

# Notes on the volume “The Ethics and Integrity in Education and Research”

## Review

Antonio SANUD & Bogdan POPOVENIUC

*Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare, Tritonic, 2018*

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### Abstract

Lately, ethics has become the ghost that haunts Romanian society, such as communism in the writings of the founders of the International.<sup>1</sup> And just as the above-mentioned ghost, ethics makes its bed in the ideological stand of the anger of the working class, to understand of any person who feels entitled to criticize in general a degenerate society, whose “principles” therefore are no longer! And like his bigger sister, who haunted us with startles such as equality and friendship – concepts that are also ethical in the end – ethics comes with the anti-corruption fight, the antiplagiarism, that is, something similar to class struggle: them against us!

**Keywords:** *ethics; integrity; research & development; codes of ethics.*

### *Introduction. On the “ghosts” of ethics*

Lately, ethics has become the ghost that haunts Romanian society, such as communism in the writings of the founders of the International.<sup>2</sup> And just as the above-mentioned ghost, ethics makes its bed in the ideological stand of the anger of the working class, to understand of any person who feels entitled to criticize in

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifestul partidului comunist* (Bacău: Vicovia Publishing, 2014).

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general a degenerate society, whose “principles” therefore are no longer! And like his bigger sister, who haunted us with startles such as equality and friendship – concepts that are also ethical in the end – ethics comes with the *anti-corruption fight, the antiplagiarism*, that is, something similar to class struggle: them against us! Transforming ethics into an instrument of purification of the alienated society – in the Marxist sense – by the wanderings in the transition to no one no longer knows what, this branch of philosophy descends from the ivory tower of reflection on moral conscience in the apparent thicket of ethical codes, the deontological ones and those of conduct often made in the hurry to respond to social and normative pressures,<sup>3</sup> and less to a need to clarify what is morally acceptable in one field or another, of social and especially professional practice. The transformation of ethics into a phantom takes place by giving up its original spirit, the search for virtue, including the professional one, and the ways to take the most correct decisions in line with ethical values. Instead of these two legitimate concerns, a number of elements have been introduced in professional ethics, but especially in ideological discourse on ethics, on *combating corruption, eliminating the lack of integrity*, etc. These concerns, which are legitimate and are of particular importance for the functioning of society in ethical parameters, diverted the emphasis from the prescriptive function of ethics to the punitive one. Instead of having an ethical discourse on best practices in various socio-professional fields,<sup>4</sup> and developing them in consensus with ethical values in the society, most ethical codes emphasize sanctions and ways to apply them.

Ethics in education and research has joined the ghostly concert of shadows, often distorted, of the presence of stagiriture in today's society, particularly in education, especially in higher education, and in the production, management and dissemination of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> The ethical discourse in the field of education and research in Romania is almost entirely absorbed in the issue of plagiarism. This problem is not neglected either by the magnitude the phenomenon seems to have,

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<sup>3</sup> Mădălina Albu, “Ethics adviser role in public administration,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences* 6(1) (2017): 41-50, doi:10.18662/lumenss.2017.0601.04.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Sandu, “In digital pursuit of happiness. Appreciative ethics and virtual philosophical café,” in *The Socratic Handbook. Methods and Manuals for Applied Ethics and Philosophical Practice*, coord. Michael Weiss (Germany: Lit Publishing, 2015), 349-364.

<sup>5</sup> Luis Iván Sanchez Rodriguez, Dora María Llado Larraga and Adriana Dominguez Saldivar, “Policies and mechanisms to promote the production of knowledge and its effects on university scholars: Comparative analysis among public universities in the northeastern region of Mexico,” *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 10(4) (2018): 315-331, doi: 10.18662/rrem/91.

especially by the impact of politics on science, plagiarized doctoral theses being the product of many politicians, with important functions in the administrative apparatus, in the legislative sphere, but also in the judiciary power. The lack of academic integrity, when appearing in the case of a politician or judge, is publicly perceived as a de facto corruption, casting the presumption that its lack of integrity may also affect its activities related to the exercise of political<sup>6</sup> or judicial power.

