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Civil War and Power: A Theoretical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a theoretical project that explores the conceptual nexus between civil war and power. It maps out a lineage of thought which posits civil war as a framework for explicating politics, not as a pre-political stage of savagery or a deteriorated condition of the socio-political order. Starting with Michel Foucault's radical yet short-lived civil war thesis, which situates civil war as *the matrix of relations of power*, this investigation traverses the work of several theorists and philosophers who have drawn on, or departed from, this line of thought. It critically evaluates Giorgio Agamben's use of the concept of civil war as the fundamental threshold of (bio)politics in an epoch marked by the 9/11 attacks and the 'war on terror'. Then it gives an account of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri's and Eric Alliez & Maurizio Lazzarato's differing perspectives on the question of how civil war relates to contemporary capitalism. A central theme of the dissertation is the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power inherent in Foucault's formulation of civil war, the way subsequent theorists position themselves in relation to this aporia, and the success or failure of their attempts to resolve this tension. As an alternative, I draw from Baruch Spinoza's political philosophy to generate a perspective that prioritizes the uncertain and volatile nature of the relationship between civil war and power. I contend that such a perspective could address the strange overlap between the contemporary modalities of diffused political violence and decentralized regimes of power characterizing our present and provide us a theoretical account on the relationship between power and civil war that does not culminate in a ratification of domination and sovereignty.

Keywords:

Civil war, power, biopolitics, governmentality, sovereignty, Foucault, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hardt & Negri, Alliez & Lazzarato, Agamben

SUMMARY FOR LAY AUDIANCE

The primary aim of this project is to build up a theoretical inquiry that explores the relationship between civil war and power. I have examined the work of several theorists and philosophers and mapped out a lineage of thought through which civil war is presented as an integral aspect to socio-political existence in contradistinction to the state-centric theorizations that drive civil war to the outer margins of the political or frame as a complete breakdown of the socio-political order. Starting with Michel Foucault's civil war thesis, this theoretical inquiry evaluates Giorgio Agamben's use of the concept as the paradigm of biopolitics in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the 'war on terror'. It then gives an account of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri's and Eric Alliez & Maurizio Lazzarato's differing perspectives on the question of how civil war should be thought of in relation to contemporary capitalism. I have particularly stressed the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power inherent in Foucault's formulation and the success or failure of the subsequent theorists in resolving it. I draw from Baruch Spinoza's political philosophy to generate an alternative theoretical perspective to rethink the relationship between civil war and power with the intention to deal with the cluster of issues and problems that arise from such a line of thought.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This project is a theoretical investigation into the nexus between the concepts of civil war and power. It attempts to map out a lineage of thought through which civil war is posited as an integral aspect to politics, rather than denoting a pre-political condition of savagery or complete breakdown of the socio-political order. Starting with Michel Foucault's radical yet short-lived civil war thesis, which situates civil war as *the matrix of relations of power*, this theoretical inquiry traverses the work of several theorists and philosophers who have drawn on this line of thought. It evaluates Giorgio Agamben's use of the concept of civil war as the fundamental threshold of (bio)politics in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the 'war on terror'. It then gives an account of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri's and Eric Alliez & Maurizio Lazzarato's differing perspectives on the question of how civil war relates to contemporary capitalism. A central theme of this dissertation is the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power inherent in Foucault's formulation of the civil war thesis, the way subsequent theorists position themselves in relation to this aporia, and the success or failure of their attempts to deal with a cluster of issues such a formulation brings about. I draw from Baruch Spinoza's political philosophy to generate an alternative theoretical perspective that allows us to rethink the relationship between civil war and power that does not culminate in a ratification of domination and sovereignty.

Why does a theoretical inquiry like this matter? This dissertation adds insight to an undertheorized phenomenon. Let alone the rarity of the studies that investigate its relationship to power, as Agamben points out, "[t]here exists, today, both a 'polemology', a theory of war, and an 'irenology', a theory of peace, but there is no 'stasiology', no theory

of civil war" and in the making of the history of western political thought, even when taken into consideration, civil war is either associated with a pre-political stage of savagery or posited as a condition that implies the complete disintegration of the political community (Agamben, 2015, p. 2). While the notion of civil war did not have a place in the context of classical Greece—such a conceptualization originated in Rome—their notion of *stasis*, the internal strife, nonetheless designates a grave danger threatening the well-being of the polis akin to a social disease that must be averted at all costs. For the Romans, to whom we owe the exact term *bellum civile*, civil wars had an enormous role in the making of their history, yet it implied an inglorious internecine war that threatened the bonds that made up the civic order: "civil war remained the war that dared not speak its name" (Armitage, 2017, p. 59).

The status attributed to civil war does not change that much either within the political paradigm of modernity. As Hardt and Negri note, "[o]ne central component of the political project of modern theories of sovereignty—liberal and nonliberal alike—was to put an end to civil war and destroy the constant state of war by isolating war at the margins of society" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 5). In fact, although "it is likely that the difference between the two concepts is in fact purely nominal" (Agamben, 2015, p. 3), civil war does not even meet the same status as the modern notion of revolution. While the latter is usually associated with progress and carries within itself a possibility for emancipation or liberation, the former implies a breakdown of the socio-political order, associated with gruesome and stupefying violence that drags humankind to its pre-political stage.

