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**ASPECTS CONCERNING THE CRISIS OF
PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
FROM ROMANIA**

The present text discusses several aspects of the institutional crisis of philosophy in the Romanian educational system after 1989. On the one hand, at the level of university educational system, one may note the marginalization of philosophy programs, due to young people's decrease of interest for those specializations that do not provide immediate benefits for rapid integration in and well-paid jobs on the labor market. This entails direct consequences for the type of financing and creates functional difficulties in the university system. On the other hand, the diminution of the presence of philosophy at the level of high school curricula has given rise to a crisis manifested through the negative consequences on the necessity for humanist education of the young people, upon the social prestige of philosophy, and upon the possibility of philosophy graduates' insertion on the labor market.

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The Crisis of Humanities

The institutional crisis of philosophy in the Romanian university system¹ can be better understood if we analyze it primarily against the background of the so-called „crisis of the humanities” that is being discussed in the American – and not only American² - university programs. More generally, this crisis can be associated with the increasing discussions, from 1960 onwards, of several alternatives to disciplinarity – namely, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.

Thus, speaking about the „crisis of the humanities” in 1999, Robert Weisbuch offered the following diagnose: „Today's consensus about the state of the humanities - it's bad, it's getting worse, and no one is doing much about it - is supported by dismal facts. The percentage of undergraduates majoring in humanities fields has been halved over the past three decades. Financing for faculty research has decreased. The salary gap between full-time scholars in the humanities and in other fields has widened, and more and more humanists are employed part time and paid ridiculously low salaries. The "job crisis" has existed for over a quarter of a century - no crisis, then, but a semi-permanent depression. As doctoral programs in the humanities proliferate irresponsibly, turning out more

and more graduates who cannot find jobs, the waste of human talent becomes enormous, intolerable.

More broadly, the humanities, like the liberal arts generally, appear far less surely at the center of higher education than they once did. We have lost the respect of our colleagues in other fields, as well as the attention of an intelligent public: The action is elsewhere. We are living through a time when outrage with the newfangled in the humanities - with deconstruction or Marxism or whatever - has become plain lack of interest. No one's even angry with us now, just bored."³

It is interesting to signal that the author situates the crisis at the level of postgraduate education, more precisely at the level of doctoral programs in literary studies. Thus, literary studies attract a good deal of attention reserved to the humanities; however, this can be readily applied to the situation of philosophy discussed in this paper. If only we replace „doctoral programs” with „university programs” and „the humanities” (i.e. literary studies in Weisbuch’s article) with „philosophy”, we will find his diagnose to be an accurate one for the present situation of philosophy as an academic discipline in the Romanian university system.

When we go on with Weisbuch’s text and get to the solutions he envisions for this intolerable (in his view) situation, we find the following (summarized by Marjorie Perloff): “(1) to gather data on our departments, finding out where our graduates get jobs so as to insure better planning, (2) to "practice doctoral birth control," using Draconian means to cut down the number of entering graduate students, (3) to "reclaim the curriculum" by having all courses taught by full-time faculty members rather than adjuncts, (4) "create jobs beyond academe for humanities graduates, (5) "redesign graduate programs so as to accommodate the new community college market where teaching skills are more important than scholarly expertise, and (6) "to become newly public" – that is, to make better contacts with the so-called outside world”⁴.

However, not everybody agrees to this diagnose, nor to the solutions proposed. For instance, one remark on the solutions notes that the approach backing the them implicitly agrees that the problems of the humanities departments are almost exclusively financial; moreover, that we have a clear understanding of the mission of the humanities in the first place: “The trouble with such practical solutions is that they assume that we have a clear sense of what the humanities do and what makes them valuable: it’s just a matter of convincing those crass others, whether within the university or outside its walls, that they really need us and can use our products.”⁵

A somehow different approach is that of Barry Hudek, who ironically places his paper under the motto of John Searl that overstates the crisis of the humanities by extending it at a national and to some extent deeper level: “I can recall no time when American education was not in crisis.”⁶ Hudek goes on to explore more optimistically the prospects of literary

studies when he states: “The reality remains that there is a crisis in the humanities, and navigating to fact from the rocky shoals of fictional doomsday language can be difficult. But any student entering the academic arena must understand the nature of this crisis, the prospects for future employment, and, ultimately, whether continuing his or her education is the best path before beginning the voyage.”⁷ In other words, the bleak reality of the crisis must not undermine one’s effort to prepare oneself in order to be able to later find a suitable job.

Last, but not least, we wish to mention here a more nuanced position that aims to investigate the true dimensions of the crisis of the humanities with the tools of philosophy. We refer here to a paper by Katherine Arens in which she questions the meanings of the current crisis in the humanities by using Deleuze’s and Guattari’s model of a conceptual person to solve the issue of what the crisis might actually be.⁸ Thus, she questions the dominant understanding of the crisis, as “a crisis of authority within society, aimed at the implications of the US University with politics and social power”, in other words an *external* crisis that emphasizes the relations of the humanities with the outer society. Alternatively, she proposes to shed light on “an *intrinsic* critique of how the humanities produce knowledge.” In this respect, she draws on Deleuze’s and Guattari’s well-known text on philosophy to unravel the complex relations that are to be found under the “assumptions and stereotypes” about the crisis of the humanities.

