

prioritization of elite perspectives and inconsistent regional representation constrains its overall scope. For both academic audiences and the general populace, this work functions as an intriguing and intellectually stimulating primer on the historical narrative of the Muslim world. Subsequent investigations might enhance Cook's framework by integrating a broader range of viewpoints from underrepresented communities and delving deeper into the intellectual and economic histories.

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CAVELL, WILLIAMS AND THE QUESTION OF STYLE IN PHILOSOPHY. By Paolo Babbioni. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024. 304 pp.

Paolo Babbioni's *Cavell, Williams and the Question of Style in Philosophy* is an academically ambitious and methodologically scholarly work that challenges the common supposition that style in philosophy is superficial. Babbioni argues that, for Stanley Cavell and Bernard Williams, style is an integral part of the nature of thinking, shaping not just the form of their thinking but also the philosophical thought they put forward. In the union of close reading and digital humanities methodology, he argues forcefully for the importance of style in the philosophy field. His main argument is stated clearly at the outset: "I will be interested in other contemporary philosophers who, similarly to Wittgenstein, have tried to emphasize the importance of style in philosophy; stylistically self-conscious authors, who have used style in many ways, and have tackled different 'problems of style'" (p. ix).

The text is structured so that it increasingly develops the reader's understanding of this claim. After an introduction placing his work within the current debates over philosophical style, Babbioni conducts a comparative analysis of Cavell and Williams. He then outlines a distant reading strategy to trace the repetition of certain stylistic features in their work. The final chapter addresses the broader implications of these findings for the discipline of philosophy. "One author will be better illuminated by the background of the other, and vice versa" (p. ix), he explains, offering an explanation for his comparative analysis decision.

Babbioni's interpretation of Cavell is especially convincing. For him, Cavell's writing is marked by what he calls "lingering," a stylistic device that resists the strictures of analytic philosophy and instead invites the reader to indulge in a process of self-reflection. "Cavell discovered his own ways in philosophy, which share a common spirit—and this is a spirit that is revealed through its digressive, lingering parts" (p. 141). He puts a lot of stress on Cavell's use of parentheses, seeing them not as so-called incidental asides but an integral part of Cavell's thinking. By looking to their appearance and placement, Babbioni shows that "the massive presence of parentheses after a mark (which open to another self of the text, in counterpoint to the main body); the use, within normal parentheses and parentheses after a mark, of pronouns such as 'you' or punctuation marks such as '?'. Moreover, I also briefly observed how the lingering movement of the parenthesis is expressed by dubitative and concessive formulas such as 'perhaps' or 'though'; or by the negation ('not') of alternative ways (which are excluded but at the same time remembered in parentheses); or by the massive use of 'or', which contributes to increase the ambiguity and multiplicity of dimensions to which Cavell's writing refers (as pointed out, among others, by Mahon)." (p. 237-238) This quantitative evidence testifies to the thesis that Cavell's writing not only describes Emersonian perfectionism but actually performs it instead.

By contrast, Williams's stylistic strategy is marked by what Babbioni calls "compression," a rhetorical device for the transmission of massive meaning with laconic words. He shows how Williams,

like Nietzsche, uses brevity as a philosophical instrument: “Williams used compression for many different reasons: not only in order to free himself from an English tradition, but also to give relevance to all the other speech-acts (other than asserting and arguing) that philosophical writing can encompass” (p. 140). Such laconic words, as Babbotti contends, are at the heart of Williams’s grand critique of moral theory’s project of offering systematic accounts. “Williams used not only Nietzsche, but a style similar to Nietzsche—in its compression, incisiveness, and humor—as a tool for freeing himself from a certain English tradition” (p. 139). Babbotti’s awareness of the way Williams’s style actively resists the prevailing conventions of analytic philosophy is one of the book’s strong points.

Perhaps the most insightful part of Babbotti’s analysis is his handling of implicit argument in Williams’s writing. As opposed to more classical accounts of analysis that emphasize explicit argument, Williams’s method often involves suggestion and insinuation. Babbotti connects this feature to Williams’s reading of Nietzsche, suggesting that Williams discovered in Nietzsche’s aphoristic technique a model of philosophical address that is available to the reader to interpret. This point enriches our understanding of Williams’s resistance to the rigors of systematic moral theory.