Today, however, it is at least possible to speak of a growing interest in the theme of civil war. What is at issue here is not only a prevailing theoretical tendency to challenge the state-centric political theories but also the mainstream appropriation of the notion of

civil war. Recently published books such as Stephen Marche's *The Next Civil War: Dispatches from the American Future*, Barbara F. Walter's *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them*, and articles appearing in the popular media outlets, most notably an op-ed written by three retired US army generals in The Washington Post[1], use the notion of civil war not just as a metaphor but seriously consider it as a real threat to the foundations of today's formal democracies (Eaton, Taguba, & Anderson, 2021; Marche, 2022; Walter, 2022).

Such an increasing interest in civil war is by no means unsubstantiated. We live in a world that is traversed by seemingly 'endless' civil wars, such as the ones in Syria, Libya, Yemen, or Myanmar, in the Global South and their overspill to nearly every corner of the globe, albeit in varying degrees and forms. Today, war itself could not be thought of as a quasi-regulated armed conflict between the states, a formulation that has held since the Treaty of Westphalia: not only "[t]he decades following the Cold War saw a major spike in its incidence" to an extent that rendering civil wars as the dominant form of armed conflicts, but also with the emergence of new modalities of warfare, such as the small wars, hybridized warfare and proxy wars, it is even possible to speak of a blurring of the line of demarcation between wars "proper" and civil wars, rendering the latter a much wider phenomenon (Armitage, 2017, p. 5).

We find another reason for interrogating the theme of civil war in the emergence of a new modality of politics more and more resembling, or becoming almost indistinguishable from, a latent civil war in the making. We live in times marked by the

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[1] https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/12/17/eaton-taguba-anderson-generals-military/

ascent of 'new' authoritarianisms, personified in the controversial figures of Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Jair Bolsonaro, and alike whose power depends less on bureaucratic organizations as it did in the "totalitarian" dictatorships of 20th century and more in their capacity for creating ever-deepening political polarizations and deepening the already existing lines of fault in today's societies. Coupled with the rise of far-right ideologies and neo-fascist movements[2], lone wolf attacks, mass shootings driven by explicit or implicit political aims, and the culmination of multiple forms of struggle and resistance—most visible in the global waves of protests and uprisings as in the cases of the Yellow vests movement in France, the Arab Spring, or much more recent wide-scale protests in the United States following the killing of George Floyd—this new political landscape of ours harbours seemingly irreconcilable conflicts and intensified degrees of political violence. All these experiences that we witness firsthand make civil war more than a timely thematic to study.

However, this dissertation neither aims at establishing a comprehensive theory of civil war, nor identifying a generalized condition of civil war as the paradigm for understanding contemporary politics. The primary aim of this project is to build up a theoretical inquiry that explores the uncertain and volatile relationship between civil war and power through the examination of the work of several theorists and philosophers who

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[2] Bernard E. Harcourt highlights how civil war becomes a theme in the discourses of the far right. As he writes:

> The New Right explicitly adopted a warfare paradigm of political conflict. "Civil war is already upon us," Invictus writes. Europe "is at war," Faye writes, in boldface. And the relation to Maoist insurgency theory is explicitly made, for instance by Rich Higgins, who argues that Trump was the target of what he calls "political warfare" that traces directly to Mao's strategies. "Political warfare is one of the five components of a Maoist insurgency," he writes. "Maoist methodologies employ synchronized violent and non-violent actions that focus on mobilization of individuals and groups to action." (Harcourt, 2020, p. 515)

strive to rethink civil war as an integral aspect to socio-political existence and, at the same time, challenge the state-centric theorizations that drive civil war to the outer margins of the political. Stressing on the relationship between civil war and power in a context like ours, in which both warlike confrontations and relations of power become so diffused, provides us with a theoretical vantage point for making sense of this strange overlap between the ever-reaching mechanisms of the market, the apparatuses of control and security, and the processes of subjectification and desubjectification through subtle yet effective techniques and procedures of power at work in neoliberal forms of governance, irreconcilable conflicts, and intensified degrees of political violence that shape our socio-political climate.

Methodologically, I take a genealogical approach to map out a lineage of thought, tracing the work of several philosophers and theorists to situate civil war in relation to power. This theoretical inquiry explores a cluster of issues and problems arising from their formulations. It is important to mention here that such a research trajectory is greatly influenced by Foucault's civil war thesis, particularly his formulations dating to the early 1970s in which he posits civil war as the matrix for relations of power. Foucault's early works not only serve as a point of departure for this inquiry, but also my examination focuses on the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power inherent in Foucault's formulation of civil war which stands as a central theme of this dissertation. Indeed, I critically evaluate how Agamben, Hardt and Negri, and Alliez and Lazzarato position themselves in relation to this aporia, and attempt to illuminate both the success and failure in their attempts at resolving it. As an alternative reading, I offer a reinterpretation of Spinoza's political philosophy with the intention of generating a

perspective that prioritizes the uncertain and volatile nature of the relationship between civil war and power. The following is a brief breakdown of the chapters.

