

# **Taking Rhetoric Seriously:**

## **Nietzsche's Style and Philosophy**

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Wherever there is a discussion of style in literary works, one begins by asserting what seems rather obvious: that there is a deep connection between content and form, between what is thought and how it is expressed. In this case, 'style' is understood as the totality of techniques used to convey ideas in a meaningful manner, and so it remains at a distance from thought itself—it is primarily a mode of aesthetic expression and not a way of thinking. At first sight, the same thing could be said to hold when it comes to discussions of philosophical writings: the distinction between content and form is present here as well, but, in addition, 'style' appears to be considered only supplementary to the ideas expressed. For it is philosophy which, in trying to define itself in opposition to literature, claims to be *the rational search for truth*, though its name is only 'love of wisdom'. But it appears that philosophy is, in any case, a strange kind of love, one that hides its origin (for after all, it is a human yearning for truth, meaning, wisdom) and so tends to efface the presence of the 'lovers'. Or perhaps one could suspect at this point that philosophers themselves are the ones who, in *their* loving of wisdom, usually employ a writing style that is aimed at concealing their presence as authors, such that they can adequately disclose the presence of truth instead: the concern for objectivity is, after

all, something philosophy has always treasured—especially during modernity, when the possibility of transforming this discipline into a rigorous science was for the first time taken into account. Seen in this light, philosophy should usually be written in a clear, precise and orderly manner, and, since it is a rational search for truth, it would demand that the authors begin their inquiries by first presenting a method that would offer us guidance with regards to how authentic knowledge will be secured. It would appear, then, that ‘philosophy’ and ‘literature’ are, so to speak, opposed types of writing, but many twentieth-century thinkers, such as Heidegger, Derrida and others, tried to demonstrate this is not the case by collapsing the boundaries between the two—and Nietzsche, who was a major influence for basically all of twentieth-century continental philosophy, had a similar project.

It should not seem surprising, then, that Friedrich Nietzsche’s texts are often very difficult—if not impossible—to include in a clearly defined category (philosophy? literature?), without our being forced to change the way we think about the meaning of ‘philosophy’ and ‘literature’. In fact, it is not even advisable that one read and interpret a thinker like Nietzsche by starting from very abstract notions or rigidly defined concepts. Because it is by attending seriously to his text that one begins the difficult task of interpretation, especially in the case of a thinker whose books appear to stand at the border between philosophy and literature, and whose use of language does not ignore or deny but rather emphasise its rhetorical nature. Now, of course, Nietzsche is not the only one who intentionally departs from the conventional style of philosophy (one can think here of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Derrida, and many others); what makes each of these writers interesting and unique, however, has to be sought in their philosophical projects. In the case of Nietzsche, whose writing will be the subject of this essay, it is well known that the unconventional style he employs abounds in aphorisms, metaphors, hyperboles, ironical remarks, sarcasm, contradictions; but when one goes on to claim—after a superficial reading of his texts—that, say, Nietzsche’s writing is merely ‘aphoristic and

fragmentary', one focuses on what constitutes only a small part of his works, and disregards, for example, texts like *The Birth of Tragedy* or *On the Genealogy of Morals*. By approaching his text more carefully, however, one should arrive instead at the conclusion that what makes Nietzsche so easy to misunderstand is that he in fact does not use only one style, but many.

