

## **Between sovereignty and precariousness: post-communist daily life condition**

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For several years now, my research in philosophy has been focusing on the everydayness, understood both as concept and as lived experience.

*In the first meaning*, my philosophy training during the years as a PhD candidate has developed in the generous area of French contemporary philosophy, under Professor Jean-Luc Nancy's careful and direct supervision. Thanks to him and to the philosophical school he has coordinated in Strasbourg, I have managed to articulate a consistent study of the philosophical concept of everydayness as it has been described by many authors and theoretical currents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this study, the stake of my research consisted in grasping the philosophical meanings of everydayness in times of post-metaphysical or post-Nietzschean philosophy, when the announced death of God destined the world to a never-ending process of self-creation and immanentization. The theoretical "Revolution" that this announcement triggers – not in the sense of a chronological or mechanic causality but in its meaning of essential concentrate of modern world spirit and becoming – produces, among other effects, this habilitation (or rehabilitation) of the philosophical dignity for everydayness. Without the intention or the possibility to explain in full detail this statement I shall say just that at least two different – in motivation and purpose – philosophical directions, that still reverberate today, have made a major contribution to this introduction of everydayness on the list of fundamental issues in philosophy. On one hand, we have phenomenology (especially in its "heretic" shapes: Heidegger, Lévinas, Patocka or Schutz) and, on the other hand, Marxism (again in shapes that are rather deviating from the straight line of Marxist-Leninist ideology: Heller Agnes, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, but also Karel Kosik or some contemporary American authors).

But it is worth mentioning that these two kinds of approach for everydayness can be found in various proportions and expressions in many writings of the contemporary French philosophers: Lyotard or Foucault, Derrida or Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy. None of them is a phenomenologist, nor a Marxist but they have all been keen – through their thought and writing – to this philosophical rehabilitation of everydayness even if, in almost none of their texts, the term doesn't come up as such and the everyday life is not explicitly the object of a particular interrogation. However, in my research, the concept was easier and subtler to describe thanks to Lyotard's analysis of the end of great narratives and "differends", thanks to Foucault's description of the passing from sovereign regimes to disciplinary power, thanks to Derrida's deconstruction and Deleuze's analysis of the event, and, last but not least, thanks to Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy of sense.

*In its second meaning*, the everydayness has become a theoretical issue when I realized that I could not separate my “profession” as a philosopher from the life experience I was living in a society recently freed from totalitarianism. Whenever I walked in a classroom, in a library or in my office, I would not leave behind, as an umbrella at the door, the huge, unpredictable, seducing and misleading experience of the fall of communism. For, if there was an immediate, common and unavoidable consequence of the end of the totalitarian regime, that has been, for many of the young people at the time, the birth of a feeling for each and every one of us of belonging to history making. That Ceaușescu’s escape and his death gave us back the right to decide for our lives as individuals and for our destiny as a society. And history was no longer written in the secret headquarters of the power but – sacred illusion!... – on the street, at the workplace, in meeting areas, etc. In other words, that history had become a daily thing (the reciprocal however is not very true: everydayness did not make history, did not become monumental, it remained the main source of flavor and enthusiasm in the encounter with the ephemeral). Daily life was becoming again the property and the field of action for each and everyone, time and space were recuperated by the ordinary people, especially the present and the future, the urban space (the street), but also, in a different sense, the actual physical space, the land, the buildings, even the monuments.

In the same time, everydayness proved to be the accurate indicator of the various speeds in leaving communism behind. If the great political declarations, the free elections and the creation of political institutions have consecrated definitively the break from totalitarianism, daily life, in the innumerable gestures, behaviors, thoughts, faiths, values, still kept alive a necessary and impossible heritage: necessary because everything was still present, no one can say goodbye to what has been his own life; impossible because all these behaviors, faiths or values had become useless or at least inappropriate in building a new society.

