

PLAGIARISM IN GERMAN DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS: BEFORE AND BEYOND ZU GUTTENBERG

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Abstract: In 2011 activists at the GuttenPlag Wiki publically documented the extensive plagiarism in the dissertation of the German Minister of Defence, Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg. The final tally—63% of the lines on 94% of the pages—was shocking and he was forced to resign, but this was neither the first nor the last doctoral dissertation in Germany to be found to contain plagiarism.

In 1865 the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Marburg published a broadsheet with the names of two persons caught plagiarizing in their dissertations. The Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bonn decided in 1965 to rescind the doctorate in German Literature of a Dominican Order priest. The college of deans voted, however, not to depromote him for reasons still unknown.

In 1990 another case at the University of Bonn was widely published. One professor published an extensive documentation of the plagiarism in another s dissertation. In 2005 there was a case at the University of Tübingen, at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, that was widely reported on. Many other cases, however, have not been discussed publically at all.

Since zu Guttenberg there have been many documented cases of plagiarism. VroniPlag Wiki has documented over 30 cases of plagiarism. Some universities have rescinded the doctorates on the basis of the documentations, but others have refused to even publish explanations as to why the extensive text parallels are not considered problematic.

This talk will present both historic and current cases.