

SANDU FRUNZĂ

A STEREOTYPE: THE LACK OF THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF PHILOSOPHY

The way in which the relations among philosophy, religion and politics have been built and evolved in post-1989-Romania brought about the development of several stereotypes connected to the social inutility of philosophy, to the graduates' difficulty in adapting to the requirements of the labor market, to the lack of importance of philosophy and of philosophical education. The present text signals the crisis of philosophy due to a series of factors such as: the difficulties that the philosophical discourse has in finding a place in the public debate, the negative perception of philosophy in the public mentality, the stereotypes concerning philosophy that the political representatives cultivate, and the lack of a labor market that would adequately value the competences and the expertise of the graduates in Humanities.

Sandu Frunză

Associate Professor, Ph.D.,
Political Science Department,
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj,
Romania. Email:
sfrunza@yahoo.com

Key Words:

social prestige, philosophical education, marketization of philosophy, religion, politics, the Romanian system of education

In Romania, after 1989, the faculties of philosophy, as well as those of theology, have been founded gradually in the traditional university centers first and then in all the places where an initiative for such a program existed¹. It was easy to establish a faculty of philosophy because it did not require huge resources or big investments. The human resources in the already existing faculties of philosophy before 1989 started to work in parallel in the new centers where they began to train people that later took over the reins. The demand for entry places was big enough, and the entry exam made quite a good selection. The financial politics promoted by the ministry of education led to a relaxation of the university entry process, later liberalized, a process that affected the quality of the educational process. Moreover, the university centers began to adopt the file-based admission in order to ensure a better financing for the programs that developed by increasing the number of fee places in the public system of education. In parallel, a huge number of private universities have been developed, but only few of them initiated philosophy study programs, preferring instead the programs in law or economics because of benefiting from an apparently inexhaustible demand. The number of philosophy graduates has always overcome the power of their absorption into the educational market. The diminution of the educational offer after the removal of philosophy from the curricula of technological high schools led to crisis in the pre-university system, the main market place for philosophy graduates. This market was left unable to absorb the huge number of new employees and it started to endanger the position of those within the system.

Philosophy lost the privileged place it used to have before 1989 and in the years after, and the reasons are multifold. Adrian-Paul Iliescu states that first of all, the diminution of the presence of philosophy is to be attributed to the failure of the educational administrator to reform philosophical education; second, it was obvious that the philosophical educational system, in its very large distribution prior to 1989, could no longer exist; and third, those responsible for the reform of the philosophical educational system were unable to understand that it needed a new direction, different from traditional philosophy. This is why „by failing to understand this, namely to understand the necessity of a reform of the philosophical educational system towards an applicative direction, they had the impression that reform is not possible and concluded that philosophy can no longer find its place ... simply put, I believe they did not realize or know anything about this sphere of applied philosophy”.²

The faculties of theology were also founded by transforming the former theological institutes in faculties that were then included in some state universities. Later on, few bishops could resist the temptation of having their own Faculty of Theology. Inside the powerful centers, the Faculties of Theology have developed into small-scale universities inside the state universities. It is widely acknowledged that „our theologies, once included in the university ... have built their own confessional universities inside the state universities”³. They proposed extremely diverse specializations, ranging from pastoral theology to sacred art, from social work to sport and theology, from theology and letters to journalism.

A well-known philosophy professor has stated that „Religion as discipline has been introduced in school by force.”⁴ This is how he attempts to point to the pressure and the political interests that determined the inclusion of religion in the common body of disciplines. The political and spiritual pressure led, without any doubts, to the establishment of a great number of faculties of theology. They also represent an answer to the needs of a market opened by pre-university education. The establishment of religion as discipline in the national curriculum from the first to the twelfth grade justified, to a certain extent, the development of theology beyond the pastoral needs, leading also to a series of double specializations of theology in relation with other disciplines that were meant to provide theology graduates with a series of competences that would ease their absorption into the labor market, and especially into the pre-university educational system.

A well-known representative of the civil society states that „the investment in religion is not an investment in civilization”.⁵ Yet, Romanian culture and civilization proved to be in the tradition of their formation as an establishment that included the religious element as a paramount one. Moreover, after the experience of the forced imposition of the atheistic ideology during the communist regime, it was understandable why the expectation level concerning the presence of religion in society, and

implicitly in the educational system was high. The fact that according to statistics there are less than 10,000 self-declared atheists in the Romanian community may be an important element to be taken into account when trying to understand how it was possible that the church occupied the public space so easily and that the solid system of religious education at university and pre-university level developed so rapidly. The increase of the prestige of the church inside the population and the continual decrease of trust in the political class was an equally powerful argument for the presence of religion in the public space, including public schools and the educational offer of the secular state⁶. The fact that politicians needed church prestige in order to attenuate their own lack of prestige, especially during electoral campaigns, led to a series of alliances between church representatives and politicians. The alliance between religion and politics resulted in positive consequences for the development of religious education⁷.

