Is Plagiarism a Crime or Just a Condemnable Inspiration Method in the Digital World?!

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author BC designed the study, performed the aphorisms and quotes analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MC managed the analyses of the entire study. Author BC managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of plagiarism in Romania, as well as in other countries, has become a mass one, thanks to the excessive use of www, characterized by the means of transmission and circulation of information. In this order of ideas, we could say that the most affected areas are academic and creative ones. To express our knowledge about plagiarism in a slightly more original form, in the present paper, we correlate the few aspects related to plagiarism that we could notice in some artistic manifestation, such as aphorisms, thoughts, epigrams, speeches and interventions, with the presence of the phenomenon of plagiarism in the context of new information technologies. We included passages from the types of writing mentioned above, to capture and emphasize the

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phenomenon of plagiarism beyond its well-known connotation. Out of the approximately 18-20 creations used, only 2-3 come to affirm an acceptance attitude and to embrace the plagiarist. The vast majority of the creations consulted condemn plagiarism and, by themselves (especially aphorisms), makes funny jokes when it comes to plagiarism. As it was expected, in the end, we concluded that although there is a side in each of us that would accept the temptation of plagiarism and would gladly embrace the ephemeral benefits associated with the phenomenon, there is also a side that makes us aware that what we do not like not to do to others.

Keywords: Research methodology; inspiration method; plagiarism; aphorisms.

ABBREVIATIONS

Plagiarism	: A form of presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or wothout their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement;
Copyright	: A form of legal protection given to content creators through the assignment of specific rights to works that qualify for protection;
Trademark	: A sign capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one enterprise from those of other enterprises, trademarks being protected by intellectual property rights;
Clone plagiarism	: Copying an exact passage (or the entire work) and passing it off as your own, in this context there are no citations.
CTRL+C & CTRL+V plagiarism	: Copying an exact passage (or the entire work) and passing it off after making tiny changes to the content to create smooth transitions, and make it seem as though the content as your own or that is not copied, in this context there are no citations.
Remix plagiarism	: A combination of paraphrasing and copying passages, also with no citations associated, and there are like in the case of CTRL+C/CTRL+V plagiarism only small changes made to the content in order to create smooth transitions.
Find & replace plagiarism	: Copying exact passages (or the entire work) and changing keywords throughout the piece without changing the main portion of the content, and, of course, in the context in which there are no citations;
Recycle plagiarism (self-plagiarism)	: Includes re-using your own work or failing to cite yourself in subsequent work that references the original, and even in this context no citations are present;
Hybrid plagiarism	: A blend of work or a veritable combination of properly, sometimes even perfectly, cited sources and copying of passages with no citations.
404 error plagiarism	: Refers to citing sources that are inaccurate or non-existent to back your claims;
Aggregator plagiarism	: Refers to the act of properly citing all sources in the work, however, leaving out any original thought, ideas or arguments.
Mashup plagiarism	: Copying passages from multiple sources and mixing them up within the new work, case in which there are also no associated citations.
Re-tweet plagiarism	: Properly citing all sources in the work, but relying too much on the original work's wording and structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many lines have been and will be written about science. In a certain order of ideas, it is science that underlies almost everything humanity has consciously accomplished over time. Today's society would probably have had a different story without the certainly considerable contribution of the scientific activity for more than 2000 years [1,2].

The scientific knowledge of the world, as we all know, has gradually developed, through small and huge steps. Thus, over the years, numerous scientific discoveries have followed one another, which have contributed to the cultural endowment and to the progress of society [1,2]. The most numerous of the scientific elements are routine observations and recordings, contained in research reports, non-scientific reports and small communications, each having its own importance within the mechanism of the documentation act.

In an era of mass communication, the role, but also the real and virtual central position of the media in relation to societal progress, dominate high level discussions. Studies in the field of media offer different views on social-cultural life, on economy and politics, and even on circumstances in which they can change or adapt to the standards of the information society, which imposes a new type of media culture and a new type of information culture. The latest definitions of information culture directly address the issue of using information ethically. In this context, one of the skills that researchers and people working in the field of mass communication must acquire is to use information within the limits of ethics and legality.

Lately, due to the facilities offered by the information and communication technologies, in all sectors of the society and under all aspects of the activities undertaken, syntaxes such as information society, communication society and so on, have been imposed, to designate a new existential reality, in which access to information is primed [3,4]. As such, information and communication technologies are the support of all components of fundamental and applied scientific research in various fields [5], being used to numerically simulate complex interdisciplinary processes, to supervise and manage experimental processes in laboratory facilities, but also in all applications in the field of information transmission.

