

October 17, 2012

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Dear Prof. Price:

With deep regret for the necessity of this letter, I am writing today with two formal complaints regarding plagiarism committed by Terrence Deacon, currently the Chairman of the Anthropology Department at UC Berkeley. Thank you again for confirming that Berkeley has appointed a formal investigative committee to examine the matter.

The first complaint is an amplification of matters which you and I have previously discussed on multiple occasions -- namely the FINDINGS by the Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence that Deacon made significant use of the ideas of others without appropriate attribution or citation in his book *Incomplete Nature*. We have previously discussed Deacon's plagiarism of the work of Alicia Juarrero (most notably the ideas she first promulgated in her 1999 book *Dynamics in Action*). Now that UC Berkeley has appointed a committee to investigate Deacon's plagiarism, it is important to make a formal record of others whose works were not attributed or cited by Deacon yet whose ideas are contained throughout *Incomplete Nature*. These include Evan Thompson (focusing mainly on the ideas of dynamics and self-organization and found in his 2007 book *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*), Roy Bhaskar (whose ideas regarding absences are both the foundation of Critical Realism and which appear almost whole cloth in the first two chapters of *Incomplete Nature*), Stanley Salthe (whose concepts of three levels of emergence and the labeling of such by their thermodynamic roles appear throughout *Incomplete Nature*), and Mark Graves (a former student of Deacon's whose 2008 book *Mind, Brain And The Elusive Soul* contains foreshadowings of much of the material presented by Deacon in *Incomplete Nature* but such work remains unacknowledged).

Deacon's book is thus a compilation of the works of others, which he has reconfigured (and in some instances opposed) to make their ideas appear to be his own. If he were to have provided the correct attributions and citations regarding the origins of these ideas, Deacon's work would not be the subject of any complaint. Instead, Deacon presents all the compiled material as if he were its cognitive origin -- which he was NOT. If he made the omissions deliberately, that

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would be plagiarism. If he made the omissions by failing to do any research as to the origins of the ideas he presents -- that too is plagiarism ("the presenting of the works of others as if it were one's own) -- plagiarism by deliberate negligence. Plagiarism is judged, I would submit, by the results and not by the declared intention of the plagiarist.

In academia we demand that our students do the research necessary to back up what they present. To pass off ideas which are easily located in the previously published works of others as one's own is simply not tolerated. To use as a defense "well I did not do the reading" is unacceptable. If we cannot accept such defenses and inappropriate work from our students, how can the University tolerate the same from one of its senior professors?

Deacon has been afforded every opportunity possible to accept responsibility for his "negligent research" (if we are to accept that the resulting plagiarism was not done deliberately) and has refused to do the same. He has chosen to ignore the power of a simple "I'm sorry" and instead has attacked both Professor Juarrero and myself for attempting to get the record set straight. He has falsely accused both the *New York Review of Books* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of being "paid" to "get him." He has claimed that I have expended large sums of money to "do him an injustice." It is a matter of open discussion among Berkeley faculty members that he has "threatened" junior faculty in his own department who want the opportunity to discuss the issue. These are the claims of a guilty man --not the efforts of an innocent one to clear his name.

To the claims previously brought to your formal attention I must now add another: Deacon plagiarized my 2003 article "The Redefinition of Memes: Ascribing Meaning to an Empty Cliché," first published in *Emergence: A Journal of Complexity Issues in Organization and Management* Vol. 5 No. 3 pgs 48-65 (and then republished in the *Journal of Memetics - Evolutionary Models of Information Transmission*, 8, in 2004) in his 2004 book chapter "Memes as Signs in the Dynamic Logic of Semiosis: Beyond Molecular Science and Computation Theory" in Karl Erich Wolff, Heather D. Pfeiffer and Harry S. Delugach, eds. *Conceptual Structures At Work*, ICCS 2004, Proceedings, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, pp.17-30. A reading of both works will indicate that Deacon appropriated my concept of the meme as a "sign" for an "environmental niche" and failed to provide either attribution or citation. I sent Deacon a copy of this article in the Fall of 2003 by email, and had discussed the same with him at a conference we both attended in 2003. Thus I am aware that it was in his possession. Further, the *Journal of Memetics* put the article on line in January 2004. As mine was the first anti-meme article ever published by the *Journal of Memetics*, it received significant attention in the memetics community.

Juarrero has put together a thorough analysis of the overlap in argumentation between *Incomplete Nature* and *Dynamics in Action*. If your investigatory committee so desires, I can prepare the same regarding my work and Deacon's later book chapter. Nearly everyone I know, however, who has read the two works has found the plagiarism to be obvious.

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What is most disturbing about this entire affair is the example it sets for our students. The correct response would have been for Deacon to acknowledge his negligence and to invite those whose work he plagiarized to correspond with him about their various agreements and differences. This would have turned a mistake (or perhaps a series of mistakes) into a learning experience from which all would benefit. Instead, Deacon has behaved like a wounded and cornered animal striking out in both inappropriate and fruitless manners and declaring himself to be the victim.

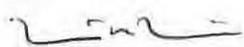
There is no excuse for UC Berkeley to support the idea that academic behavior deemed unacceptable for a student is tolerated if done by a senior professor. There is no excuse for UC Berkeley to even tolerate the idea that in the Internet Age it is acceptable for a senior professor to fail to see what others have written before publishing his own work in a field – especially in a field which he admits is not his own. Plagiarism by negligence is still plagiarism. It is simply unacceptable in academia.

SHAME ON BERKELEY IF IT CANNOT UPHOLD SUCH A STANDARD.

I am available to the investigative committee as it may desire as is all the material at the web site <http://theterrydeaconaffair.com>

It remains my suggestion that the appropriate “fix” is for Berkeley to host a symposium where the commonalities and differences amongst Deacon, Juarrero, Thompson, Salthe, Graves and Bhaskar are discussed and whose proceedings can be published as an academic monograph. The exchange of ideas trumps the issue of who said what when and was attributed properly or not.

I must note in advance that I will not accept any stipulations of confidentiality regarding this matter. Plagiarism by a senior professor, whether by intent or negligence, must be a matter of open discussion so that the community can learn from it. I must also stress that the above represent the FINDINGS of the Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence, and we are referring those findings to Berkeley for an appropriate response.



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