Unlike religion, philosophy did not manage to find a proper place in the public space. It did not manage to escape from the burden of its association with atheistic education or with the ideology of scientific socialism, nor did it manage to recover the philosophical tradition as a living element, which plays a formative role in the education of young people in the present social conditions. It did not manage to prove itself useful for politicians and for the cultural and scientific challenges of the new context of informational society. It barely succeeds in influencing the new generations who are offered a new image of philosophy, very different from the one their parents had because more than 40% of the young people do not have even the opportunity of meeting with philosophy during the twelve-year pre-university formation. Moreover, those who have the privilege of dealing with philosophy either prove to be indifferent to it or they are rather interested in other more applied disciplines, better demanded on the labor market. These pupils are discouraged by the difficulty of philosophy and by the continual effort that the fascinating field of philosophy proposes. Those who still believe that philosophy is an easy field are reminded of Mircea Flonta's words: „Philosophy is exercising thinking that needs to be continually practiced, such as the piano, the violin, painting, engineering or medicine.”⁸

One of the problems that philosophy faces in today's Romania is determined by the difficulty of adapting the academic philosophical discourse to the public space. Even when questioning people who benefited from previous training in the field of philosophy, they encounter difficulties in giving the names of the philosophers (we obviously refer here to all the professors of philosophy, as well as to those who follow, in their writings, a philosophical pattern of discourse) that are visible in public discourse and in public action. The names the people usually mention are those of Andrei Pleșu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Horia-Roman Patapievici, Mihaela Miroiu, and the list continues with other two or three

thinkers that are no longer alive. An interesting situation, even if uncommon, is the one of the presence, inside political life, of several university professors who also followed a study program in philosophy, such as Emil Boc, Mircea Miclea, Vasile Dâncu (to give only three names). The above-mentioned personalities claim to be representative for the other specializations they followed, namely law, psychology, and sociology⁹. Most often, public personalities that previously followed a training path in philosophy treat this section of their CV as a marginal one or see it as a colorful spot on their colorful career background.

Most probably, this attitude does not result from the conscious approval of the practical inutility of philosophy, or of its lack of contribution to the development of a successful career or to the active participation in political life. We are rather more tempted to associate this attitude with the marginalization of philosophy in the pre-university educational system, to the perception of philosophy as a Cinderella of the university system and to the very low social prestige of philosophy in the Romanian public sphere. This marginalization of philosophy is in high contrast with the scientific production in the field of philosophical academic research after 1989, such as the existence of a significant body of translations made from classical philosophical texts, of some significant comments on them, and of some original philosophical works with unprecedented contribution to the Romanian culture. Except for the increasingly low number of students who opt for a philosophical academic training, all the factors seem to favor the development of philosophy. However, apart from a small number of works in ethics, the philosophy of communication and political philosophy, there is no real visibility of philosophical works on the Romanian cultural stage. At the same time, when attempting to access any database of academic publications, we will see that the papers of the philosophy professors of the Romanian universities are seldom present, and when they are, this is due to the presence in the prestigious international databases of some journals co-edited by Romanian scholars and their colleagues from abroad, such as *Studia Phaenomenologica* or the *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*.

*

An almost inexplicable situation in the Romanian society is the rather negative perception of philosophy at the level of common sense, as well as of the mentality of many personalities that are active in public and especially in political life. The recent controversy on the topic of philosophy introduced by the acting Romanian president, Traian Băsescu, is very telling. This president included among his collaborators several persons with good philosophical education, not to mention several Romanian philosophy creators. The present study is written in a period that is close to the presidential electoral campaign, a period in which the

media debates obsessively on behalf of the political opponents in order to demolish the image of the acting president. The present text is not concerned with the topic of Traian Băsescu as an acting president or as a candidate for the future presidential elections. We are only interested in the fact that he embodies, at the highest level of public presence, a very widespread mentality (if not a cliché) about philosophy.

Relevant is the president's pejorative use of the word "philosopher" in the Government meeting on June 14, 2009 – a sequence that was repeatedly broadcasted on all the media channels. Of course, Romanian is a permissive language and does allow for diverse phrases, such as "the philosophy of budget" or "it is not a big philosophy/ it is not a big deal". However, the acting president uses the term in an official context, connected with issues concerning the development strategy of the educational system. At the governmental meeting that he chaired, offering suggestions for the development of several ministries, the president addresses the Minister of Education, Ecaterina Andronescu, accusing her of the fact that Romanian education produces too many philosophers and does not correspond to a real need of the market that, in the president's vision, rather requires waiters and tinsmiths.

The context of the whole discussion is that of the president's remarks on the lack of reform in education: "Mrs. Andronescu, I have a big request to make of you. Let us not waste another year without an educational reform, because the situation of education in Romania is dramatic from the point of view of quality. I do not want to enter into polemics, but I do believe that any child, if he wants to find out more about salad or dandelion, he can find information on Google. If he wants to know more on antic history, say Herodot, he can google it. Let us focus on an adequate curriculum that is concise and preferably adapted to the Romanian economy because we get all the signals that we no longer have trained car mechanics or tinsmiths. There are no longer nutrition high schools. Let us produce waiters, let us do what we should to do! All we produce are philosophers that are barely absorbed into the market", concluded president Traian Băsescu. It is true that his allegations concern pre-university education. Yet, the crisis found at university level is closely connected with what happens to humanist education and to the philosophical disciplines of high school education.