One of the book’s methodological contributions is its application of distant reading techniques to quantify stylistic trends. Babbotti justifies the approach by asserting, “I chose a distant reading approach because it is able to measure the most evident stylistic recurrences in a certain corpus” (p. 212). Through it, he is able to show, for example, the measurable disparity between Cavell’s employment of parenthetical aside and Williams’s use of short, aphoristic remarks. While this quantitative evidence is extremely persuasive, it is occasionally at risk of obscuring more interpretative perspectives. Babbotti’s assertion that Williams’s sentences are more syntactically condensed than Cavell’s could have been enriched by a more extended consideration of the consequences of this disparity beyond mere statistical comparison.

In the last chapter, Babbotti speaks to the broader significance of his research by returning to Emerson’s reflection on individuality and philosophical legacy. He notes that both Cavell and Williams, despite having very different stylistic and philosophical inclinations, were both able to achieve an impressively individualized and non-transferrable philosophical voice. He states, “the fact remains that a new degree of culture, or style, was achieved by both philosophers” (p. 263). Babbotti shows their work as demonstrating Emersonian perfectionism—each philosopher, through his distinctive stylistic approaches, achieved a style of philosophical expression that was resistant to easy incorporation into dominant scholarly conventions. The chapter also speaks to the idea that philosophical style cannot be reduced to personal taste and is inextricably tied to the methodological and metaphilosophical concerns of an author. Babbotti concludes by suggesting that Cavell and Williams offer two models for would-be philosophers who wish to develop a style that is both personal and intellectually sound.

Although it has numerous strengths, the book is not without its weaknesses. Babbotti’s interaction with philosophers outside of Cavell and Williams is somewhat limited. Although he does gesture towards Nietzsche’s impact on Williams, a more in-depth discussion of other philosophers who are noted for their attention to style—such as Derrida or Rorty—would have made his argument more robust. Furthermore, although the quantitative methodology is novel, there are instances where a more in-depth philosophical examination of the implications of these stylistic changes, rather than the statistical occurrence, would be more desirable. Nonetheless, *Style in Philosophy* is a significant contribution to the philosophy of philosophical writing. In showing that style is not an appendage but an element of philosophical inquiry, Babbotti turns the usual view that philosophy is first and foremost a matter of argumentation over expression on its head. His book will be required reading for Cavell and Williams scholars, philosophers of language, and literary philosophers. Moreover, it poses questions about the future of style in philosophy more generally. If Babbotti’s approach succeeds here, it can be applied to other thinkers as well, enabling us to better grasp how style determines philosophical thought more generally across traditions.

By drawing out the profound bond that underlies the relationship between writing and thought, Babbioni has created a work that is both rigorously methodical and stimulating. His book increases our appreciation of Cavell and Williams, yet simultaneously provokes a re-consideration of the place of style within philosophy as a whole.

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Style is subjective, relational to the context in which it is understood *and* applied. Style is a mark of the identity of an individual *in a particular space and time*, with specific activity (or set of actions and attributes) associated with the individual. In this engaging, sometimes convoluted, yet relentlessly deep exploration of two philosophers and their style, Paolo Babbioni is absolutely stunning in revealing the fundamental questions that trouble any literary or philosophical student regarding style. The web of his analysis offers a mesh that interconnects and intersects factors like appropriateness, personal touch, the plausible quotient of perfectionism.

In *Cavell, Williams and the Question of Style in Philosophy*, Babbioni observes the phenomenon of style in line with the personalities of two philosophers of the twentieth century, whom he calls the “perfectionist friends” – American philosopher Stanley Cavell (1926–2018) and the English philosopher Bernard Williams (1929–2003). Babbioni starts off with a detailed execution of setting the ground straight for how style is studied and understood in the context of becoming an identity-marker for some and the attribute weaved into personalities with time and experience. Throughout the book, Babbioni manages to weave between literature, commonplace problems, and issues as well as strictly academic and scholarly discourses, debates, and exchanges on philosophical questions. Morality remains a thread that he associates with the fundamental point of initiation of scholarly pursuits in theorizing style, and the point of contention that brings forth relevant and recurrent philosophical debates.