Of course, one cannot explain the various rhythms in giving up the communist past of the various countries through the mere daily practices. But, in the case of Romania, one plausible explanation of the poor anti-communist resistance as well as of the appalling hesitations and delays from 1990 to the present day can be expressed in the terms of inefficient awareness and constitution of daily life and its image for individuals, groups, communities. Thus, if the protest, unlike in Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Poland, against the abuses of an increasingly oppressive regime (and the rare exceptions are all the more praiseworthy) has almost never been political, the reason is that the political itself never took the shape, as Hannah Arendt used to say, of public courage and implication, but it has been subverted, avoided, misled into forms of pseudo-resistance, of total implication in the anonymous micro-gestures and rituals of daily life, the more anonymous the more imperceptible, the more insignificant from the viewpoint of the panoptical power. Everydayness was the place where communism has left the deepest traces also because it was the last refuge for the unprotected in his public, political or professional life. And the fall of communism hasn’t led to the disappearance of these traces but to their keeping as routines and inertia to protect individuals and communities from daily convulsions, or to show them off as open wounds whenever exhibiting them as weaknesses, insufficiencies or prejudices could bring the smallest profit by stirring up the westerners’ compassion.

This is why, I believe that besides a legitimate and necessary trial of communism (political, moral but also juridical), an archeology of communist daily life is still needed, of that small, repetitive, banal life solidified in rituals of minimal survival and common existence practices concentrated in the intimacy of family or small community of friends and colleagues. In other words, it is an archeology of everything that happened at an infra-politic level, under the sensibility threshold of the totalitarian power, where continuities are stronger than anywhere else and the gaps harder to understand than revolutions and reforms (or their postponement) of the last 16 years. Such an archeology can be done only partially through the institutions that have been created in the last years in Romania for the explicit purpose of studying the communism: the Institute for Totalitarianism Studies, the Institute of the Romanian Revolution, the National Council for the Study of *Securitate* Archives and the recent Institute for the Investigation of the Communist Crimes. They are all attempts to provide an institutional framework coming from a political initiative, more or less transparent, more or less structured or declarative, meant to lead the phenomenon of Romanian communism into comprehension and, more than that, to understand it as criminal guilt, to condemn it *in corpore*.

But the limitations of such an approach become clear precisely here: neither in the fact that we speak of communism in terms of totalitarianism, nor in the fact that it was a criminal regime. Both statements are true, tragically true. But in the fact that, treated from the very beginning as a massive phenomenon to be condemned, chances are that all the attention be focused on the identification of guilty institutions, parties or persons, on their trial according to general justice and so, privileging the judicial aspect we would neglect the social, mentality, community aspects including the daily aspects of life under communism.

And in order to launch the hypothesis of my intervention I'd say that communism has produced durable, multiple and extremely diverse effects in everyone's daily life and of the society as a whole. These effects have triggered a deep precariousness of life and took away from people the dimension of personal sovereignty, understood as autonomy. Thus, I introduce for discussion two key terms of my analysis: precariousness and sovereignty. I shall explain how I understand these two concepts to come back in the end to the description of post-communist daily life.

After having spent several years to the study of everydayness, I found pertinent an analysis of the situations, events and forms that produce either the exit from the everydayness or its suspension, temporary or definitive. If human existence is fixed in the stability of day-to-day life (through anonymous, repetitive practices, through work or modest but sure significance attribution), this stability remains always frail, provisional. On one hand, it is always threatened by events (biological, natural, social, economical, political events) that bring it very close to death; on the other hand, a human existence reduced to everydayness is often felt insufficient. Its meanings is perceived as deficit, repetition is worn out, anonymity contests the certitude of existence, work drains out physically and mentally, and the certitude of minimal sense takes in time the shape of a lack of meaning. Then, how come the need, the urge to find the sovereignty of life as a possibility to accede, be it momentarily or temporarily, to a superior sense.