What is the reason for this? Why does Nietzsche rely on a multitude of different styles, and does this eradicate the possibility of finding a unitary meaning in his writings? What does he want to achieve? In this discussion, I will argue (drawing on the more recent works of David Owen and Christopher Janaway) that Nietzsche's preference for various styles and rhetorical devices is strongly connected with his philosophical commitments and therefore justified as the proper means of transmitting his teachings on morality. In the first section, I will point out some difficulties with Nietzsche's writing, and will present the ways in which different scholars have attempted to make sense of it; I will also comment on some of the interpretations of Nietzsche which I take to constitute the more extreme tendencies, and will explain why these should be avoided. Sections II, III and IV will contain my arguments for holding the view that Nietzsche's use of rhetoric is not merely a matter of style, but that it is instead a necessity imposed on his writing by the manner in which he construed the central problem that he wanted to address, that of nihilism and how to overcome it. I will draw attention in section II to the fact that Nietzsche does not write in a rigorous and straightforward way, because he does not think that by simply unfolding a series of rational arguments, he will be able to solve problems like that of moving 'beyond good and evil' (overcoming morality); what is rather needed is forming an affective relation with those who are willing to understand what he has to say. Then, section III will demonstrate that Nietzsche uses rhetoric in order to make his readers suspect the origin of morality and its value, and, in this way, to render possible a critique of moral values—this would be, so to speak, the negative use of his rhetoric. In the final section, I will explain how using rhetorical devices is again an appropriate means to instil the will to

overcome nihilism, which is one of the main concerns of Nietzsche – thus I will show the positive use of his rhetoric. Taking into account, then, what I consider to be three fundamental aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy, i.e. the importance of psychology; the critique of morality; and the need to overcome nihilism, and showing how these are reflected in his writing style, I will demonstrate that making use of rhetoric, far from being incidental in Nietzsche’s case, proves to be very effective in expressing his ideas and way of thinking.

## I. Styles

Let us return to the question of Nietzsche’s styles, and let us consider in more detail what this would imply with regards to interpreting Nietzsche’s text. Sarah Kofman, for example, in her book *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, recognises that ‘just as he multiplies perspectives, so Nietzsche intentionally diversifies his styles in order to save the reader from misunderstanding a single style as a “style in itself”’.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this is admitted by Nietzsche himself, when he writes that:

To communicate a state, an inward tension of pathos, by means of signs, including the tempo of these signs—that is the meaning of every style; and considering that the multiplicity of inward states is exceptionally large in my case, I have many stylistic possibilities—the most multifarious art of style that has ever been at the disposal of one man. Good is any style that really communicates an inward state, that makes no mistake about the signs, the tempo of the signs, the gestures [...].<sup>2</sup>

What this passage from *Ecce Homo* suggests is that there is no unique style which must be held paramount in writing, and so even in the case of philosophy, if one has come to realise

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor* (London: Athlone Press, 1993), p. 2. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale and W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 265.

that it has an essentially written character and cannot do without words, then there would be no problem in changing styles as often as one desires. However, Kofman thinks that the task of the ‘philosophy of the future’ would be to dissolve all oppositions between concept (taken to be representative of the old, traditional style of writing philosophy) and metaphor (which is one of the styles employed by Nietzsche himself, and which is usually associated with poetry) (Kofman, pp. 17–8). She says:

Tyranny is reprehensible in all its forms, including that of any philosopher seeking to raise his spontaneous evaluation to the status of absolute value and his style to that of a philosophical style ‘in itself’, opposed to the poetic style ‘in itself’ like truth opposed to untruth, good to evil. But the tyranny of anyone seeking simply to invert the terms and commend the value of metaphor alone is equally reprehensible: he remains ensnared in the same system of thought as the metaphysician.

(Kofman, p. 3)

Thus, for Kofman, the decision to use a variety of styles would be in strong relationship with the rejection of metaphysical oppositions and dogmatism, which is characteristic of Nietzsche’s philosophy. As is well known, the fundamental notion of ‘perspectivism’—the idea that the way one perceives things is not the truth, but rather a perspective (which even at this point, implies a certain degree of interpretation and evaluation) that is good for him/her, although not necessarily good for everyone—is crucial here, because if a change in style represents, ultimately, a change in perspective, then the distinction between content and form becomes blurred. By employing various styles, then, Nietzsche’s intention is to remind us of his presence as author, and this is in some sense constraining but also liberating. Because, even if Nietzsche wants all who read his books to see, to become aware, that his interpretations are not identical with truth, and do not have to be accepted as absolute, those who are really

interested in his ideas and want to understand what he has to say about morality, the value of truth, and the like, find themselves compelled to accept Nietzsche's text *as it appears, as it is written*—they are, paradoxically, not in a position to 'interpret' it. But at the same time, Nietzsche's refusal to pretend that he is not involved in the construction of his texts is liberating, since those who read him (well) cannot be brought to the conclusion that with Nietzsche's writings, interpretation has come to an end.