In this philosophical exploration, both by an academician (with a systematic methodology in place) and by a thinker (revealed through his constant and conscious deliberation through his discourse with the texts of these philosophers and the readers), Babbioni serves a platter of intricate knowledge on style. The ‘Introduction’ serves as a groundwork of establishing the way philosophical emphasis on getting things right and being morally perfect, following the Emersonian tradition, made philosopher-stylists like Cavell and Williams pursue paths of active experimentation and openness in their “playing fields” of choices in writing. In Chapter 1, “Emersonian Perfectionist Writing in Philosophy”, Babbioni analyzes Emersonian criteria for perfectionist writing in the earliest works of Cavell and Williams as young philosophers, *The Claim of Reason* (1979) and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985) respectively. In the chapters that follow, “Through the Examples” and “Stylistic Methods”, Babbioni analyzes excerpts of Cavell’s critique against the emotivist theory to establish that Cavell had an intimate style of writing. Furthermore, through an analysis of Williams’s critique of J.J.C. Smart’s utilitarian minimalization of a human being in moral crisis through open-ended discussions of problems faced by common people, Babbioni establishes that Williams always believed in finding answers that were in spaces beyond the strict confines of philosophy. Babbioni, in the next chapter “Stylistic Methods” establishes that Cavell and Williams were metaphilosophically similar, but differed in how they ‘opened’ the space for readers to build meanings and answers to the questions posed in their writing. While doing so, in many of the chapters, Babbioni’s own analysis of stylistic concerns of knowledge, wisdom and aphorism in writing through detailed analysis of Bertolt Brecht’s “son” (literary creation, as Babbioni contends) Mr. K and Nietzsche’s *Human All Too Human* (which Williams admired and contended was a classic example of the dry aphoristic style

prerogative of the German nihilist) stands out. The rigorous exercise of Babbioni reaches a pinnacle when he utilizes Cavell's and Williams's respective analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter* and Denis Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, to show that they ultimately embodied the very characters that they studied in their practices and principles of writing as matured philosophers in their later stages of life. For Babbioni, Cavell is the playful, adventurous and "outsider" Auguste Dupin in philosophy who was the intimate and human voice in a strict and objective school of philosophy. On the other hand, Babbioni analyzes Williams's handling of Marxist and conservative critiques in Oxford and Cambridge styled-philosophical circles to prove that as a true "maverick" of the discipline, Williams establishes a dialectical style of writing and rebutting criticisms against approaches in a deeply logical and witty manner (one is reminded of the aphorism of Nietzsche that he so admires). He ends the long exploration with a unique quantitative study that just put to empirical language many of his observations and contentions in the book prior to that chapter.

Babbioni's personal attempts at fulfilling many of the Emersonian perfectionist writing criteria in the process of tracing them in the philosophical styles of Cavell and Williams is praiseworthy because of several reasons. First, Babbioni digresses in many spaces from his original plan (that he meticulously lays out before sections or chapters begin). Many times, as a reader with a literary background trying to understand the complex workings of an academic-thinker in philosophy, one does feel lost and has to backtrack. His analysis in turn helps one expand on his or her own understanding of 'style' as a human phenomenon in the process. Secondly, Babbioni effectively blurs the boundaries of and merges literary discourses with philosophical exposition. However, it blends and contextualizes even a lay reader into the stylistic worlds of Cavell and Williams. Thirdly, Babbioni's beautiful use of allegory to portray the unique positions of 'outsider' and 'maverick' for two of the most renowned analytical philosophers as against their contemporaries, further emphasizes that philosophy is relational and perfectly unfinished. Thus, in *Cavell, Williams and the Question of Style in Philosophy*, one does get a first-hand experience in 'living' style as an innate ability that gets worked and re-worked on by human interactions and deliberations. As personalities evolve, so do their styles. So, there can never be an absolutist explanation of style.

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MODERNITY, PRINT AND SAHITYA: THE MAKING OF A NEW LITERARY CULTURE, 1866–1919. By Sumanyu Satpathy. London: Routledge, 2024. 238 pp.

Where Walter Benjamin might view print as a tool of "mechanical reproduction" that withers the "aura", Benedict Anderson argues print capitalism catalyzes the rise of linguistic-national consciousness. Sumanyu Satpathy's *Modernity, Print and Sahitya: The Making of a New Literary Culture, 1866–1919*, engages with these theoretical tensions and places Odia literature as both a casualty and a beneficiary of the print revolution, carrying the contradictions of literary modernity.

It must be appreciated that the book does not follow a strict chronology, but rather delves into layered insights ranging from linguistic debates to the evolution of Odia *sahitya* as a modern genre. The book's structure is designed thoughtfully with five thematic chapters which stand on their own while contributing to the larger story of the development of modern Odia *sahitya*. These chapters reveal a new dimension of Odia literary culture's evolution through interactions with print, education, and colonial power. This structure does more than just presenting information; it tells a story of transformation in which debates about grammar, schoolbooks, and newspapers are as important as literary texts themselves.