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PHILOSOPHY AND REFORM: A WORD ABOUT CURRENT PHILOSOPHY –
RELIGION DIALOGUE WITHIN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: The analysis aims at showing that the position of philosophy in society depends upon two factors: the real spirit of reform born from philosophy and the appetite of society for reform. The first part of the present study provides a short historical illustration of the genuine character of philosophy as a bearer of reform, while the second part of the work mentions different attitudes toward reform, as well as the problems generated by the intersection of these attitudes with the reforms promoted by philosophy. In addition, the paper intends to contribute to the understanding of the present-day status of philosophy within the Romanian educational system. In this respect, the dialogue of philosophy and religion is considered relevant to the topic. Besides this aspect, the work also mentions the dogmatic imprint of philosophy during the Stalinist epoch and the dogmatic inertia after 1990 – manifested in different and apparently opposed forms. Moreover, the study suggests that the improvement of the prestige of philosophy depends not only upon the self-criticism that Romanian philosophy has to develop but also upon the influence that this spirit of self-criticism could have on decision-makers. Philosophical self-criticism is a precondition and, at the same time, a part of the reform that philosophy initiates in the field of knowledge. Thus, the paper is to underline the importance of philosophy in giving direction and in providing the framework for social reform. From this point of view, the dialogue between philosophy and religion is difficult but possible at university level and in the field of research.

Key Words: crisis of philosophy, Romania, the institutional crisis of philosophy, reform, university, bureaucracy, philosophy, religion, dialogue, self-criticism

Etymological captatio

The following text intends to suggest that the entire evolution of philosophy as well as its social recognition and presence in educational institutions depend on the spirit of reform it endorses. But what is *reform*? A possible speculation views the link between the Greek exclamation (ρῆ) - expressing surprise, astonishment or calling attention - and the Latin prefix *re* - signifying the permanent renewing of an action initially revealed as limited, unfinished and requiring improvement. Thus, the response to an action is a re-action, i.e. a) the continuity of the action, b) a new action somehow in contradiction or even in opposition to the first one, c) the return to the previous status of the action. If the consciousness of the now inadequate character of the entire set of actions is acute, the reactions constitute a re-form. First of all, reform means being conscious that things are already obsolete and have to be reformed. Secondly, reform shows the intention to change - thus change as such, irrespective of the directions of this action: backward (and from this standpoint, there is considerable overlap between reform and the etymological sense of *revolutio*) or forward. Thirdly, reform points out the effort to improve the old status, to recover from certain languidness through some concrete measures, to correct the negative aspects within the considered framework, by preserving its genuine form and thus by restoring it.

Therefore, to reform means to consolidate the form of a structure. It is the result of the consciousness of the crisis of the given structure.

The historical context of the crisis of philosophy: Stalinism, post-Stalinism, bureaucracy and its inertia in present-day academic life

What does the *institutional crisis* of philosophy in Romania mean¹? If speaking about it, one is certainly interested not so much in the crisis of philosophy as such but in the diminished prestige that philosophers and philosophy have in the decision-makers' view, who do not consider they should be given an important place in the public sphere. This means the lack of considerable philosophical education in high schools² and universities, in opposition to the desire of the Romanian philosopher Ion Petrovici who, in 1926, imagined a common and large course in philosophy for all high school classes³. Surpassing the institutional crisis of philosophy could as well mean considering philosophers as promoters of public opinion⁴, as noteworthy opinion-makers, perhaps even as the grey eminences behind the political actors.

The purposely challenging statement mentioned above tends only to suggest that although the institutional crisis of philosophy and the crisis of philosophy are not necessarily interrelated, they cannot be grasped

without any reference to each other or without any connection to the status of society.

If, for example, during Stalinism one could not *formally* speak about an institutional crisis of philosophy – as “dialectical materialism” and “historical materialism”, philosophy was taught in high schools and in every university, not to mention its presence in the generalized political-ideological education and the fact that the more the system entered its crisis, the more the philosophical standpoint and the philosophical reference to Marx and Lenin lacked –, *philosophy was in crisis*. Certainly, in Romania any philosopher had an important place in society, although not within the public arena, since this one was a reduction of the complexity of the civil society and was confiscated by the “supreme leader” and the party leaders: but only if considering the total subordination of philosophers to the dominant ideology can one qualify the situation as “institutional crisis of philosophy during Stalinism”; otherwise, it only illustrates the simple *system crisis of Stalinism*. These two crises, of society as a whole and of philosophy as discipline, had an obvious influence on the *institution* of philosophy (the institution of philosophical education and the status of philosophers): *indeed*, this institution too suffered from the general Stalinist illness which meant the total subordination of the intellectual activity to (the unique) Stalinist ideology, and thus the Stalinist ideological criteria of the intellectual/philosophical responsibility and judgment concerning the consequences and perspectives of the intellectual/philosophical work.