This approach is significant, in our view, for a tendency that can be encountered in philosophical discourses and analysis of the crisis: namely, to go against the trend and question those things beyond the obvious factual data connected, as in Weisbuch’s article, with economic factors and decrease of prestige. In the interviews that we collected for our research project, we noted several discourse strategies that resemble this one.

The crisis of humanities is of interest here under the disguise of the institutional crisis of philosophy that we find in the Romanian educational system. Although our interest conducts us towards the university system, the actual situation of the discipline of philosophy compels us to take into consideration the fact that there is a close relation between the institutional crisis in the pre-university⁹ system (the main labor market for philosophy graduates) and the crisis manifested in the university system, even when the latter has its own peculiarities.

We base our approach not only on bibliographical inquiry, but on a broader research we made concerning the university educational offer, the curricula for the discipline of philosophy in high schools, media analysis, questionnaires to university professors and students, and also a series of interviews with people that are both university professors and carry administrative decision functions in university. Only some of these sources have been used for this research paper concerning the crisis of philosophy. Other results of our research will be capitalized in future publications.

Our research shows that post-1989 Romania witnessed an enlarged development of both the philosophical and the theological educational system. Philosophy departments and faculties were established in several centers; similarly, theological education developed step by step, both at university and at pre-university level.¹⁰ After a short period of growth, philosophical education first stopped off, then entered a crisis. This was particularly due to several administrative decisions and public policies developed lately by the ministry of education. The limitation of the labor market for the philosophical educational offer had a negative impact on the discipline's development potential, both at pre-university and at university level.

At the same time, there has been a large-scale development of theological education and of the religious educational system.¹¹ This development has been made possible by the public policies developed over time by the ministry of education. The creation of a new labor market through the introduction of religion as a mandatory subject over the 12 years of pre-university education brought about a major contribution to the development of the religious educational system. Most of our interviewees from the university centers of Bucharest, Iasi, Cluj, Timisoara, and Galati argue that the development of religious education was concomitant with a diminution of the place and role that philosophy and the other social and philosophical disciplines had in our educational system. They are always tempted to attribute this development of religious education not to spiritual determination, but to a political decision adopted under the church pressure. Therefore, each of them pleads for taking the political decision (and especially the educational policies) out of the pressure of the ecclesial power, in the name of the secular principles of the modern state.¹² The discrepancy between teaching philosophy and respectively religion is attributed by Adrian-Paul Iliescu to "the cheap opportunism of Romanians who are now governed by the impression that this is a time when religion rather than philosophy is ruling... there are many from the older generations who, in order not to be suspect for having atheist reminiscences from the communist time, overstate the study of religion and religious education, simply because they wish to escape the accusations of still having some sequels".¹³

For the philosophy professors we interviewed, the solution to reach a balance between the public engagement of the ecclesial discourse and the public discourse concerning the secular state and the educational system from public schools is that of accomplishing, in the pre-university system, certain complementarities between religious and philosophical education.¹⁴ The demands of philosophy professors are not directed towards taking out the religion classes, but towards the necessity that political decision makers would not privilege religious education to the expense of the humanist one. In this perspective, political decisions should aim at ensuring an equal status to religion and philosophy, by

guaranteeing an equal status to philosophy and religion in the pre-university educational system.

Challenges of philosophy in the institutional relations inside university

Despite the unprecedented development of the post-1989 Romanian philosophical research and intellectual production, today we are facing an institutional crisis of philosophy, with the following symptoms: 1) the incapacity of philosophy professors to function as a community and to form a powerful professional association, which would work as a powerful and distinctive voice in society; 2) decrease of philosophy in the national curriculum of pre-university education; 3) marginalization of the philosophy programs in the Romanian university system; 4) the lack of attractiveness/ appeal of philosophy for students and the reduced number of students who enroll in philosophy departments; 5) financial shortfall in philosophy departments, due to the small number of students enrolled (*per capita*) and not counting the scientific accomplishments and the importance of that program for the educational system; 6) the negative prospects of philosophy graduates to be hired on the labor market according to their specialization; 7) the lost ground in front of the other socio-humanist disciplines, such as religion; 8) the inability of philosophy to propose itself as a discipline of spiritual interferences, interdisciplinary openings and orientation towards transdisciplinarity; 9) the lack of social prestige and the denial of any practical utility of philosophy by different stakeholders; 10) the lack of support for philosophical education on behalf of the political factor, in the circumstances when there is an established fact that education belongs to the fundamental public policies of any state; 11) 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 – that entails an indirect influence on the sort of disciplines that are taught. The actual educational policies favor religion, virtually ranking philosophy second in what regards the necessities of a harmonious development of the young people from the pre-university educational system.