The second chapter, "From Civil War to Governmentality", is structured as an exposition of Foucault's conceptualization of power and traces the role civil war plays in the making of his account. I start with an in-depth analysis of Foucault's formulations in the 72-73 Collège de France lectures, the civil war thesis, and demonstrate how Foucault advanced the idea of civil war as the matrix of relations of power. I discuss how this particular formulation stands as a unique and potent critique of juridical theories of power by challenging the Hobbesian political theory that strives to cast civil war out of the domain of politics. I then explain the reasons why Foucault abandons such a position not that much later: as we will see, becoming well aware of the risk of giving rise to a complete denunciation of power by reducing power to domination, and thus neglecting the way power can also function as a productive network, he nearly reconstructs his conceptualization of power from the ground up in his now well-known analyses of biopolitics and liberal governance during the late 1970s and the 1980s. The second part of this chapter examines the transformation of Foucault's formulations of power, from a warlike relationship to the multiform techniques that aim to "orient behaviors, administer modes of life, and erect and organize productive potentialities" (Revel, 2014, p. 382). Lastly, I interrogate whether it is possible to re-establish a conceptual passage between the notions of power and civil war within the theoretical framework of Foucault's later work.

The third chapter, "Civil War as the Paradigm of (Bio)politics", is devoted to an analysis of Agamben's perspective on civil war, especially the one arising from his 2001 seminar at Princeton University. I primarily discuss how Agamben posits civil war as the

paradigm of (bio)politics and point out the limits of his approach. There are three interrelated points that I focus on: the first one is how Agamben situates civil war as the paradigm for understanding politics. At the core of Agamben's theorization lies his insistence on positing civil war as the paradigm of politics; in his words, civil war "marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Agamben, 2015, p. 22). I discuss how Agamben's engagement with the work of Nicole Loraux, a historian of classical Greece, enables him to formulate civil war as the fundamental threshold of politicization throughout Western political history. The second focal point of this chapter is Agamben's understanding of biopolitics as the production of bare life under the sovereign ban and as the permanent state of exception. I show how his formulations of biopolitics radically differ from that of Foucault's—as the politicization of life by the exposure to death—highlighting the significant role that sovereignty plays in Agamben's account, and how he attempts to integrate civil war into his broader framework of biopolitics. Third, I stress the implications of Agamben's framing of civil war as the originary political violence that both initiates and shapes the juridico-political structure of sovereignty and his equation of civil war with terrorism, in which he identifies "the passage into the dimension of global civil war" in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and rampant exceptionalism during the so-called the 'War on Terrorism' (Ibid., p. ix). I interrogate whether such an equation, which essentially involves a complete erasure of the line of demarcation between political violence and power, is a viable way to rethink the relationship between civil war and power, and more importantly, if it provides any kind of resolution to the tension between the productive and repressive sides of power inherent to Foucault's earlier formulation.

The fourth chapter, "Civil War and Capitalism", explores Hardt and Negri, and Alliez and Lazzarato's differing perspectives on the relationship between civil war and contemporary forms of capitalism. The first half of this chapter is devoted to a close reading of Hardt and Negri's formulation of civil war as an incessant conflict between Empire and the multitude that shapes our contemporary world both on global and local levels. Starting with explicating the concepts of Empire—the tendency for the emergence of a novel form of global sovereignty in the service of capital—and the multitude—a democratic political project that could bring a post-capitalist future—I demonstrate how Hardt and Negri locate civil war amid an absolute antagonism between these two opposing political forces. I also highlight how Hardt and Negri's formulations are grounded on a conception of two opposing modalities of power, a constituent and productive power of the multitude and the Empire's constituted power of capitalist command, which is to a great extent drawn from Negri's previous readings of Spinoza. In so doing, I show how Hardt and Negri manage to abstain from painting a picture of an over-encompassing model of domination and repression. Nonetheless, I interrogate the efficacy of their approach as a means of examining the relationship between civil war and power today. I find a potential limitation in the rather strict dichotomy they establish between the two modes of power and an almost Manichean narrative that emerges in this formulation.

In the second half of the fourth chapter, I analyze Alliez and Lazzarato's diagnosis of a global civil war in the circuits of global capitalism. First, I show how their account furthers a productive reinterpretation of Foucault's civil war thesis from a Marxian perspective, especially through an emphasis on Marx's concept of primitive accumulation. Second, I focus on their formulation of neoliberalism as governance by civil wars,

specifically as "interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on 'minorities,' wars on women, [and] wars of subjectivity" that operate on the basis of the model of colonial war (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 27). I then demonstrate how Alliez and Lazzarato establish a theoretical perspective that presents power more or less as the sum of techniques and procedures that initiates and maintains capitalist subjugation and domination that is, in a way, no longer distinguishable from the war itself. I critically evaluate whether such a formulation provides us with an adequate theoretical framework for understanding the multiple ways in which power operates today and if it manages to overcome the issues that led Foucault to abandon his civil war thesis.