The need for ethics,<sup>7</sup> in research at least, far exceeds the simple fulfillment of the need for trust in science, for which the integrity of the researcher is indispensable. Such a *first level*, of obtaining and maintaining public confidence in the results of scientific research, requires clear rules to combat inadequate conduct in research, plagiarism being one of them, to which the production of results, or their distortion, the exclusive presentation of the results supporting research assumptions, faulty publication, in publications that do not provide or ensure at a minimal level scientific peer-review over published articles, falsification of citations, and scientometric indicators to ensure an unqualified trust of a researcher or group of researchers, of an institution, etc.<sup>8</sup> At a second level, however, there is the social responsibility of the researcher and the research institution, the way in which the results of the research are obtained – including the costs with which these results are obtained, and the risks to which the participants in such research may be subjected<sup>9</sup> – consequences of the implementation of results.<sup>10</sup> All these

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolai Gori, “Codes of ethics for political parties and their role in communication (in the time of electoral campaigns),” *Postmodern Openings* 9(1) (2018): 147-164, doi:10.18662/po/10.

<sup>7</sup> Roxana-Ionela Achiricesei and Ioan Cezar Anuței, “Etica profesională,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 103-159.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194; Antonio Sandu, “Proiectul de cercetare. Repere etice și metodologice,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 195-228; Antonio Sandu, “Etica publicării științifice și a comunicării cunoașterii,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 401-436.

<sup>9</sup> Mircea Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 125-146; Ana Voichița Tebeanu and George Florian Macarie, “Etica în practica cercetării clinice pe subiecți umani în 6 țări europene din fostul bloc comunist,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 229-257.

<sup>10</sup> Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Inteligența etică și educația pentru guvernarea tehnologiei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 289-322; Laurențiu Dan Milici and Mariana Rodica Milici, “Considerații privind etica în cercetarea din domeniul științei, tehnologiei și ingineriei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 323-351; Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în*

concerns are, or should be, brought together in coherent ethical policies,<sup>11</sup> to provide the framework for the development of knowledge and the implementation of the *knowledge-based society*. All these concerns find a number of responses, of course partially, but important enough to be worth mentioning in the volume coordinated by Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc, entitled *Ethics and Integrity in Education and Research*, published at the end of 2018 by Tritonic Publishing House in Bucharest. The present paper seeks a critical reception of the abovementioned volume, from the perspective of its usefulness in the preparation of PhD students – especially – in the field of research ethics.

### *To learn ethics?*

The volume starts with a perennial question in the history of ethics: *can it be taught and learned?*, addressed this time by the French philosopher Jean Pierre Clero (2018),<sup>12</sup> in the good Philosophical tradition of both Platonic and Aristotelian inspiration. The chapter devoted to the learning of ethics is a philosophical one, a tribute to the history of ethics, without which the volume would not bear the burden of great philosophical and spiritual reflections on the nature of ethics. The fact that the state is, for example, the bearer of the public will, dares to implement the values unanimously accepted by society, even to the individual's detriment? Or is the latter called to assert himself as a single personality and as a moral person entitled to self-affirmation? The ethical grounds of democracy are recalled by the French philosopher when he considers the state to be *a teacher* who is entitled to form young generations in the letter and in the spirit of good. But good is not something given by itself, and the knowledge of good is a difficult attempt both for the philosopher and for the educator. The mere knowledge of moral doctrines is not enough, according to Clero. The teaching of ethics must be accompanied by her exemplary experience by the Master, thus re-opening the discussion of philosophy as a way of life. In the French philosopher's opinion, it is important in learning ethics, to disentangle the student, the learner of ethics, the scholar, from his own self, to pay attention to the *Other* as a philosophical partner of the Self! The analysis of the relationship between

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*educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Bouriaud, Mitică Drăgușin and Vasile Pătrașcu, “Analiza critică a cadrului legal și instituțional de implementare a Legii nr. 206/2004,” in *etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 437-451.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Pierre Clero, “Poate fi etica predată și învățată?,” in *etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 15-35.