The present state of things could be also analyzed from the same perspective. There is academic freedom, but without some real scientific dialogue and criticism, it is a rather unlimited expression of weak competence. Furthermore, there is pluralism in this framework but philosophy posits itself under the umbrella of mainstream ideology (that which is the substrate of both liberalism and conservatism, and also of social-democracy) if its bearers, the philosophers, do want (and they do) to be recognized as respectable members of academic philosophy⁵. This position of present-day philosophy determines a kind of inferiority complex that Romanian philosophy manifests when situating itself ideologically as an unconditional admirer of Western philosophy, i.e. selectively approached. If in the first 20 years of Stalinism, the model of philosophy was that of the Soviet Russia, now the model is the ideologically strongly selected Western wisdom. Obviously, this selection is not explicit but it is made with the science of self-censorship that contributes so nicely to academic recognition and thus to the privileges of this comfortable bureaucratic status⁶. Consequently, from 1990 onwards, some fields (as phenomenology) have developed, while other disciplines, like social philosophy, have not been professed anymore.

At the same time, the *bureaucratic* character of the Romanian society, university and academic research – inherited from Stalinism and also from

modern Romania (the end of the 19th century until 1944⁷) – generates a more visible “decrease of critical reflection”, strong bureaucratic mobility and recognition⁸, and thus a weak efficiency of philosophy in the solving problem of our knowledge and epoch. We cannot ignore that there are two intertwining social causes of this situation: the coexistence of the bureaucratic character⁹ of management in universities and research institutes, and the tendency to overdevelop the market-oriented principle within the entire education.

Do these aspects suggest that we are facing a crisis of philosophy in Romania? This last concept – crisis of philosophy – is only a mark, yet an important one, of philosophy as a whole. One should not forget that there is at least one philosophical field that is not in crisis at present: the history of philosophy and especially the history of the Romanian philosophy which is working over inexistent data before 1990 and interprets in an uninhibited manner (apart from the new dogmatism of the new *pensée unique*), the interesting Romanian philosophical and intellectual creation. On the other hand, one could certainly say that we are facing a crisis of philosophy in Romania just as the same could be said about world/Western philosophy, laying stress on the above-mentioned signs of bureaucracy and the complex of periphery within Romanian philosophy. Indeed, philosophy develops as an institution: that is “a procedure for the conservation of a knot, at risk of the cut which would be the dispersal of its elements”¹⁰.

Philosophical reform – a weapon against the crisis of philosophy

Could one conceive a crisis of philosophy when there are so many fields, researches, results – books, journals and conferences? Apart from the complexity of this problem, the answer to the question above could be positive only if one defines the crisis of philosophy as its *raison d'être* – the permanent new understanding and innovation of the modes of thinking about the senses of the perpetual new human life within a continuous new universe – would be exhausted. From this standpoint, if the spirit of reform in knowledge and society seems to be lesser/significantly lesser than it is necessary, one can say that we confront a crisis of philosophy. Furthermore, from the same point of view, one could hardly find in history an epoch of complete crisis of philosophy but rather the obvious crisis of some aspects covering some non-conformist offshoots situated in the *arrière-plan* and developing a new perspective in the name of *posse*.

As the present paper states, the crisis of philosophy is only a phenomenon of the movement of contemporary world philosophy. There are certainly some critical phenomena but at the same time there are trends of innovation, of sincere and enthusiastic philosophical challenges that philosophers address to the world in order to serve it. For this reason, to discuss the problem of the crisis of philosophy means not only to keep

attention to this mixture of reasons of pessimism and optimism, but also to consider the importance of the spirit of *reform* for philosophical thinking and the world as such. In the entire history of philosophy, the proof that philosophy was not in crisis was the reform it promoted as its main characteristic in a given epoch.

Indeed, philosophy was born under the sign of reform. The Greek lovers of wisdom have created a new type of thinking and thus a new type of knowledge: that based on rational demonstration and critical debate, therefore opposed to the former mythical one. As we know, this new type of knowledge is the ground of the entire European philosophy and culture¹¹. The rationalist approach – to question reality, the common opinions and authoritative statements as well, thus to transform them into problems, to challenge them with critically conceived arguments and demonstrations, to open closed solutions – was the permanent sign of rebellion of philosophical thinking against the single and dominant theologian truth, the closed universalism of authority. Later on, Francis Bacon brought a breath of fresh air to philosophy by openly emphasizing the prejudices in human thinking, the already ordinary and traditional *idola*¹². Yet, the German philosophy of Reform promotes the new modern view of activism in a thinking still dressed in old clothes. Kantian criticism and the system of Hegel, conceived in the same critical manner, have marked an otherwise baroque epoch. One certainly does not forget Marx's new philosophical pattern, Nietzsche's radical interpretation, Husserl's new path to understand the world and so on. As one knows, philosophy was the ground of sciences¹³, and the structure of scientific revolutions¹⁴ has its origin in the permanent spirit of philosophical reform. Philosophy and sciences all together had and have to struggle against the *argument of authority*¹⁵.

If sciences are those which today reveal, penetrate and disenchant the uncanny aspects and the images of the world, philosophy is that which warns on the significances of these operations as well as these uncanny aspects and images. *The sign of reform is mixing with that of rebellion*: against the fetishes of thinking, but also against the fetishes forged in society. In this respect, rebellious philosophy always asks the old question posed by Étienne de la Boétie: why do they not revolt?

Philosophy began as freedom of thinking, it is freedom of thinking. It is escape from reality by putting it under question, not by evading it. This spirit is difficult to keep, especially in a bureaucratic society. One has to admit that the philosophical requirements – equal rights to debate, equal responsibilities toward words, concepts, problems, arguments, texts and people – collide with the illusions of eternal truths and their support. In fact, these truths and support reflect the power relations in their concrete appearance. In our bureaucratic society, each philosopher struggles for his/her own bureaucratic recognition and posits himself/herself within the framework of power relations as explicit or unconscious ally and

spokesman of different parts of the dominant forces. Therefore, the philosophy of all of these philosophers exists as an institution that moves to preserve the knot they formed with different bureaucratic traditions.