In other words, sovereignty and precariousness are the extremes of human life where life is in total tension with right, two rights to be precise, which are the absolute limits of any law system: according to classical definitions, sovereignty is the attribute of a person or instance enjoying the “*droit de vie et de mort*” (*life and death right*) over his subjects. At the other extreme, we can define precariousness as the place (or time) of human existence when it claims its most elementary right beyond all human rights stated in the declarations of the modernity, beyond any political, juridical or social right: the “*droit à la vie*” (*right to life*). But in both claims life is at stake; moreover, a life caught in its most vulnerable dimension, in what Benjamin used to call *bare life* and Foucault and Agamben *naked life*. Both sovereignty and precariousness submit life to exposure at minimal articulation level, at the frail border between life and death. In this exposure, any other claim – political, juridical, esthetic, etc. – becomes secondary in relation to pushing the limit that, in the case of sovereignty, proves the exceptional right to transgress (through killing or death penalty) what cannot be otherwise transgressed except with juridical consequences; in the case of precariousness, pushing this limit has no other purpose than perpetuating existence even provisionally.

Before analyzing briefly both terms, let me say that sovereignty and precariousness are the extreme conditions of human life, the opposite directions where daily life cracks up or is even destroyed. But, in this very opposition, strange similarities can be identified between sovereignty and precariousness. If they exist and are worth the analysis, it is not just for the sake of theoretical symmetry or that of some mysterious kinship between the two conditions of life. I consider – and I will come back later to this idea – that if today, in the times of late modernity, “extremes” touch, it is because the “extremes” have lost their exceptional character and became “normal” or (in the terms of this analysis) daily. In Walter Benjamin’s words, we need to understand how the exception has become the rule, statement that was later rephrased by his interpreters as shift from sovereignty without exception to an exception without sovereignty. And if sovereignty and precariousness invest excessively today the life of millions it is because life itself is looking for everydayness with meaning and is constantly mobilized – by the illusion of sovereignty to be found again and the fear of precariousness to be avoided.

Allow me a few words now about each of the two concepts as well as about the common attributes that establish the strange similarity between them.

*Sovereignty* is a major concept in the theory and practice of modern politics. Elaborated by authors such as Hobbes, Bodin or Rousseau, the concept accounts for the essential conjunction between politics and law in the modern state. But this concept has undergone, with the evolution of the nation-state, major transformations that catches it today in a series of paradoxes and metaphor processing. With no intention of presenting here the history of the concept, I will say that the becoming of “sovereignty” is a testimony for the becoming of the whole concept system of the politico-theological tradition of modernity. Hannah Arendt has been among the first authors who underlined, in her monumental work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the paradoxical character of modern conceptuality and the tragedies that the insufficient or, better yet, the unilateral elaboration of this conceptuality applied to heterogeneous reality has triggered ever since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In

the same time, several authors have made considerable effort to rethink sovereignty according to the becoming of the modern state and society. Among them, three names occur to me as noteworthy in a very succinct presentation of their ideas. Thus, beyond the major differences between Carl Schmitt, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault, through an imaginary dialog between their theories one can understand the meanings of sovereignty and the destiny of this concept in the political theory and practice of the world today.

For all three of them, the sovereignty is a limit-concept for several reasons: first, it exposes the limits of philosophy *and* politics, not only as they are both limited, confined, in their thought and practice but also in the deeper sense that such a concept is the maximum tension point between philosophy and politics, where their specific meanings mingle, interfere and determine each other. Then, this concept accounts for the equal exhaustion of philosophy and politics in the last century or, at least, the exhaustion of those meanings that made philosophy and politics work together in complicity along the modern era. Limit-concept but in the same time central concept, sovereignty is also marginal, full of sense and devoid of sense, making sense and destroying sense. Only if we accept this exceptional character of sovereignty we can understand why it is defined, *faute de mieux*, precisely through the state of exception as explained by Carl Schmitt and Georges Bataille. Only through this ex-centric position of sovereignty can we grasp Foucault's statement "*il faut couper la tête du roi*" (we have to behead the king), an expression through which the French philosophers incites to the abandon of the analytical politico-juridical model in modern society.