Even if the discussion strictly refers to the level of pre-university education, the lack of logic of the president's associations and the minimalization of the field of philosophy resulted in stupefaction among philosophy professors and several intellectuals. Moreover, all these would have remained insignificant for our discussion if things had been limited to that. Yet, a few days later, at the opening of *Bookfest*, a microphone recorded president Băsescu while confessing to philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu about a bigger mistake than the one with philosophers and tinsmiths that he was on the point of making. He acknowledged that what

he had really meant was the fact that “The Romanian school produces stupid people” and that at the last minute he managed to avoid it by admitting that it produces philosophers.¹⁰

The private dialogue, yet registered by the journalists, continued, while Gabriel Liiceanu conceded that, in principle, he could agree with the president if he meant that the Romanian school needed to be more applied in its programs and content.¹¹ The journalists rightly noted that at that moment, Gabriel Liiceanu was left without a proper reply meant to balance the situation. The philosopher later came back with a comment on *Realitatea TV* rightly saying that „at this time, the problem of Romania is not Traian Băsescu”. Later on, he continued with a personal reflection on the president remarks that remains debatable, stating that: „If you address the issue from one point view, the president’s statement is false. If you address it from another point of view, it is true”. Thus, the philosopher avoided both to openly accept the president’s perspective and to criticize it, affirming that he has „the gift of throwing some words that later on have to be re-addressed”.¹²

Mircea Cărtărescu, one of the most important Romanian writers, also attributes these statements to an unfortunate expression of one’s mind, to a momentary inability, on which one might want to come back. He suggests that the situation is not relevant, that we should rather pass over it, because Traian Băsescu could simply not find a better way to express himself. At the same time, he states that „It is sheer nonsense to claim that the educational system would produce more philosophers than waiters, because the Romanian educational system does not even truly produce philosophers. My guess is that Traian Băsescu aims at seeming more basic sometimes, as he wants to speak so that everybody could understand him, and he finishes by not being understood at all, as it usually happens”¹³.

Ilie Călian also attributes the president’s statement to an error. He considers it is more likely a documentation error made by the president and his councilors, who are not well documented before making public statements. In fact, they do not understand the role of certificates, of qualifications and of professions in Romanian education. To Ilie Călian’s mind, the real issues are those regarding the Romanian labor market, namely the fact that those products of the Romanian school, „those car mechanics, those tinsmiths and waiters do exist, but many of them go to work abroad”¹⁴, where the labor market seems more favorable.

Coming back to the meeting between the president Traian Băsescu and the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu and emphasizing the vivid discontent of the latter with the arguments of the former, Constantin Toma suggests that these attitudes of the president could have a negative impact on the subsequent evolution of his political career: „For the moment, Traian Băsescu makes little jokes and he is the first one to laugh at them. In addition, when he makes a mistake, he amuses himself as if he has made a joke. The public laughs, out of politeness or at the ha-ha-laughter of the

president. However, one day people may refuse to agree to the president's jokes and Bănescu will discover he is laughing alone."¹⁵

It is hard to believe that the presidential negative approach to philosophy would significantly impact upon the attitude of those connected in different ways to philosophy towards Traian Bănescu. Very likely, if he had said „theologians” instead of „philosophers”, it would have stirred some negative reactions that could lead to public discomfort. No active politician affords to make such an unacceptable mistake as to associate or to substitute „stupid people” with „theologian” or „priest”, even for avoiding a mistake. This is not because unlike philosophy, theology would be more speculative, it would have a higher formative value or it would better fit to the requirements of the labor market but because the church is a very important political force in Romania. Both the political instrumentalization of the church and the conditioned support granted by the church to the political parties and personalities contribute to stating why the situation of religion (or theology) cannot be identical to the one of philosophy. The fact that philosophers are not president Traian Bănescu's best long-term companions in the political competition may be illustrated with another episode with deep significations for the relation between philosophy and politics or between philosophers and politicians. At the meeting planned on October 27, 2009, during the electoral campaigns at the Group for Social Dialogue, the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, in dialogue with the candidate Traian Bănescu, looks more likely as a man who got tired under the pressure of political and social events than as a possible road companion for the competitor engaged in the political battle for a new presidential term. "I am glad you are a rested president. I feel more like a tired and defeated citizen. Back in 2004, you came with a project, and this project fell in a swamp. And you willy-nilly entered this field. I believe you are the victim of a situation. I hoped you are the only politician able to manage to take Romania out of this field. My feeling is, nevertheless, that whoever enters this political stage enters this game and does it by turning his back on the people”, says Gabriel Liiceanu.¹⁶

An ex-presidential councilor, an influential figure of public life and a prestigious philosopher, Andrei Pleșu, distances himself from the „philosophy” of the acting president and notes that the presidential discourse is dominated by mistakes and logical flaws:

- a) A logical flaw signaled by the philosopher is the link established by the president between the truly important topic of the disappearance of several traditional jobs that are still useful and entire fields such as metaphysics, ancient history or natural sciences. Following the presidential logic, it results that we lack tinsmiths because we deal too much with botany, with the past and with ideas. This is, as Andrei Pleșu claims, a very erroneous idea because it is not the mission of high school to directly produce