Alexander Nehamas has basically made a similar point in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, wherein he claims that Nietzsche's recourse to a multitude of styles cannot be, in any way taken as meaning that Nietzsche was somehow an anti-philosopher, that he opposed philosophy 'as such'. It is dogmatic philosophy which tends to denounce other modes of thinking as 'non-philosophy', and so Nietzsche's 'new kind' of philosophy can only be distinguished if it is considered in relation to the tradition that philosophers have inherited from Socrates and Plato. As Nehamas explains: 'Nietzsche is so suspicious of Plato and Socrates because he believes that their approach is essentially dogmatic. He attributes to them the view that their view is not simply a view but an accurate description of the real world which forces its own acceptance and makes an unconditional claim on everyone's assent.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, it is the case that philosophy (in this dogmatic sense) hides its origin (which is in individual evaluations and interpretations) so that it may appear to proclaim universal truths which would not need further questioning. Nehamas also observes this and goes further to say that:

It is in the interest of dogmatic approaches to hide their specific origins; in this way they are enabled to make universal claims. This is one of the reasons [...] why Nietzsche engages in the practice he calls 'genealogy', for genealogy reveals the very particular very interested origins from which actually emerge the views that we have forgotten are views and take instead as

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 32. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

facts. Genealogy reveals both these origins and the mechanisms by which the views in question try to conceal them.

(Nehamas, pp. 32–3)

It can be seen here that the purpose of genealogy is to show, as Nietzsche famously said at one point in *The Will to Power*, that ‘facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations’, which is not to say that everything is relative, but rather to affirm perspectivism once again, meaning that what comes to be known as a fact is not separated from interpretation: thus there are no bare facts, but no ‘mere’ interpretations either.<sup>4</sup> Now, when hearing the word ‘interpretation’, one usually tries to grasp its meaning by thinking of it in opposition to ‘truth’, and in this case interpretation could justifiably be considered ‘mere’ interpretation. But Nietzsche’s point is not that there is no truth in the way we interpret the world, ourselves, and so on, but rather that this truth is not binding for all. This is perhaps clearly illustrated in the Second Essay from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, when Nietzsche talks about the origin of bad conscience in the moralisation of suffering and says that ‘The aspect of suffering which actually causes outrage is not suffering itself, but the meaninglessness of suffering.’<sup>5</sup> It is by trying to find a meaning behind this suffering, i.e. to come up with an interpretation of it, that man has worsened his condition and has not reduced but increased his suffering. Arthur Danto has made a very interesting point in this regard, for he claims that Nietzsche’s project in the *Genealogy* is to help those who read it cure themselves of *ressentiment*, which is another sign of the will for suffering to have a meaning:

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<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale and W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 49. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

What Nietzsche objects to is not so much this model [of justice based on punishment] but its total generalisation, making *every* suffering a punishment and the entire *world* a court of justice with a penitentiary annex. If I am right that this is his view, the final aphorism of the *Genealogy*, ‘man would rather will the *nothing* than *not* will,’ does not so much heroise mankind, after all. What it does is restate the instinct of *ressentiment*: man would rather his suffering be meaningful, hence would rather will meaning onto it, than acquiesce in the meaninglessness of it. [...] In a way, the deep affliction from which he seeks to relieve us is what today we think of as hermeneutics: the method of interpretation primarily of suffering. And when he says [...] ‘there are no facts, only interpretation,’ he is, I believe, finally addressing the deep, perhaps ineradicable propensities of *ressentiment*.<sup>6</sup>

This last point is indeed based on a subtle reading of Nietzsche, not least because it presents his view of perspectivism as opposed to hermeneutics and in a way connected to the deconstructive approach devised by Jacques Derrida, who is certainly one of Nietzsche’s inheritors. Understood, then, in the way Danto has, the famous aphorism shows that there is a deep connection between Nietzsche’s conception of the problem posed by moralizing suffering, and his way of recognizing and unmasking the various things that are similar to it and lead to *ressentiment* (in this case, for example, the idea that there is always only *one* true interpretation).