Coming back to Schmitt and Bataille, let us say that in the imaginary dialog between them everything seems to separate them: their theoretic education, their profession, their philosophical convictions, their writing and style, their purposes, etc. Even in the definition of sovereignty, the distance between them seems maximum. Thus, if for Schmitt "*Souverän ist, wer über den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet*" (the sovereign is the one who decides in/for the state of exception), for Bataille "*la souveraineté n'est RIEN*" (sovereignty is NOTHING). But in this widest distance, between exception and nothing, we can find the most surprising analogies and transfers of meaning that make sovereignty an excessive and problematic concept both necessary and impossible. We know that Schmitt's effort was focused on an analysis of sovereignty as decision and exception, in order to understand how the sovereign prerogative can still be used in the field of law and at its margins whenever it gets suspended. The German author considers that in modern world – where politics are neutralized by economy, technology and culture – the normative source can be decided only in border cases when law suspends itself or is suspended by exterior forces. But, without going into all the details of Schmitt's analysis, let's say briefly that almost all of the philosophical-political features of sovereignty are to be found in Bataille's writings where the stake of the debate is no longer political or juridical but ontological-existential. The interest of the two authors for sovereignty comes, as I said, from its excessive character; excessive from a theoretical viewpoint in relation to any strict conceptuality and excessive from a practical viewpoint toward any individual or social experience. Sovereignty is the space between violence and right, between qualified life and simple life, the place of anomia where everything is decided in the series of situations described by the prefix "ex". Thus, for both authors, sovereignty manifests in *exceptional* situations through the intervention of a power element, that is

through the concentration of sovereign prerogatives in a single attribute of power. But exception is *excessive* because, as Schmitt says, the exceptional case cannot be circumscribed in its empiric reality cannot be included in the juridical field but it foretells the metaphysical character of sovereignty exercised, its transcendental dimension: “with exception, the force of rebel life breaks the shield of mechanics stuck in repetition”. Then, it can be granted the attribute of *exemplarity*: for Bataille, the individuals of the mass recognize themselves in the sovereign, their subjectivity borrows meaning from the sovereign’s subjectivity who thus becomes an example for the ordinary people. But exemplarity has also the meaning of the model and of the unique act, of the impossible repetition, thus determining Schmitt to declare that “sovereign decision is the decision in its absolute purity”, detached from any norm or law, exposing the individual to anomia. Further more, in a fourth sense, sovereignty is an *experience*, and this term seems to be the most important to our analysis. Sovereign experience is in the same time exceptional, exemplary and excessive; Schmitt says that in an instant (*Augenblick*) the decision detaches itself from the arguments upholding it and acquires autonomous value, it escapes any general formulation and any real and conceptual homogeneity. Bataille goes even further when saying “the nothing of sovereignty is given from experience”. The same element of the instant makes the experience of sovereignty incomprehensible and incommunicable, deeply individual and subjective, with Bataille as well. Moreover, only getting out of oneself, ecstasy as overcoming ones own limits, as exposure of the individual to his own limits, can authentify the subject as subject, as sovereign interiority, detached and detachable from any other object and any other person or subject.

Through this rich comparison, an intermediate conclusion can be drawn: beyond the political and juridical dimension of modern society, sovereignty is the ultimate experience that the man is condemned to after the death of God. It is a condemnation with no possible redemption, it is a condemnation to transgression as the only way to recuperate sovereignty drifting farther and farther away as the god has left. Bataille’s analyses go this way as Foucault notes astutely. In an essay about the author of the *Interior Experience*, he says:

“(Death of God) ... mustn’t be understood as an end of his historical reign, nor as an assertion, finally free, of its non-existence, but as the space of our experience now constant. Death of god, taking away the limits of the Unlimited from our existence, leads it to an experience wherein nothing can announce any longer the exteriority of the being, so to an *interior* and *sovereign* experience. But such an experience, wherein the death of God is bursting, discovers its finitude as its own secret and its own light, the unlimited reign of the Limit, the void of this overcoming wherein it finds its end and abandons itself. In this sense, the interior experience is totally an experience of the *impossible* (the impossible being what has to be experimented and what constitutes the experience).”<sup>1</sup>

