

<p><b>Institution: Cardiff University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: 32</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Enabling critical engagement with academic research in A-level Philosophy</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  A booklet was produced to address a problem identified by A-level teachers of Philosophy. They had reported that while independent critical engagement is strongly emphasised in the A-level Philosophy marking criteria, the available teaching materials do not foster this skill. The booklet contains essays summarising research papers from three members of the Unit that represent opposing views of Nietzsche's critique of morality. Through questions and puzzles, students are able to compare the claims and take up critical positions. The booklet has contributed a new type of educational material for developing critical thinking in A-level Philosophy and has been used in the UK and overseas.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b>  The booklet summarises and draws out the tensions between three academic papers arguing original philosophical positions, written by staff in the Unit: Robertson (joined as Lecturer 2012); Tanesini (joined as Lecturer 1992, SL '99, Reader '06, Professor '10); Webber (joined as Lecturer 2008, SL '10, Reader '12).</p> <p><b>Robertson's paper</b><sup>3-1</sup> contributes to current debate over the value of morality. It is widely agreed among philosophers that if morality is intended to prescribe all our actions, then it is an obstacle to living a fulfilling life. The lesson usually drawn is that morality should only set constraints that rule out certain actions, but which leave a wide range of options available. Robertson draws on Nietzsche to argue that this is mistaken, since morality understood as a set of constraints remains an obstacle to fulfilment. In particular, he argues that such constraints would prevent the flourishing of great individuals. Although elements of this philosophical position were developed before his arrival at Cardiff, his booklet chapters reflect the full position, developed at Cardiff and first published in this paper.</p> <p><b>Tanesini's paper</b><sup>3-2</sup> charts a course between the realist view that moral values exist independently of the ways in which we see the world and the subjectivist view that moral values are merely expressions of opinion. Tanesini draws on Nietzsche to argue that mere opinions are not genuinely ways of valuing something. She argues that evaluative attitudes are rather grounded in long-term commitment to a goal. It is this kind of self-determination, the mark of the great individual, that gives rise to genuinely valuable ethical values.</p> <p><b>Webber's paper</b><sup>3-3</sup> defends Kant's idea that each action lays down law which governs the future actions of that person. Philosophers generally agree that Kant's idea of 'self-legislation' is nonsensical, but Webber argues that this consensus presupposes a particular understanding of the kind of legislation involved. Instead of reading it as analogous to the passing of statute, we should read it as analogous to the way judges set precedent. Interpreted so, Kant views morality as the set of restrictions that need to be observed for actions to set precedents that can be respected. Together, these papers generate debates over the nature and acceptability of Nietzsche's critique of morality. One question is the relation between Robertson's and Tanesini's papers. If genuine values are those pursued by great individuals, why should we accept that the flourishing of great individuals is genuinely valuable? Is it because some great individuals value it, rather than each simply valuing their own flourishing? If so, where is the evidence? A second question concerns the relationship between morality and self-determination. Robertson defends the Nietzschean view that morality is a threat to self-determination, but Webber presents a Kantian argument that morality is required for self-determination.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b>  The booklet of teaching materials summarises and draws out tensions between three recent research publications in leading academic journals of philosophy. It is the juxtaposition of the three views that creates the power of the booklet's impact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Robertson, S.</b> &amp; Owen, D. 2013. Nietzsche's Influence on Analytic Philosophy. In: Gemes, K. &amp; Richardson, J. (eds.). <i>Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche</i>. OUP, 185-206. ISBN: 9780199534647</li> <li>2. <b>Tanesini, A.</b> 2013. Nietzsche on the Diachronic Will and the Problem of Morality. <i>European Journal of Philosophy</i> 21. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0378.2012.00564.x (REF output)</li> </ol>

3. Webber, J. 2012. A Law Unto Oneself. *Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (246): 170-189. 10.1111/j.1467-9213.2011.692.x (REF output)

#### 4. Details of the impact

The booklet<sup>5-2</sup> was developed in order to make a significant change in the materials available to A-level Philosophy teachers. It was a response to a problem identified by teachers during an engagement and outreach consultation. While independent critical thinking is an intrinsic element of the A-level Philosophy syllabus, and the marking criteria for the A-level examinations require critical engagement for gaining the highest marks,<sup>5-1</sup> there is a dearth of educational materials able to foster it in relation to the set texts and topics. The skills of critical engagement are learned through practice, which requires an appropriate framework for developing conclusions, drawn from careful consideration of alternatives. The insight for the Unit's research to contribute in addressing this problem was that the contrasting positions within some of the Unit's recent research publications on Nietzsche and on moral philosophy naturally created such a framework. These publications bear directly on two popular modules of the AS and A-level syllabus: 'Why Should I Be Moral?' (AS) and 'Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*' (A2). As a result, the booklet simultaneously provides research input at the topic level and, through a set of questions and puzzles after the texts, draws out the disagreements and encourages students to develop views on the debate.