In today's society, defined by this new reality [4, 6], the success and survival of institutions and individuals, with political or social responsibilities, depend on the ability to locate, analyze and use information resources efficiently and wisely. In this context, the increasing pressure of the Internet development, but also the way we collect information by browsing or using search engines, more and more frequently, have changed the way of carrying out a documentation, a research paper, or even a simple essay [7].

Using the Internet in documentaries, the temptation of students, and beyond, to plagiarize has increased greatly in recent years. In just a few seconds, using a search engine, and typing in the keywords associated with a topic, sites that provide full text information are ready to be copied [7]. Thus is born what we call plagiarism, although plagiarism exists in various forms, as stated by M. Cucereavii, making analogy that even painting is a plagiarism of nature [8].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Beyond the current concerns regarding the scientific research and the teaching-learning-evaluation activity, specific to the teachers, it is appropriate to pay special attention to the creations of different nature. This is how, in this study, as well as in its extended version, a series of the most unique creations most of them created in the last 10-15 years, as part of our language and cultural spirituality, found a well-deserved place. The unique creations, as form and content, we referred to earlier, of which we can mention aphorisms, thoughts, proverbs, famous lines, or various forms of versification, can serve as a foundation to complete and validate the plagiarism. Precisely in this aspect, we aimed at their use, in order to emphasize, in various forms, the impact that plagiarism has in the digital world.

The collection of the material, as well as the documentation regarding the plagiarism, was done in the last 5-6 months, when we were put in the situation to check a series of materials made by the students. Although the approaches subject was the ecological house, at that time, ignoring the topic addressed by each student, we came to the idea that excessive use of online documentation platforms only is not beneficial. Students do not even assume the paragraphs they are copying, let alone adapting it to their own personality and feelings.

Starting from our observations from working with students, we decided to see and, finally, to highlight the way literature relates through its creations to the phenomenon of plagiarism. Thus, we collected, analyzed and integrated in the study a series of definitions, epigrams and hexagrams, but especially famous words, which we identified in some platforms with a very well defined palette of literature approach, such as and the case of the frequently used one, respectively citatepedia.ro. Within this platform we identified the most diverse materials, their selection being made with great difficulty, given that an attempt was made to highlight pure plagiarism, and we tried to keep a friendly tone and as appropriate as possible for the presentation, without entering into controversy or heated debates, attacks to characters who have plagiarized or deceived their own condition by other less orthodox methods.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Some Issues Regarding Plagiarism

We can consider that plagiarism has a long history behind it, and in the foreground an individual who creates and another who, without intellectual or moral scruples, becomes guilty as he borrows the creation of the first one. The loan itself is problematic, as the act of creation is not paid, as it is very clear from the definition given to the plagiarist by Francisc Gavrileţ - a poor man who, giving rejections/ With his delicate pen,/ Has resorted to loans/ Without paying interest [9].

Also, in the everyday reality in which the spoken words betray some writers, the printed ones reveal the plagiarists [10], Elena Bassu finds an inspired formula to catalog the plagiarist - In the delimited literary space/ There is an individual aiming treacherous key moment,/ As in the pocket of the mind, unlocked,/ To put his paw after any idea [11].

About the plagiarist's guilt we find out from Mircea Ionescu-Quintus' epigram that it is not so serious, the plagiarist still has an excuse - He stole from the sacred fire,/ But God forgive us,/ Because he is not the first culprit,/ Prometheus also stole [12]. Another excuse is assigned to the plagiarist by Dan Căpruciu through the epigram - The skilled plagiarist/ He is not a thief and he has an excuse:/ He is the man who fell in love,/ With the same muse [13].

Remaining in the same unorthodox context of theft - Pinching ideas, easily forgive/ Carelessness and stupidity,/ Convinced that even in art/ Stealing, you learn ... craft [14], we find the plagiarist as belonging to the category of thieves, as it results from the hexagram - Some steal money, chickens,/ Goats, grain, horses, cars,/Others steal diamonds,/ Or appetizing wives./ And he steal, my dears,/ He is a thief, but of ideas [15].

