Personalising impersonal science

Narrative-ethical analysis of some authorship cases

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IQ Scientific Institute for Quality of Healthcare

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Cases like these…

- PhD-student generates data for research project and makes first analysis.

- Due to pregnancy, PhD-student leaves project, initially temporarily. Yet, after the birth of her child (with health problems) it sadly appears to be impossible
to continue her project and it seems that will not return.

- Another PhD enters the project and starts to write the article based on the already data and first analyses of the first PhD.

- When the first PhD comes to know this, she demands to be on the author list of the article.

- The consequence is a dispute about authorship.

Goal

- **Not:**

  solving the normative-ethical problem:
  What is the right thing to do here, in this situation?

- **But:**

  deeper understanding (hermeneutics)
  of what happens here and how scientific texts actually come about

- **Central claim:**
  - Situations like these result from *plot fractures*
    in the standard-story of authorship
  - Tentative: Critical awareness of such plot fractures may prevent
    authorship disputes?

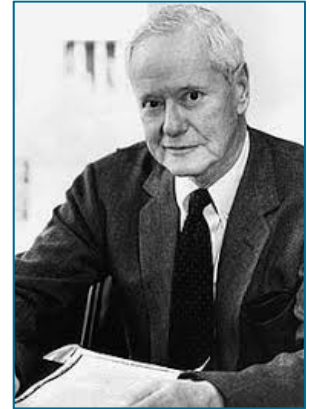# Cutting edge of two discourses

Discourse I: Scientific treatise

- Impersonal description of method, process, results of research

- Disinterestedness as ideal

- Background assumptions: value-free, facts, objectivity

Discourse 2: Narrative

- Personalized story of what happened, plot with characters who develop in situations that occur

- Personal interests, ambitions, motives and desires in reality

- Background assumptions: values, norms, subjectivity and intersubjectivity

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Merton – the ideal of disinterestedness

- Robert K. Merton: arch father of sociology of the professions

- Implicitly assumed ideal norms in scientific practice
  ('the ethos of science')

  - C : 'communism'/communality
  - U : universality
  - D : disinterestedness
  - O : organised
  - S : skepticism

- Non-ideal counter-norms

Cutting edge of two discourses

Discourse 1: Scientific treatise

- Impersonal description of method, process, results of research

- Disinterestedness as ideal

- Background assumptions: value-free, factual, objective

- Merton's **ideal norms of science**

Discourse 2: Narrative

- Personalized story of what happened, plot with characters who develop in situations that occur

