

Disguised Academic Plagiarism: A Typology and Case Studies for Researchers and Editors, M.V. Dougherty, Springer, 2020, pp. 158 + xvii, \$45.43 hardcover.

A Plagiarism Schematic

David Randall

Scientists have to deal with the irreproducibility crisis—the concatenation of mistaken procedures that lead to a mass of irreproducible results. Scholars in the humanities have to deal with plagiarism—a mass of different ways to take credit for other scholars' work and present it as one's own. Dougherty's *Disguised Academic Plagiarism* takes a hammer to such plagiarism.

Dougherty provides an elaborate typology of different sorts of plagiarism, building on his own Javert-like work to bring various plagiarists to justice. First there is *translation plagiarism*: a chapter of a German philosophy monograph reappears as an English article in communication

studies. Then there is *compression plagiarism*: an entire German monograph boils down to an article in English. *Dispersal plagiarism*: an unpublished dissertation appears (in someone else's name) as seven different articles. *Exposition plagiarism*: the insights of other scholars, or even the subjects of the scholarship, appear *sans* reference as the insights of the plagiarizing scholar. *Template plagiarism*: an analysis of corruption in Africa re-appears as an analysis of corruption in Eastern Europe, with references adjusted to substantiate verbatim plagiarism.

The sins of humanities scholars have even infected the Roman Catholic church, which suffers from *magisterial plagiarism*. As Dougherty notes, the Church, theologians, and all the faithful, rightly expect scrupulous accuracy when popes or bishops speak magisterially, and when theologians argue about matters of doctrine. It is therefore disconcerting when bishops (or, rather, their ghostwriters) plagiarize theology articles, when theology articles plagiarize magisterial statements, and when bishops' ghostwriters plagiarize Lutheran theologians. Indifference to scholarly ethics has serious theological consequences.

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Dougherty hits heavily on the scholarly ethics compromised by plagiarism. Scholars have a duty to eschew plagiarism, deriving from respect to fellow scholars, from respect to the original subjects, and to ensure that future scholarly conversations rightly credit the originators of particular arguments. Plagiarism aids the careers of the plagiarists, crowds out the scrupulous, and distorts the scholarly record. All of these are grave sins.

Or so argues Dougherty, in high dudgeon. He is entirely serious in his outrage—which is a pity, because much of this story is very funny. We have scholarly disciplines so ignorant of foreign languages that you can make a career out of translating German philosophy *sub rosa* and expect never to get caught. We have the brilliant insight that if you pillage the dissertation of a guy who made a career as a bureaucrat, no one will notice or care. We have the creation of imaginary interview subjects who just so happen to repeat verbatim the analyses of old policy papers. We have the very words of Kant appearing as a supposed analysis of Kant. We have analyses and jargon so banal that they can be transferred from one subject to another, from one discipline to another, with no one the wiser.

We have, above all, a world of ludicrous scholars. Such plagiarism could not thrive if scholars did not use banal, interchangeable jargon, if they did not thrive in tiny disciplinary siloes ignorant of the wider literature, if they were not ignorant of other languages and the great works of their disciplines, if they had not already made blather the medium of academic communication, if they did not gaze with myopic beneficence on the mountebanks who present themselves as scholars. Nor could plagiarism thrive without these peculiar hucksters, who put as much effort into plagiarizing as they might have done in pursuing original research. This world—as well as the world of bloviating bishops—needs a Swiftian essay, not a monograph.

Dougherty's monograph is not that essay. Indeed, it is barely long enough to be called a book. The urge to publish afflicts even Javerts.

Dougherty has produced an excellent how-to guide for the aspiring plagiarist, although he is shorter on practical solutions. Clearly we need a career track for scholarly translators, to channel the ambitions of academics with more German than scruples. We also need a Grand Unified Scholarly Database, armed with an Artificially Intelligent Plagiarism Detector and an update of Google Translate. Also, some genetic engineering is in order,

to produce a class of academic that more closely approximates the scholarly ideal, and whose members have no desire to publish when they have nothing original to say.

Next year in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, encourage the Javerts, who keep the plagiarists on their toes. So long as scholars steal, we need such men.