

Review of: "The Countertextual Peripeteias of the Contemporary Humanities as a Political Challenge"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I wanted very much to like this paper (I know that sounds ominous). It was confident, astute and clearly written, given the complex nature of the ideas. The writer is obviously intelligent, well-read and audacious to take on such a broad-ranging topic. It began well enough but the paper has a few flaws that need to be addressed before it is ready for publication.

(a) A penchant for lists [The use of etc is used 14 times] and name-dropping [e.g. see pg 12&13/24] with the expectation that the reader is able to make the connection or knows what concept the writer is referring to in the works of the authors cited.

(b) Some terms need to be explicitly defined. For example, in the introduction, a little more specificity ("the most recent history of the humanities" – what is recent history?) and contextual explication ("the so-called linguistic turn" when?) are necessary. "raising legitimate doubts" concerning what?

The more abstract the idea, the more it is important for the reader to know what the writer is elucidating, especially those who are less familiar with the field. Terms like 'orality', 'textuality', even 'literature' are too broad for the reader to pinpoint whether they agree or disagree with the argument. Because of the complexity of sentence structures, the reader is unsure sometimes which concept "it" refers to e.g. "I pose a question about the university and try to respond, referring to the Turner's concept of a *communitas*." Respond to what? What is *the* Turner?" - "if compared with another category, perhaps less familiar, yet featured in metahumanistic discourse: the category of return." [2/24]. Sentences like these sound like a thought pattern rather than an argument and may hinder comprehension.

(c) Making some unsupported claims. For example, "The value of all historical categories has been considerably downplayed by the vast number of successive turns that we know to have taken place in the humanities" – how have they been downplayed and why? All historical categories? What is written sounds intelligent (and I am sure it is) but the reader is convinced more by its rhetoric than by its argument. The writer must assume an interested (but not fully informed) reader, and one that is critical (rather than one that is assumed to agree readily with the writer). The reader wants to learn from, connect and agree with the article but one cannot do that if claims or connections are made without explanation. An example of this: "Today, emotions are attributed not only to individuals or groups, but also to entire cultures (melancholy, nostalgia, grief, awe, boredom, etc.)." – how is grief or awe a culture? Or "“hich now crop up and bend the main line of development in the humanities understood narrowly." Who decides what is narrow or broad or where the boundaries end? Such statements are prevalent throughout the article.

Some technicalities:

- a. Formatting “barbarism.”¹ Does the close inverted comma comes first? Or is it “barbarism”.¹ The spacing for *eripeteia*, p 5 Plato's *R epublic*, -- are these typos or due to the page formatting?
- b. The use of colons and dashes as punctuation can be haphazard. For instance, “Punctuatiion: “A similar situation obtains in the case of something that returns: returning is conditional on temporary absence – a thing returns to the humanities after a time of being banished from their domain for some reason, and remaining outside of it ever since. It returns either in the old style or in a changed form – but it comes back, anyway, as the same thing, oder slightly different – it haunts the humanities like a spectre.” When does the writer use a dash, and when will commas suffice? In other sentences, commas are used to break the sentences when they are not needed ““In the era of writing, philosophy, when understood as *episteme*, supersedes poetry, now degraded to a *doxa* form. The excessive intellectualisation of life, which Nietzsche would impute to Socrates, would soon become a fact of general culture owing to the growth of writing culture.”
- c. There are missing or additional words or grammatical errors so there is a need to proofread the paper again. “how man understand himself,” understands; “content that is strictly corresponds” “but very likely they once were”. “asking questions about himself (e.g. about love, death, struggle, illness, home, community, nature, gods, time, etc.) and replies to them,” (and replying). This paragraph in the middle of the page is not explained: ““In the era of writing, philosophy, when understood as *episteme*, supersedes poetry, now degraded to a *doxa* form. The excessive intellectualisation of life, which Nietzsche would impute to Socrates, would soon become a fact of general culture owing to the growth of writing culture.” Other paragraphs that appear displaced include “““The theory of orality was devised mainly to clarify the genesis of Homeric epic poems, but within half a century it evolved into a comprehensive theory of culture,” writes Paweł Majewski.²² In the opinion of Eric A. Havelock, the oral turn in the humanities took place in the early 1960s, when a few seminal works were published; the interest in orality, nonetheless, goes back to the pre-war era.²³ Also the offhand reference to “Lord's book titled *The Singer of Tales* was published in 1960.²⁶” why mention this?

Some suggestions:

- (a) Perhaps it may be better for the author to focus on one aspect of these ideas. The tendency to truncate sentences results in a loss of content or explication that is needed for a full understanding of what the author is trying to say. For example, ““which I intended to bridge returning with turning” when what is presumably meant it “which I intend to use to bridge”
- (b) Using sub-headings to delineate and signpost for the reader the focus of each section. While the abstract delineates three clear sections “(1) I discuss the philosophical meaning of the metacategories of “turn” and “return” in the contemporary humanities. In the second part (2) I present briefly a few turns that question the traditional sense of the humanities, understood as *studia humaniora*. In addition to the oral turn, I take into account the rhetorical, performative,

memory, ludic, somatic, media, affective and post-colonial turns. In the last part (3) I concern research on the institutional consequences that bring into question the primacy of writings in the humanities.” – These three segments are not replicated in the sub-headings of the article. Create an Introduction and Conclusion section, as well to signpost the intentions and direction of the article.

(c) Reconsider the numbering in the first half [pg 8-11/24]. What are these numbered points illustrating? What is the relevance of orality to the humanities? Why? What does the writer mean by “orality”?

These examples are not exhaustive and are mostly from the first part of the paper but is characteristic of the rest of the paper as well. What the writer is saying is clearly important, and potentially impactful. The start of the paper and the final third of the paper were the most focused – the relevance of orality in the first half needs to be more firmly established (or removed). What is crucial is that this article is insightful and saying something potentially important. What it needs to do is to make its content more accessible, framed and transparent for a reader who wants to come away with an understanding of what it says.