One could at least begin to discern some features of Nietzsche’s styles from what was said so far. Let me now go back one moment to Nehamas’s text and say that the way in which he thinks Nietzsche solves the problem concerning the dogmatism of philosophers is by distinguishing himself from Socrates and criticizing that tradition: and he does so not by ceasing to write works that could be considered philosophical, but rather by changing the way

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Danto, ‘Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*’, in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. by Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 35–48 (p. 46).



in which philosophy was written, by employing a variety of styles, by presenting a multitude of perspectives. Nietzsche in fact said, in his early *Lectures on Rhetoric*, that:

There is obviously no unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts. The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power that Aristotle calls rhetoric, is at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things.<sup>7</sup>

So, he has easily noticed that words are not identical with the things they stand for as signs, and because of this all truth amounts to a convention at the level of language. On the origin of truth, Nietzsche says in a well-known passage that it has become hidden the moment our metaphorical constructions (pertaining to rhetoric and so essential to language) have lost their force (and this applies also to the creation of concepts in general, for they are a form of falsification):

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sander Gilman, Carole Blair and David Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Language and Rhetoric* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Breazeale, ed., *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of Early 1870's* (New York: Humanity Books, 1979), p. 84.

Nietzsche therefore does not attempt to escape these aspects of language, when he writes philosophy, and neither does he want to pretend for his readers that he does so, but rather criticises the dogmatic (and metaphysical) tradition by revealing its origins and motivation (for example, by showing why and how have people come to value truth above all else). One could hardly fail to notice, at this point, that rhetoric for Nietzsche occupies a position similar to that which writing has for Derrida, who, noticing—for example, in Plato's *Phaedrus* and many other texts—that if truth is not present in writing as it is in speech, then it is not immediately present in speech either, proposed a 'science of writing' as a 'remedy', concluding that philosophy should be more written, and employing in his own works a significant amount of devices meant to destabilise the privileged position occupied by speech in the Western tradition. Similarly, as I already said, Nietzsche

does not hope [...] to make possible a nonrhetorical philosophy by revealing some hitherto unnoticed error. [...] Philosophy is inseparable from language, and no self-consciousness will alter or transcend that circumstance. For Nietzsche, the goal is not to discover the unvarnished truth, for there is no such thing. Rather, the aim is to understand the forces – such as the need to communicate and the will to power – that have produced those ideas about truth which have driven philosophy through its long history.<sup>9</sup>

Now, in closing this section I want to draw attention to what I consider to be two extreme tendencies of interpreting Nietzsche, which are in my opinion wrong, because they both fail to take seriously into consideration the connection between content and style. In fact, I take these misunderstandings to spring from a questionable way of looking at Nietzsche's perspectivism. Thus, one way of interpreting Nietzsche's style is to say that it is merely a

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<sup>9</sup> Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1990), p. 887.

supplement to the ideas expressed, and that the abundance of metaphors, rhetorical interrogations, and aphorisms are not helping to identify his claims and arguments (if there are any), but rather unnecessarily obscure them. Those who fall in the other extreme actually do not fail to take into account the importance of Nietzsche's rhetoric, however, they only seem to be concerned with and to put emphasis on his literary style and in doing so are misled to think that Nietzsche's writings are merely a way to make apparent if not the impossibility, then at least the undecidability of meaning, as if he did not really intend to say anything, but nevertheless used rhetoric as a means to avoid making definitive claims. One thing that is not accidental in Nietzsche's texts is, however, the insistence that his philosophy is not meant to be understood by everybody, and that *as a result* of this, his style would not please all readers. I believe that those who read Nietzsche in any of the two ways mentioned above are judging wrongly that the various styles he employs do not, in fact, find their justification in Nietzsche's perspectivism: they either desire to discover universal truths, or want to impose their own interpretation by not paying attention to the form specific to different texts. But, to emphasise once again, 'Nietzsche uses his changing genres and styles in order to make his presence as an author literally unforgettable and in order to prevent his readers from overlooking the fact that his views necessarily originate with him. He depends on many styles in order to suggest that there is no single, neutral language in which his views, or any others, can ever be presented' (Nehamas, p. 37).