In the pre-university education, there seem to be three factors leading to the crisis: at the level of professors, students, and institutions. The institutional dimension is prevailing, and this is the reason why we talk about an institutional crisis of philosophy. The place of philosophy faculties seems rather marginal inside the academic institutions, and the same is true for the role philosophy could play in society. The decrease in students' ranks at philosophy departments is a major factor of influence in what concerns the status of philosophy inside the university, especially since the financing of a study program is related to its number of students. This decrease may be attributed to the demographic decrease that affects

all university specializations, to the elimination of double specialization in the implementation of the Bologna system, but also to the reduced possibilities of graduates to find a job related to their university specialization.

Many other circumstantial aspects related to the power relations inside the university may be added. At this level, the marginalization is reflected in the constant limitation of the possibilities of development for the philosophy departments. This limitation is obvious in most universities. In this respect, Prof. Adrian-Paul Iliescu's story is very telling; he tried to establish a section of international relations and European studies at the faculty of philosophy (University of Bucharest), in cooperation with the Law School and administered by the faculty of philosophy. Following several Western models for the construction of such programs, the representatives of the faculty of philosophy sent a program proposal to the university and to the institutions for accreditation in the ministry. There were multiple arguments for introducing such a specialization at the faculty of philosophy, in cooperation with the Law School: 1) the first reason was that Europe has certain intellectual and spiritual roots, and that many courses at the faculty of philosophy were already dealing with issues related to European cultural heritage; 2) at the faculty of philosophy there was also a tradition in comparative studies, the study of paradigms, trends, orientations, and cultures and the envisioned program was planned in these comparative perspectives; 3) there was a good tradition of cultural anthropology that, at the University of Bucharest, was developed at the faculty of philosophy, and this was important for the way the section of European studies was conceived, other than a sub-section of debates concerning the organization of the European institutions (which could be taught in the political science program); 4) there was an important component of international relations and European institutions that was being developed in this program by the professors from the faculty of law etc. Quoting from the program initiators "the program was justified and unbeatable".¹⁵

Everything seemed to work until a series of blockages, silences, and unexplainable delays started to accumulate. While investigating the reasons for the delays in answering, it has been discovered that the blockage was in fact at the university level. Finally, university representatives explained that there already existed a similar program at the MA level at the faculty of letters, and the university could not afford to support another program of the same type. In fact, the above mentioned program was a specialization in European cultural studies. Although the specialization was different from the type of program proposed by the faculty of philosophy, the university explanation was deemed reasonable. However, one year later a section of international relations and European studies has been established at the Faculty of History. Why there? Because at that time the influential vice-rector came from the Faculty of history,

and he managed to impose a program there and to reject the proposal of the faculty of philosophy. Nevertheless, at the faculty of philosophy a specialization module in European studies was organized in the frame of the philosophy program. Although students are not granted a diploma in European studies, but only a diploma in philosophy, on the diploma supplement this specialization module is mentioned, and its presence raises the attractiveness of the field and, to a certain extent, consolidates the position of the faculty of philosophy in the university.¹⁶ Here we note that, as it happened to other programs¹⁷, the establishing of new programs in Romanian universities has sometimes depended on the influence certain persons had in certain moments in the university. The development of some new academic programs has been regulated by chance and by the power relations inside the university, without taking into account the necessity of a coherent development corresponding to a coherent university strategic plan. The fact that philosophy is marginalized in most universities hindered the development opportunities of the philosophy departments.

Philosophy departments started to experience a decline in students' ranks especially after the elimination of double specialization programs. This removal was explained as a specific request of the Bologna system (actually, this particular interpretation of the Bologna system was specific to the Romanian educational system, for in other countries it did not have the effect of eliminating double specialization programs). The solution was either to create new specializations, or to find ways to offer specialized courses to students from other departments. At the same time, a rethinking of the disciplinary offer from the philosophy diploma was necessary.

Constantin Sălăvăstru considers that, usually, the large university centers from Romania had certain specificities. However, he doubts that today these centers can maintain their tradition. He is rather confident about the necessity of adaptation to what is dominant in the world. "I suppose some disciplines that would help the graduates should be introduced. Of course, from my point of view, this includes issues related to argumentation, the art of convincing people, rhetoric – all these would be attractive to high school students. Of course, for us, who have been lead only by passion when we studied philosophy, we could say that reading Plato is the most wonderful thing and that this is what one should study in philosophy."¹⁸ Beyond one's personal preferences, Sălăvăstru seems convinced that young people today cannot manifest openness for the classical study of Plato and Aristotle. They can still be studied, but not in the manner that was traditionally associated with the history of philosophy, but through the instrumentalization and adaptation offered by a systematic thinking, one that is oriented towards contemporary problematization. Classic authors and classic topics may be used in the

philosophical formation of young people if they are taught so as to offer some answers to current issues of daily life.