In the fifth and final chapter, "Rethinking Civil War and Power from a Spinozist Perspective", I draw from Spinoza's political philosophy to suggest an alternative way to rethink the relationship between civil war and power. My primary aim is to devise a conceptual passage between civil war and power without establishing a mutual exclusivity between political power and civil war—without framing them within an either/or logic, thus giving rise to an unresolvable dichotomy—but at the same time without reducing relations of power solely to a violent confrontation in which a segment of a society dominates others. To do so I focus on two interrelated issues: first, I suggest an alternative reading of the distinction between two concepts, *potentia* and *potestas*, which Spinoza uses for denoting power. Rather than assuming an absolute antagonism between *potentia* and *potestas*, I demonstrate how this pair of concepts function in a complementary yet irreducible way, exposing the limits of the exercise of power. Second, I give an account of Spinoza's critique of and alternative to the Hobbesian understanding of politics in the passage from the state of nature to state sovereignty. I especially stress how, in Spinoza's

formulation, the state of nature could never be completely consumed and superseded, and politics always contain conflict in varying degrees. Rather than denoting a pathology of political life, I show how civil war emerges as a violent process of the reconfiguration of forces that shape the realm of politics. I trace these two themes in Spinoza's primary texts and in commentaries written on Spinoza's work, including those by Negri, Deleuze, Matheron, and Del Lucchese. In so doing, I argue that this new approach to Spinozist political philosophy provides us with an adequate theoretical vantage point for examining this strange overlap between the culmination of diffused forms of political violence, deepening polarizations, and the decentralized and productive regimes of power that seem to be characterizing our epoch.

CHAPTER 2: FROM CIVIL WAR TO GOVERNMENTALITY

In a letter to Daniel Defert dating to 1972, Michel Foucault wrote that he wanted to analyze relations of power on the basis of "the most condemned form of war: not Hobbes, not Clausewitz, not the class struggle, but civil war" (Defert, 2013, p. 52). This statement, at least at first glance, seems perplexing: the theme of civil war was never a primary area of interest for Foucault in the same way as punishment, madness, or sexuality; his later work on power could hardly be seen as constructed on the basis of civil war. In the early 1970s, however, Foucault posits civil war as the very matrix "of all the struggles regarding and against power" (Foucault, 2015, p. 13). Yet this formulation slowly fades away throughout the following years, and, for this reason, invites us to question the weight of the civil war theme in Foucault's work. While the model that civil war provides might appear provisional in relation to Foucault's conceptual breadth, I argue that the model of civil war not only provides the main grid of intelligibility that explicates power in Foucault's early work, but also manifests a cluster of issues that runs across his oeuvre. This chapter presents a close reading of the linkage between notions of civil war and power in Foucault's work. It traces the transformation that Foucault's theory of power underwent from its initial bellicose model to the analysis of (neo)liberal governmentality in which the notion of power seems to be posited less and less as primarily a matter of confrontation and conflict. The central problem that I address is why Foucault abandons civil war as a grid of intelligibility for analyzing relations of power in favor of others; first, biopolitics and later on, governmentality.

2.1 Civil War and Power

During the early 1970s, one of the crucial questions that drove Foucault's theoretical venture was whether civil war, as a model of constant struggle, could be regarded as "both the principle and motor of the exercise of political power" (Foucault, 2003, p. 18). To understand the role civil war plays in Foucault's work, one needs to first understand what power denotes. While this seems like a straightforward task, there is a catch; Foucault's conceptualization of power is by no means a monolithic one and it is subject to radical revisions throughout his works. While Foucault never devoted any work solely to power—he strongly rejected the idea that his was an attempt for outlining a general theory of power—throughout his books, lectures, and interviews, "[t]he issue is central, not because Foucault makes it into a stated object of research, but because it keeps returning in different formulations" (Caillat, 2015, p. 15). To put it in a different way, power appears as a recurring theme that runs across Foucault's entire oeuvre starting with his genealogical studies on the prison system, sexuality, and analyses of biopolitics and governance. What, then, does power mean to Foucault?

2.1.1 Foucault's Conceptualization(s) of Power

While it is difficult to tend to this question with a single blow—Foucault constantly reworked his earlier formulations and revised them over years—his guiding notion of power, in French *pouvoir*, is as "a way in which some act on others" (Foucault, 2000d, p. 340). While such a definition may appear overly simple, it nevertheless denotes one of the central characteristics of Foucault's conceptualization: power first and foremost is a type of relation; rather than denoting the existence of a stable entity, substance, or form, a structure above or outside of society, it is precisely a relation that "exists only as exercised

by some on others" (Ibid., p. 340). The second equally important aspect is how Foucault

formulates power 'at the grass-roots level'. For him, power penetrates and permeates the

"capillaries" of the social body and "is everywhere; not because it embraces everything,

but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). For this reason, it would

be an erroneous and futile attempt to locate power at some center, such as the state or any

specific institution. By the same token, power is not something that an individual or group

could possess or could be merely understood as serving to maintain a class's interest over

others in an economic sense. In his own words,

> power is not something that is divided between those who have it and hold it
> exclusively, and those who do not have it and are subject to it. Power must, I think,
> be analyzed as something that circulates, or rather as something that functions only
> when it is part of a chain. It is never localized here or there, it is never in the hands
> of some, and it is never appropriated in the way that wealth or a commodity can be
> appropriated. (Foucault, 2003, p. 29)

From Foucault's perspective, power is first and foremost a kind of relationship that runs

across the capillaries of the social and "traverse our lives […] at the intersection of the

multiple determinations that the relations imply" (Revel, 2014, p. 377).