## **II. Psychology**

Perhaps one of the most important teachings of Nietzsche's is that of not taking for granted the deep-seated presuppositions about morality, selfhood, knowledge, history and philosophy which are usually thought to be just self-evident. The great discovery, in his case, is of course the essential role that psychology occupies in explaining how humans came to judge what is

good and what is evil. But Nietzsche also observed the degree to which Christian morality has become intertwined with our understanding of our psychic life, and this is very well shown in his critique of the ‘English psychologists’ throughout the *Genealogy of Morals*, who seem to be unable to infer correctly with regards to the origin of our moral values, since they assume that what is now considered ‘good’ has always been relevant for explaining human desires, needs, fears and so on, and not vice-versa. Nietzsche warns against this when he says, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that ‘All psychology has hitherto remained anchored to moral prejudices and timidities: it has not ventured into the depths.’<sup>10</sup> It becomes clear that what has to be done to understand human drives and emotions is to separate morality from psychology, and this cannot be achieved otherwise than through a very special kind of writing, which would indeed, as Nietzsche said in the Preface to *Genealogy*, make one feel ‘at some time deeply wounded and on another occasion just as deeply delighted’ (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 10). He emphasised the same point (and I consider this to be true both for author and reader) when he claimed that

A genuine physio-psychology has to struggle with unconscious resistances in the heart of the investigator, it has ‘the heart’ against it: even a theory of the mutual dependence of the ‘good’ and the ‘wicked’ impulses causes, as a more refined immorality, revulsion to a conscience still strong and hearty – and even more a theory of the derivation of all good impulses from wicked ones.

(Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 53)

For it is one of the ‘prejudices of philosophers’ to consider ‘good’ and ‘evil’ as having separate origins, and pertaining to a metaphysical realm, the result of which being the

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<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 53. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

intermingling of morality with theology. And Nietzsche could not have addressed this harmful connection between the two in some other way than by employing rhetorical constructions meant to stimulate our affects. This relates again to his perspectivism, since by starting to feel differently, one is at the same time starting to adopt a different interpretation. Therefore, Nietzsche's thought that 'psychology shall again be recognised as the queen of the sciences', since it 'is now once again the road to the fundamental problems' has to do with an abandoning of metaphysical perspectives and a returning to an interpretation of human life that is rooted in history, physiology and psychology—this is the reason why the vocabulary used in the *Genealogy* abounds in terms and metaphors alluding to human drives, impulses, and so on (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 54). Since there is resistance (against interpretation itself), presenting his views in a straightforward way does not prove to be effective for Nietzsche's goal: the style employed reflects instead clearly that he writes with psychological intent. Changing between aphoristic or metaphoric styles is itself an expression of and evidence for the multitude of emotions that lays hidden, and which constitutes the basis of how we come to judge in terms of morality.

### **III. Critique of Morality**

It could be said that the fundamental problem which motivates Nietzsche's *writing* of philosophy (in the way that he does) is that of nihilism—what we are confronted with when the highest values devalue themselves. One of the ways in which Nietzsche refers to this problem is by using the hyperbolic expression 'God is dead', which most notably appears in *The Gay Science*.<sup>11</sup> Simply put, he does not allude here to God as a transcendent being (since in this case asserting such a thing would be contradictory to God's deathless nature), but rather to what has