- waiters or plumbers, as this is to be regarded as a cultural institution. Rather, there are specialized schools that have to do this and they should not replace the classical gymnasium training.
- b) Another mistake signaled by Andrei Pleșu is that the president makes high school responsible for the subsequent distribution of pupils by specialties. Instead, high school really needs to be regarded as „a place of formation, of integral shaping of personalities; it ideally produces characters, personalities, intellectual opening. In which direction will the virtues acquired in high school go is an issue that overcomes the agenda of secondary education.”¹⁷
 - c) Like other intellectuals who took a stance on this issue, Andrei Pleșu claims that the president’s idea, that we train too many philosophers that are impossible to hire easily on the market, is to be equally flawed. This fake perception of an inflation of philosophers is connected by Andrei Pleșu (in a somewhat exaggerated way, we could say) „to a personal idiosyncrasy towards the ‚intellectuals’ he disparages, even when they, poor them, support him”.
 - d) Yet another inadvertence that is considered unacceptable by Andrei Pleșu is the president’s indication, in the same discourse at the government, to maintain the classes of sport in the curricula. With his well-known humor, Andrei Pleșu states: „Remaining in the logic of Cotroceni, we could object by claiming that one can practice gymnastics or football at home, as leisure. What is the purpose of delivering alert bodies, when there is such a crisis of tinsmiths?”¹⁸

A relentless critique is given by Daniel Barbu, the chair of Political Sciences Department at the University of Bucharest. He believes that even though Traian Băsescu’s statements must be regarded as a metaphor, one must not forget that the president reacts as a communist activist when he mistakenly identifies the people that are responsible for the lack of some professions and criticizes the alleged excess of „philosophers” produced by Romanian education. In an attempt to identify the major shortcomings of the national educational system, Daniel Barbu argues: „Traian Băsescu hurried and made a fundamental mistake, one that reminds us of the 1950s and the 1980s, when hard work or hand work was valued to the detriment of intellectual work, considered inferior”¹⁹.

An important figure in the discourse of political philosophy and gender studies, Professor Mihaela Miroiu from NSPSA is more tolerant in this case. She seems to give justice to president Băsescu when he denounces the disappearance of certain professions, but still finds him guilty of a big mistake when he refers to an excess of „philosophers”. She finds that the president lacks the necessary information in this respect.

„Romanian education does not produce philosophers; it produces generalists that are guilty of having too many elements of general education. One teaches too many types of sciences that are never used... There is no excess of philosophers, of humanities”, Mihaela Miroiu argues.²⁰

A perspective that insists on the conjunctural character of Traian Bănescu's declaration is advanced by Călin Hera. He claims that the presidential discourse is purely electoral and that it should not be considered outside the electoral frame. Traian Bănescu wanted to transmit the message of his being close to simple people, to the workers that are sensitive to this type of discourse. For this purpose, he uses the tools of political communication as regards conflict and mobilization, persuasion and manipulation. Călin Hera is convinced that by upsetting the „unhireable philosophers”, Traian Bănescu did not risk too much, because he knew he could easily win them back after the elections.²¹

In the context of the controversy triggered by the statement of Traian Bănescu, a particular position, meant to diminish the tension on this topic, is the one of Andrei Cornea, an important figure of university life and a significant voice in Romanian culture. He brings a romantic academic perspective. The philosopher gives a rather conciliatory reply to Traian Bănescu by arguing, in a metaphorical way, that in fact Romania has „too many tinsmiths and too few philosophers”. Referring to the philosophy graduates themselves, in a symbolic and ironic manner, Andrei Cornea finds that many of them become „tinsmiths”, and very few of them manage to become „philosophers”. He goes on to explain his findings: „By philosopher I mean the person who, in every field of knowledge, takes things one step further, is creative and opens a new path or completes an old one. The one who browses through what is well known is the tinsmith. From this point of view, we have too few philosophers... Yet, we have many tinsmiths, many mediocre people that do not manage to go beyond the trodden paths”²².

To our view, this position is significant for our topic because it is obvious that from the point of view of the students' interests, it is exactly this aspect of creativity, typical for philosophy, which is important. If pupils do not have philosophy included in the educational offer, they are deprived of the formative impact of a discipline that develops competences of creativity based on critical thinking and renewal of thinking, on conceptual systematization, on understanding and interpretation, on the pluralism of options²³, on argumentation and debate, on research, analysis and synthesis, on the dialogue with other disciplines etc.

From the approach taken by *Cotidianul* and from other views on the topic, one can extract a great variety of opinions as regards president Bănescu's statement concerning the surplus of philosophers produced by the Romanian school. Thus, there are radical positions that associate Traian Bănescu either with Nicolae Ceaușescu or with Elena Ceaușescu; or

there are positions who consider that the declarations of Traian Bănescu only present him as he is, as a man with rudimentary thinking. These types of associations seem to be accompanied by a certain dose of normality in the Romanian context of a very difficult electoral year. At the same time, one can find positions that are closer to president Bănescu's intentions. These reveal the uncontested fact that what has to be extracted from his discourse is his major concern for the implementation of reform in education. Everybody is familiar with the urgent need for massive reform in the educational system. Apart from his clumsy expression, the message of Traian Bănescu targeted exactly on this reform.

If we are to credit the president with his good intentions and correlate them with his attempts to provide a unique law that should regulate the situation of Romanian education, we can easily accept that Traian Bănescu was not understood in his intentions, in the content of his message, that his critics were unable to go beyond the literal and formal statements to the deeper ones. Of course, this is a simplistic interpretation. Moreover, we cannot dismiss the efforts of the Presidential Commission for Education, directed by Mircea Mică, who attempted for the first time to propose a unitary document in Romania, based on a diagnose of the situation of education and on a perspective that claimed the necessity for a radical reform of the system. Traian Bănescu has made a real effort to sustain this approach and has done the legal pressure allowed by his status in order to determine the adoption of a new law of education meant to go one-step further in the modernization and reformation of the educational system. In this perspective, the president's intentions can be deemed as positive. However, when it comes to how these intentions are connected to the discourse on philosophers, this remains a subject for further discussions.

