBN 960-442-787-3])
- IS2. Catherine Osborne 'La naissance de la philosophie.' in *Histoire de la Philosophie* ed. Jean François Pradeau. Paris: 2009, 7-30.
- IS3. Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford (Rewley House) Weekend course "The origins of Metaphysics"  
[http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/infosysfiles/O11P121PHR\\_1\\_Application.pdf](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/infosysfiles/O11P121PHR_1_Application.pdf)
- IS4. Forum for European Philosophy Consilience event:  
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/forumForEuropeanPhilosophy/events/consilience/Consilience.aspx>
- IS5. Raymond Tallis, author and broadcaster: written confirmation of impact from Rowett's work. cf <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K9bes5UcjA>; and <http://philosophybites.com/2008/12/raymond-tallis-on-parmenides.html>
- IS6. BBC Radio Three, *Night Waves* edition 19/4/11;
- IS7. Alexander Davidson *The Money Myth: A Classic Introduction to the Modern World of Finance and Investing (Financial Times Series)* (2012).
- IS8. Alexander Davidson, Reuters Journalist (written testimonial, quoted above).
- IS9. Customer reviews of *The Money Myth* at <http://www.amazon.co.uk/>; review in *Hedge Funds Review*: <http://www.hedgefundsreview.com/hedge-funds-review/news/2169519/book-review-dispelling-financial-market-myths>; further articles about the money myth in *Ad familiares* (Friends of Classics Magazine); paper for Chartered Insurance Institute, at [http://www.cii.co.uk/media/2244450/tp77\\_davidson\\_money\\_myth\\_vf.pdf](http://www.cii.co.uk/media/2244450/tp77_davidson_money_myth_vf.pdf)
- IS10. Audience figures and podcast downloads at <http://www.uea.ac.uk/philosophy/news-and-events/podcasts/>. See also further links and data at <http://www.uea.ac.uk/philosophy/research/impact-beyond-academia>