The death of God is synonym, with Bataille reader of Nietzsche, with the emptiness of transcendence and the fall of the world into the immanence of its own becoming with no exterior purpose. Through this event of modernity that makes our modernity, man is confronted equally with the necessity to overcome his own limits and the impossibility to abandon them. *Necessary* overcoming because his existence is a project, foregoing, projection (*Geworfenheit*, would say Heidegger) into the future and opening to the future;

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, “Préface à la transgression”, in Dits et écrits, vol. I, p... (Our translation from French).

but an *impossible* overcoming because beyond these limits there is no exterior of the being, no superior meaning of its existence, promised or hidden, to be reached through battle, sacrifice or any other trials.

I think that in this double constraint, in this *double bind*, all the contemporary sovereignty is at stake, both the individual one, which Bataille was so desperately searching for, and the politico-juridical, which Schmitt or other authors tried, just as desperately, to ground in philosophy. The despair can be easily identified in the abundance of the prefix “*ex*” I was just speaking about: in order to be grounded the law needs the outlaw; in order to find himself the individual needs to go out of his self, to exceed himself. The liberation from servitude that the sovereign experience promises, the absolute foundation of the law and the finding of an absolute authenticity of the individual existence remain promises that cannot be kept – after the disappearance of any transcendence wherefrom the liberation can extract its sense – unless with unchained violence threatening the life of individuals and society. Moreover, we can make the hypothesis that the ideal of freedom (in any sense we understand it) has been accomplished and thus exhausted and that its event brings to vicinity close to coincidence the double exhaustion of state sovereignty and individual sovereignty. In other words, to believe that the growing proximity between the two up to a point where they annihilate each other, where the politico-juridical takes for an object life itself and life becomes the last conquest to be made by any power, this proximity can be explained through what can be called the *precarious becoming* of sovereignty.

I call here “precarious becoming” what Jacques Derrida, in several late works, has called “autoimmunity”, a process affecting the fundamental categories of modern politico-juridical thinking such as “democracy”, “human rights” or “sovereignty”. This is Derrida’s definition of “autoimmunity”:

“The immunity vocabulary imposed its authority mainly in the field of biology. The immune reaction protects the body’s *indemn*-ity producing antibody against exterior antigens. As for the auto-immunization process (...) it consists, for a living body (...) in protecting itself against the self-protection destroying its own means of immunity defense. As the phenomenon of these antibodies stretches over a vast area of pathology and because the positive virtues of immune-depressors, which are meant to restrain the rejection mechanisms and facilitate the tolerance to transplanted organs, are used more and more we lean on this extension and shall speak of a general logics of the autoimmunity”<sup>2</sup>.

In other words, again Derrida’s, but easier to understand: “An autoimmunity process is (...) that strange behavior of the living body that, in an almost suicidal manner, tries to destroy “itself”, its own protections, to get immune against “its own” immunity”<sup>3</sup>.

Faithful to these general logics, the autoimmunity names here not only the self-ruin of any political conceptuality but also the impossibility to transfer this conceptuality from a historic experience (political, economical, juridical or cultural) to another, from one age to another, from one state to another, the impossibility to abandon it, to give up the modern theological-political legacy. But this conceptuality, which could also be called weak, fragile or precarious, becomes today an inappropriate instrument for interpreting the world and an

<sup>2</sup> J. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, pp. 67-68, n. 23 (Our translation from French).

<sup>3</sup> J. Derrida, in *Le „concept” du 11 septembre*, Galilée, Paris, 2003, p. 145 (Our translation from French)

instrument much less adapted for the elaboration of local, national or transnational intervention strategies.