affections and reason cannot be missed precisely because this chapter firmly stands ethics, at least teaching and learning it, in the philosophical tradition being in itself a manifest against the arbitrary rupture of it, in the opinion of contemporary ethicists, by the great currents and moral doctrines. Without being able to criticize the intention of this epigonic attempt to *re-establish the metaphysics of morals* in the nowadays education on what is the basis of the law of ethics, namely the theoretical moral analysis, whether perennial, social inspiration, or the ephemeral outcome of the social construction of ethics<sup>13</sup> we cannot fail to notice that, in many situations, the resistance of the theoretical ethics and its claim to dogmatically impose on applied ethics,<sup>14</sup> especially when applied ethics are often taught by theoretical philosophy teachers with little experience in the practice of ethics, can lead ethics to derision by appealing to the titans of philosophy of previous centuries, but who are perceived to have limited relevance in the context of today's society, where for the first time the destructive capacity of mankind exceeds the geographical and temporal proximity of the moral actor. At the other end, applied ethics, in this case ethics in education and research, is taught by professionals from different areas, often convinced of the equivalence between professional competence and ethics. If you are a good professional, engineer, lawyer, or sociologist, you certainly know the essential aspects of the ethics of the research area! Nothing less true, since the ethical reflection on a profession does not derive directly from the theoretical corpus of the respective scientific disciplines underlying the professionalization of a field.<sup>15</sup> Teaching ethics in a field requires substantial training on both the main ethical theories that apply, and the ethical issues and dilemmas that may arise in that professional or research area.

The information becomes almost palpable, so Maria and Mircea Leabu<sup>16</sup> almost feel the pressure. Under this *pressure* of knowledge, the authors consider it necessary to *renounce paternalism in education*. The educational ideal of the cognitively *autonomous student* seems as an optimal solution for the elimination of boredom, which the students show against the exhausted exposures, filled with the *wisdom of the teacher*, often translated by banality, obsolete and exposed information without the possibility of a critical reception. School responsibility

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<sup>13</sup> Antonio Sandu, *Etica și practica socială* (Iași: LUMEN, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Cristina Tripon, “Learning to learn: Critical thinking skills to help students for life,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences* 6(2) (2018): 1-10, doi:10.18662/lumenphs/06.

<sup>15</sup> Ana Frunză, *Către o nouă expertiză etică. Deconstruind valorile etice* (Iași: LUMEN, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Mariana Leabu and Mircea Leabu, “Educația în zorii mileniului al III-lea. Încercătura etică,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 37-59.

goes from transmitting knowledge to creating skills to manipulate and reorganize information in such a way that knowledge can be generated, not just assimilated. It is the paradigmatic shift in education which could allow the system to adapt to the demands of the information society and its pressure. However, it is important to underline that the *reform of education* is a classic desideratum, the Romanian educational system, and almost the entire society is in a process of continuous reformation, yet the finalities of many of these educational reforms are still not clear. The introduction of a new ethics in education based on student autonomy and the partnership between teacher and student, although not mentioned effectively in the text, seems to be the central element of this reform proposed by the authors. Given the stated essayistic nature of the chapter, we do not see any developments in educational policies coming in to meet the announced reform, but only the general frameworks in which it could take place.

As if completing the previous essay, the chapter on ethical values in education signed by Daniela Jeder<sup>17</sup> deals with the problem of *student-centered* education efficiency! Normally, education should be student-centered, but the long tradition of *teacher-centered* and almost all-knowing teacher education makes the (re) centering of student education a desideratum of ethical valence. In a market of education, based on supply and demand, the *education provider*, the bidder exhibited his products, the *capital of knowledge*, which he managed for the benefit of society by passing it on to the younger generations. The globalization of the educational market and the free access to education for students who can access competitive education services in a highly competitive market for education providers make universities orient themselves towards the needs of the student and personalize the educational system for their needs. But focusing on the student is an end to the teacher's monopoly in choosing the finality of education and its content. The teacher-student partnership transforms *classical teaching* into sequences of learning situations. This approach is convergent with the one based on competency-based learning, the stated ends being those of not passing on competencies, but of developing skills. Of course, this educational paradigm requires a new ethos to regulate the relationships between teachers and students, whose core value is partnership, mutual respect and readiness for learning. The classical ideal of a *good teacher*, a competent professor with a rich level of knowledge is questioned, the good teacher is rather the one who facilitates learning and is able to learn with the student.

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<sup>17</sup> Daniela Jeder, "Valori etice în discursul educational," in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 61-102.