Such an understanding implies a radical break from the juridico-political theories

of power that have dominated Western political thought at least since the Middle Ages.[3]

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[3] While Foucault has never focused solely on law, the said subject matter nonetheless is one of the important
domains for understanding how relations of power are exercised: law "is the code according to which power
presents itself and prescribes that we conceive of it" (Foucault, 1978, pp. 87- 88). In an interview, published
under the title "What Our Present Is", Foucault tells us that:
> But just as with madness, crime and prisons, I encountered the problem of rights, the law, and the
> question that I always asked was how the technology or technologies of government, how these
> relations of power understood in the sense we discussed before, how all this could take shape within
> a society that pretends to function according to law and which, partly at least, functions by the law.
> (Foucault, 2007b, p. 142)

However, for Foucault, the model law provides us with does not adequately explicate how relations of power
operate: the law is nothing more than a representation or crystallization of power at best and manifests itself
as an effect that the exercise of power produces. Indeed, throughout his works, Foucault explicitly remarks

For Foucault, from the perspective of juridico-political theories, the question of power is almost always presented as "an exchange of contracts" (Foucault, 2003, p. 13) and posed within the theoretical framework of sovereignty. Every question regarding power either becomes a matter of defining the sovereign's "rights, his power, and the possible limits of his power" (Ibid., p. 26) or is "posed only in terms of the state apparatus", as if power is solely a thing both culminating in and dependent on the state. Foucault persistently challenges "a schematism that […] localizing power in the machinery of the State, and in turning the machinery of the State into the privileged, central, major, and nearly unique instrument of the power" (Foucault, quoted in, Revel, 2014, p. 380). For him, what is overlooked in the state-centric formulations of power is how relations of power operate in multiple ways, in specific contexts, and how they are diffused through a wide spectrum of social relations.

In this sense, for Foucault, there is always something inassimilable regarding power; there is a dynamism in relations of power that even resists theorization. Redirecting from overarching theorizations and metaphysical questions, he moves "toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis" (Foucault, 1978, p. 82). In other words, the crucial question regarding power, for Foucault, has never been a question of "what" but of "how": he strives to build *an analytics of power* that involves "rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and

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that his is an attempt to "construct an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code" (Foucault, 1978, p. 90).

necessary" (Foucault, 1991, p. 76). In this sense, the way in which Foucault conceptualizes power is a product of a stern and conscious methodological choice that prioritizes relationality, multiplicity, and immanence before anything else.[4]

2.1.2 Civil War as the Analyzer of Relations of Power

At this point, one might justifiably wonder how Foucault's understanding of power relates to the notion of civil war. The short answer is that civil war provides us with the first coherent theoretical framework in Foucault's formulations in which he attempts to explain how power functions. Foucault's civil war thesis arrived out of an interest in departing from juridical theories of power, specifically Thomas Hobbes's contractual model. As Foucault once remarked, his was nothing other than an attempt "to study power outside the model of Leviathan, outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the State" (Foucault, 2003, p. 34) and his aim is plain and simple: "to cut off the king's head" (Foucault, 2000e, p. 122) in political theory.

As one could easily guess at this point, Foucault's desire to study power beyond the model state-form provides, or better put to devise "a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty" (Ibid., p. 122) while dealing with the question of power, involves challenging the very basis of Hobbes's account—the claim that the

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[4] The methodology that Foucault deploys is in close proximity to a Nietzschean conceptualization of "force", even though the latter is not a concept widely associated with his work. Indeed, in his monograph on Foucault, Gilles Deleuze points out this very connection. In Deleuze's own words:

> In the first place, we must understand that power is not a form, such as the State-form; and that the power relation does not lie between two forms, as does knowledge. In the second place, force is never singular but essentially exists in relation with other forces, such that any force is already a relation, that is to say power: force has no other object or subject than force. […] [F]orce has no object other than that of other forces, and no being other than that of relation: it is 'an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or future'; it is 'a set of actions upon other actions'. (Deleuze, 1988, p. 70)

As Deleuze claims, in Foucault's use of the concept, "power is a relation between forces, or rather every relation between forces is a 'power relation'" (Ibid., p. 70).

political community starts to exist when the condition of primordial civil war comes to an end. It is worth noting that Foucault's reading of Hobbes is an unconventional one. Unlike most commentators of Hobbes's work, Foucault does not see in Hobbes a theorist who had laid the foundations of the political realm in the condition of war; the model of commonwealth Hobbes proposes is not as much of an outcome of the condition of civil war as it might seem at first sight. For Foucault, what lies at the heart of Hobbes's account is something quite different: it is nothing other than an attempt to drive (civil) war away from the scene of politics for good. In Foucault's words:

> Hobbes turns war, the fact of war and the relationship of force that is actually manifested in the battle, into something that has nothing to do with the constitution of sovereignty. The establishment of sovereignty has nothing to do with war. Basically, Hobbes's discourse is a certain "no" to war. It is not really war that gives birth to States, and it is not really war that is transcribed in relations of sovereignty or that reproduces within the civil power—and its inequalities—the earlier dissymmetries in the relationship of force that were revealed by the very fact of the battle itself. (Foucault, 2003, p. 97)

For Foucault, what Hobbes strives for is a warding-off of the permanent civil war by pushing it to the outer limits of the political, limiting war by making it dependent on the contract. Foucault argues that Hobbes does this to lay secure grounds for the Leviathan state by nullifying the possibility of struggle and resistance from the very beginning.

Foucault locates the Hobbesian account in the gradual socio-political transformation that was taking place in Europe at least since the Middle Ages. In the Collège de France lecture from 21 January 1976, which was later published under the title *Society Must Be Defended*, Michel Foucault provides us with a succinct account of how he formulates the monopolization of warfare by the state. Foucault directly associates the

state's monopoly of war with the proliferation of the centralised states dating back as early as the late Medieval era European context.[5] In Foucault's own words:

> We can indeed say, schematically and somewhat crudely, that with the growth and development of States throughout the Middle Ages and up to the threshold of the modern era, we see the practices and institutions of war undergoing a marked, very visible change, which can be characterized thus: The practices and institutions of war were initially concentrated in the hand of a central power; it gradually transpired that in both de facto and de jure terms, only State powers could wage wars and manipulate the instruments of war. The State acquired a monopoly on war. (Foucault, 2003, p. 48)

From this passage, one can clearly understand that Foucault locates the foundations of this very transition in the gradual process of the proliferation of centralised states in the West. However, one of the most crucial points of inflection Foucault locates is the emergence of a carefully defined and controlled military apparatus that effectively pushes war to the outer limits of the modern state. In other words, for Foucault, the state's monopolization of warfare implies a tendency for the cleansing of warfare from the sphere of everyday life. He writes:

> The immediate effect of this State monopoly was that what might be called day-to-day warfare, and what was actually called "private warfare," was eradicated from the social body, and from relations among men and relations among groups. Increasingly, wars, the practices of war, and the institutions of war tended to exist, so to speak, only on the frontiers, on the outer limits of the great State units, and

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[5] However, it should not be forgotten that the historical tendency Foucault depicts here was to a great extent particular to the socio-political context of the West. Indeed, it could be productive to read Foucault's account with Carl Schmitt's conceptualization of the bracketing of war:

> In the 18th and 19th centuries, European international law achieved a bracketing of war. The opponent in war was recognized as a *justus hostis* and was distinguished from rebels, criminals and pirates. To the same degree war lost its criminal character and punitive tendencies, thereby ending discrimination between a just and unjust side. Neutrality was able to become a true institution of international law, because the question of the just cause, the *justa causa*, had become juridically irrelevant for international law. (Schmitt, 2006, p. 309)

For Schmitt, the notion of the bracketing of war designates the inter-state political order in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries in which warfare had a limited and quasi-regulated character between states on the continent; however, the rest of the globe was posited as a free land mass waiting to be appropriated and more importantly as the space for unlimited war.

only as a violent relationship—that actually existed or threatened to exist—between States. But gradually, the entire social body was cleansed of the bellicose relations that had permeated it through and through during the Middle Ages. (ibid., p. 48)

The crucial question is how far this cleansing of bellicose relations from the social body reaches, or more precisely whether the establishment of the State or any kind of structure of sovereignty completely rules out the possibility of civil war.

During the early seventies, the answer Foucault gives to these questions is straightforward and radical. As Bernard E. Harcourt writes:

As opposed to the Hobbesian idea of a war of all against all, ending with the establishment of public order, Foucault sought to reinstate the notion of civil war within the Hobbesian commonwealth. Civil war, for him, is not the collapse of a political union that would plunge us back into a state of nature. It is not opposed to political power; rather, civil war constitutes and reconstitutes it. Civil war is, in his words, "a matrix within which elements of power come to function, are reactivated, break up." Political relations must be viewed through the prism of war: "Contrary to what political theory usually assumes, civil war is not prior to the constitution of power; no more than it is what necessarily marks its disappearance or weakening. [...] Civil war takes place on the stage of power. (Harcourt, 2020, p. 285)

In other words, for Foucault, power at its core denotes a warlike relationship of domination, and civil war is integral to the domain created by the relations of power to an extent that civil war functions as a matrix for the relations of power. To better understand how Foucault comes to this conclusion, we must take a closer look at the 1972-1973 lectures at the Collège de France, recently published under the title of *The Punitive Society*, in which Foucault provides the clearest formulation of his perspective.