The plagiarist is therefore an individual who does not have his own merits and possesses those of others, or a man without his own value, who parasitizes the value of another. In other words, it is comparable to a drone that feeds on bee pollen. In this sense, we can say that the plagiarist endangers the fruits of the others work, and even the right to recognition of merits. Nowadays, as successful careers are based on the recognition of merits, it goes without saying that the plagiarist's intentions disarm even the chance to evolve of the true content creators. If we exaggerate a little, we can confirm that plagiarism is like murder: no matter how well a murderer erases traces, there are still some that reveal the crime, and the plagiarist is all the more guilty the more he strives to delete them.

The crime of which the plagiarist is accused comes in the favorable context in which it is stated about plagiarism that it is a literary coincidence composed of a compromising primacy and an honorable consequence [16]. However, the same context was not surprise by the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, in which plagiarism is defined as a literary, artistic or scientific work of someone else, appropriated (in whole or in part) and presented as a personal creation. Basically, plagiarism means using the work created by other people without mentioning the source or intellectual property of the respective authors on the data, in other words we are talking about the assumption by a person of information that does not belong to them.

Although plagiarism is not clearly delineated, we can say that it is constantly spreading; and we were inclined to believe this cruel truth, as David Boia also stated in one of his epigrams - This phenomenon hurts,/ All over it is expanding,/ Even on the coast, tourists,/ Many have plagiarized ... the nudists [17]. We said that there are no clearly defined limits of what plagiarism means, there are many words to describe the concept - as revealed in Fig. 1 [18]. In such a

context, we take for granted the statement - If you steal ideas from one person, it is called plagiarism, and if you steal ideas from several people, it is called research [19].

Such a statement is more current now than it was in the past, which means that today nothing can be written inspired by just one author, as Jose Gasset stated in The Revolt of the Masses - Breaking the continuity with the past, wanting to start again means to aspire to go down and plagiarize the orangutan [20]. On the other hand, Lucian Blaga brings an aphorism with which we completely agree - Imitating someone's high ethical qualities has never been considered plagiarism [21].

In plagiarism, as we have noticed, the last hand not only tries to hide the first hand (the creative hand), but also does so. Sometimes it does it so well, with so much enthusiasm and skill, so that you get to see the nice part of plagiarism - The greatest tribute a plagiarist can bring you is to not be able to change a phrase from what what you wrote [15]. In other words, you come to believe that if you have been copied or plagiarized, it indicates that you have created something productive, valuable and long-lasting, that will be perpetuated [22].

However, there are cases, when the act of plagiarism is not that it is not well done, but being taken to the extreme it monopolizes, in particular, the negative energies of the creative hand; if we

are allowed to talk about extremes in plagiarism, Valeriu Cercel shows us, with great skill, what he considered to be the culmination of plagiarism - The greatest plagiarism,/ Which exceeded the measure,/ It was when it was copied/ Including even the signature [23].

Undoubtedly such a gesture entails the antipathy of the creator; moreover, the injury in the intellectual pride and the deep wound appear, which are just some of the many symptoms associated with plagiarism [24], which upset the creator and misrepresent the originality. We are in consent to consider originality as an undiscovered or undetected plagiarism [25]. And this in the conditions in which the villainy unites people more than humanity, the thief more than the honesty, the mediocrity more than the intelligence, the plagiarism more than the originality, the vice more than the virtue etc [15].

Because we were talking about mediocrity, vices and plagiarism in the same intervention, we consider that it is not appropriate to stop right now and precisely at the surface plagiarism, which occurs naturally when - The volume is not complete, friend,/ Documented critics tell us,/ For it lacks exactly the list/ Of the authors consulted [26]. Plagiarism knows of course several types - as we shown in Fig. 2 (adapted from [27]), after which we can catalog it, but regardless of these, the phenomenon remains the same - theft, a risk not always assumed.
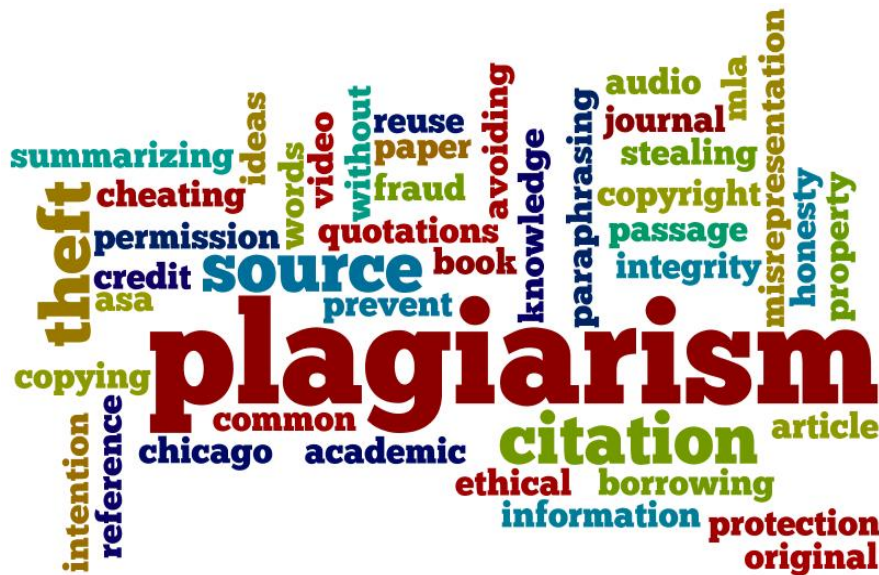