Concerning sovereignty, we can share the perplexity of grave tones of the same Derrida who asks: “how to decide between, *on the one hand*, the positive and salutary role of the form “state” (sovereignty of the nation-state) and consequently of the democratic citizenship, as protection against international violence (market, global concentration of the capitals, but also the “terrorist” violence and weapon diffusion), and, *on the other hand*, the negative or limitative effects of a state whose sovereignty remains a theological legacy, a sovereignty that controls the frontiers and closes them to the non-citizens, that monopolizes violence, etc.?”<sup>4</sup>

This kind of reasoning, of the “on one hand and on the other” structure accounts for the tension where the philosophical concepts describing our comprehension of politics are stuck. This tension is no historical accident, nor a primary flaw of the theory; it is constitutive for the very way in which the philosophical concepts are built and interrelated, through the wishes for plenitude and transparency they put forward. Sovereignty is also following this rule: it is equally conditioned and unconditional, anomic and normative, exceptional and decisive for the exception. Its inner tensions add to the tensions coming from the contiguity in the same semantic field of politics with the other concepts: state, nation, democracy, history, power, reason, etc. But also with the concepts from the semantic field of individual experience: subject, knowledge, self, truth, action, etc.

All these determinations – together with many others of course – compose the heterogeneous landscape of what we have called the precarious becoming of sovereignty, its autoimmunization. The necessity and the impossibility of sovereign experience – even the necessity and impossibility of any experience if we were to follow Walter Benjamin – make precariousness function here not only as an attribute of a concept or conceptual creative process but as a concept in the strongest meaning of the word. I express here that, in order to understand what is happening today in our post-communist societies, posterior to the last tragic attempt to conquer community sovereignty, we need to provide an interrogative (philosophical) dignity to the term itself of precariousness.

Very briefly, I’d like to say that, as a collateral (or main...) effect of sovereignty and sovereignty thinking exhaustion, precariousness is the most problematic state, dimension, of the societies and individuals in the time of globalization, that it describes the human condition in a “society of spectacle” or in the “society of risk” in the times of “normative or disciplinary power”.

Precariousness shares, as in a mirror effect, the same attributes with sovereignty, as a kind of legacy of some imperatives becoming, from the great philosophical systems down to us, daily rituals and practices. Thus, if sovereign existence used to be decided in the state of exception, precariousness is the state of an exceptional existence, without the pretension of sovereignty but, merely, with that of its minimal continuation. Similarly to the sovereign life, the precarious life is decided in the present of the moment but in a present lived at its deepest intensity that doesn’t require anything else but to be lived again in a another moment

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<sup>4</sup> J. Derrida, *Force de loi*, Paris, Galilée, 1994 (Our translation from French).



through an effort of survival. Precarious life lives similarly to the sovereign one in non-time, not as a consequence of deliberate choice or sovereign will to power but as a consequence of condemnation or even entrapment in the present. If sovereignty is the proof of an excessive energy, precariousness is also an excess, if we can say so, in lack of energy, any spending being a wager of life on life.

Sovereignty was in close relation to necessity; in the precarious life, necessity (understood as need) is the incommunicable of an intimacy becoming one with the organic life. "Necessity has no law": this is a statement valid also for the post-sovereign human, in both meanings that we can give it – "necessity doesn't recognize any law", it acts chaotically and depends only on the law of opportunity. But also in the sense that "necessity creates its own law", an iron law of social Darwinism staged today by the neo-liberal strategies. If the sovereign experience is the experience *par excellence*, precariousness exposes the human being to the most painful and intense experiences, those of the organic caught in the global eco-technical mechanisms that exploit the genetic and affective resources as merchandise in a world trade of material and symbolic goods.

The sovereign is the one who needs no other but in the sense that the latter recognizes his superiority and majesty. The precarious does not need the Other because he is not enough to himself, cannot project himself as relation producer outside the demand, help and salvation. The precarious need no other as a distinct and distant other, in a second meaning, because he cannot take distances with himself, cannot imagine himself as another and cannot elaborate himself as a project.

The sovereign and the precarious bet on their lives with every gesture. If the first does it to give life a superior meaning, the second does it because there is no meaning and no promise of meaning, he risks his life only for life to continue.