Professionalization of ethics is a response to the challenges that contemporary society makes the traditional ethicist face, who is accustomed to discussing moral virtues and conscience, and even moral reasoning, but rather difficult to adapt as an ethical counselor, for moral case law, which the practitioner in the field health, research, or education deals with.

### *Ethics in research-development*

Ethics in research and development is correlated on the one hand with bioethics,<sup>18</sup> on the other hand with the ethical evaluation of technologies<sup>19</sup> and technoethics.<sup>20</sup> Ethics of research itself has as a starting point the understanding that the concrete ways in which research is carried out and the implementation of its results can no longer support the modern ideal of axiological neutrality of scientific research, nor the primacy of the interest in knowing in the face of other moral considerations that make the research undesirable or even unacceptable.

A history of bioethics on its ethics of research on human subjects<sup>21</sup> focuses on the rights of research participants. This *obsessive leaning* towards the continual assertion of respect for the participant's autonomy exposed as a bioethical principle in research on human subjects,<sup>22</sup> along with non-harm, benevolence, and social justice, and manifested at least by the compulsory expression of the informed consent of the participant to the research, ensures the research, especially the one in the biomedical field of a human character, by weighing the benefits of carrying out that research and the risks or inconveniences that it may bring to the participants. The progress of science and technology cannot be axiologically forbidden, as the researcher's subjectivity cannot be totally eliminated from the

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<sup>18</sup> Mircea Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 125-146.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Evaluarea etică a tehnologiilor în domeniul bio-medical,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 353-398.

<sup>20</sup> Laurențiu Dan Milici and Mariana Rodica Milici, “Considerații privind etica în cercetarea din domeniul științei, tehnologiei și ingineriei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 323-351; Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Inteligența etică și educația pentru guvernarea tehnologiei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 289-322.

<sup>21</sup> Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație.”

<sup>22</sup> Andreea Popescu, “Informed consent. Ethical perspectives in assessing the quality of medical services. Case study at the Dorohoi Hospital,” *Eastern-European Journal of Medical Humanities and Bioethics* 2(1) (2018): 33-74, doi:10.18662/eejmhb/08.

design of the research project<sup>23</sup> or from the later stages of the actual research or the dissemination of the results. If subjectivity is considered to be higher in scientific areas within the social area, it cannot be totally excluded from research in the natural and life sciences, at least because of *research interests* that privilege at the level of funding and / or publishing one or many more areas of research.

Ethical normativity is dealt with in the paper on three distinct levels: the international normative context,<sup>24</sup> the internal normative framework governing the functioning of the National Commission for Research Ethics,<sup>25</sup> but also at the micro level, the concrete analysis of the content of codes of ethics valid in various higher education institutions in Romania.<sup>26</sup>

An interesting conceptual proposal comes from Bogdan Popoveniuc who speaks of ethical intelligence in the context of “education for technology governance”. The author refers to a possible ethical endorsement of “technology governance ethics” with the better-known ecological humanist education. Basically, Bogdan Popoveniuc tells us, with a direct reference to the ethics of achieving technological singularity, it is particularly difficult or even impossible to foresee the consequences of the emergence of a technological singularity, which is why the ethics of technology development should be less attentive to the instrumentalist aspect of the analysis technological advances in the artificial intelligence industry, for example, as well as the social and cultural significance of technological progress and mutations in human culture through so-called human bio-amelioration.

### *Instead of conclusions*

The volume coordinated by Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc is welcoming through its openings to the various sides, that together constitute ethics in education and research, and which can thus place this branch of ethics in a self-contained scientific register in the process of being formed, being a a transdisciplinary synthesis between the philosophical, theoretical and prescriptive-

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<sup>23</sup> Antonio Sandu, “Proiectul de cercetare. Repere etice și metodologice,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 195-228.

<sup>24</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194.

<sup>25</sup> Bouriaud, Drăgușin and Pătrașcu, “Analiza critică a cadrului legal.”

<sup>26</sup> Tomiță Ciulei, “Analiză comparativă a Codurilor de Etică din universitățile de top din România,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 453-463.



normative perspective, with wide legal accents, and the socio-psychological perspective of analyzing the universe of values and beliefs underlying one or another of the ethical decisions.

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