The solutions Constantin Sălăvăstru proposes for overcoming the critical situation of philosophy seem well placed: "Maybe in the field of philosophy, at least at university level, we should better analyze the directions that are manifest today, especially in the field of practical philosophy. I see that many universities, not necessarily pragmatic by tradition, emphasize a lot these research directions: political philosophy, bioethics... I have always thought bioethics to be a problem of medicine, which is not, or not only. I believe these directions should be developed in our university education as well."¹⁹ Those responsible with making educational plans would better use this suggestion which would transform philosophy in a less esoteric discipline for those who, at their turn, could decide the inclusion of philosophy or of several applied philosophical disciplines in the high school curricular plans. An orientation towards problems applied to society could lead to perceiving philosophy in a positive way and to the rise of its social prestige which was seriously diminished in post-1989 Romania.

One way to overcome the institutional crisis of philosophy could be securing the support of other university faculties by showing them that the presence of philosophy in their curricula would add new professional competences to their graduates. However, most faculties are reducing the presence of the disciplines other than those of their specific specialization, assuming that a strict specialization is more useful for their own graduates. Referring to this situation, Constantin Sălăvăstru proposes to discuss the presence of philosophy in the curricula of other faculties on two aspects: "The first would be: what can we do within the present constraints? And the second aspect: What could we do if we had no constraint at all? Firstly, we have a time constraint: 22 hours per week."²⁰ Taking the example of Al. I. Cuza University, Constantin Sălăvăstru shows that: "Until the imposition of a 22 hours per week constraint, we used to have philosophy classes at almost all faculties from the university. After the reduction of classes, the first ones to be taken out were those from the other departments, without taking into account students' formative and educational needs. Nevertheless, students are taking rhetoric and juridical logic at the faculty of law. We have managed to preserve some courses at the specialization from our own faculty: sociology, social work, political sciences. Students have been offered logic at all specializations, and there have been courses in exegesis and argumentation in philosophy. We have been solicited by our colleagues from other faculties at their MA programs etc. If we carry on a discussion with our colleagues that would not involve an immediate decision, everybody agrees on the importance of philosophy courses. When the issue of the actual introduction of such a course is at stake... well, that's another story. But I don't think this phenomenon has to do with an alleged

deformed image of philosophy, my guess is that we are dealing with other types of constraints".²¹

More likely, problems appear because of the actual financing system of the higher education programs and constitute a disadvantage for the faculties with a small number of students, even if the programs are outstanding at the level of academic activity and scholarly work. This is why faculties need to take some special measures according to financial politics. The momentarily solution found by Al. I. Cuza University can serve as a model for solving the problem on a short term. Even if the number of enrolling students is not high, the BA program in philosophy will not have to suffer. "The university will provide the financing, in a reasonable way. Even now, 50% of the salaries at philosophy are paid from the contribution of the other specializations. 25% of all funds entering the university constitute the university fund that is used for the policies of the actual leadership. One of these policies is to maintain those programs with a good image, but poor student attendance. However, professors' efforts to attract more students are also needed."²² Constantin Sălăvăstru does not rule out the possibility that the actual situation of the institutional crisis of philosophy might be due also to the exaggerated diversification of programs, not only to philosophy' lack of attraction. Yet, he believes that the professors' efforts to promote philosophy should also be guided by the reorientation of philosophy towards applied disciplines, such as applications to the socio-political sphere, applied ethics²³, discourse philosophy, philosophy of communication etc.²⁴

The necessity of supporting philosophy faculties by the university at large has been a problem that appeared as a real concern for universities. Babeş-Bolyai University may serve as a good example. Here, the principle of self financing of each study program functions, up to the level of each chair, according to the financial resources of that particular unit. With regard to philosophy, the university acted on two levels: on the one hand, in the circumstances of the very low income from sources other than the state budget, the department was imposed some restrictive measures, intended to reduce the expenses; on the other hand, the university supplemented the funds granted to the department so as to ensure a good functioning. At the same time, part of the faculty decided to employ a new way of teaching their own disciplines and, when possible, to teach a more applied dimension of the traditional courses. Simultaneously, the philosophy department realized from the beginning the importance all the three study cycles proposed by the Bologna system had and took intense measures to improve the quality of the educational act. Moreover, it tried to recover the losses caused by the small number of students through developing highly competitive doctoral programs. In this way, the philosophy department at the Babes-Bolyai University is one of the most competitive in terms of scholarly research activities.

With regard to how the philosophical disciplines are sustained in order to be taught in other programs than philosophy, Bejan believes that (although philosophy is taught at Iasi in other faculties) it is difficult to say that there is a consistent policy of encouraging the presence of philosophy courses in other faculties. Thus, it is difficult to sustain a coherent policy to support philosophy.

More specifically, "Philosophy is not necessarily a problem of university in the strategic sense."²⁵ The presence or absence of philosophy courses depends on how much flexibility exists within faculties. Some departments have admitted the importance of philosophy in training their graduates and were coherent in their action to support the presence of philosophy in their curricula. Others have chosen to save resources, so as not to give away to other departments their own courses, and found it in the interest of their students to rather support their own specialized elective courses than philosophy courses. This economic outlook was also imposed by the financial situation of the department of philosophy, that had to give up on financial considerations to a number of disciplines offered by other faculties. Thus, a situation similar to other universities ensued: disciplines that were somehow supposed to be useful to graduates were maintained. These subjects include, for instance, psychology and economics.