Fig. 1. A mind-map example for plagiarism concept

Also, in order to fully understand the meaning of some of the terms associated with the plagiarism phenomenon, we decided to offer some additional explanations, in the form of definitions [28-31], in the section dedicated to them. In a picturesque note, the epigrammer Valentin David shows us that one can make fun of trouble relative to the risks of the profession - You can be a plagiarist,/ Doctor or notorious drunkard,/ Nobody takes you in the spotlight,/ Until you are prime minister [32].

Here's how, starting from the question "Is plagiarism reprehensible or is it just an invention-response of people to the daily scientific evils of society?!", we realize that plagiarism can have repercussions, that it can be more than just a tool on the way to a successful career; or worse, that it can be the milestone of an individual who can change destinies. In this context, in our humble opinion, plagiarism accesses the list of convictions.

3.2 To Be or Not to be ... on the Side of the Copiers?!

According to the good manners, which are less and less associated nowadays, the duty of the youth must be to challenge and fight against corruption, no matter what form it takes. However, there are many who embrace a series of vices, although much is said, including the art of copying, if we can call it art.

The associations between art and copying pass seamlessly from one generation to another, from one individual to another, diminishing through the process of copying itself, what we might call and consider as models, which appear less and less in our daily life. Vasile Gavrilescu in one of his interventions, in Parables, showed, not long ago, the very essence of what we said earlier, namely that if we still copied each other, we ended up missing the authentic models [33]. Of course, when we talk about authentic models, we are naturally tempted to talk about success.

But success is hard to achieve, if not impossible sometimes and most often entails copying and envy of others. The relationship between the two elements, between success and copying, is well defined by Pablo Picasso himself in one of his classic quotes already, namely - Success is dangerous. You start copying and copying yourself is much more dangerous than copying others. It leads to sterility [34]. And yes, success is really dangerous. It is sometimes as dangerous as a lie, which in turn has a special relationship with copying. For example, in Crime and Punishment, the great Dostoevsky rigorously considered that lying with originality is almost better than copying the truth told by another; in the first case you are human, in the second you are just a parrot [35].

As can be seen so far, in the examples presented above, it is certified that the act of copying is closely related to the success, but also to the lie, respectively the lack of models. Besides, we can associate copying with theft, in the sense that we give credence to what was said by the same artist Pablo Picasso - Good artists copy, great artists steal [34]. But why would Picasso associate theft with copying, and why does he consider copying to be insufficient on the road to success?!

The most likely answer, to the above question, is given by Nigel Cumberland in the 100 steps to a successful life, his book, when he states that it is not enough to copy a boater, an accountant or an eminent teacher, if you tell yourself that you will not be as successful as they are [36]. In fact, he also makes us consider copying as something positive, at least in terms of the copy-success relationship, stating that - If you have the talent to copy indigo, this could be the key to your success. By observing and learning from successful people, you can increase the learning curve and achieve your goals more easily [36].

However, let us not fall into the trap already prepared, in believing that the phenomenon of copying is a beneficial or even worthy to be followed and carried out. We have to be careful when copying, even if the temptations are great, and the sensations and results are unexpectedly wonderful. And this, even in the extremely favorable context in which to copy writers more experienced than you, is wonderful, it's like you're a child and someone holds your hand and teaches you how to go [37].

