Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences
ISSN: 2284-5976 | e-ISSN: 2501-0409
Covered in: ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, Index Copernicus, CrossRef, CrossCheck, J-Gate, Google Scholar, Ideas RePeC, Econpapers, Socionet, KVK, WorldCat.

2025, Volume 12, Issue 1, pages: 103-108 | doi: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenphs/12.1/86

On Academic Integrity. A Book Review

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Abstract: *This review examines Antonio Sandu's work, "The Architecture of Integrity. Beyond Plagiarism. A Handbook on Academic Ethics and Integrity for Students and Researchers", a comprehensive volume that reconceptualizes academic ethics through an affirmative-appreciative paradigm. Moving beyond prohibitive approaches focused solely on plagiarism prevention, the work establishes integrity as a positive ethical value grounded in coherence between professed principles and conduct. The volume's most significant contribution addresses the ethical challenges posed by artificial intelligence integration in higher education, introducing concepts of post-plagiarism, ideatic plagiarism, and the necessity for methodological transparency. The author proposes institutional policy frameworks for ethical AI utilization and reconceptualizes the professorial role as intellectual mentorship rather than information transmission. Aligned with Romania's 2024 Framework Code of Ethics, the work critiques scientometric evaluation systems and advocates for equity-based academic assessment, offering essential guidance for navigating contemporary ethical dilemmas in education and research.*

Keywords: *academic integrity; artificial intelligence ethics; affirmative-appreciative ethics; post-plagiarism; educational partnership.*

How to cite: Nistor, P. P. (2025). On academic integrity. A book review. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences, 12*(1), 103-108. https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenphs/12.1/86

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The volume *The Architecture of Integrity. Beyond Plagiarism. A Handbook on Academic Ethics and Integrity for Students and Researchers – in the Context of the New Framework Code of Ethics and University Deontology*, authored by Antonio Sandu (2025), constitutes a significant contribution to the academic corpus devoted to the problematic of integrity in higher education and scientific research. The work subscribes to a transdisciplinary approach, integrating philosophical, juridical, and deontological perspectives to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the ethical foundations of contemporary academic activity.

Conceptual framework and theoretical foundations

The central thematic of the volume concerns the construction of a coherent architecture of academic integrity, transcending the predominantly prohibitive paradigm that restrictively associates academic ethics with the combat against plagiarism. The author proposes a fundamental reconceptualization of academic ethical discourse through the adoption of an affirmative-appreciative perspective, which displaces the focus from interdictions and sanctions toward the cultivation of intellectual virtues and the promotion of moral excellence. This epistemological reorientation marks a transition from a negative ethics, based on *interdictum*, toward a positive ethics, centered on the valorization of human potential and the development of exemplary academic practices.

The volume articulates a fundamental distinction between morality, as a system of values governing individual conduct in the broad social context, and ethics, as an ensemble of norms and principles regulating behavior in specific professional and institutional environments. This conceptual differentiation permits a nuanced analysis of academic responsibility, situated at the intersection between the personal dimension of integrity and the deontological exigencies of the university profession.

From a philosophical perspective, the work traces a genealogy of ethical thought, from Aristotelian virtue ethics and the Kantian categorical imperative to utilitarian consequentialism, proposing a reflexive synthesis that mediates the tension between the ethics of intention and the ethics of consequences. Integrity is defined not merely through the absence of ethical deviations, but as a substantial coherence between the values professed by the individual and their effective conduct, thus constituting an affirmative value and not merely a conformity with normative interdictions.

Innovative contributions to the theory and practice of academic integrity

The volume distinguishes itself through several theoretical and methodological innovations that position it at the vanguard of specialist literature:

1. Integration of the new national normative framework. The course is conceived in close correlation with the provisions of the Framework Code of Ethics and University Deontology of April 2024, offering a critical analysis of its implications for Romanian higher education. Complex problematics are addressed, including the uniformization of ethical standards at the institutional level, the organic integration of research with didactic activity, and the consolidation of trust as a fundamental operational value in the academic milieu.

2. Critique of scientometric evaluation systems. A notable contribution consists in the problematization of academic evaluation systems based exclusively on quantitative metrics. The author signals the ethical risks inherent in a predominantly scientometric approach, which can generate distortions in the recognition of innovative contributions from niche domains or research of high theoretical complexity. A recalibration of evaluation systems is proposed that operates the distinction between formal equality and substantial equity in the recognition of academic merit.

3. Application of game theory to academic ethics. The volume introduces elements of game theory to analyze the dynamics of ethical behaviors in competitive contexts, offering a sophisticated analytical perspective on the strategic decisions of academic actors.