Bejan considers that, in the higher education system, there are some departments where the presence of teachers of philosophy should be taken for granted. He exemplifies the need for teaching courses in philosophy for theology students: "I find really reprehensible the absence of a philosophy course from the curricula of a faculty of theology, and there are many such faculties in this country. In Iasi, we have different situations depending on the confessional orientation of the faculty of theology. Thus, Roman Catholics teach philosophy for two years, and after that they go to the study of theology courses or some choose to pursue theology in Rome. At the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, the situation is different. Philosophy courses are put on hold here. And if someone teaches philosophy, as elsewhere in the country, it is certainly a theology graduate, who does not have a systematic philosophical training."²⁶ Beyond the strictly professional elements, we can state that in this way diversity is discouraged and those models by which the specialized curriculum might contain elements to reconcile various options in an ecumenical perspective are eliminated.

An interesting phenomenon reported by Bejan is that of the interest shown for philosophy from the part of graduates of other faculties, particularly from the arts. These students ask for specialized courses, such as philosophy of art or aesthetics. They are interested in the philosophical reflection applied to artworks. In recent years, at the University of Iasi, there have been about 20-30 young people who pleaded on this complicity between philosophy and art, some of them well-known practitioners and

artists. Petru Bejan thinks that philosophy may prove useful in the most diverse places. You just have to find the right place for it. We understand from here that one solution could be the involvement of each member of the philosophy departments in finding solutions to building bridges between disciplines and specialties, creating an area of usefulness of philosophy for other disciplines.

For a good cooperation of philosophy with other disciplines, a positive factor is the example of the collaboration with other social sciences and humanities organized as either separate specializations or in the framework of the same specialization, as it happens for instance at Al. I. Cuza University in Iasi or the Western University in Timisoara, and, respectively, is organized by other faculties, as in the case of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj. Speaking on the latter case, it is interesting to note that, even if at Babes-Bolyai University the Department of Philosophy is situated in the same faculty as the Department of History, a reciprocal exchange of subjects seemed almost impossible between the two departments. Philosophical disciplines (which a few years ago were present in several departments) are instead still taught by professors from the department of philosophy in the programs from sociology, social work, psychology, political science, journalism, letters, ethnology, etc. An important group of teaching and research in philosophy works in the Faculty of European Studies. Babes-Bolyai University has also the largest network of faculties of theology. The situation is the result of the multi-confessional and multi-cultural structure of Transylvania.²⁷ Again, as it happens in most faculties of theology in Romania, the philosophical disciplines that are present in the educational plan of theology faculties are not taught by the professors from the department of philosophy.

An interesting case in managing the presence of philosophical and social-humanist disciplines is encountered at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. Through a strong and persuasive initiative, Vasile Macoviciuc, the head of the Department of Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, managed to obtain a decision from the university in which students from all faculties must attend, during the three years of study, one of the disciplines proposed by the Department of Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology. Thus, one may choose among philosophy, psychology, sociology, political theory, business ethics. During the following year, other new disciplines were planned to be proposed, either mandatory or elective. Vasile Macoviciuc begins with the idea that for finding a place for philosophy and its related disciplines in the university, one must start from two premises. The first one is promoting a positive and active attitude towards the students. This means, primarily, treating the student as an important actor in the communication relationship. The second one is to check what subjects and disciplines are offered. He is convinced that "one cannot live with a Plato type philosophy"²⁸

Vasile Macoviciuc believes that if we can speak of a crisis of philosophy in higher education, then this crisis concerns the people, it has nothing to do with the subjects we offer, but with the people who teach these subjects. He is convinced that the greatest damage brought upon philosophy is done by the people who teach philosophy in an inadequate way. There can be no question of a lack of attractiveness of philosophy. He ironically notes, "this environment is full of spiritual and mental constipation".²⁹

Perhaps the example of a persuasive action at the level of institutional decision makers in a university can lead to good results. In this regard, however, we can see from the experience of the professors from the Academy of Economic Studies that the teachers who lecture in philosophy and social and humanities have a high degree of adaptability to the professional needs of future graduates. Given the student profile in economics, we tried to understand the way in which the recruitment of students functions for various courses. With humor and confidence Vasile Macoviciuc told us: "I never start with the notion that I need to convince students to choose a course of mine. Trying to convince those who will not be convinced is sheer waste of time. Students have to simply be virused."³⁰

The best way to get students from different specializations to choose and follow courses in philosophy seems to be that of a persuasive action that triggers both an emotional and a rational appeal. In this respect, what counts most is the appeal to everyone's deep need to find a meaning, to the natural desire to understand things in their simplicity and complexity, to the desire to explore the many worlds that overlap with their own, to the need to reflect on the big problems we face, as well as on the small elements of our daily experience. This is how we understand our interlocutor's statements.