However, beyond such considerations and comparisons, how can we interpret the becoming of our societies and, particularly, of the post-communist societies from the perspective of these two figures – the sovereign and the precarious? How can daily life be understood according to the (still vague) categories of sovereignty and precariousness?

I would say, coming to an end without conclusions, that the event of the fall of communism is the moment of breaking up with the last political or metaphysical illusions of sovereignty. We all know too well that the communist totalitarian regime has ceased to believe itself for a long time in the possibility of a sovereign freedom regime despite its more and more aggressive declarations. The equality it used to proclaim, at the lowest level of existence lived at the minimum of ontological security, annulled any possibility of distinction (but not of hierarchy!). But the fall of communism has also come and when these illusions stopped functioning, the cold and seducing realism of the consumption society has replaced them with the advertised figures of individual sovereignty to be achieved through consumption and what we could call a personal existential design. Let us understand: the sovereignty promised by capitalism is not less illusory, just as precariousness induced by the market economy is no less serious. It is only that illusion daily produces real effects of sovereignty and precariousness seems to be daily avoided or even overcome in the precise moment it seemed less possible.

The almost miraculous effect that the society of spectacle produces on daily life is that it stretches life between its extremes where the routines are suspended in experiences of sovereignty and precariousness. But, at a closer look we can see that there is no symmetry between the two as if they were the protection or destruction zones, the winning or losing the sense of existence. In terms of an ontological description, I do not think that we have today a homogenous surface of routines and different spaces for evasion toward sovereignty or drowning into precariousness. I would say that the pattern of the three concepts under discussion functions differently and emphasize abruptly: *everydayness is the place where the illusion (promise) of sovereignty hides the reality of precariousness*. Everydayness is the place where luxury, spending, excess are offered in homeopathic dosage – real or imaginary – in order to divert attention from poverty, need, fragility, vulnerability.

I shall give three examples to sustain my previous theoretical analysis.

My first example comes from *mass media*, from television to be exact. Presently, Romania is among the first top places in Europe in number of public and private television channels. The inflation of channels did not occur in the sense of program diversification but, except a few niche channels (news, telenovelas/soap-opera and sports), in the sense that the broadcasts became the equivalent of tabloids. Even the news, rushing after the daily sensational and searching for the exceptional in the core of banality (paradoxical expression yet perfectly true...), offer the most diverse information – politics, sport, traffic accidents, natural or industrial catastrophes – in the same exalting presentation, “live” from the halls of the Parliament, from the stadium, from a village under water, from the place of the accident or explosion, in the truest Hollywood style. Everything has to happen momentarily, there is no time to lose and no time to waste on thinking about what is going on, everything has to be lived and relived at maximum intensity.

Making any event a spectacle (in fact, ulterior moment to the transformation of the non-event in event or the creation “out of nothing” of the event) is the easiest and most efficient strategy to maintain millions of passive viewers who have never exercised the critic spirit of the major subject Kant used to dream about, by cultivating the image and the imaginary of luxury, spending, exceptional situation, unique experience, exemplary deed, intense living beyond limits. Of course, Romania did not invent this strategy and the Romanian viewers are not the most original in the world in this pseudo-mimetic behavior. (There is nothing original anyway except maybe the selling of originality and authenticity as the most valuable merchandise today.) But when television has become not only the main source of information, but also the first source of knowledge and culture. When according to a recent poll more than half of the population in the country is unable to tell the name of one foreign writer, then the offer of TV-sovereignty attests only the fragility of any relation with the other and with the self in the necessary autonomy for knowledge, comprehension and dialogue.

The second example comes from a completely different area: healthcare. In recent years, a pseudo-social phenomenon that we thought vanished with communist poverty has been reinvented: the queue. And not just any queue but queuing for drugs. Every day, the media presents the crowds of elderly people waiting for hours and days, in rain, cold or heat to get their free drugs they need to survive for another month. I do not intend to discuss here the crisis of the medical system, nor about the multiple bio-political meanings of the

phenomenon. I just want to say that maybe nowhere else the image of real and daily precariousness is so unbearable as in this spectacular presentation of sadness in the last and most difficult years of life of the dying who beg of the state a prolongation of their life. No trace of sovereignty, of spending, of luxury or excess: only exhaustion, self-consumption and trembling life on the threshold of its absolute nudity. If the nation-state touches a threshold of the biologic modernity, as Michel Foucault says, when it takes care of the nude life of each citizen (positive and negative side of birth rate, mortality, public health, etc.), we can say about the Romanian post-communist state that it doesn't succeed yet to develop bio-political strategies through which simple life may become one of its main issues and concerns.