It is true that generally the intelligentsia is an opportunistic category since it depends upon power relations. It is true that philosophers want to find a warm place and for this purpose, they enslave themselves to the dominant forces by providing the legitimating ideology of status quo. But the explanation of this social fact is not that philosophy itself would be exhausted¹⁶. If philosophy became a transfigured *laudator temporis acti* or unconsciously contributes to the preservation of status quo, this happens because of the constraint of (the present-day Romanian) power relations. Epistemology shows that this unconscious contribution manifests through the inertia of paradigms: in a shifting society, some philosophers want to respect/apply the former obsolete paradigms. This happens not only because the paradigm change takes place only after the agglomeration of contradictions have succeeded in hurting the philosophers' thinking, but also because philosophers move within the framework of clichés and judgments given and limited by the tradition of domination.

Obviously, philosophy is not a compact unit: philosophers are divided not only from the standpoint of fields, disciplines, schools, envy, but also from the one of ideology. But if the functions and consequences of the activity of philosophers are no longer important for society, if it seems that sciences took over these functions and consequences¹⁷, if it seems it would be better to exclude philosophy – since it can no longer say anything new and it only interprets the old texts¹⁸ –, we have to question the causes of these phenomena and representations. These representations are a veiled social critique and it seems to be a revolt, so a classical and specific philosophical attitude. But philosophy not only revolts, it also reforms. Thus it's important the kind of revolt.

A revolt without any consideration of its consequences is not philosophical at all. Would the death of philosophy be a desirable fact? Let us admit it. But the consequences are only that society would miss an instrument to judge the endeavors of sciences and that the power relations would no longer be dislocated by the force of arguments. The firm and conservative framework that hinders human existence in the present world is thus made eternal.

Certainly philosophy does not accomplish more than it can, and it is not only philosophy which could dislocate the irrationality of the present world. But it could be an instrument, and it is a *sine qua non* instrument of this operation if we critically judge and argument it, and do not "solve" it "radically", i.e. simply annulling it.

One could interpret the phenomenon of self-enveloping within the selected rationality of some old texts – for they protect us from the inimical and dangerous appearance of the present real world – as a sign of crisis of philosophy. We certainly motivate our position by underlining

how important it is to understand how people have thought and thus to create our partners of dialogue. However, besides our love for the history of philosophy and our specialization, it is vital not to remain at this stage. Philosophy is in crisis only if it refuses “the sign of reform”, so if it does not assume the present world as partner: if it does not criticize and self-criticize the present environment of man, its thoughts, institutions and culture. An important aspect of the condition of philosophy is its relation with religion.

What would the dialogue philosophy-religion mean?

The *dialogue* is a historical, i.e. a cultural human relation. Theoretically, it consists: 1) in the proposition of different rational arguments and the confrontation of these different arguments and 2) in the assumption of those arguments that seem to be more consistent. 3) Consequently, this assumption belongs to all the participants 4) in order to efficiently continue the dialogue itself or, more generally, the development of human rationality within human *praxis*.

Nevertheless, as it is known, dialogues were and are far enough from these requirements. The causes are certainly cultural, reflecting the historical level of knowledge that people attained, but also the power relations. From this standpoint, *dialogue is a power relation*. In a more specific manner, the social dialogue – concerning social-political problems (social-political aims and means) – is a power relation.

There is a first contradistinction at this point: while at the level of its logical concept, dialogue means the equal positions of participants – each of them aiming at the same “enlightenment” through the analysis of the arguments (facts but also inferences) –, in reality dialogue reflects the social hierarchy, the socially stratified positions. Some would hastily suppose that this situation corresponds to the stratified level of knowledge within the dialogue. However, the characteristic of the dialogue is not similar to the master-student relationship, between the one who knows and answers and the one who asks. Dialogue is not such an asymmetry; on the contrary, it is the development of the rationally conducted speech on behalf of people equally desiring to know. Dialogue means a symmetrical relationship between the participants. The only ending of a dialogue is to better know through the assumption of better arguments and from this point of view, the first characteristic of dialogue is, or it should be, its constitutive honesty, thus an original “veil of ignorance” covering all the participants in the beginning. This means an organic symmetry within dialogue.

But dialogue is not only a framework for the work of argumentation. It is au fond the ensemble of data implied in the technique supposed by the framework. The definition of the concepts, criteria, significances of the consequences, the short term and the long term included in the

inferences – all of these form the “meat” of dialogue, without which the dialogical technique itself remains a simple skeleton. Ideally, all these data would be, or should be the result of the common analysis and rational acceptance of all the participants. The Socratic method of *elenchus* was not the teaching Socrates transmitted to his opponents, less clever than him, but just the stimulation of rational inquiries at all the participants. Socrates himself learned something when he asked questions, and he also asked himself, not only the others. At this ideal level, dialogue is a multiplication of symmetries in the frame of *gnosis*.