- Personal interests, ambitions, motives and desires in reality

- Background assumptions: values, norms, (inter)subjectivity

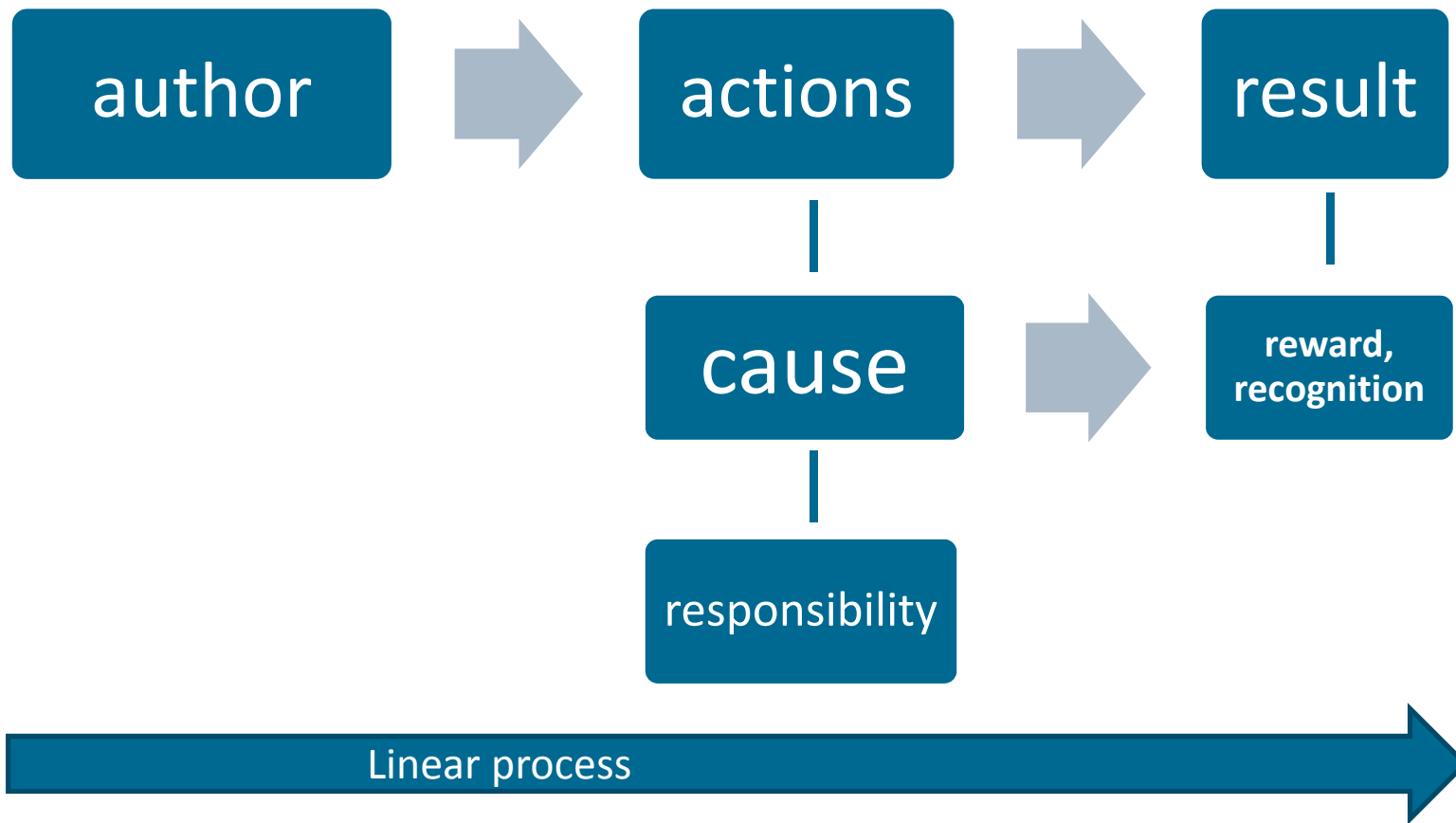- Both **ideal norms** ánd **non-ideal counter-norms**

Discourse 2: authorship-narratives

Basic plot

- Single author

- Doing all the work

- From beginning to end
  in a linear process

- And, therefore,
  - deserves all credits, reward
    and recognition
  - and is responsible for the
    result