The last example is just as topical and dramatic. One of the conditions for Romania to join the European Union is to solve the problem of corruption. The 1989 "Revolution" was the occasion for the second plan communists to come to power and also for the secret services and foreign affairs officers to confiscate the state businesses. 16 years later, we still do not have a fairly realistic image of the theft and dilapidations that went on. The speed for hundreds of Romanians to become multimillionaires in euros in just a few years offers but a poor image on the dimensions of corruption. But corruption is not only financial, it is also economical, political, moral. It is so generalized, so endemic, that sometimes seems to be part of the intimate structure of every Romanian and of the society as a whole. I would like to focus briefly on one aspect: the recent anticorruption campaign launched by the Bucharest authorities. The today leaders came to power in 2005 with the strong will to eradicate the high level corruption and even promised to the European Union, under the menace of the delayed date for adhesion, that they will arrest a certain number of high profile corrupt before April 2006, due date for the next country report on Romania. For a few weeks now, all the action movies on TV are in second place right after the news that broadcast live, several times a day, images from the attorney's office, the court, the police, the indicted homes, interviews with lawyers, prosecutors, indicted and witnesses in an endless yet passionate juridical spectacle. Each new element of a case triggers a national fever, each new suspect on the list excites and satisfies the viewers. And the satisfaction is greater as the name is more important, as the accused is or was closer to the top of the power hierarchy. In other words, the ordinary man is living the spectacle of arrests as a ritual punishment of the fallen sovereign. But beyond such media rituals, two issues remain: first, in this show the state of law (*l'Etat de droit, Rechtsstaat*) is put to the test, the legitimacy and legality of its actions are disputable and risky. Thus, several political decisions have been taken lately on the fringes of the legality invoking either the emergency of the situation or the fairness and popularity of the intervention. The prerogatives of the sovereign within the state can be used excessively and can create precedents for actions that infringe the human rights, the personal liberties or the values of democracy.

The second problem is that the characters of the juridical ceremonies could be seen as owners of the corruption monopoly just like 10-15 years ago a few persons were able to concentrate the whole guilt of communism. The communism trial and the corruption trial (it might be the same after all) are – as things go on for now – in the same time operations of public refusal of responsibility wherein figures of ancient sovereignty come back to life in order to be punished and fill with meaning a precarious reality, wherein the civic values have difficulties to impose themselves (the best example is the small corruption and tacit

education to encourage it in order to go easier through bureaucracy mechanisms or institutional rigidity).

One last sentence for closure: making a philosophical connection between the concepts of everydayness, sovereignty and precariousness allows us, on one hand, to rethink radically the concepts of the metaphysical-political tradition and their degree of inadequacy to the national and international realities of our time. We cannot be sure any longer that sovereignty makes sense neither at exceptional decision level of the politico-theological sovereign (who could that be?), nor at the subjective level of the individual trying to elaborate his or her life through appropriate self technologies. However, we can be sure that in daily life precariousness is deeply rooted in all our decisions, free or imposed, precariousness that, through permanent and persistent action, erodes all our convictions and all our beliefs exposing us to an incessant revocability of our own identity.

On the other hand, resistance to this universal precarization can take, in philosophy, the form of new concept creation, concepts that are able to “read” daily life. Mimetism is in Romania and elsewhere a facile solution: taking up ready made theories and concepts can be a provisional solution in order to fill them with an always excessive reality. But, in time, reality revenges and the intellectuals get depressed because their beautiful idealities are not to the likes of reality.