*

What matters here is, nevertheless, the negative or at least the pejorative perception of philosophical education and of philosophers in the Romanian society. The above-discussed presidential discourse is a significant sample of a way of thinking and of an attitude towards philosophy and philosophers. It is clear that the presidential statement reflects neither his hate towards the intellectuals, nor his dismissal of philosophy, and maybe nor the attitude of reserve he might have concerning some of the people he could identify with „philosophers”. Rather, one finds here a certain type of mentality widespread at the level of common perception (and especially at the level of political mentality): the lack of social utility of philosophy, its incapacity to respond to some practical requests of society, and the difficulty to absorb those with good theoretical and philosophical preparation into the labor market.²⁴ Such stereotypical thinking cannot influence the university study programs in

philosophy, which is visible at least through the increasingly low number of candidates for the admission in the faculties of philosophy. When more than 40% of the high school graduates did not have the opportunity to have at least a one-hour class of philosophy, one might expect that, faced with the possibility of choosing a university program in the field of philosophy, their attitude is deeply influenced by the negative stereotypes about philosophy that are discussed in the public sphere.

The great difficulty of philosophy that can be found in relation to the president's attitude is connected not only with the fact that it reflects a rather common attitude in the Romanian mentality, but also with the fact that he can provide an attitudinal model. It is known that the parents put some pressure on the Ministry of education in order to reduce some classes from the high school curricula. Moreover, when faced with the increase of the percentage of curricular disciplines that the schools can decide on, the parents impose their preference for certain optional disciplines on these schools. This pressure will constantly rise. In the case of technological high schools, where philosophy has to win back a lost battle, the parents' options are for other disciplines than philosophy. This is not only due to the stereotypes concerning philosophy, but also to the fact that, in general, the population has a negative perception on philosophy, thinking that the utility of philosophy is hard to grasp. In this respect, it is to mention some of the statements on the kinds of pressure put on at the ministerial level and at the level of school inspectorates. Thus, Laurenta Hacman, an inspector of socio-humanist disciplines, states: „I wonder what the usefulness of philosophy as a discipline would be, for technological high schools. I think the students would be neither interested nor able to understand something of it”.²⁵

Probably a solution is the one proposed by Anton Adămuț, namely: those who follow the faculty of philosophy have to be convinced that „after all, philosophy is a vocational faculty, such as the arts, theology or drama”.²⁶ If they follow and capitalize on their vocation, the high school teachers will find the best solutions to overcome the limitations imposed by the textbooks of philosophy (that are so badly made that they seem to work against philosophy), the shortcomings caused by the students' lack of sympathy with the critical and innovative discourse of philosophy, and even the young people's lack of inclination towards philosophical reflection.

An improvement of the way of perceiving philosophy, apart from the existing stereotypes connected to it, might be done through a rethinking of the relation of the philosophy graduate with the labor market. Adrian-Paul Iliescu believes it is possible to overcome the dilemmas concerning the crisis of philosophy if we understand that we have to follow examples that have already proven their efficiency, such as the Oxford-Cambridge model. For Adrian-Paul Iliescu, the reentry of philosophy in the agora is possible if the university professors manage to understand that, for the market, we

need to produce young people that become specialized in the handling of ideas, of the plans of thinking, of critical thinking, of the flexibility of thinking and of conceptual innovation. The big issue in Romania comes from the fact that there is no clear idea about what can be done with philosophy graduates. Adrian-Paul Iliescu believes our country should rapidly follow the British model, where „there is a clear picture of the competences of philosophy graduates and their suitable jobs. For instance, there are jobs in mass media, in publicity, in marketing and communication campaigns, and, quite surprisingly, in banks. In UK, the people in the human resource business and labor recruitment have already got a clear idea about the use of philosophy graduates. To one’s great surprise, there are a great number of philosophy graduates that are recruited in the banking system. Why? Because those people have found out that the flexibility and the intellectual sophistication of philosophy graduates are useful for certain jobs in the banking system.”²⁷ Of course, this involves a certain mentality that is able to positively value public presence, social importance, creativity and professional expertise, all these special competences that philosophy and „philosophers” could bring into the labor market.

It is obvious that such an opening of the labor market to the absorption of philosophy graduates can be established, on the one hand, under the circumstances of an adequate legislative framework, that would not rigidly restrict the possibility of professional insertion according to the exact label on the graduation diploma and, on the other hand, if the perception of the status of philosophy and of philosophy graduates is favorable at the level of social mentality, freed from stereotypes. A change of attitude towards them on the labor market is not possible without a positive perception based on the understanding of the social utility of philosophy, of philosophical education, of the competence and the expertise that the philosophy graduates possess.

References:

Adămuț, Anton. Interview by author, Iasi, 15 May 2008.

Andrescu, Gabriel. ”Investiția în religie nu e o investiție în civilizație”. *Ziua*, Nr. 2937, 13 februarie 2004.

Boc, Emil. *Instituții politice și proceduri constituționale în România*. Cluj: Editura Accent, 2005.