2.1.3 The Revolt of Nu-Pieds and the 72-73 Collège de France Lectures

The Collège de France lectures between 1971 and 1972, published recently as *Penal Theories and Institutions*, contains a detailed analysis of the revolt of Nu-Pieds and the

following regime of repression. The revolt of Nu-Pieds was the culmination of a series of popular uprisings that took place in the Normandy region of France in 1639. The primary cause behind the uprising was the French government's attempt to reduce the deficit in the royal budget, mostly due to the growing cost of the French military intervention in the Thirty Years' War, with an aggressive plan of taxation. Normandy, being one of the most prosperous provinces, though weakened by a plague epidemic, was required to make the strongest contributions. The government's new taxation policy initially created a noticeable discontent amongst the Norman population and was met with various degrees of resistance during a period that lasted more than a decade. However, starting with the assassination of a tax collector in 1639, the events took another turn: the unrest rapidly spread throughout the whole region and brought people together almost from all social groups. Peasants, laborers, poor city dwellers, and the members of the clergy took up arms, joined the ranks of *d'Armée de souffrance* (the army of suffering), and confronted the French government's tax authorities and agents with an armed resistance. Foucault does not seem to be very interested in the revolt itself; in a sense "the Nu-Pieds revolts were 'fairly typical, and were nothing extraordinary, neither from a quantitative nor a qualitative point of view'" as it was nothing more than a peasant uprising against the taxation system, one among many other popular uprisings during the same period (Elden, 2017, p. 48). But he finds the violent process of suppression and the following period of restoration particularly notable.

For Foucault, the suppression of the revolt of Nu-Pieds was significant for three reasons. First, the revolt of Nu-Pieds implies the emergence of a new repressive system in the context of the demise of feudalism and the subsequent development of centralized states

in the 17th century. It was "the first major deployment of the "arms" of the State independently of the person of the king" (Foucault, 2019, p. 5) and a precursor to, or better, a model for the later treatment of the 'social enemy'; a category soon to include social groupings such as "the poor classes, the unemployed, beggars, vagabonds, rebels" (Ibid., p. 59). Second, it was indeed the site of the birth of a novel *dispositif* that he termed 'armed justice', designating the counter-insurrection tactics, deployed by the French state apparatus as a systemic response against riots. In the particular case of the revolt of Nu-Pieds, this counterinsurgency campaign consisted of the deployment of the French army led by Chancellor Séguier to the region of Normandy, the designation of the entire population as internal enemies, effectively denying their status as legal subjects, and consequently leading to the extremely violent suppression of the uprising before the legal order or 'civil power' was re-established. For Foucault, what is important is that "armed justice" was not so much "an institution, it is an operation: a series of operations" that "no longer has the function of ensuring the circulation of wealth, as in the Middle Ages, but the repression of popular revolts by the segregation of people" (Ibid., p. 253) that "works itself into the faults of the old system [...] overlays it, pushes it back, disrupts it, [and] will finally prevail over it" (Ibid., p. 20). Third, the whole process implied the emergence of a novel modality of power in the circuits of the newly born centralized state apparatus. According to Foucault, this new regime of power was qualitatively different than the royal power: the primary aim was not about preserving the rights of the King, but it functioned more as a repressive system deployed by the State apparatus that puts the population in crosshairs.

However, it would be erroneous to understand Foucault's analysis as one in which relations of power are completely dependent on the state apparatus. As Stuart Elden writes:

> It is significant that Foucault stresses the clash of competing exercises of power: this is not power imposed simply from above. The study of the Nu-Pieds is one of a sequence of 'refusals of the law and struggles against power'. […] But this is not to set power and law on one side and the peasant refusals, struggles or resistance on the other. The King, the State, individuals such as Séguier, and the peasants all exercise power. 'For the Nu-Pieds, the rejection of the law is at the same time a law (it is like the other side of the law [...]); the rejection of justice is like the exercise of justice; the struggle against power is a kind of power'. (Elden, 2017, p. 52)

As well as delineating a network in which both relations of power and violence are encoded and recounting an unconventional politico-historical narrative on the birth of the centralized state apparatus, Foucault's account of the revolt of Nu-Pieds not only lays the groundwork for the civil war thesis, but also foreshadows his analyses on disciplinary power.

The clearest formulation of the civil war thesis can be found in the 1972-1973 lectures, *The Punitive Society,* devoted to the theme of penality (Foucault, 2015).[6] More specifically, the lectures on January 3rd and January 10th are extremely important for our discussion here for two reasons: first, we find a clear answer to the question of how Foucault formulates the notion of civil war, specifically in contradistinction to Hobbes's

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[6] Foucault's lectures of 72-73 at Collège de France were devoted to studying the changing nature of the penal regimes starting from the 18th century and could easily be seen as a historical document showing the gradual transformation from the repressive dimension of relations of power to a productive one in Foucault's work. Moreover, these lectures stand as a clear predecessor to what would later become *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and harbors an earlier conceptualization of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979). It is important to note here that this formulation that takes civil war as its very model is based upon Foucault's research on penality:

> The penal laws, intended for the most part for one class of society, are made by another. I acknowledge that they concern the whole of society—no one can be sure of always escaping their rigor—but it is true, nevertheless, that almost all crimes, and especially certain of them, are committed by the part of society to which the legislator does not belong. Now this part differs almost completely from the other in its mentality, mores, and its whole way of being. So to make suitable laws for it, it seems to me that the legislator should, above all, endeavor to forget what he is himself […] to look with care, not for the effect of a legal measure on himself, but on the quite differently disposed mind of the people for whom he works. (Foucault, 2015, p. 22)

understanding of the concept. Second, we see how Foucault identifies civil war as the matrix of relations of power.