In essence, however, things in terms of copying are completely different. And they must be seen from a completely different point of view, from a completely different perspective. As Edgar Degas also said, naturally, in one of his speeches - one thing is to copy what you see, but it is much better to draw what can only be seen in memory ... there, memories and fantasies are freed from the tyranny exercised by nature. Which seems normal to me [38].
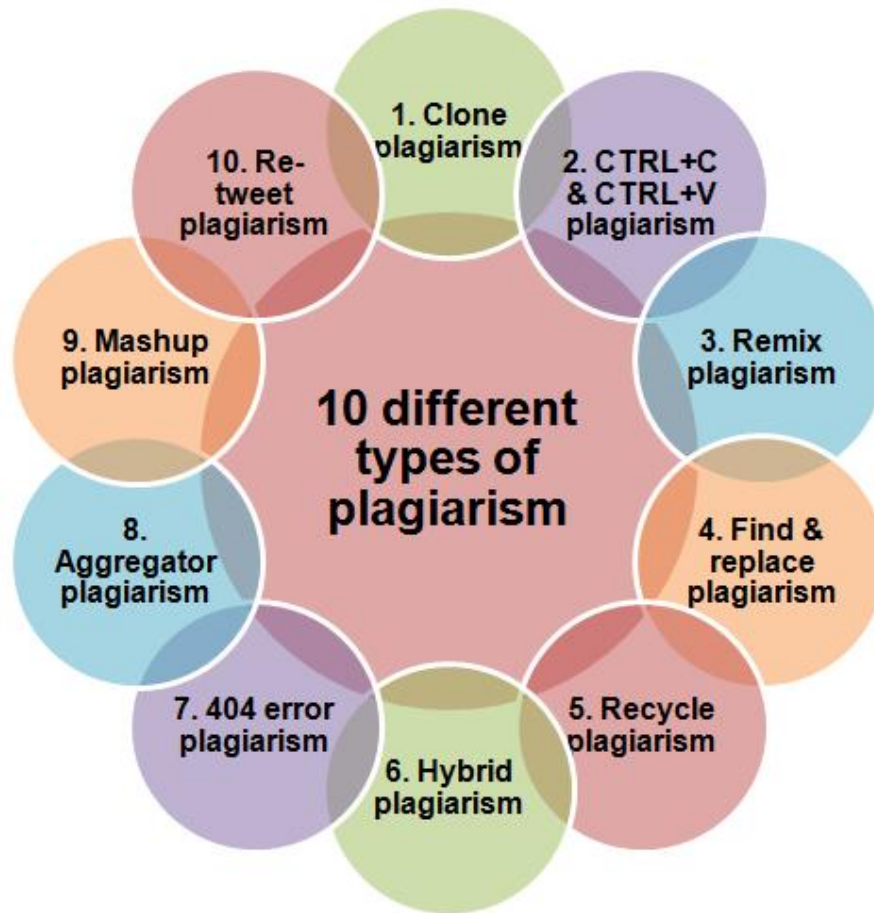
Fig. 2. Classification of plagiarism in 10 different types

We are talking about such a tyranny that is inherent in us, as individuals, and the beginnings we have, in the sense that we are practically born with the temptation to imitate, to copy, to try to overcome our situation and comfort zone. To surpass ourselves. But that doesn't excuse us at all. Moreover, as Jack Ma also states, we should go beyond what is in nature and in our nature to do with everyone else around us - You should learn something from the competition, not copy it. If you imitate it, you will die [39].

It is quite possible, close to certainty, that things do not stand this way. Besides, who would have been willing to assume the act of death just because he or she dared to copy?! We tell you that no one thinks and does not go so far with copying. And so it happens, even if we are not practically aware that the beauty of life does not lie in copying. Paul Cezanne, another world-renowned artist, in order to complete the aforementioned, noted a not at all hilarious fact,

that at least in painting, copying does not have much purpose [40].

Plagiarism is somewhat set aside, precisely in order to succeed in immortalizing some pleasures that come to beautify life. In fact, painting in nature does not mean copying an object; it means to make a sensation. In other words, between painting - as an art of humanity, and copying - as a shortcoming in today's society immersed in far too much information, there is not much bridge. We also strongly state, as agree with Paul Cezanne, in whose view painting must not copy the object slavishly, but must capture the harmony between its many relationships [40].

In the same way, we continued to believe that the time of the copies is over, and not just because we saw young people reorienting themselves to copy exams in an increasingly digitized way, but for the simple fact that society

are slowly responding to this phenomenon. If you used to put a copy on your sleeve or write your answers in the palm, now, when students around the world are preparing for the exam season, copying has really entered the high tech era. Even if Google Glasses, smart watches, smart pens are available on the profile market, and the modern child has a wide range of gadgets available to fool even the most watchful teacher, there are still odds of success in the fight with the copying phenomenon.