Of course, rethinking the relationship of philosophy with other disciplines could be oriented towards a fair relationship, beneficial to all parties involved. It is one of the challenges that philosophy must tackle in connection with various other academic disciplines. But first of all, philosophy must address the challenges that come from within. And most of them seem to be related to the reduced chances of employability of philosophy graduates. There are multifolded reasons that led to this situation. But we think it is important to ask whether there is a problem with what the program offers to its graduates, or the problem is rather to be found at the level of graduates' inability? We may wonder whether the curricula of the faculties of philosophy should be re-oriented towards developing skills that would enable graduates to find better employment. The need to adapt the educational program of the faculties of philosophy of education to the pre-university educational market requirements is requested by the fact that the faculties of philosophy primarily prepare teachers for this educational market. It seems, from the way they are prepared today, that these students are poorly prepared upon graduation.

They have difficulties in passing tenure exams with good results; they have problems related to their status in relation with the different subjects they teach. And, sometimes, they can not provide to the schools where they teach alternative programs for optional subjects related to their specialization.

What has to be done to get out of the crisis?

The difficulties the philosophy departments encounter are mainly based on some reasons related to the current status of the discipline itself, to the relationship of philosophy with other disciplines, and especially to the relationship with the labor market for the philosophy graduates, which is mainly represented by the pre-university education. This labor market is in constant decrease, not only because of the decline in school population and, therefore, in the number of graduates in philosophy, but also because of some of the restrictions concerning philosophy in the national curriculum.

Beyond the erosion of the status of teachers of philosophy and of philosophy itself, the problem is that philosophy graduates have no choice but to teach disciplines such as entrepreneurship education and applied economics. Moreover, this is the happy case when they manage to have a full teaching workload and not to have problems in working as school teachers. Philosophy teachers' conversion to other disciplines has a side effect that is difficult to accept. It is unacceptable that they are paid for these hours as non-qualified personnel and not as qualified people.

The reasons why philosophy ended up in this situation are multiple. Most often one mentions the low social prestige, the lack of support from policy makers, but also the teaching style of philosophy professors, namely the university model that is adopted by graduates and teachers in pre-university education.

Among the general measures that can be drawn from our research, one can mention a series of suggestions concerning the target audience in the recruitment of potential students in philosophy, a set of measures for rebuilding the educational plans of the faculties of philosophy, the necessity of philosophy as a subject offered to the whole system of pre-university educational institutions; the need to rethink the role that philosophy can play within the context of all the disciplines offered by the national curriculum etc.

Therefore it is useful to accept a fashionable idea today, that faculties of philosophy should provide competences rather than to merely transmit knowledge; that programs must be designed not only according to the research interests of teachers available in a department, but according to the training needs of the young people; that not only the subjects that taught are important, but their correlation with the training skills that can be used by graduates on the labor market.³¹

The measures that may be taken in order to recover the advantages lost during the last years are multiple. One should aim at measures both at the level of university system, and at the pre-university one. However, the improvements concerning the effective rise of the quality of philosophy graduates and their actual preparation for the labor market cannot be overlooked.

To summarize the main directions of change that should be followed in order to take philosophy out of its institutional crisis, we propose a conclusive solution detailing the main steps that have been mentioned in our interview with Eugen Stoica³². Therefore, the following are important:

1) A sustained activity to promote philosophy and to lobby on behalf of the universities for generalizing the study of philosophy for all high schools, no matter their academic profile.

2) A close cooperation between universities, more specifically between the faculties, departments and departments of philosophy and the school inspectorates, high school leadership and teachers of philosophy. A joint effort would result not only in building a culture of academic dialogue, but also in a revival of new methods of professional employment and educational offerings in relation to the labor market dynamics.

3) A more careful development of the curricula and of the university offer in order to cover in the educational plans those courses and subjects that are typically found in the full teaching load of a teacher, an aspect that would allow for graduates to be able to later teach them. Note that today these subjects are poorly represented both at the BA and at the MA level³³.

4) An objective to be pursued would be to find solutions for adapting university education plans to the requirements of the market. Where possible, it would be appropriate to replace the traditional idea of a philosophical discipline with more applied disciplines, with philosophical problematizations, the latter applied in such a way as to meet the educational needs of the science-oriented or technological high schools.

5) In this respect, Eugen Stoica considers that one should submit to the ministry more applied curricular proposals, differentiated by branches and even by specialization. For example, elements of epistemology could be better represented in the curriculum for students following a scientific profile, while elements of aesthetics, social philosophy, and political philosophy could be more fruitfully introduced in the curriculum of the humanist profile. One must begin from the things that are at hand. It is true that such an action requires universities to overcome the mere declaratory nature of supporting actions for philosophy.