Because dialogue has developed within historical societies, its data have mirrored the social-political stratification. The empirical level of our discussion shows that many social concepts, criteria and inferences have transformed themselves into axioms and myths, and that they became more powerful than any other logical attempt to question them. In this way, the social dialogue itself became a hierarchy between those who have provided the notions and criteria as axioms, on the one hand, and those who were imposed to take over and apply these axioms, on the other hand.

A different and even inverse model has appeared in relation to the real social dialogue, in philosophy and science. The first element of the rationalist philosophical debate and of the scientific (modern) dialogue is the questioning of the *suppositions* of theories, by the means of rationalist inquiry, analytical development, experiments and demonstrations¹⁹. [From this standpoint, if the dialogue suggests that the old suppositions have to be changed, and the (ideological) mainstream (or “intellectual fashion”, as Popper named it) does not yet accept this turn, the history of science still confronts with a pre-revolutionary, inertial moment (Kuhn)]. The scientific model of dialogue also means that all the partners assume the rationally best suppositions just to compete within the scientific (rational) field. And even though in philosophy there are different schools of thinking that some judge as being incommensurable²⁰, at least in every school the same rationalist model is developed.

Although philosophy and religion are both cultural/historical facts, they have opposing methodological assumptions. While philosophy develops by questioning its suppositions, religion goes in the opposite direction. In principle, philosophy itself could criticize the development of some moments constructed from untouchable axioms²¹. From this perspective, philosophy and religion are not symmetrical cultural facts. If so, what about their dialogue, who requires it, and when does it happen, since their essence is rather contradictory?

First of all, there is no such dialogue because its components do not occupy socially equal positions. Philosophy has developed as alternative to religious thinking, challenging and tending to substitute it through rationalist inquiries. Moreover, even during the positivist epoch, when scientific optimism was exacerbated, it was not science that was the

socially dominant cultural feature, but rather religion. [Their specific coexistence and certainly the complex social determinism of social evolution – thus to deduce the social avatar from the rationalist optimism is a *non sequitur* fallacy – have generated the very contradictory facts and lines of reasoning in modern times. Having to face such reality, the most important critique of reason – from Nietzsche to Foucault via Husserl and Heidegger – never led to the surrender of the paradigm of scientific and philosophical rationality to the one of religion]. They are cultural features and social institutions rather placed in opposed social positions. The logical discussion between them was and could be only a controversial one, or the “simple” imposition of the dominant cultural axioms within the social organization. In this respect, the problem is not the rejection of rationalism by religion in more or less secret religious documents or directed toward restricted scientific circles, but its *rejection as dominant value in the common social consciousness and the social and political function of religion as vector of inertial behavior in the permanent re-creation of humanity*.

At the same time, through convergence or divergence, there is a direct or indirect, explicit or implicit debate between philosophy and religion. Nevertheless, since they are different ideological constructions, their “dialogue” is rather indirect, each of them focusing on its own development. From this point of view, even though dialogue means the equal positioning of partners, it is not this aspect which seems to be the most important but the consequences of the competing ideological lines over society.

Who asks for dialogue? In principle – therefore apart from the preceding moment of the myth and the posterior development of philosophy and science, and generally the entire history of science and philosophy – science does not ask for the dialogue with religion. It simply demonstrates and asks itself, and again demonstrates and asks, *putting all the axioms on an equal and questionable position*, and becoming a more and more important means used in social life and the worldview. Religion is, on the other hand, that which asks for a “dialogue” with science just when its dominant social position was or is shrinking. In the same way and from the same perspective, religion asks for the dialogue with philosophy.

Furthermore, the equal position within dialogue is not a superfluous element. Although philosophy has reached a superior position – from an intellectual point of view, and not from a social one – in its competition with religion, it has always treated religion with respect, as a historical cultural institution, thus it has always criticized it respectfully. But in contemporary Romania, the intellectual prestige of philosophy has diminished, while religion has become the most powerful ideological institution.

There is some continuity of arguments of religion, but what is important is their aim *to separate the common people from the scientific worldview*. As a consequence, there is a contradistinction between the

simple use of science in the everyday life and the scientific/philosophical method of dialogues, inquiries, reasoning²². At the same time, the use of technology, as manifestation of science, and the religious worldview in everyday life coexist. The effort to impose religion as a normal and eternal institution with a set of values was not and is never the result of a dialogue, but a question of power, of *power relations*, within which the axiom of the coexistence and co-teleology of ratio and faith, in the service of religion, was and is promoted²³.

Religion uses faith as an organizing factor of the order (the symmetry) of the world. Tending to subordinate science and philosophy as instruments of its own representation of the world order, religion accepts this asymmetrical coexistence (admitting that it is not the only provider of truth) on condition that philosophy and science do not question religion constantly.

What kind of dialogue?

Religion and philosophy were the historical answers given by the human being in order to resist-in-the-world. These answers consisted and consist in the creation of models of reality (or of possible worlds) which offer understanding, practical development and consolation. What kind of consolation? Would it be possible that consolation has never changed under the influence of scientific education? Could one accept that human culture would stop its presuppositions?

Science and philosophy nurture understanding and practical development, allowing better resistance, enjoyment and happiness, a better control of at least the annoying social asymmetries, thus the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” (Bentham). At present, there is a mainstream official and tacit political tendency to dominate science and minimize philosophy *within the common social conscience*. Its subliminal message is that religious consolation could substitute science and philosophy in order to control the reactions related to the social asymmetries.