Basic authorship-story

author → actions → result

actions — cause → reward, recognition

cause — responsibility

result

Linear process

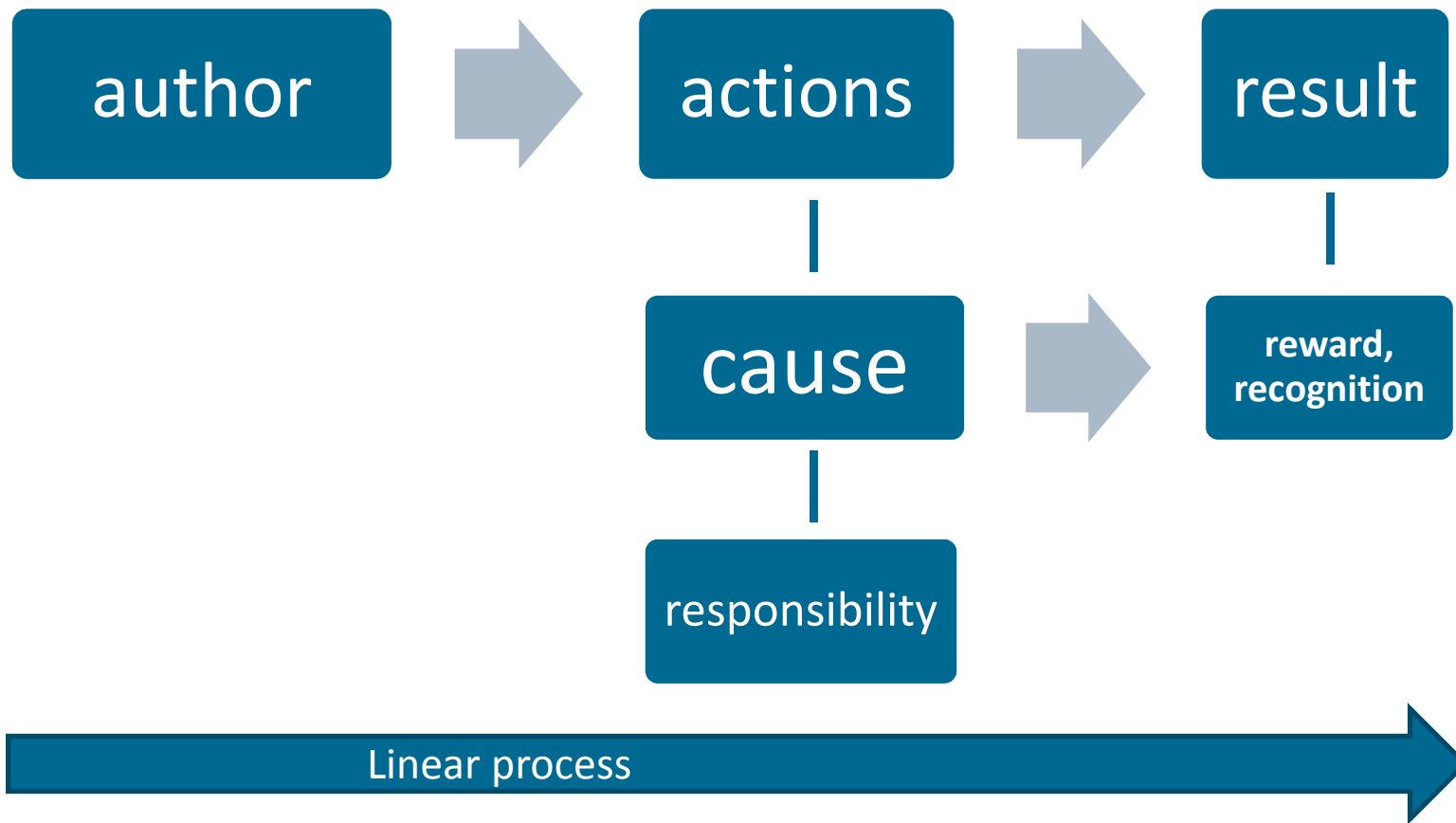Radboud umc

Discourse 2: authorship-narratives

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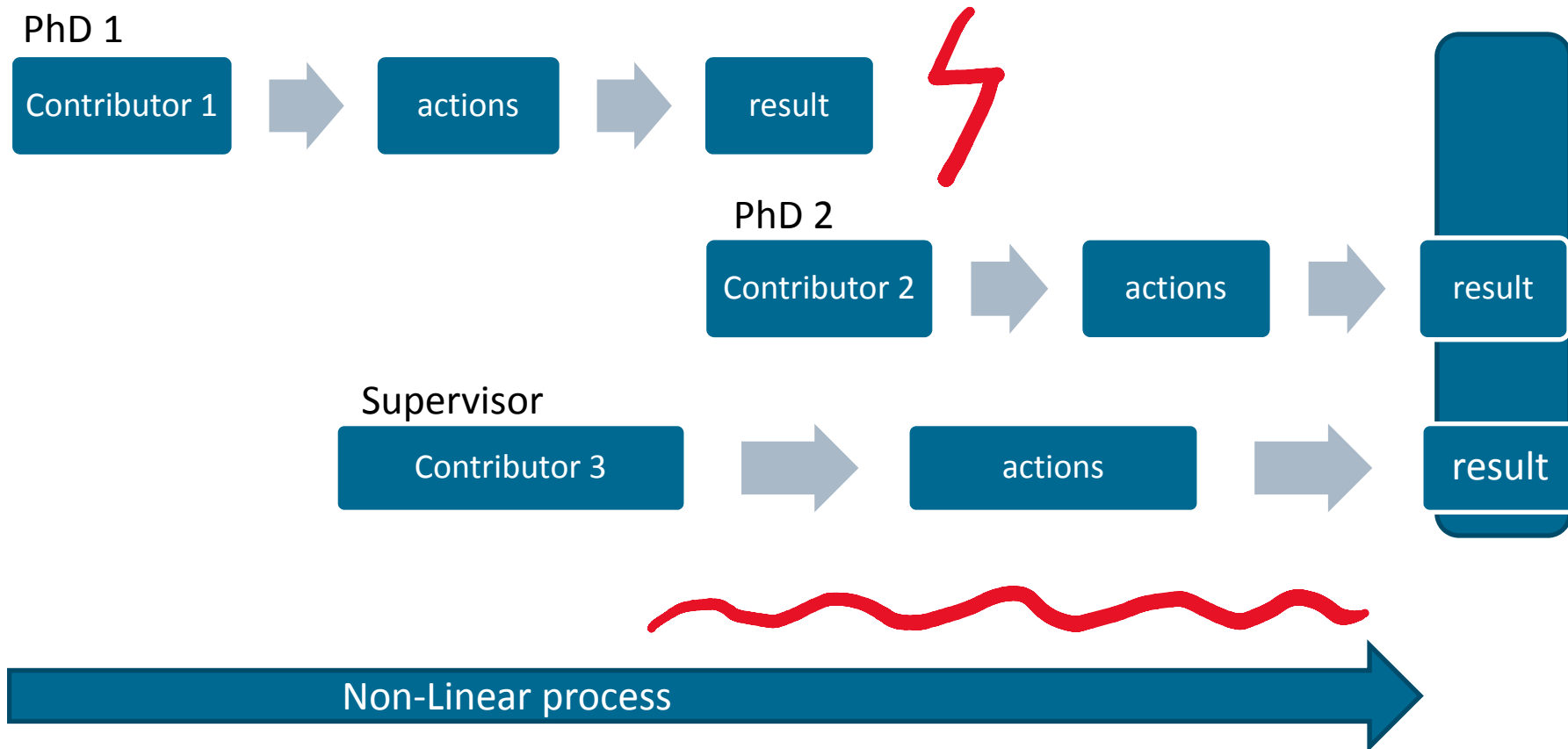 - and is responsible for the result

Usual more complicated plots

- More than one or even many authors

- All contributing in one way or another, more or less, to the work

- From somewhere to somewhere during the process

- And, therefore, **disputes** arise about who
  - deserves credits, reward and recognition
  - and is responsible for the result

Basic authorship-story

author → actions → result

actions → cause → reward, recognition

cause → responsibility

Linear process

Complications in authorship-story

PhD 1

| Contributor 1 | → | actions | → | result |

PhD 2

| Contributor 2 | → | actions | → | result |

Supervisor

| Contributor 3 | → | actions | → | result |

Non-Linear process

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Questions to you as conclusion:

- What do you think?

  - Does this distinction between
    discourse 1 and 2 make any sense?

  - Does the distinction between
    basic authorship plot and
    the complicated stories with plot brakes
    make any sense?

  - Do they help us to deepen our understanding in
    what goes on and what goes wrong
    in cases like the one described?

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