4. Conceptualization of educational partnership. The work reconceptualizes the student-professor relationship as an authentic educational partnership, grounded in the rights and freedoms of the academic community, enshrined in the University Charter and national legislation. Essential dimensions are detailed, including academic freedom, the right to petition and contest, and the active participation of students in university life.

5. Methodological innovation and epistemological transparency. The author demonstrates remarkable methodological transparency, disclosing the elaboration process of the volume, which involved transcription assisted by artificial intelligence (Descript) and editing with the support of the Claude 3.5 Sonnet system. This practice exemplifies the principle of transparency in the utilization of advanced technological instruments, constituting in itself a model of academic integrity.

Contributions to the ethics of artificial intelligence utilization in the academic milieu

The most significant contribution of the volume resides in the comprehensive and prospective approach to the ethical problematic generated by the integration of artificial intelligence in education and research. This dimension confers upon the work a special relevance in the context of current technological transformations and prefigures essential directions for future institutional policies.

1. Definition of the new technological paradigm. The volume introduces and conceptualizes the phenomenon of technological singularity – the hypothetical moment of the transcendence of human cognitive capacity by artificial intelligence – as well as post-singularity, exploring the implications of these scenarios for the human condition and for the epistemological foundations of knowledge. The impact of A.I. on creativity, intellectual property, and the structure of academic professions is analyzed, problematizing the ontology of authenticity and originality in the era of generative technologies.

2. Redefinition of copyright and academic responsibility. The work frontally addresses the juridical and ethical dilemmas of A.I.-assisted or A.I.-generated creation, underlining the necessity of a reconceptualization of traditional categories of authorship and originality. The principle is established according to which A.I. cannot be recognized as author or co-author of scientific works, since it cannot assume intellectual and ethical responsibility for the generated content. This methodological position clarifies the epistemological status of A.I. instruments as cognitive auxiliaries, not as autonomous intellectual agents.

3. The imperative of transparency and the problem of post-plagiarism. The volume articulates the concept of post-plagiarism or digital plagiarism, designating subtle forms of intellectual inauthenticity facilitated by generative technologies. The obligation of methodological transparency is accentuated: researchers must explicitly disclose the modalities of utilization of A.I.-based instruments in the research and writing process. This exigency of transparency becomes a constitutive component of academic integrity in the digital era.

The work problematizes the phenomenon of ideatic plagiarism, distinct from textual plagiarism: A.I.-generated content may be original from an expressive perspective, yet the underlying ideas derive from the vast corpus of texts on which the system was trained, thus generating an ambiguous form of intellectual appropriation that undermines the authenticity of the contribution.

4. Institutional normative framework. The volume presents a comparative analysis of regulations adopted by prestigious institutions (Harvard, MIT, Stanford) and from the Romanian university space, proposing an institutional policy model to govern the ethical utilization of A.I. in education and research. This model operationalizes principles of transparency, responsibility, and adaptation of evaluation methodologies to new technological realities.

5. Reconceptualization of the university professor's role. In a contribution of particular significance for the future of the didactic profession, the volume argues that university professors can no longer be simple vectors of informational transmission, a function that A.I. can fulfill with increasing efficiency. The professor's role is fundamentally reconfigured as intellectual mentor, facilitator of critical thinking, and mediator of passion for cognitive activity. This transformation implicates what the author terms the third literacy – the competence of critical and ethical utilization of artificial intelligence instruments.

6. Reform of academic evaluation. Confronted with the risk of examination fraud through the discrete utilization of A.I., the work proposes a substantial reform of evaluation methodologies. The introduction of an oral component is recommended to verify the depth of conceptual comprehension, as well as the replacement of conventional finalization works with tasks that solicit a high degree of creativity and inventiveness – the capacity to produce paradigmatic changes, a dimension that current technologies cannot authentically replicate.

Conclusions and academic significance

The Architecture of Integrity. Beyond Plagiarism represents a rigorous synthesis of theoretical foundations and ethical practices in higher education, adapted to contemporary normative and technological realities. Through the adoption of an affirmative-appreciative perspective and through the articulation of a comprehensive vision of emerging ethical challenges, particularly those generated by the integration of artificial intelligence in educational and research processes, the volume offers a solid conceptual framework for the formation of academic professionals capable of practicing research and education with ethical excellence.

The central values promoted – public trust, epistemic neutrality, academic independence – configure a coherent ethical architecture, essential for the consolidation of the social legitimacy of higher education and for the authentic progress of scientific knowledge. The work thus constitutes an

indispensable resource for students and doctoral candidates, as well as for faculty members and researchers, offering the theoretical and practical instruments necessary for navigating the complexity of ethical dilemmas in the contemporary academic milieu and for constructing an institutional culture of integrity.

Statement on the Use of AI Tools | *The final editing of this review (copy-editing & proofreading) and the translation into English was accomplished with the assistance of the AI software Claude Sonnet 4.5.*

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