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Volume 23, Issue 01, June 2026

**Book review:**  
***Arcana Technicae: El derecho y la  
inteligencia artificial***  
**(*Arcana Technicae: Law and Artificial Intelligence*)**

Carlos Amunátegui Perelló  
Valencia: Editorial Tirant lo Blanch 2021. 128 pages.  
ISBN 978-84-1355-020-6. 22 euros (eBook).

*Reviewed by Jorge Balmaceda Hoyos\**



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DOI: 10.2218/scrip.12285

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\* DIGI+ fellow, sponsored by the European Commission for the MSCA Global Postdoctoral Fellowships (101081609 – DIGI PLUS – HORIZON-MSCA-2021-COFUND-01) programme under the Horizon Europe (HORIZON) Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions & Support to Experts. Researcher, School of Law, University of Galway, Galway, Ireland; [jorge.f.balmacedahoyos@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:jorge.f.balmacedahoyos@universityofgalway.ie)

## 1 Defining and historicising artificial intelligence

Professor Carlos Amunátegui Perelló's *Arcana Technicae: Law and Artificial Intelligence*, is a timely and ambitious attempt to contextualise artificial intelligence (AI) within contemporary legal reasoning. The book is written in Spanish, and no English-language or other foreign-language translations are currently available.

Its significance is heightened by the current Chilean debate on a bill regulating AI (Bulleted No. 16.1821-19<sup>1</sup> presently in its first constitutional stage), which, while inspired by the European Union's Regulation (EU) 2024/1689<sup>2</sup>, raises complex questions about transposing European regulatory models into a different cultural and economic environment. In this light, Amunátegui's monograph constitutes both an explanatory and a critical engagement with how law assimilates technological innovation across jurisdictions of the civil-law tradition.

*Arcana Technicae* is elegant in design and rich in learning. Structured in three chapters, it synthesises central issues concerning artificial intelligence and its legal implications, offering a Spanish-language bridge between technical and juridical discourse (a considerable contribution in a field dominated by English literature). Although concise, the work is accessible without losing rigour and succeeds in keeping its interdisciplinary core coherent.

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<sup>1</sup> Cámara de Diputadas y Diputados de Chile, Regula los sistemas de inteligencia artificial, Boletín No 16821-19 (7 May 2024) <<https://www.camara.cl/legislacion/proyectosdeley/tramitacion.aspx?prmBOLETIN=16821-19&prmID=17429>> accessed 9 June 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) [2024] OJ L 2024/1689.

The opening chapter introduces the concept and historical development of AI, tracing its origins to the Dartmouth Conference of 1956 and its subsequent “summers and winters.” The author’s pedagogical style makes abstract ideas tangible, explaining the structure and functioning of neural networks and their cognitive limitations (particularly their inability to abstract or manipulate concepts). Numerous examples help demystify these processes for readers unfamiliar with computational theory, enabling jurists and students alike to grasp the foundations of algorithmic reasoning.

Amunátegui also differentiates among expert systems, the Internet of Things, facial-recognition technologies, and autonomous vehicles, illustrating how these modalities shape the broader ecology of AI. His short yet accurate account of deep learning and the principal research schools captures the technological diversity underpinning AI’s current evolution. The section concludes by addressing two core challenges of algorithmic systems (bias and opacity) and proposes responses grounded in European guidance, notably the Ethical Guidelines for Trustworthy AI.<sup>3</sup>

While introductory, this chapter establishes a solid conceptual foundation. A more critical reflection on the epistemological limits of “explainability” in AI could, however, enhance the dialogue between law and cognitive modelling – an area increasingly relevant to questions of accountability and due process.

## **2 Artificial intelligence in law**

The second chapter, “Artificial Intelligence in Law,” is the analytical heart of the book. Here, Amunátegui examines how automated systems intersect with

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<sup>3</sup> High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, *Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI* (European Commission, 8 April 2019) <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ethics-guidelines-trustworthy-ai>> accessed 9 June 2026.

fundamental legal and ethical principles: due process, equality before the law, respect for fundamental rights, human dignity, proportionality, and transparency. He identifies potential conflicts between algorithmic decision-making and procedural fairness, pointing to the need for human oversight (under user control) and adequate governance mechanisms.

The discussion is grounded in comparative jurisprudence. The author references *State v Loomis* (2016)<sup>4</sup>, a seminal case on the use of risk-assessment algorithms in criminal sentencing and contrasts it with corporate responses such as Amazon's and Google's adoption of "Machine Learning Fairness".<sup>5</sup> These examples anchor abstract principles in concrete regulatory experiences, though the treatment sometimes leans descriptive; a deeper normative critique of how fairness is operationalised by private actors would have strengthened the argument.

Amunátegui's legal analysis extends beyond litigation analytics. He explores intellectual-property issues concerning AI-generated works, the potential legal personality of algorithms, obligations and contracts, and tort liability, areas often discussed in isolation but seldom synthesised coherently. Particularly engaging is his comparative use of Roman-law analogies, offering a doctrinal lens through which to assess the assignation of liability and ownership in autonomous systems. The scholarship here demonstrates both conceptual agility and cultural awareness, situating AI within a continuum of legal evolution rather than a rupture.