6) Eugen Stoica believes that, in reality, if we may speak of a crisis of philosophy as a discipline in the educational offer, then the real crisis lies in the faculties of philosophy themselves, which offer only highly specialized and very narrow programs. At pre-university level, the crisis is obvious especially at the level of the very weak prospects of teachers to make a full teaching load out of philosophy classes only. Here, the

institutional crisis of philosophy would come to an end provided that universities could finally understand that, in terms of pre-university education, the faculty of philosophy trains only teachers of philosophy and not philosophers as such. Eugen Stoica and Laurenta Hacman³⁴ believe that this confusion between teachers of philosophy and philosophers is visible especially at the level of the very poor didactic qualities of philosophy graduates at the beginning of their careers. The two inspectors, not to mention others, believes that philosophy graduates virtually enter the first year of school teaching without having the minimal knowledge and the necessary skills to conduct educational activities. In their view, understanding the needs of philosophy graduates might begin with understanding the need to study during undergraduate and graduate formation those courses they will later be taught by the graduates, such as: anthropology, sociology, psychology, elements of economics and other disciplines from the pre-university curricula.

7) Eugen Stoica argues that another aspect of any measure should concern general legislation because the law concerning employment is quite restrictive. He says the employment of graduates is based on the specialization that appears on the diploma. From the perspective of labor legislation, one should aim to be able to write on the diploma broader terms, such as humanities with a specialization in Philosophy. However, for this to be feasible, it is necessary that these claims should also have a curriculum back-up.

8) At the university level, there is also the need to go back to double specialization. This could create a wide range of opportunities for teacher training and for providing the skills that would enable them to solve the issues from the educational labor market. Also, students could benefit from the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach proposed by their teachers, thereby contributing to the formation of competences and skills.

9) The repeated attempts made by Babes-Bolyai University to the Ministry of Education with the purpose of re-establishing double specialization, when there is a valid justification, should enjoy broader support from other universities, but also from the pre-university educational system, one of the main beneficiaries of the implementation of such a measure.

10) Eugen Stoica suggests that there is no connection between the presence or absence of religion in national curriculum and, respectively, of philosophy (although this is a statement that can only partially be defended). He believes that the absence of philosophy from several layers of the pre-university educational curriculum is rather a consequence of university professors' lack of real support for this discipline. He states that "the presence of a discipline is closely connected to its support. However, one must not forget that education is a major political issue"³⁵. Therefore, solving the institutional crisis of philosophy should begin by producing a

change of mentality from the part of politicians concerning the importance and the social prestige of philosophy.

Religion is a widely mentioned example by the philosophy teachers that could serve as a model for solving the crisis of the presence of philosophy in the curriculum. Religion is studied as a mandatory discipline during all twelve years of the pre-university education. We do not refer here to the positions that devalue the presence of religion in public schools. We believe that, from the perspective of our subject, the important thing is neither what is taught at the classes of religion, nor the status of the discipline in the curricula. For us, it is more important to search for an educational system in which religious education and philosophical education are complementary. We cannot disregard the fact that not only those particular two disciplines, but the entire study program must be regarded as a whole.³⁶ Philosophy should be placed in a relation of complementarity not only with religion, but also with the other disciplines. In this context, one must always insist on the contribution that philosophy-related competences bring to the development of competences offered by the other curricular disciplines.

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¹ The present article is part of a larger research project that aims to investigate the relation between philosophy, religion, ideology and the crisis of philosophy in the Romanian educational system. The research has been carried within the framework of the project ID_511 and has been financially supported by CNCSIS. During this research, we analyzed different reports, documents and texts on the situation of

philosophy in the main universities from Romania and we carried in-depth interviews with philosophy professors and decision makers from the same universities.

² See for instance Yoo Seung-gi, Crisis in the Humanities in Korea, 2006-09-28, http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?at_code=363083

³ Robert Weisbuch, Six Proposals to Revive the Humanities, Chronicle of Higher Education, 00095982, 3/26/99, Vol. 45, Issue 29.

⁴ Marjorie Perloff. Crisis in the Humanities, <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/perloff/articles/crisis.html>

⁵ Marjorie Perloff, Crisis in the Humanities, <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/perloff/articles/crisis.html>

⁶ Barry Hudek, Do I (We) Have a Future? Exploring the Crisis For Graduate Students in the Humanities. A paper delivered at the Conference of the Illinois Philological Association, April 2, 2005, <http://www.eiu.edu/~agora/Sept05/Hudmain.htm>

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Katherine Arens. Expert Personae in the Humanities: Ideologies of Academic Performance in the Knowledge Economy. The International Journal of the Humanities. Vol 5, nr. 1/2007, 141-147.

⁹ By “pre-university system” we understand here all education before university level, not only the education from high schools.

¹⁰ See Slobodan Milivojevic „Education in Multicultural and Multiconfesional Areas. Different models”, pp. 39-57, in Sandu Frunză, Michael Jones (eds.), *Education and Cultural Diversity*, Cluj: Provopress, 2006, 49-50.