What kind of dialogue does religion ask for if it imposes the religious presuppositions, and not the rational dialogue, in public discourse? What kind of dialogue does religion require if it imposes religious education in public schools? What kind of dialogue does religion demand if it imposes the transgression of the modern separation between state and church? Besides, dialogue as a complex social relationship involves both religion and philosophy and, additionally, political decision. Frankly speaking, religion does ask for more than a dialogue with philosophy because of the overturning of the former secular tendency that gave religion a subordinate role within the educational system. At the same time, post 1989 decision-makers were and are oriented toward the use of religion as a legitimating force of the new power relations. Consequently, “the teaching

of both philosophy and religion proves to be influenced by the political decision concerning the type of education we are supposed to adopt as a model – which entails an indirect influence on the sort of disciplines that are taught. The current educational policies favor religion, virtually ranking philosophy as second in regard to the necessities of a harmonious development of the young people in the pre-university educational system”²⁴.

Concretely, another factor of the ambiguous attitude toward the relationship philosophy-religion is the post 1989 intelligentsia. Because of the overthrowing of the political order, an important criterion for the social recognition of post 1989 intellectuals was the devotion to religion. As a result, they – and not even the philosophers – did not raise the problem of dialogue, i.e. of the equal positions of philosophy and religion in education.

To a great extent, post 1989 philosophers offered a legitimating force to the religious representation concerning both the *logos* and *kosmos*. Let us remember some directions of such a philosophical thinking: the critique of scientific “positivist” optimism – as if in its internal logic, science would not reject this suspect non-scientific excrescence, positivism being a *philosophical*, not a scientific doctrine and attitude –; the insistence on the relativity of cultural motives and the suggestion that only religion could counteract the human scattering; the excuse of religious customs whilst “we, the intellectuals” may refuge in the metaphysical sense of the “objectivity of the Being/God”²⁵; the critique of science as the new type of authority and provider of universality, without any reference to religious authority; the inevitable print of tradition within which we live (as if there would not be obsolescent traditions); the description of rationalism as suspect.

Therefore, in present-day Romania, it is not only religion which requires dialogue, but it is also philosophy: just because it has been pushed to an insignificant level within public education.

Eventually, it is to mention a quite recent philosophical image about religion and a possible path of the dialogue philosophy-religion. Religion has the function to liberate man from chains, and to again enslave him in new chains²⁶; consequently, both religion and philosophy have to constitute a *hot community*²⁷ (and the modern and present society would not be so). This would be their common venture, challenging their dialogue.

Philosophy and religion are social institutions, having social consequences and encompassing the social significances of the cultural themes of philosophy and religion and the dialogue between them. For this reason, the relations between them are more complicated than they appear here.

What would this dialogue mean at the level of higher education and research? First of all, it would be possible only if the current relationship

of philosophy and religion is transformed, by adapting religion to the scientific spirit of the epoch, and not by subordinating philosophy to religion. In this spirit, it would be fruitful to emphasize, for example, the continuity and discontinuity between myth and rational thinking.

The dialogue is possible only starting from the assumption that both religion and philosophy are cultural historical constructions. Thus, they are topics of disciplines and have to be studied. The history of religion offers a rich database concerning the contexts and senses of the old wisdom of humanity, and the history of philosophy only profits from these data. The philosophy of language, ontology, ethics and political philosophy could but enjoy the windows opened to etymology, metaphors, connections and worldviews. In fact, it is difficult to conceive a hermeneutics of philosophical texts without a hermeneutics of religious thinking.

An important domain of dialogue is between philosophical tradition and religious writings: because the knowledge of tradition is essential both for philosophy and for religion, and the dialogue between the history of philosophy and the history of religion has to strengthen.

Consequently, the dialogue is possible – and yet, it is important to remember that the two parts come from two opposite methods – if the philosophical search for truth, always self-questioned, becomes predominant over religion. Only in this way does religion remain a figure of the history of man, appreciated like all the human creations, and it does not act as an obstacle of knowledge and society. If religion concentrates on the principle of authority, philosophy is, or might be through its own strain, democratic: this fruitfulness of philosophy allows for the supersession of religion as dominant in ideological communication.

Hence, all these things have to be understood not only by religion but, somehow taking priority over it, also by philosophy. The dialogue with religion as well as with science fortifies the effort of philosophy to reform itself and to have a more powerful voice in university and society.

The institutional crisis of philosophy: the awakening

The symptoms of the crisis of philosophy are related to its institutional crisis. It is not about the fact that most universities have eradicated philosophical education in faculties, other than that of philosophy, but about the fact that the significance and importance of philosophical education, including the PhDs, have failed. This failure took place within the general process of *weakening of the influence of the intellectual way of thinking in contemporary society*. This sounds paradoxical, but let us remember that the most important value promoted today toward common conscience is no longer the intellectual effort that could propel a person to some well-deserved recognition within society, but the exhibition of economic power and media visibility: the PhDs and the

university degrees are only accessories to the status of power and are so easily obtained! At the same time, the logic of the present *oikeiopragia* generated the message that common people do not have to worry about the social problems because it is only the opinion-makers that are responsible for these. It is not surprising that the questions philosophy raises concerning how and why people think in a way or another, concerning the basis of their reasoning, what stops them from having in view the *entire problem* they have in a moment or another, its causes and consequences, and thus what prevents them from thinking in a rationalist manner “all the way”²⁸, why they respect the values they do, what the significances of their position in front of power relations are - all these questions and many others seem to be outmoded.

