

Editorial *Plagiarism in a Digital Age*

There is at least anecdotal evidence that the section of academic libraries that consistently have the greatest number of losses in unreturned or simply missing books is in theology and religion. There are a number of factors that could contribute to this unsubstantiated phenomenon, including a toxic mix of typically high prices for academic volumes combined with the typically low earning power of graduate students in theology. Perhaps there is a strong secondary market in used theology books, but there is also the possibility that theologians are more apt to rationalize their unauthorized borrowing through casuistic gymnastics. Of what concern are mere property rights when compared with the pressing needs of those exploring divine things?

Less anecdotal and more empirical, however, is the problem of academic plagiarism, in which the intellectual work of someone is used in a way that does not adhere to proper attribution protocols. There is a sense in which this is a uniquely modern problem. It is the norm in premodern periods to find essentially verbatim quotations of others, often authorities in a particular tradition, that are unacknowledged and unattributed. Sometimes marginalia or other textual references provide some guidance to the reader, but, in general, footnotes for the purposes of rigorous attribution in the scientific sense are an Enlightenment era invention.¹ In the premodern period there are a number of reasons why the practice of minimal or nonexistent citation might have made sense. It would have been impracticable for a reader to track down and verify the quotations of various authorities absent a large and expensive library at hand. In other cases, the authors may have simply assumed a level of educated readership such that

unattributed quotations could be expected to be recognized. Scholars would know Augustine or Aquinas so well that an allusion or verbatim quotation would suffice in itself to point to their source.

With the advent of printing technologies, particularly those in the industrial era, the dissemination and availability of academic texts became much more widespread, and along with this dissemination arose a reference apparatus and practice that more or less rigorously expected detailed attribution for source material. In theory, at least, a reader ought to be able to reconstruct the argument being made by carefully tracing the footnotes. Often this was more ideal than actual, but the standard has persisted to this day that plagiarism is a serious intellectual (and moral) offense. What has changed even more recently is that the digital dissemination of intellectual material has made plagiarism both easier to commit and easier to detect. With a simple cut and paste maneuver huge blocks of text can be moved from a web page to a word processor. However the same works in reverse, and massive search engines like Google, as well as specialized services like Turnitin, have made plagiarism detection a cottage industry (and for some professors, an unavoidable component of their occupation).

As Dylan Pahman has recently outlined, the practice of peer review is critically important to the work of an academic journal, and plagiarism detection is an important element of the entire review process, from peers, to editors, to readers.² Yet as the recent scandal associated with the retraction of sixty articles published in the *Journal of Vibration and Control* demonstrates, peer review is an imperfect check.³ There is, in fact, no system that is incorruptible. What is made by man can be abused by man.

There are procedures and systems that can make such corruption more difficult or more costly, however. Even as there are incentives in the academic reward system that can help occasion plagiarism, there are important feedback loops that can help to ameliorate some of the more insidious consequences. Retraction articles and notices, as well as more general attention in the scholarly community to questions of academic integrity and intellectual honesty, can help to define a culture in which plagiarism is not endemic.⁴ Professional societies like the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ) and the Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) provide resources and guidance for publications at all stages of the editorial process, including specialized tools for determining the extent of plagiarism and definitions for best practices in handling such cases.

It is therefore with regret that I must report a case of unattributed dependence that appeared in the pages of the *Journal of Markets & Morality*. The piece in question is an introduction by Francisco Gómez Camacho to a translation of Luis de Molina's *Treatise on Money*, which first appeared in 2005.⁵ It has been our

practice to take many of these translations and publish them separately, often in corrected, expanded, or otherwise more developed form.⁶ It was only through the process of bringing Molina's treatise to print in the ongoing Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics, and Law series that the problems with Camacho's introduction became apparent. In tracking down some irregularities with the citation method of Camacho's apparatus, a number of direct, substantial, and nearly verbatim sections were found that corresponded with places in Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson's magisterial work, *The School of Salamanca*, first published in 1952.⁷ In particular, the section of Camacho's introduction titled "Economic Context" draws heavily and substantially on Grice-Hutchinson's work, without attribution.⁸ The final paragraph of the section "Financial Innovation and Excesses" also relies on Grice-Hutchinson, again without attribution or other normal means of signaling to the reader that the words on the page are not original to the author of record.⁹ In fact, Grice-Hutchinson's volume is not mentioned by Camacho, although another of her publications is cited in passing at the conclusion of the introduction.¹⁰

For these reasons Francisco Gómez Camacho's introduction to Molina's work is formally retracted. The text will no longer appear on our journal's website, and the article's page will appear with a note referring to this editorial for further information about the retraction. As M. V. Dougherty, P. Harsting, and R. L. Friedman put it, plagiarism is "a serious breach of scholarly ethics and a form of conduct that undermines the foundation of all that we endeavor to achieve in the world of learning."¹¹

Meanwhile, the integrity of the Molina translation itself persists, and we have commissioned another introduction for the separate publication, forthcoming from CLP Academic in the Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics, and Law series. Our hope is that this unhappy incident will not stand in the way of increased exposure to the economic thought of one of the foremost Jesuit theologians of the early modern period, and more broadly a better understanding of the development in economic and moral thought during this period. In this regard, Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson's *The School of Salamanca* is an excellent resource with which to begin.

—Jordan J. Ballor, Dr. theol.

Notes

1. A particularly noteworthy example of a sprawling apparatus in an early modern work is available in Johannes Althusius, *Dicaeologicae* (Herborn: Corvinum, 1617), available at: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/61058/>, located by way of the Post-Reformation Digital Library: http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=1014.
2. See Dylan Pahman, "Editorial: A Primer for Peer Review," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 1–7.
3. This particular case was widely reported and particularly egregious and sophisticated. For details, see "SAGE Publications busts 'peer review and citation ring,' 60 papers retracted," Retraction Watch, July 8, 2014, available at: <http://retractionwatch.com/2014/07/08/sage-publications-busts-peer-review-and-citation-ring-60-papers-retracted/>.
4. For an excellent example, in this instance documenting the publications of a single person, see M. V. Dougherty, P. Harsting, and R. L. Friedman, "40 Cases of Plagiarism," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 51 (2009): 350–91.
5. Francisco Gómez Camacho, "Introduction," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 167–98.
6. In this case, see Stephen J. Grabill, ed., *Sourcebook in Late Scholastic Monetary Theory: The Contributions of Martín de Azpilcueta, Luis de Molina, S.J., and Juan de Mariana, S.J.* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007), 111–35.
7. Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson, *The School of Salamanca: Readings in Spanish Monetary Theory 1544–1605* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).
8. Camacho, "Introduction," 169–70. Cf. Grice-Hutchinson, *The School of Salamanca*, 5–8, 10.
9. Camacho, "Introduction," 171. Cf. Grice-Hutchinson, *The School of Salamanca*, 16.
10. Camacho, "Introduction," 198n55, noting Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson, *Economic Thought in Spain: Selected Essays of Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson*, ed. Laurence S. Moss and Christopher K. Ryan (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1993).
11. Dougherty, Harsting, and Friedman, "40 Cases of Plagiarism," 350.