**Process:** The booklet was developed on the basis of information gathered at two one-day conferences for A-level Philosophy teachers and students held at Cardiff University in November 2011 (20 students, 5 teachers) and March 2012 (50 students, 5 teachers). The conferences served two purposes. One was to identify through targeted discussion what the teachers most wanted from new teaching materials. The other was to gauge how sixth-formers responded to the ideas we presented, so that we could calibrate explanations of our research at the appropriate level of accessibility. The booklet was developed particularly through close discussion with two A-level teachers in very different educational settings: Marc Bevan of Llanidloes High School in rural Powys,<sup>5-6</sup> and Pamela Marshall of Exeter College, a combined further and higher education institution. Bevan used the conference handouts to structure class discussion and Marshall tested first drafts of the booklet essays with her students. Marshall was the one originally to propose that a booklet might be developed to help A-level students with their critical evaluation of Nietzsche.<sup>5-5</sup>

During the summer of 2012, the booklet of six 1000-word essays was produced.<sup>5-2</sup> The first half of the booklet comprises essays by Robertson, Tanesini and Webber, laying out the core claims in their respective research papers. These essays make the tensions between our views apparent. Each essay is accompanied by two comprehension questions. They are followed by two puzzle pages that set up the tasks of critically comparing and assessing the ideas. The second half of the booklet deepens the debate through three essays by the same authors that extend the research discussions, again with comprehension questions. The booklet closes with further puzzles concerning the disagreements between these essays.

This design allows teachers and students to engage with the booklet in the ways they find most appropriate. Teachers can use it to develop their own teaching inputs or distribute it to their students. Engaging with a single essay will be beneficial, but working through the first half of the booklet provides a solid basis for independent argumentation concerning Nietzsche's critique of morality. Students can check their understanding using the comprehension questions, and can develop their own critical views before they read the second essay set, so that, in effect, they gain feedback on the ideas they have had.

The booklet was launched with a dedicated conference in December 2012. It was made available as a free download under a Creative Commons licence. Teachers can freely distribute it to their students in paper form or through virtual learning environments. It was advertised through a network of A-level Philosophy teachers, the Philosophy in Europe email list (Philos-L), and our Twitter feed.

The change that this booklet has made to the set of available educational materials is *significant* in that it not only informs students about Nietzsche's work and opposing views of it, but also impacts on students' meta-learning. That is, critical thinking practised in relation to Nietzsche can be transferred to other topics within and beyond philosophy.<sup>5-5,5-6</sup> The head of Exeter College describes the booklet as "a great response to the problem I raised in discussion [with the team]" and says that "the experience of working through the booklet has improved my students' abilities to engage critically with philosophy across the syllabus and generally to argue philosophically."<sup>5-5</sup>

**Nature of impact:** The booklet constitutes an **effect on, and benefit to, society** in providing a

new kind of study material that influences **the activity, awareness, capacity and understanding** of A-level students. The impact is **significant** in making a tangible and effective change to the quality of philosophy teaching at A-level. The booklet is a direct conduit of the research undertaken in the Unit, which, in representing different philosophical views, creates the basis for the critical discussion and evaluation that teachers reported difficulty in achieving by other means. As for its **reach**, although the text was developed in consultation with teachers and school students in Wales and SW England, the booklet is in use across the UK. The AQA Chief Examiner for A-level philosophy has approved the booklet for use as a teaching and study resource (see below), and since the AQA offers the only A-level philosophy syllabus, that means the booklet is a recognised resource for every philosophy A-level student in the UK: some 2941 A-level and 5129 AS level philosophy candidates in June 2013 (<http://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/about-results/results-statistics>). Were the estimated 551 UK views and downloads (see below) all from students, approximately one in 15 (6.8%) of them (551/8070) would have accessed the booklet in its first year. However, our evidence below indicates that most downloads are from teachers, strongly suggesting that a considerably higher proportion of A and AS level students were reached. Making the booklet freely available for download has reached an additional user group in 46 countries beyond the UK (see below).