Beyond the attention of the teacher, even the governments, and in this case the relevant ministry (the Ministry of Education and the associated administrative forums), they focus their attention on copying. There are more and more cases where governments are starting to react to the threat of supertechnology and digitalization of copying.

We firmly believe that any pupil, student or, in general, any person who is subjected to an examination is subjected to the temptation to copy; in the absence of a surveillance system, even the most honest of competitors will succumb to temptation. Also, no matter how drastic are the measures taken to prevent fraud, there will always be increasingly efficient methods of copying. However, the effectiveness of these methods is questioned as long as even those who are local or central supervisors themselves have integrity issues (they copy at tenure, take bribes, their superiors have plagiarized doctoral dissertations, etc).

That being said, we are far from agreeing with the phenomenon of copying, and moreover we support anti-copying initiatives. The copier and copiers no longer have to find shelter in any society, whether it is the Information Society, the Knowledge Society or the Conscious Society. If

the latter is reached, then it is appropriate to take an attitude and not to fall prey to fraud of any kind, to practically fight against malicious, even bad practices.

Copying does not provide stability and consistency. Copying does not bring long-term satisfaction. And schools need to make sure that this phenomenon stops. Schools must act appropriately against copying, and incidents of this nature must be reported to central boards that organize all kinds of exams, interviews or other competitions. Schools must, as institutions and not only, take note of this phenomenon which is not appropriate today. It must discourage the act itself and those who perform it, especially young people.

Not being on the side of copying, attempts of fraud and of those who invoke them, only in the spirit of meeting the needs of the moment or obtaining undue benefits, it seems to us, by far, the best position, in terms of professional ethics and deontology. It is not moral for someone to make an effort to succeed or to strive for success, and for someone else to come and only reap the fruits. Such a thing is no longer possible. This has to end as soon as possible.

There needs to be a change in this respect. We must fight the phenomenon of copying and we must do this for each of us. We must focus on stop copy-paste initiatives – as suggested by Fig. 3 [41].

Change must start from the bottom, from the youngest, from those for whom society promises access to success. We must not neglect the emergence of copying at any level of society, especially where copying can produce adverse effects, through access to undue success, or, even worse, to undeserved powers and rights.

Fig. 3. An example of anti-plagiarism message

Copying and copiers must be blamed. The phenomenon itself, in our humble opinion, must not lead to major changes in society. Copying and implicit plagiarism should not discriminate against the competence of individuals. May such practices have as short a life as possible from now on. May the new generations not tolerate the undue benefits and rights associated with copying and plagiarism, to vehemently condemn the injustice of our day.

4. CONCLUSION

If at first we asked ourselves "Is plagiarism reprehensible or is it just an invention-response of people to the daily scientific evils of society?!", now we are inclined to believe that plagiarism has always existed and did not appear as an invention-response to the frauds of society. Not nearly. We also consider it reprehensible, and not only when it can bring about major changes in society.

Plagiarism has always had, has and will have repercussions. Most often, however, they make a discordant note during the life of the creator. This is precisely the problem, as Pascal Bruckner also noticed - I would go through libraries and write down my supply of scenes, metaphors. From each author we did not take, out of prudence, more than one or two terms, a word and its attribute. I didn't steal, I pinched: performed at this microscopic level, the fraud could not be detected, it was a trivial mess. On top of that, I respect an absolute principle: to plagiarize only the dead, the living ones are so susceptible [42].

From the same perspective, the entire study, developed using the descriptive survey design, was intended to be a newsworthy issue describing the phenomenon of plagiarism in the context of the New Information Technologies. Also, to emphasize the key elements of the research carried out, as could be seen by going through the present material, an extremely varied material was used, starting with classic quotes, epigrams, aphorisms, aphoristic and epigrammatic definitions, etc. Thereby, the artistic and literary property of the study was successfully highlighted through artistic-literary creations, most of them available online.

That is why, in the end of this limited study, both from the perspective of the materials used (last 10-15 years), and from the point of view of the time actually dedicated to the study, we totally declare ourselves against the unorthodox practices of those who steal ideas. Also, we are more than absorbed by what Ion Luca Caragiale stated in one of his interventions - Whatever is said, in all the world, artistic and literary property, like all properties, is and must be respected; the more one reveals or defends the dangerous view that plagiarism is legitimate, of course one must be poorer in literary property - and people who are busy melting the old coins of others and turning them into new coins to the expenses they spend are called calpuzani, in the market, and plagiarists in literature [43].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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