

Institution: University of Southampton
Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy
Title of case study: 32-02 Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on the Value of Existence
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>In recent years, few institutions have contributed more intensively than Southampton to the wider appreciation of two of the 19th Century's most influential thinkers, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. By way of a determined campaign of public engagement, we have shared our research on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche with over three million members of several different publics. This has resulted in genuine cultural enrichment: our interlocutors have encountered new approaches to topics that they find intrinsically compelling, and have been prompted to think and feel differently about issues that are – or that have come to be – of real significance for them.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) agree with one another about the fundamental nature of existence, but differ sharply in the valuation that they attach to it as a result. Schopenhauer sees life as a ghastly error that warrants resignation if not outright despair, whereas Nietzsche regards it as something to be embraced and affirmed – not in spite of the features that prompt Schopenhauer to pessimism (for instance, that life is ineluctably filled with suffering and loss), but at least partly <i>in virtue</i> of those features. And this basic disagreement about global value, as it were, feeds in fascinating ways into their distinctive approaches to a variety of more local evaluative issues – concerning, for example, morality and religion – that remain of relevance and importance to any thinking person today.</p> <p>Recent research at the University of Southampton has been at the forefront of broadening appreciation and understanding of these hugely influential thinkers. The overarching aim has been to clarify how, for both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the question of the value of existence arises and acquires urgency, and how, from their respective answers, other questions, concerning, e.g., moral and religious value, radiate out. Few institutions have contributed to this particular strand of investigation more intensively or productively during the past decade.</p> <p>The research referred to here began in 2004, and has been led by Christopher Janaway (Professor of Philosophy at Southampton, 2004-present). Studies have been conducted partly through individual scholarship (see section 3, below) and partly through collaborative projects. The most significant of these latter have been 'Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Value', a series of events culminating in an international conference held in Southampton in 2007 (the proceedings of which were published, first, in the <i>European Journal of Philosophy</i> 16:2, 2008, and subsequently by Wiley-Blackwell); 'Nietzsche and Modern Moral Philosophy', a three year AHRC-funded research project (2007-10), comprising three international conferences, nine international workshops and nine public lectures (the proceedings of these events are being published as a series of edited collections with Oxford University Press: the first, <i>Nietzsche, Naturalism and Normativity</i>, C. Janaway and S. Robertson, eds., was published in 2012); and the Cambridge Schopenhauer edition, of which Janaway is the General Editor, issuing new scholarly editions of Schopenhauer's works, the first of which appeared in 2009.</p> <p>The questions that motivated Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are big ones (the value of life, the significance of suffering, the meaning of morality, etc.), in which any thinking person must take an interest. Their answers are striking too; and in clarifying them, and in developing fresh interpretations of, and responses to, them, we have amassed a body of research that has lent itself very naturally to a programme of public engagement activities. The key insight is that (and how) a fundamental valuation of existence feeds into questions concerning other values, for instance moral and religious value. The outputs listed in section 3 explore and articulate this insight from a variety of angles.</p>

3. References to the research

Key Outputs:

1. Janaway, C. and Gemes, K. (2012), 'Life-denial versus Life-affirmation: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on pessimism and asceticism', in Vandenabeele, Bart, ed., *Companion to Schopenhauer*, Blackwell, pp.280-299
2. Janaway, C., General Editor (2009–), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer*, 6 Vols. [one volume returned to REF 2014]
3. Janaway, C. (2009), 'Autonomy, Affect and the Self in Nietzsche's Project of Genealogy', in Gemes, Ken and May, Simon, eds., *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, Oxford University Press, pp.51-68
4. Janaway, C. (2007), *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's 'Genealogy'*, Oxford University Press [returned to RAE08]
5. Janaway, C. (2005), 'Schopenhauer et le Valeur du "Non-Égoïste"', in Bonnet, Christian and Salem, Jean, eds., *La Raison Dévoilée : Études Schopenhaueriennes*, J. Vrin, pp.81-94
6. Janaway, C. (2004), 'Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: is the will merely a word?', in Pink, Thomas and Stone, M.W.F., eds., *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, Routledge, pp.173-196 [returned to RAE08]

Key Grants:

'Nietzsche and Modern Moral Philosophy', AHRC, September 2007– September 2010, £328,000; Principal Investigator: Janaway.

4. Details of the impact

A sustained and wide-ranging campaign of public engagement has allowed us to achieve an array of cultural impacts, including bringing lay audiences to ask themselves new questions and reassess familiar problems; stimulating debate with respect to those questions and problems; and encouraging non-philosophers to explore material they would not otherwise have encountered.

Media appearances

On August 20, 2008, Janaway recorded a 'Philosophy Bite' on aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of value ('Philosophy Bites' are podcasts of philosophers discussing their research for the benefit of a lay audience), drawing on outputs 2 and 3. At September 17, 2013, his contribution has had 107,330 downloads [5.1].

