

Academic Ethics and Integrity Assignment

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Abstract: This paper investigates the challenges of academic integrity and the definitions of ethical conduct in higher education. Drawing on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, it assesses current academic standards and develops a practical framework for those operating within these environments. The focus shifts away from how students utilize Artificial Intelligence and toward how the academic system itself influences our conceptualization of AI. The objective is to provide a clear, actionable approach to modernizing the culture of integrity.

Keywords: Human-Centered Education, Efficiency Trap, Intellectual Autonomy, Academic Integrity, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

Introduction

This study will be divided into 3 parts. The first section analyzes the current state of academia, concerning a certain practice relevant in this field, more specifically focusing on the usage of Artificial Intelligence in education and how this can affect the core values of academic integrity. The second section introduces Aristotelian values and arguments which are key elements for finding a middle ground in this discussion. Instead of trying to use the classical deontological route, teaching what students are and are not allowed to do, the discussion advocates for a deeper engagement contributing not only to their academic growth but to their growth as an individual, as a person with values, principles. The aim is to discuss the goals of education and why this matter is the fundamental concept for the discussion. Lastly, this essay offers a practical framework which can easily be implemented in academia, because being rigorous in an academic setting, being honest and truthful with yourself and with your development “isn’t this thing you do one time. It’s a way of living. It’s fundamental” (Holiday, 2020).

1. Falling for efficiency

The academic system is seeing an unforeseen enemy, Artificial Intelligence. However, this imminent threat is not necessarily directed towards the system, or at least not directly, but towards the individuals, towards their ability to think critically, to gain knowledge, to properly function with rationality.

The efficiency trap is a significant concern in academia. We think AI is helping us, saving us time, being resourceful with the tools at hand but in reality, our usage of AI is stripping us of our autonomy and of the potential cognitive abilities we could have gained if we would have engaged in the academic process. Cal Newport wrote a very insightful article precisely on this topic, about how students use Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT to be more precise. We are facing a two-edged sword because “AI tools can enhance productivity, they may also promote a form of ‘metacognitive laziness,’ where students offload cognitive and metacognitive responsibilities to the AI, potentially hindering their ability to self-regulate and engage deeply with the learning material” (Newport, 2023). So ultimately, it comes down to what we strive to achieve in an academic setting and what we promote. If the academic setting strives for productivity, for maximum efficiency, then we might find ourselves in a very delicate position of needing to use AI to meet these criterias. If, through the academic setting, we wish to create intellectuals, distinguished thinkers, then it is crucial to emphasize those values, that intellectual effort is not only needed, but desired. We have to teach that strain and pressure are part of the academic path, or at least are part of the “proper” academic

path. Choosing the easy way out should not be categorized as cheating the system, but cheating on ourselves and on our progress.

2. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics as a (new) framework

To address this crisis, we must return to the key principles, the foundation on which we wish to build. That is why it is crucial to address the relevance of Aristotle's ethics. If we wish to have morality within a system, in our case in an academic setting, then we first shall cultivate the character of the individuals. The infamous *We are what we repeatedly do* should be, in a very narrow sense, an academic motto. Academic integrity should be an end in itself rather than something viewed as a means to an end. "Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else" (Aristotle, trans. Ross, 1999, p. 10). What it means is that education has the role and the goal to cultivate and shape a student's way of thinking, seeing, and understanding. The goal is to shape one's character and not a mere process of grade acquisition.

3. A practical framework for academic integrity

Translating Aristotle's wisdom into the current academic setting requires a shift of perspective. Instead of practicing and valuing a culture of panopticism, a constant surveillance of students and their academic performances, we should focus on a culture of development and organic growth. The goal shouldn't be catching a cheater, but rather developing a scholar. "A number of virtues are central to being a good researcher. Those include courage, respectfulness, resoluteness, sincerity, humility and reflexivity" (Macfarlane, 2010, p. 3). Macfarlane explains beautifully how key values from the Nicomachean Ethics, such as those mentioned above, should be the main focus in academia. If we are aiming for a productive academic culture, we certainly need to pay attention to the defining and fundamental characteristics of the individuals involved. Consequently, when we define a "good student", do we call upon a student who meets deadlines, who submits their work promptly or do we have in mind the image of an individual who values the process of becoming rather than the superficial end result, who is more implicated and concerned with the doing of an essay rather than just making it to be checked off the never ending to do list? What does the academic setting desire, a doer or a thinker?

4. Final remarks

This study has examined a very relevant problem in academia and for the culture of integrity within this community: the usage of Artificial Intelligence. After examining the provided arguments, it is crucial to make the following recommendation. If we wish to have a sound academic culture, we shall be resilient when facing Artificial Intelligence. It is the turning point at which we should rethink and reevaluate the core values which stand as the baseline for this community and understand that what academia should promote is the development of the individual, providing a human-centered approach to education and to living. If the goal is effectiveness, then Artificial Intelligence will do the trick, most likely even perform better than most researchers and students. However, if the goal is to shape minds and build character, we will see different results in the way students approach the issue. Instead of asking and assuming the good old *Did you use AI to write this essay?*, it is time to ask something more relevant, more personal, more fundamental: *What virtues did you practice while completing this essay?* The aim is not to eradicate the use of AI, that would be not only unrealistic but also impossible. The obstacle we are facing is one which is much greater:

building a character which will not be tempted to use AI as a shortcut, but as a tool to aid one's character-building process. "AI tools could enhance various user skills, such as analytical thinking, reflective analysis, writing, and composition, if used consciously and ethically, seeking a seamless integration of human skills and technology. However, it is the user's ethical values that determine their application, with the risk of substituting texts without preserving originality and thereby leading to self-deception" (Ghandar et al., 2024, p. 2156).

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