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<sup>4</sup> *State v Loomis* 2016 WI 68, 371 Wis 2d 235, 881 NW 2d 749 (Wis 2016).

<sup>5</sup> This refers to Google's commitment to avoiding the creation or reinforcement of unfair bias. Google, 'AI Principles' (Google AI) <https://ai.google/principles/#our-ai-principles-in-action> accessed 10 June 2026.

### 3 The future and the profession

The final chapter reflects on AI's transformative potential for the legal profession. Amunátegui provokes the reader with a deceptively simple question: Is AI "the future," or have we already entered its "present"?<sup>6</sup> The inquiry recalls Richard Susskind's thesis that the legal profession must reconsider its models of service delivery and knowledge production in the face of automation.<sup>7</sup> Amunátegui shares this view yet tempers it with realism: AI should not replace the lawyer but may reshape how the lawyer reasons, acts, and values human judgment.<sup>8</sup>

The author surveys examples of increasing automation (notarial functions, registries, archiving, and contract-drafting processes) and evaluates their expansion beyond common-law jurisdictions into continental practice. He devotes particular attention to online dispute resolution (ODR) mechanisms, which use by commercial chambers and digital platforms such as Amazon and eBay has demonstrated procedural efficiency without necessarily undermining fairness. Notably, he warns against inferring efficiency as justice, insisting that any digital process must preserve an avenue for appeal and procedural transparency. This insistence on human-centred safeguards distinguishes his contribution from purely techno-optimistic literature.

In discussing data and predictive analytics, Amunátegui traces developments from the 1970s statistical models to today's advanced platforms by Thomson Reuters, Tirant lo Blanch, and LexisNexis. He observes that not all jurisdictions have embraced these tools, citing the example of France, where

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<sup>6</sup> Carlos Amunátegui Perelló, *Arcana Technicae: El Derecho y la Inteligencia Artificial* (Tirant lo Blanch 2021) 97-103.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, Oxford University Press 2017) 59-122.

<sup>8</sup> Amunátegui Perelló (n 6) 108.

legislation enacted in 2019 restricts the use of certain predictive justice tools<sup>9</sup>. This law prohibits misusing magistrates' identity data to compare or predict judicial behaviour in criminal matters, effectively limiting predictive analytics to private-law domains. The case epitomises the tension between innovation and privacy, a topic ripe for further empirical exploration.

One of the book's most engaging sections concerns legal education. In the final chapter, Amunátegui questions whether current pedagogies have become obsolete or whether room remains for adaptation in a digital environment. Echoing Hunter (2020), he suggests that while many legal tasks — notably drafting and reviewing contracts — may be automated, the initial framing of a legal problem and the subsequent evaluation of algorithmic outputs will remain human responsibilities<sup>10</sup>. These require judgment, ethical reflection, and conceptual abstraction, capacities that no silicon-based system can yet emulate. Hence, he proposes revisiting curricula to emphasise analytical and ethical competencies over rote doctrinal learning. His argument echoes broader global debates about "law and technology" instruction but is contextualised effectively within the civil-law educational tradition.

#### 4 Concluding remarks

The principal virtue of *Arcana Technicae* lies in the author's ability to integrate technical, philosophical, and legal insights into a compact and approachable text. For Spanish-speaking audiences, it provides not only a translation of complex English-language debates but also an interpretive framework anchored in

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<sup>9</sup> Loi n° 2019-222 du 23 mars 2019 de programmation 2018–2022 et de réforme pour la justice (23 March 2019), codified in arts 226-18, 226-24 and 226-31 of the French Penal Code.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Hunter, 'The Death of the Legal Profession and the Future of Law' (2020) 43(4) *UNSW Law Journal* 1199.

Roman-law logic and continental methodology. Its pedagogical merit is undeniable.

Yet the book's brevity occasionally limits critical depth. While Amunátegui concisely outlines problems such as bias, opacity, and accountability, there is limited engagement with competing theoretical positions (particularly those emerging from critical algorithm studies or feminist legal theory) which could enrich the work's normative scope. Similarly, an explicit treatment of Latin American contextual realities (beyond the Chilean legislative reference) would further consolidate the comparative ambition implied in the introduction.

These caveats, however, are minor in comparison to the monograph's overall achievement. Amunátegui's command of both technical substance and legal doctrine makes *Arcana Technicae* stand out within the Spanish-language literature. It succeeds in making AI legible to lawyers without simplifying its complexity, and in portraying law as a living system capable of absorbing technological change while retaining humanistic orientation.

*Arcana Technicae* contributes meaningfully to the civil-law perspective on AI and legal transformation. By combining doctrinal clarity with conceptual breadth, it enables readers to situate artificial intelligence within the continuum of legal reasoning rather than outside it. The text's accessibility makes it suitable for a wide audience, from judges and practitioners to academics and advanced students, without sacrificing scholarly precision.

Future editions would benefit from incorporating developments in jurisdictions where AI is already operational in judicial contexts, notably Argentina and China, and perhaps from issuing a comprehensive English translation to extend its reach. Despite its concise scope, the work's synthesis of law, computer science, history, and ethics secures its place as a reference point in the Spanish-language scholarship on AI and law.