¹¹ Dollores Benezic, “România produce de zece ori mai mulți teologi decât în ’89”, *Evenimentul zilei*, 30 oct. 2009 www.evz.ro

¹² The danger of such a pressure comes not only from ignoring the separation between church and politics, as the basis for the functioning of the modern state. It is manifested both as an influence of politics upon religion, running the risk of transforming the latter into an ideology. In this respect, Paul Bejan argues: “Belief is the binder of any ideology. Religions are not ideologies, but they can become ideologies, when the attention of “the city of man” surpasses the one of “civitas dei”. Petru Bejan, „Discursul autorității și interpretarea ideologică”, in Ștefan Afloroei (ed.), *Interpretare și ideologie*, Iași: Editura Fundației Axis, 2002, 11-31.

¹³ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 9, 2008. Several important aspects concerning the evolution of the religious phenomenon in Romania can be followed in Claudiu Herțeliu, *Metode cantitative în studiul fenomenului religios*, Cluj: Napoca Star, 2009, 140-194.

¹⁴ On the relation between philosophy, religion, and ideology, as well as between philosophy and politics see our article from JSRI issue 22 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”. In: *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, nr. 22, Spring 2009, 129-149. Some interesting debates on philosophy, religion and politics may be followed in Nicu Gavriluță, „Șapte dialoguri despre hermeneutică, religie și politică” in *România în starea Bardo*, Cluj: Provopress, 2006, 127-208. A critical attitude concerning the interferences of religion and politics can be read in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *Politica după comunism. Structură, cultură și psihologie politică*, București: Humanitas, 2002, 173-184. The premises of a complementarity between philosophy and religion

may be found in Gianni Vattimo, who argues: „It is a fact that the „end of modernity” or, in any case, its crisis, brought about the unraveling of the major philosophical theories that considered to put an end to religion: positivist scientism, Hegelian historicism, and later the Marxist version of it. Today, those strong philosophical reasons for being atheist or, anyway, for rejecting religion, are no longer in place”. Gianni Vattimo, *A crede că mai credem. E cu puțință să fim creștini în afara bisericii?*, Constanța: Ed. Pontica, 2005, 15.

¹⁵ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 9, 2008

¹⁶ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 9, 2008

¹⁷ For a comparison with other fields, see Mihaela Frunza “Introduction des études de genre dans le système d'enseignement supérieur de Roumanie. Défis et perspectives”. In: *Chronique Feministe*, no. 101, “Feminisme et recherché: incompatibles?”, Juil.-Dec. 2008, p. 15-22. See also Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, “The Short Exultant Life of Gender Studies in Romania. Gender Studies and Curriculum Transformation”, http://web.ceu.hu/crc/crc_resfel_draft2006.html (restricted access).

¹⁸ Constantin Sălăvăștru, interview by authors, Iași, May 16, 2008

¹⁹ Constantin Sălăvăștru, interview by authors, Iași, May 16, 2008

²⁰ Constantin Sălăvăștru, interview by authors, Iași, May 16, 2008

²¹ Constantin Sălăvăștru, interview by authors, Iași, May 16, 2008

²² Constantin Sălăvăștru, interview by authors, Iași, May 16, 2008

²³ Tom L. Beauchamp, *Philosophical Ethics. An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991.

²⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Introduce în filosofie*, Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea Independentă “Dimitrie Cantemir”, 1994.

²⁵ Petru Bejan, interview by authors, Iași, May 15, 2008

²⁶ Petru Bejan, interview by authors, Iași, May 15, 2008

²⁷ See Ioan Vasile Leb, *Biserică și multiculturalitate în Europa sfârșitului de mileniu*, Cluj-Napoca. Presa universitară Clujeană, 2001. See also Mircea Mică, „Ecumenismul universitar” in Ioan-Vasile Leb, Radu Preda, *Culte și statul în România*, Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2003, 9-10.

²⁸ Vasile Macoviciuc, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 10, 2008

²⁹ Vasile Macoviciuc, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 10, 2008

³⁰ Vasile Macoviciuc, interview by authors, Bucharest, July 10, 2008.

³¹ Mircea Mică, Interview by author, Cluj, September 6, 2008.

³² Eugen Stoica, Interview by authors, Iași, May 15, 2008

³³ There is one exception, in the curricula of one MA program in Philosophy from the University of West, Timisoara. Here the curricula cover even the most discussed subject of “entrepreneurial education”.

³⁴ Eugen Stoica, Interview by authors, Iași, May 15, 2008; Laurenta Hacman, Interview by authors, Iași, 15 May 2008

³⁵ Eugen Stoica, Interview by authors, Iași, May 15, 2008

³⁶ It is useful to remind here that “Authentic philosophy, far from ignoring the material world, will initiate reflection from this world that conditions all our thoughts. Destined to elevate ourselves, philosophy is not meant to send us into exile. And reflection needs not be an evasion. The philosopher is not satisfied with living the events jumble, in their concrete diversity. As in the excellent formulation of Lacroix, the philosophical act tends to „transform an event into an experience”; it proposes to extract lesson from events, to get events closer to one another in order to understand them – to include them together – with the purpose to attain a systematic,

i.e. unified vision of the universe”. Andre Vergez, Denis Huisman, *Curs de filosofie*, Bucureşti; Humanitas, 1995, 15.