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<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 181. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

become of God in human beings, in what is immanent: ‘By its very nature, God the metaphysical entity cannot die. What is dead, then, must not be God Himself, as it were, but rather something that can be born and die, namely the idea of God or the belief in God.’<sup>12</sup> But Nietzsche intends to prove that loss of belief in the Christian God does not already imply an abandoning of Christian morality, since to hold an interpretation of the world as that proposed by Christianity is in strong connection with a specific way of life, one that in fact does not affirm it, but is rather turned against life and against human nature itself. And the passage named above is crucial, I would suggest, in understanding Nietzsche’s strategy regarding the style necessary for a critique of this inherited morality. It would be interesting to observe that ‘The Madman’ parable can also be taken as a warning against how not to read Nietzsche, since it has at its centre a failure of communication, or a failed relationship between the one who announces the ‘death of God’ (the Madman; Nietzsche), and those who are not yet able to recognise this ‘tremendous event’ (the people from the marketplace; those who gave up belief in God but not in Christian morality, those who are not prepared for the ‘philosophy of the future’, those who value truth above all else, even when it proves to be harmful).

A loss of the belief in God is an event that engages human existence totally, because it carries with it the danger of forgetting what it means to be human. As such, the ‘death of God’ and the consequences that ensue in its aftermath cannot be recognised for what they are if this event were to be presented in a direct manner, and Nietzsche is fully aware of this necessity. Therefore, it is crucial that he makes use of the figure of the Madman as the one who, ironically, seeks to enlighten others—‘Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place and cried incessantly: “I seek God! I seek God!”’ (Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, p. 181). The various symbolic gestures that accompany the speech

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<sup>12</sup> Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 40.

delivered in the marketplace are meant to reveal precisely how strong is the influence exerted by Christian morality and the steps one is required to take in detaching from, critiquing and undoing the effects not yet realised of the ‘death of God’. In order to be able to address the danger of nihilism, then, one must first see where it is rooted and what sustains it. Thus, as David Owen remarked, ‘prior to any such re-orientation, there must be the recognition of the need for re-orientation, and it is the failure of such recognition that is symbolised by the third appearance of the lantern of enlightenment: the madman’s smashing of the lantern on the floor’.<sup>13</sup> So what this signifies is a change in the attitude of the Madman, when he realises that his listeners are not prepared to face up to the consequences of the ‘death of God’, and this failure of enlightenment results in his renunciation to engage directly with the people from the marketplace; the madman instead decides to chant a requiem in the churches, saying that those represent only the sepulchres of God.

#### **IV. Re-evaluation**

The rhetorical style used by Nietzsche, as I said in the introduction, also has a positive role, that of allowing us to construct something different, something new, an interpretation of life and a philosophy ‘beyond good and evil’, that comes as a replacement of the Christian worldview. Nietzsche wants to instil in us the desire to transcend the ‘slavish’ morality fundamental to Christianity, because, in doing so, we will come to affirm life once again. What I find relevant here is to comment briefly on the fourteenth section of the First Essay in the *Genealogy of Morality*, where he invites (or maybe, provokes) the reader to venture into the ‘dark workshop of ideals’, to see what the real origin of our highest ideals is. The words and images used to describe this place, as well as the alert rhythm in which the unveiling of these hidden origins is presented, is meant to illustrate how deep-rooted is the morality that

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<sup>13</sup> David Owen, *Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007), p. 55.

undermines and seeks to inhibit all manifestations of the will to power, and that the only way in which this morality can find expression is not in action, but feeling ‘the impotent failure to retaliate is to be transformed into “goodness”; craven fear into “humility”; submission to those one hates into “obedience”’ (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 31). It is by allowing us to see the contrast between nobles and slaves, between *ressentiment* and action, positive valuing, that we, the readers, are subtly guided towards the masters and their way of life. And Nietzsche’s use of metaphor and hyperbole is once again intended to make us see the worsening of man’s condition under a slavish morality and the need to overcome nihilism.

Therefore, in all of Nietzsche’s texts, there is a deep connection between style and content, one that finds its justification in the way he understands the affective attachment that exists between those who have not yet renounced Christian morality and the values and ideals they believe in unconditionally. It can be rightfully said that Nietzsche recognises the threat posed by nihilism and the necessity to overcome the morality of ‘good and evil’ and as a remedy he makes ingenious use of rhetorical devices meant to open our existence to this danger, confront it and in the end still be able to affirm life through a new re-evaluation, one that goes beyond good and evil.

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