Călian, Ilie. „Bănescu - între “tîmpiți” și “filozofi””. *Făclia de Cluj*, http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:maz0ShZN4_0J:www.ziarulfaclia.ro/B%C4%83sescu---%C3%AEntre-8220-t%C3%AEmpi%C5%A3i-8221-%C5%9Fi-8220-filozofi-8221-%2B27422+filozof+basescu&cd=10&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

Codoban, Aurel. “Intervenție la Dezbateri partea a II-a. Regimul juridic al cultelor din România și provocarea integrării europene”. In: Sandu Frunză (ed.). *Pași spre integrare. Religie și drepturile omului în România*. Cluj: Limes, 2004.

Codoban, Aurel (ed.). *Postmodernismul. Deschideri filosofice*. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1995.

Dâncu, Vasile Sebastian. *Comunicarea simbolică. Arhitectura discursului publicitar*. Cluj: Dacia, 1999

Duca, Dan, Cristiana Vișan. “Bănescu regretă deficitul de ospătări și inflația de “filozofi””. *Cotidianul*, http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:BFjGkWoU4q8J:www.cotidianul.ro/basescu_regreta_deficitul_de_ospatari_si_inflatia_de_filozofi-88153.html+filozof+basescu&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

Flonta, Mircea. Interview by author, Bucharest, 9 July 2008.

Frunză, Mihaela. „Despre filozofi, ospătări și mecanici auto”. *Observator cultural*, No. 480, 25 Iunie 2009.

Frunză, Sandu (ed.). *Pași spre integrare. Religie și drepturile omului în România*. Cluj: Limes, 2004.

Frunză, Sandu (ed.). *Filosofie și religie. O abordare multidisciplinară*. Cluj: Limes, 2001.

Hacman, Laurenta. Interview by author, Iasi, 15 May 2008.

Hera, Călin. “Caut tinichigiu școlit. Exclus filosof”. *EVZ*, http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:oxlm2-r_6WwJ:www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/855154/EDITORIALUL-EVZ-Caut-tinichigiu-scolit-Exclus-filosof/+filozof+basescu&cd=56&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

Iliescu, Adrian-Paul. Interview by author. Bucharest, 10 July 2008.

Iliescu, Adrian-Paul. *Introducere în politologie*. București: BIC ALL, 2002.

Ivlampie, Ivan. "Cum se poate preda filozofia?". In: *Inovație și schimbare în educație*. Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare „Dunărea de Jos”, 2003.

Ivlampie, Ivan. „Obiectivele și competențele predării-învățării disciplinelor socio-umane”. In: *Educația în mileniul III*. Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare „Dunărea de Jos”, 2004.

Miclea, Mircea. *Psihologie cognitivă*. Cluj: Casa de Editură Gloria, 1994.

Negruțiu, Florin. „Tinichigiu și filosof. Bănescu, mărturisiri necenzurate către Liiceanu: ‘Școala scoate tâmpiți’”. *Gândul*, 18 iunie 2009, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:K92O8oFJaCIJ:www.gandul.info/politica/tinichigiu-si-filosof-basescu-marturisiri-necenzurate-catre-liiceanu-scoala-scoate-tampiti.html%3F3928%3B4566809+basescu+si+filosofia&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

Ortega y Gasset, Jose. *Ce este filosofia? Ce este cunoașterea?*. București: Humanitas, 1999.

Pleșu, Andrei. “Învățămîntul, filozofii și ospătarii”. *Dilema*, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:hegRJ02g9dAJ:www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php%3Fnr%3D279%26cmd%3Darticol%26id%3D10847+filozof+basescu&cd=48&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

Popa, Gheorghe. „Teologie și ideologie”. In: Ștefan Afloroaei (coord.). *Interpretare și ideologie*. Iași: Editura Fundației Axis, 2002, 157-171.

Preda, Radu. *Biserica în stat. O invitație la dezbateri*. București: Scripta, 1999.

Preda, Radu. O perspectivă ortodoxă asupra relației Biserică-stat. 9 teze”. In: Ioan-Vasile Leb, Radu Preda. *Culte și statul în România*. Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2003, 65-67.

Sălăvăstru, Constantin. Interview by author. Iasi, 16 May 2008.

Sima, Anca. “Liiceanu îi scuză gafa lui Bănescu”. *EVZ*, <http://www.stiriaz.ro/ziare/articol/articol/liiceanu-ii-scuza-gafa-lui-basescu/sumar-articol/1201754/>

Toma, Constantin. „Traian Bănescu ‘face aroganțe’ cu tâmpiți și filozofi”. *Gardianul*, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:oz4IFbfiDmwJ:www.gardianul.ro/Traian-B%28%3C4%83sescu-%E2%80%9Cface-arogan%C5%A3e%E2%80%9D-cut%C3%A2mpi%C5%A3i-%C5%9Fi-filozofi-s137291.html+filozof+base-scu&cd=6&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

Vattimo, Gianni. *A crede că mai credem. E cu puțință să fim creștini în afara bisericii?*. Constanța: Ed. Pontica, 2005.

Vlaicu, Patriciu-Dorin. *Locul și rolul recunoscut Bisericii în țările Uniunii Europene*. Cluj-Napoca: Arhidiecezana Cluj, 1998.