On October 29, 2009, when the programme devoted an episode to Schopenhauer, Janaway was an expert guest on BBC Radio 4's 'In Our Time', hosted by Melvyn Bragg. He drew on outputs 1, 2 and 5 for the broadcast, which attracted an audience of more than 2 million and sparked a lengthy discussion on the BBC website, during the course of which the episode was described as 'riveting', the discussion as 'very helpful', 'lucid' and 'brilliant' and the contributors as 'fantastic' and as 'models of clarity': 'It opened my eyes: I'd never imagined that I would find Schopenhauer congenial'; 'I was inspired' [5.5].

This appearance led to invitations to take part in three further radio programmes. The first, Resonance FM's 'Representing Arthur Schopenhauer', was broadcast on February 28, 2012, to an audience of ~30,000 and was later released as a podcast by *Philosophy Now*, resulting in ~60,000 downloads [5.2]. The second, BBC Radio 4's 'Honest Doubt', involved episodes broadcast on June 8, 14 and 15, 2012, to an audience of ~750,000; in February 2013 Ladbroke Productions responded to what it called 'popular demand' by producing a digital audio download and ebook of the series, for which it anticipates a total of more than 4,000 downloads [5.3]. The third, BBC Radio

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3's 'Wagner and Schopenhauer', was broadcast on May 22, 2013, attracted an audience of ~150,000 and was subsequently made available as a podcast. In each case Janaway drew on outputs 1, 2 and 5.

Janaway's appearance on 'In Our Time' also led to an invitation to write an article for the *Times Literary Supplement* (circulation: ~34,000) to mark the 150th anniversary of Schopenhauer's death. Published on October 13, 2010, the piece prompted another lengthy online discussion, during which readers developed a variety of responses to Schopenhauer's pessimism [5.6].

Public discussion events

On November 20, 2008, at a session in London hosted by the Forum for European Philosophy, an educational charity that brings philosophy to the wider public, Janaway was interviewed about his work on Nietzsche before an audience of ~60 participants, drawing on outputs 3 and 4. On January 17 and 18, 2009, at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, Janaway drew on outputs 5 and 6 to lead a two-day seminar, 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer', for ~40 participants.

Southampton's Philosophy Café talk-plus-discussion events, held at the University's John Hansard Gallery, are advertised to and attended by non-philosophers, including non-academics. They usually attract audiences of about 40 [5.4, 5.7]. On October 7, 2010, drawing on outputs 1 and 5, Janaway presented a session on Schopenhauer's pessimism. Representative feedback suggests that well over 90% of respondents have been caused to 'think about unfamiliar topics or about familiar topics in new ways' as a result of attending these events, which participants have found 'stimulating', 'full of ideas' and, on occasion, 'completely brilliant'.

On May 12, 2014, Janaway was principal contributor to a Nietzsche 'Cultural Day', organised in collaboration with the University's Lifelong Learning team with the intention of engaging a wider audience in dialogue on our research on Nietzsche. His talks drew on outputs 1, 3, 4 and 6. Although it is not possible to determine the number of downloads, podcasts were also made of the constituent sessions. More than 60 people attended (at £25 per head), with participants giving the event an average score of 4.8 out of 5.0. Some 94% of respondents agreed that the event had 'changed their understanding of and attitude towards the subject matter', while 91% agreed that they were 'likely to use the ideas they had heard about in future', in contexts ranging from their own teaching activities to 'personal reflection on [my own] writing practice'. 'Thoroughly enjoyable and stimulating'; 'A very interesting and thought-provoking day'; 'A wonderful opportunity for someone not necessarily on a university/FE course. Affordable! Hurrah! Thank you.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**User/beneficiary**

5.1 For corroboration of downloads of Janaway's 'Philosophy Bite':

Philosophy Bites: email address provided

5.2 For corroboration of downloads of the podcast of 'Representing Arthur Schopenhauer':

Philosophy Now: email address provided

5.3 For corroboration of impact relating to 'Honest Doubt' and its spin-offs:

Ladbroke Productions: email address provided

Landsberg Coaching: email address provided

5.4 For corroboration of claims relating to Philosophy Cafés:

Head of Communications, John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton

Reports and links

5.5 Listeners' discussion following Janaway's 'In Our Time' appearance can be accessed here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/comments/b00nfrz/>

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5.6 Readers' discussion following publication of Janaway's *TLS* article on the 150th anniversary of Schopenhauer's death can be accessed here (subscription only):

<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls>

5.7 Details of the Philosophy Cafés and Cultural Days referred to above can be accessed here:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/philosophy/news/events/archive.page?>