**Evidence of impact:**

**Downloads:** Between the Dec 2012 launch and 31/07/13 the booklet was viewed or downloaded 1100 times.<sup>5-3</sup> While views and downloads beyond the UK (47 countries) are a welcome extra (see illustration), ranging across the world from Mexico to Japan and Mongolia, from Oman to Canada and Barbados, the primary target was the UK. 422 were recognised as being from IP addresses within the UK. Of the 258 IP addresses of unknown location, a proportionate split attributes 129 more to the UK (418/(1090-255) x 255), making a total of 551.<sup>5-3</sup>



Screen grab from:

<http://bit.ly/Rap3f5+>

31 July 2013

**AQA approval of booklet:** AQA passed the booklet to the Chief Examiner for A-level Philosophy for his opinion. He approved it as a resource for the exam board to recommend, including on the AQA's recommendations webpage. AQA also recommended it to teachers who contacted them directly for advice.<sup>5-4</sup>

**Use with A-level students:** We used an online survey in June and July 2013 to gauge the impact of the booklet. We advertised this through the same channels as we had advertised the booklet. Respondents were A-level philosophy teachers in a variety of settings, including state secondary schools, private schools, and sixth-form and further education colleges in the UK, a charity school in Singapore, and a community college in New Zealand. Most respondents had used the booklet. 75% of respondents said they would definitely use it next year.<sup>5-7</sup> They reported its use already as recommended private reading for students and as the basis of classroom discussions. Users praised it as a good framework for students to develop their own critical perspectives through the activities that draw out the disagreements between the essays.<sup>5-6,5-7</sup> (These activities were also praised on Twitter by John Taylor (<http://bit.ly/12BmRij>), Head of Philosophy at Rugby School and author of *Think Again: A Philosophical Approach to Teaching*, Continuum 2012.)

## Impact case study (REF3b)

All survey respondents who had used the booklet considered it to have improved their students' abilities to engage with philosophy more generally, not just to have improved student work in the area the booklet focuses on. One respondent has contacted us to offer help with developing further A-level teaching materials of this kind.

Marc Bevan, Subject leader of History, Philosophy, and Politics at Llanidloes High School, liked how the booklet was able to "bring the disagreement and argument of philosophy into the foreground", clarifying the students' understanding of interpretations of Nietzsche, and "presenting philosophy as a living discipline of debate." He also commented, "I do think that this work has improved my students' critical engagement with philosophy quite generally, not just on these issues"<sup>5-6</sup> He reports that one of his students particularly liked: "the cut and thrust between professional philosophers."<sup>5-6</sup>

**Onward endorsements:** Our download webpage has been onward-listed by an organisation dedicated to supporting the teaching of A-level Philosophy (<http://bit.ly/alphilresources>). Our booklet has also been praised on Twitter by Nigel Warburton, whose own Philosophy Bites podcasts have been downloaded more than 18,000,000 times.

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. AQA A-level Philosophy specification (<http://bit.ly/aqaphilspec>). This document's Scheme of Assessment specifies the requirement of critical argumentation: "develop a set of transferable intellectual skills—including comprehension, interpretation, analysis and evaluation—which will facilitate the development of independent thinking, based on critical examination of evidence and rational argumentation, and which will be applicable in the study of other academic subjects and in reflection on other important aspects of human experience" (p.17).

2. The booklet produced for this project (free to download under a creative commons licence that permits free copying and distribution):

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/philosophy/alevel/nietzschescritiqueofmorality.pdf>

The booklet itself is evidence of impact, because its creation has changed the body of materials available to A-level teachers and students.

3. A screen shot of the bit.ly record of downloads of the booklet (live at <http://bit.ly/Rap3f5+>) saved on 31.07.13. This record is evidence of the raw numbers and proportions of downloads of the booklet around the world. It shows that there were 1100 viewings or downloads of the booklet, of which 38% were in the UK, 9% the US.

4. Email exchange with the Philosophy Qualifications Developer at AQA (16/05/13), which confirms that the Chief Examiner had approved the booklet, and it was scheduled to be linked from the AQA website once software problems were resolved. The emails indicate that in the meantime, AQA was recommending the booklet to A-level philosophy teachers who enquired about suitable resources.

5. Testimony from the Head of Philosophy at Exeter FE College (Nov 2013) which confirms her involvement in developing the booklet in 2011-12 and its impact on her students' learning, including allowing them to "develop their own critical perspectives."

6. Testimony from the Head of Philosophy at Llanidloes High School in Powys, Wales (20/07/13). He confirms that he took part in the planning discussions, that he brought students to an event to develop the booklet, and that the booklet has helped his students' critical engagement.

7. Sample survey responses from teachers of A-level Philosophy in the UK and abroad (18/07/13). The survey confirms that the booklet is being used, will continue to be used, and meets its objectives of improving the students' abilities at critical engagement, not only with the issues the booklet focuses on but also more generally, through providing a framework within which they can develop their own arguments.

Pdf of 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, and copies of 5-4 to 5-7 are available from the HEI.