*** “Liiceanu către Băsescu: Mă bucur că sunteți un președinte odihnit, eu sunt un cetățean obosit și înfrânt”. *Ziua*, 28 oct. 2009, <http://www.ziua.ro/news.php?id=42854&data=2009-10-28>

*** “Tâmpiți, în loc de filosofi”, *Jurnalul*, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:GkIm2DwHaoIJ:www.jurnalul.ro/stire-politic/tampiti-in-loc-de-filosofi-511800.html+filozof+basescu-&cd=60&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

*** “Filozoful Andrei Cornea i-a replicat lui Băsescu, spunând că România are “prea mulți tinichigii””, *Realitatea*, http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:O8Jq7LOLmjUJ:www.realitatea.net/filozoful-andrei-cornea-i-a-replicat-lui-basescu--spunand-ca-romania-are-prea-multi-tinichigii_543652.html+basescu+si+filozof&cd=10&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

Notes:

¹ The present article is part of a larger research project that aims to investigate the relation among philosophy, religion, ideology and the crisis of philosophy in the Romanian educational system, a research carried out within the framework of the project ID_511, financially supported by CNCISIS.

² Adrian-Paul Iliescu, Interview with author, Bucharest, 10 July 2008. The promotion of the applied dimension of philosophy would result in the diminishing, to a certain extent, of the presence of stereotypes concerning the lack of utility of philosophy. Those philosophy-inclined persons should make a sustained effort oriented towards determining the public conscience to accept and understand that „the philosophical style of thinking does not necessarily request an unrealistic utopian approach, or one that is driven by phantasy.” Typical for this style is the phenomenon of approaching issues from the perspective of some presuppositions that are scrutinized by a critical examination, one that entails complex processes of interpretation, comparison and engaging of conceptual imagination, as Adrian-Paul Iliescu argues in *Introducere în politologie*, București: BIC ALL, 2002, 11.

³ Aurel Codoban “Intervenție la Dezbateri partea a II-a. Regimul juridic al cultelor din România și provocarea integrării europene” în Sandu Frunză (ed.), *Pași spre integrare. Religie și drepturile omului în România*, Cluj: Limes, 2004, 170.

⁴ Constantin Sălăvăstru, Interview with author, Iasi, 16 May 2009.

⁵ Gabriel Andreescu, "Investiția în religie nu e o investiție în civilizație", *Ziua*, Nr. 2937, 13 februarie 2004.

⁶ The controversies over the presence of religion in public schools have in view the idea that one of the conquests of modernity is the church-state separation, in other words state secularism. The church-state relation is an issue that goes beyond the scopes of the present investigation. A presentation of the different European models is offered by Patriciu-Dorin Vlaicu in *Locul și rolul recunoscut Bisericii în țările Uniunii Europene*, Cluj-Napoca: Arhidiecezana Cluj, 1998. Although I have a different opinion, I can mention here the works of Radu Preda on the church-state relation and the issue of secularization. Radu Preda, *Biserica în stat. O invitație la dezbateri*, București: Scripta, 1999. Radu Preda, „O perspectivă ortodoxă asupra relației Biserica-stat. 9 teze” în Ioan-Vasile Leb, Radu Preda, *Culte și statul în România*, Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2003, 65-67. Another perspective that can be debated on is the one proposed by Gianni Vattimo: „Secularization as a positive fact means that the unraveling of the sacred structure of the Christian society, the transition to the ethics of autonomy, to state secularism, a less rigid literalism in the interpretation of dogmas and precepts, all these should not be understood as a disregard of or a farewell to Christianity”. Gianni Vattimo, *A crede că mai credem. E cu puțință să fim creștini în afara bisericii?*, Constanța: Ed. Pontica, 2005, 38.

⁷ However, theologians do speak about the cultural marginalization of religion. Thus, Gheorghe Popa argues that “theology is incorrectly perceived and considered an ‘ideological superstructure’ of an institution – the ecclesial institution – that would aim to impose, by constraints, its own system of religious, moral, spiritual, cultural values”. Gheorghe Popa, „Teologie și ideologie”, pp. 157-171, în Ștefan Afloroaei (coord.), *Interpretare și ideologie*, Iași: Editura Fundației Axis, 2002, 159.

⁸ Mircea Flonta, Interview with author, Bucharest, 9 July 2008. There are some interesting discussions concerning the status of philosophy and the difficulties of teaching philosophy in Ivan Ivlampie, “Cum se poate preda filozofia?”, în vol. *Inovație și schimbare în educație*, Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare „Dunărea de Jos”, 2003. Ivan Ivlampie, „Obiectivele și competențele predării-învățării disciplinelor socio-umane”, în vol. *Educația în mileniul III*, Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare „Dunărea de Jos”, 2004.

⁹ This preference is reflected in their publications, among which we mention: Emil Boc, *Instituții politice și proceduri constituționale în România*, Cluj: Editura Accent, 2005. Mircea Micălea, *Psihologie cognitivă*, Cluj: Casa de Editură Gloria, 1994. Vasile Sebastian Dâncu, *Comunicarea simbolică. Arhitectura discursului publicitar*, Cluj: Dacia, 1999.