Therefore, *the phenomena of the crisis of philosophy are intertwined with the crises of the present-day society*. That does not mean at all that these phenomena could not be attacked separately. On the contrary, and since only the discourse²⁹ and the debates are clarifying, one has to consider the specific problems of philosophy as a unitary discipline and its institutional crisis.

It is significant that the problem of the institutional crisis of philosophy in Romania appeared 20 years after the situation of philosophy in universities had been strongly and inherently marked by the bureaucratic market-oriented economy. As a result, and in front of the mixture of many graduates, MAs and PhDs created by many new philosophy faculties/departments within many new universities where the high quality of these degrees is not always assured, a slight contempt of society toward philosophy emerged³⁰. Indeed, philosophers, as many other ‘scientists’, did not show that they had been immune to the bureaucratic manner of social recognition. Their influence was not salutary for the ethical state of society: rather they hid behind some leading conservative thinkers, by simply illustrating the continuity between conservatism and the liberal and social-democratic ideology³¹.

Another paradox that shows and emphasizes the institutional crisis of philosophy is that while the significance and importance of philosophical education, including the PhDs, failed, the academics, who teach philosophy³², showed no self-criticism but on the contrary, the expectations and behavior specific to their bureaucratic character and to the bureaucratic framework within which they act and think increased.

The Romanian philosophical research does not make an exception from the institutional crisis of philosophy: to a great extent, the researchers are isolated from each other, the websites of different faculties and institutes of philosophy are not updated (if they exist at all), and only some journals send calls for papers, there is no publicity concerning the future activities and topics of institutes. The connoisseurs are divided into different circles, and it is not the strict specialization which is the cause of this fragmentation, but rather the ideological

affinities and the professional competition: the struggle for means of recognition.

The Romanian researcher faces many pressures: to publish in Romania or rather abroad, to search for ISI cited journals, thus to restrain from the topics he/she prefers for the ones privileged by the ISI journals, or to spread the philosophical point of view within the cultural media. He/she is motivated to have as many jobs as s/he could, for example to teach philosophy in as many universities s/he has access to or to be a professional researcher and, at the same time, an academic. The philosophical research and promotion bear the bureaucratic character of the university: sometimes, the professional degrees (thus, the wages) are not directly proportional to the real visibility of their owners within the academic community. Nor is the number of books and papers per capita directly proportional to the importance of their ideas and the spirit of debate they promote. Briefly, the institutional crisis of philosophy manifests not only through the relations between the faculty of philosophy and the external environment that should offer jobs to philosophy graduates - who, in their turn, should have good instruction for *vitae*, not for *scholae*/for the sake of philosophy - but also through the quality and condition of the philosophy maker (teaching and researching within academic institutions), thus through the quality and condition of Romanian philosophy nowadays.

In this respect, to surpass these aspects of institutional crisis means first of all to increase the competitiveness of Romanian philosophy: the problem is not only the lack of money (thus the necessity to look for sponsors for journals, books and conferences) but also the need to respect the transparent scientific criteria in academic mobility and organization.

Certainly, within the current social organization, it is hard to conceive an integral solution for the increase of jobs for philosophy graduates. Undoubtedly, a philosopher is needed in every state institution and private company, for the permanent education and for the special perspectives this presence brings. If "there are no money for the philosopher", people are deprived of these perspectives.

At the same time, the conclusions emphasized by Sandu and Mihaela Frunză are true³³: there is resistance on the part of professors and decision-makers to renew the educational curricula and syllabi. What is obvious is that in Romania, this resistance is less because of the crisis of humanities - as a matter of fact general in the Western educational system³⁴ - than because of the bureaucratic character of the Romanian society, politics and education. From this standpoint, it is true that a solution could be a new, democratic and not bureaucratic law of education, in which the professional and scientific criteria for professional mobility and for the PhD degrees would exceed the bureaucratic ones. And if the "sign of reform" that philosophy promotes also means to think of the position of philosophers as grey eminences of politics - "as steps" to a

present-day genuine becoming of “kings” as philosophers³⁵, i.e. the living presence of philosophy within the public space: the introduction of the critical spirit of the rational debate over the problems and senses of existence –, this image falls into derision if it is not connected to the newly democratically conceived “common people”. If current philosophy wants to be king, it has to reach a larger audience: the common people have to be educated to appreciate philosophy as a promoter of rationalist, cultivated and democratic minds, able to control the corrupt “guardians” of social order.

However, philosophy can be king only if and when it promotes reforms in thinking, in the understanding of the senses of texts, actions and phenomena. Certainly, if sometimes reforms are not so quickly observable, to challenge the mainstreams is always interesting.

Obviously, the attitudes toward reforms are ultimately ideological – reformist or conservative – concretely reflecting the relations of forces and the level of social conscience and culture. What has to be underscored is that the reforms philosophy promotes and its reformist attitude are subversive only for the bureaucratic character of institutions within which philosophy acts, only for the bearers of this character. In fact, the reformist attitude strengthens the democratic, transparent, reasonable character of the social order, thus having real mass support³⁶.

On the one hand, the conflicting models of the values promoted by philosophy and, on the other hand, the image philosophy has within the public sphere could be changed if philosophers were more offensive in realizing philosophical reforms and in entering the public arena as *spokesmen of these reforms*: this means to challenge the existing status quo, its patterns of thinking, acting, living, imposing of power. *Philosophy has to be popularized* and this aspect is neglected in contemporary Romanian society. The main cause is ideological, deeply anchored in the organization, traditions and mentalities of a very inertial society. Consequently, this situation leads to the impression that the crisis of philosophy is greater than it is in fact and, at the same time, to the real phenomenon of crisis of philosophy.

For this reason, philosophy has to move on two fronts: one is its own internal coherence and efficiency –philosophical self-criticism being the precondition and a part of the reform that philosophy initiates in the field of knowledge –; the other one is the public sphere. This large social space requires its boldness to contribute to social reform with criteria, continuous rationalist thinking and values³⁷. At present, to destroy the power of bureaucracy in universities is the most urgent task. Yet, it is not the only one.

Notes:

¹ This institutional crisis was described by the research project of Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, cited below, and by the article: Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, Claudiu Herțeliu, „Filosofie, ideologie, religie. O încercare de a înțelege ce se întâmplă cu filosofia în sistemul de educație din România” (Philosophy, Ideology, Religion. An Attempt to understand what is Going On with Philosophy in the Romanian Educational System), *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, no. 22, (Spring 2009): 129-149.

For the symptoms of the institutional crisis of philosophy see Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, „Aspects Concerning the Crisis of Philosophy in the University System from Romania”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, no. 24, (Winter 2009): 333. See also Ana Bazac, “Filosofie și reformă”, în Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză (ed.), *Criza instituțională a filosofiei* (Cluj: Limes, 2010), 35-54.

² And not only. See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/> entry *Philosophy for Children*, First published Thu May 2, 2002; substantive revision Mon Jun 8, 2009 (accessed March 15, 2010).

³ Ion Petrovici, „Proiectul Legii învățământului din 1926” (Legea Ion Petrovici), In: Ion Petrovici. *Filosofie și politică, Eseuri filosofice, discursuri și cuvântări politice*, Ediție critică, text stabilit, studiu introductiv, note și bibliografie de Adrian Michiduță (Craiova: Aius, 2006), 132-133.

⁴ John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1915), 15: „the universities may be said to be its chief organs”.

⁵ This means at least to meet the requirements for grants, prizes and sponsors for books and public relevance.

⁶ This status is not only sure – in Romania, where the places in universities or research centres are taken forever – but also quite high (in terms of Romanian wages).

⁷ See Ana Bazac, „Filosoful, profesiunea și viața. În jurul Amintirilor lui Nicolae Bagdasar”, In: *Studii de istorie a filosofiei românești*, vol. IV, (București, Editura Academiei Române, 2008), 237-251, where there are shown the social and material conditioning of the life and moral trajectories of an inter-war Romanian philosopher, as they are described in the book of memories of Nicolae Bagdasar (1896-1971), i.e. the bureaucratic relationships and organisation of philosophy chairs, and the difficulty to keep oneself away from the political involvement which was generally considered as propitious to professional evolution.

⁸ See Ana Bazac: „Despre modelul universitarului”, In: Romulus Brâncoveanu (editor), *Structura universității – structura cunoașterii* (București: Editura Universității din București, 2008), 133-145; „Bureaucratic Inertia versus Democratic Communication Management in University Chairs”, In: Coord.: Sergiu Bălțătescu, Floare Chișea, Ionel Cioară, Adrian Hatos, Sorana Săveanu, *Educație și schimbare socială. Perspective sociologice și comunicaționale* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2010), 333-338.

⁹ Some thought that this would be equivalent to the Stalinist character, i.e. communism as such: for this reason, they thought that destroying all the elements of the former system (the Stalinist ideology, the communist type values,

the state property) would be the same thing and would invalidate formalism and the arbitrariness of the bureaucratic leadership. Yet, if the state property and the communist values were destroyed, the power of bureaucracy increased in these 20 years and so did the bureaucratic character of the entire leadership, including the universities.

¹⁰ Alain Badiou, "What Is a Philosophical Institution? Or: Address, Transmission, Inscription" (1989, 1992), *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol 2, No 1-2 (2006),

<http://www.cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/26/52> (accessed March 15, 2010)

¹¹ It is not important here that, as Heidegger observed, the European culture is rather of Roman source than of Greek origin, see Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (1942-1943, 1982), translated by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), since the Roman thinking is marked by the same elements of rationalism.

¹² Francis Bacon, *The New Organon or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature*, 1620, http://www.constitution.org/bacon/nov_org.htm (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹³ René Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie*, 1647, Lettre-Préface, In: Descartes, *Œuvres et lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1953), 566.

¹⁴ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁵ Isabelle Stengers, *L'invention des sciences modernes* (Paris : La Découverte, 1993).

¹⁶ This is Sorin Lavric's standpoint: "Ferpar filosofic", *Acolada*, 7 (aprilie 2008), 17.

¹⁷ Sorin Lavric.

¹⁸ Sorin Lavric.