¹⁰ Florin Negruțiu, „Tinichigiu și filosof. Băsescu, mărturisiri necenzurate către Liiceanu: ‘Școala scoate tâmpiți’”, *Gândul*, 18 iunie 2009, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:K92O8oFJaCIJ:www.gandul.info/politica/tinichigiu-si-filosof-basescu-marturisiri-necenzurate-catre-liiceanu-scoala-scoate-tampiti.html%3F3928%3B4566809+basescu+si+filosofia&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

¹¹ Florin Negruțiu, „Tinichigiu și filosof. Băsescu, mărturisiri necenzurate către Liiceanu: ‘Școala scoate tâmpiți’”, *Gândul*, 18 iunie 2009, <http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:K92O8oFJaCIJ:www.gandul.info/politica/tinichigiu-si-filosof-basescu-marturisiri-necenzurate-catre-liiceanu-scoala-scoate-tampiti.html%3F3928%3B4566809+basescu+si+filosofia&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

¹² Anca Sima, “Liiceanu îi scuză graful lui Băsescu” *EVZ*,

<http://www.stiriazii.ro/ziare/articol/articol/liiceanu-ii-scuza-gafa-lui-basescu/sumar-articol/1201754/>

¹³ Dan Duca, Cristiana Vișan, “Bănescu regretă deficitul de ospătari și inflația de “filozofi””, *Cotidianul*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:BFjGkWoU4q8J:www.cotidianul.ro/basescu-regreta_deficitul_de_ospatari_si_inflatia_de_filozofi-88153.html+filozof+basescu&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

¹⁴ Ilie Călian, „Bănescu - între “tâmpiți” și “filozofi””, *Făclia de Cluj*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:maz0ShZN4_0J:www.ziarulfacia.ro/B%C4%83sescu--%C3%AEntre-8220-t%C3%AEmp%C5%A3i-8221-%C5%9Fi-8220-filozofi-8221-%2B27422+filozof+basescu&cd=10&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

¹⁵ Constantin Toma, „Traian Bănescu “face arogațe” cu tâmpiți și filozofi”, *Gardianul*,

<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:oz4IFbfiDmwJ:www.gardianul.ro/Traian-B%C4%83sescu-%E2%80%9Cface-arogan%C5%A3e%E2%80%9D-cu-t%C3%A2mpi%C5%A3i-%C5%9Fi-filozofi-s137291.html+filozof+basescu&cd=6&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

¹⁶ “Liiceanu către Bănescu: Mă bucur că sunteți un președinte odihnit, eu sunt un cetățean obosit și înfrânt”, *Ziua*, 28 oct. 2009,

<http://www.ziua.ro/news.php?id=42854&data=2009-10-28>

¹⁷ Andrei Pleșu, “Învățămîntul, filozofii și ospătarii”, *Dilema*,

<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:hegRJ02g9dAJ:www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php%3Fnr%3D279%26cmd%3Darticol%26id%3D10847+filozof+basescu&cd=48&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

¹⁸ Andrei Pleșu, “Învățămîntul, filozofii și ospătarii”, *Dilema*,

<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:hegRJ02g9dAJ:www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php%3Fnr%3D279%26cmd%3Darticol%26id%3D10847+filozof+basescu&cd=48&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

¹⁹ Dan Duca, Cristiana Vișan, “Bănescu regretă deficitul de ospătari și inflația de “filozofi””, *Cotidianul*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:BFjGkWoU4q8J:www.cotidianul.ro/basescu-regreta_deficitul_de_ospatari_si_inflatia_de_filozofi-88153.html+filozof+basescu&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

²⁰ Dan Duca, Cristiana Vișan, “Bănescu regretă deficitul de ospătari și inflația de “filozofi””, *Cotidianul*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:BFjGkWoU4q8J:www.cotidianul.ro/basescu-regreta_deficitul_de_ospatari_si_inflatia_de_filozofi-88153.html+filozof+basescu&cd=1&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

²¹ Călin Hera, “Caut tinichigiu școlit. Excluz filosof”, *EVZ*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:oxlm2-r_6WwJ:www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/855154/EDITORIALUL-EVZ-Caut-tinichigiu-scolit-Excluz-filosof/+filozof+basescu&cd=56&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

A similar attitude can be found in the article “Tâmpiți, în loc de filosofi”, *Jurnalul*,

<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:GkIm2DwHaoIJ:www.jurnalul.ro/stire-politic/tampiti-in-loc-de-filosofi-511800.html+filozof+basescu&cd=60&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro>

²² “Filozoful Andrei Cornea i-a replicat lui Bănescu, spunând că România are “prea mulți tinichigii””, *Realitatea*,

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:O8Jq7LOLmjUJ:www.realitatea.net/filozoful-andrei-cornea-i-a-replicat-lui-basescu--spunand-ca-romania-are-prea-multi-tinichigii_543652.html+basescu+si+filosoful&cd=10&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro

²³ Aurel Codoban finds that the idea on which postmodernism built an emblem is „pluralism, thus heterogeneity and heteronomy”. This may act as a pattern of interpretation that could be useful to all the disciplines that are taught in the university and pre-university educational system. Aurel Codoban (ed.), *Postmodernismul. Deschideri filosofice*, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1995, 99.

²⁴ On these stereotypes connected with philosophy, see also: Mihaela Frunză, „Despre filozofi, ospătari și mecanici auto”, *Observator cultural*, No. 480, 25 Iunie 2009.

²⁵ Laurenta Hacman, Interview with author, Iasi, 15 May 2008.

²⁶ Anton Adămuț, Interview with author, Iasi, 15 May 2008. Such a perspective allows us to believe that a self-ownership of philosophy as well as some rethinking of philosophy is possible so that, by filtering them through the exigencies of one's own life, one should be able to use the traditional concepts as living tools that are useful for the present life and present thinking. See Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Ce este filosofia? Ce este cunoașterea?*, București: Humanitas, 1999, 17.

²⁷ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, Interview with author, Bucharest, 9 July 2008.