¹⁹ Karl R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework* (1965, 1976), In: Popper, *The Myth of the Framework: In Defence of Science and Rationality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 33-64, has shown that the valuable scientific results are issuing from the scientific dialogue, i.e. from the *cultural conflict* and the *exercise of the critical reasoning* confronting with this conflict: the European tradition includes precisely this cultural conflict provisionally solved through a fruitful and transparent dialogue concerning non-incommensurable texts.

²⁰ Mircea Flonta, *Grammatici certant. Discuție cu Valentin Mureșan despre "monocentrism ierarhic" și "pluralism filosofic"*, In: *Cunoaștere și analiză. Volum omagial Mircea Flonta* (București: All Educational, 1998), 245, 252.

²¹ John Dewey, 44: "John Locke's deepest objection to the older form of the a priori philosophy, the doctrine of innate ideas, was the readiness with which such ideas become strongholds behind which authority shelters itself from questioning".

²² In a recent survey concerning the common consciousness of Romanians about science and technique, the majority considered that science has huge importance in order to improve the general level of life. The confidence in science would seem wonderful if the same majority had not asserted that, generally, things turn worse just because people rather follow science than religious faith, see Ana Bazac, *În legătură cu Raportul despre nivelul cunoașterii științifice a populației*, iulie 2010, [Note on the Report about the level of scientific knowledge of the population], <http://revistacultura.ro/blog/2010/08/cu-privire-la-raportul-institutului-de-cercetare-a-calitatii-vietii-un-comentariu-de-ana-bazac/>, with the Romanian references concerning the topic.

The survey certified a quite usual tendency within current mass education: that science (and much more philosophy) occupies an *exterior* place toward people – who cannot therefore control it (even though they use it) –, as it is only divinity that does.

²³ Ioannes Paulus II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998,

http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0216/_INDEX.HTM

²⁴ Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză. „Aspects Concerning the Crisis of Philosophy in the University System from Romania”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, no. 24, (Winter 2009): 333.

²⁵ Gianni Vattimo in, Flores d'Arcais Paolo, Michel Onfray, Gianni Vattimo, *Atei o credenti? Filosofia, politica, etica, scienza* (Roma: Fazi editore, 2007): 155.

²⁶ AB: As dialectics of surpassing and creating social asymmetries.

²⁷ Peter Sloterdijk, *Dans l'oeil du cyclone religieux*, *Essai d'intoxication volontaire*, In : Peter Sloterdijk, *Essai d'intoxication volontaire suivi de L'Heure du crime et le temps de l'œuvre d'art* (Paris : Hachette, 2001).

²⁸ See Ana Bazac, „Rationalism până la capăt”, In: Ana Bazac, GG Constandache, Cătălin Ioniță, Laura Pană (coord.), *Logica și provocările sociale. Omagiu profesorului Cornel Popa la 75 de ani* (București, Politehnica Press, 2008), 258-288.

²⁹ Only discourse could jolt our conscience by displaying in front of it the progress of things and the progress of our reasoning concerning these things, or the progress of things as it appears within our thoughts.

³⁰ Sandu Frunză, „A Stereotype: The Lack of the Social Utility of Philosophy”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, no. 24, (Winter 2009), 311-328.

³¹ As this continuity is illustrated by the authors of the much discussed book *Idolii forului. De ce clasa de mijloc a spiritului este de preferat „elitei” intelectualilor publici*, coordonatori Sorin Adam Matei și Mona Momescu (București: Corint, 2010). See also Ana Bazac, „Ce fel de intelectuali publici? „alternativele”, „elitei””, *Egophobia*, nr. 28, 18 septembrie 2010, <http://egophobia.ro/revista/?p=5413>

³² In this respect, I agree with Vasile Macoviciuc – mentioned in Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, „Aspects Concerning the Crisis of Philosophy in the University System from Romania” – with his opinion that „one cannot live with a Plato- type philosophy”. What did he mean through this formula, since Plato was much anchored within the problems of his society?

³³ Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, „Philosophy and the Labor Market in Romania”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 9, no. 25, (Spring 2010), 28-58.

³⁴ Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză, „Philosophy and the Labor Market in Romania”, p. 47.

³⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, V, 473d; in the Romanian edition, Platon, „Republica” (traducere de Andrei Cornea), în Platon, *Opere*, V, Ediție îngrijită de Constantin Noica și Petru Creția, Cuvânt premeritor de Constantin Noica (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 266.

³⁶ This is the old idea of Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten, in drei Abschnitten* (1798), Zweiter Abschnitt. Begriff und Eintheilung der untern Facultät, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=1374&kapitel=1#begriff>, and Dritter Abschnitt. Vom gesetzwidrigen Streit der oberen Facultäten mit der untern, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=1374&kapitel=1#widrig> (accessed March 17, 2010); in the French edition, Kant, *Le conflit des facultés; en trois sections*, traduit de l'allemand avec introduction et notes par J. Gibelin, Cinquième édition (Paris: Vrin, 1997), 26-33.

³⁷ This means not to be indifferent to the social problems and not to focus only on the recognition within the academic field. It is easy to say, and difficult to do. Carlos Frade, "The Sociological Imagination and Its Promise Fifty Years Later: Is There a Future for the Social Sciences as a Free Form of Enquiry?", *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol 5, No 2 (2009), <http://www.cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/134/248> (accessed March 17, 2010), shows that this is also a question of academic vocation: courage and will to free the research from the constraints of the ideological mainstream.

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