To begin with the first point of discussion, Foucault describes civil war as "philosophically, politically, and historically, a rather poorly developed notion" for at least two reasons (Ibid., p. 11). First is the apparent negativity attributed to the concept of civil war. For Foucault, in the making of Western political thought, "civil war is never seen as something positive, central, that can serve [in itself] as the starting point of an analysis" (Ibid., p.11). This is because civil war is either a) typically directly associated with something akin to the Hobbesian state of nature, in terms of the pre-political condition of savagery, and "can only be the monstrous continuation of the war of all against all in a social structure that should normally be governed by the pact" or b) it is formulated as the diffusion of war proper to the body politic, in other words, "the monstrous projection of external war on the State" (Ibid., p. 13). What is common in both cases is that civil war appears as "the accident, the abnormality, and that which has to be avoided precisely to the extent that it is the theoretical practical monstrosity" (Ibid., p. 13). Second, and in a sense, more importantly, it is the mutually exclusive relationship that is posited between the notions of civil war and power: given the prevalence of state-centric theories of power, civil war is only thought of as a phenomenon in which relations of power become dysfunctional, or the complete subjection to the sovereign is in a state of disarray. However, Foucault argues that the disavowal of civil war, "the assertion that civil war does not exist, is one of the first axioms of the exercise of power" (Ibid., p. 11).

The strategy Foucault follows while dealing with the question of civil war involves undoing these two interrelated tendencies. He generates an alternative theoretical

perspective to the canonical understanding that disassociates civil war from power and formulates it solely in terms of a return to the war of all against all. Unsurprisingly, Foucault's principal adversary is no one other than Hobbes, whose account appears to be the perfect example of the canonical formulations that drive civil war outside of the domain of politics.

It would be beneficial here to elaborate on the status of civil war in Hobbes's political philosophy. Particularly in *Leviathan*, civil war appears as a thematic that is directly related to the concept of *the state of nature* and designates the pre-political condition of humankind (Hobbes, 2005). The concept of the state of nature delineates a domain of unlimited freedom, yet, at the same time, it is marked by the omnipresence of irrational violence, insecurity, and fear of death. Life in the state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Ibid., p. 102). This is because, according to Hobbes, human beings are motivated by their passions rather than following the dictates of the reason, meaning they seek solely what they think is in their immediate interest. When peoples' objects of interest coincide, they are positioned as competitors and become distrustful of each other, and on top of that, they seek "to keep in awe those who might claim to take his place" (Foucault, 2015, p. 26). Hence, they become enemies; a vicious circle of violence is the inevitable consequence—the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, or war of all against all. In other words, Hobbes's vision of the state of nature is one of unceasing civil war.

How then could human beings overcome this apparently despicable condition? For Hobbes, an escape from this state of terror could only be possible through the establishment of a political community guided by a supreme power materialized in the image of the mighty Leviathan. Yet, there seems to be a hefty price to pay: peace and security require

the unconditional obedience and the transference of all thinkable and exercisable power to the personae of the sovereign. This is a terrifying peace only possible when the right to exercise political power is exclusively reserved for the sovereign and any form of resistance and disobedience is banished from the scene for good. In such a theoretical framing, the appearance of the Leviathan-state is thought to bring an end to the war of all against all. Civil war can only become intelligible as the dissolution of the political community and slippage to the state of nature, or in other words, it can only be a resurgence of the war of all against all.

Foucault's account challenges the canonical theorization of civil war—opposing the disavowal or expulsion of civil war from the political realm and its equation with the war of all against all. What alternative does Foucault propose? The first step of his strategy is to target the identification of civil war with the war of everyone against everyone. For Foucault, "there is no civil war that is not a confrontation between collective elements: kinship, clienteles, religions, ethnic groups, linguistic communities, classes, and so on"; on the contrary, civil war always unfolds "through masses, through collective and plural elements" (Foucault, 2015, p. 28). In other words, for Foucault, civil war is not much of a resurgence of a war between *individuals qua individuals* but always emerges as a relationship between *groups qua groups*. Second, Foucault argues that civil war does not necessarily imply the dissolution of the political community: as he puts it, "far from being the process whereby we return from the commonwealth to individuality, […] from the collective order to the war of all against all, civil war is the process through which and by which a number of new, previously unknown collective elements are formed" (Ibid., p. 28). Third, Foucault strongly objects to the claim that civil war and power are mutually

exclusive conceptual categories. Indeed, for Foucault, the exact opposite seems to be the case:

> Moreover, contrary to what political theory usually assumes, civil war is not prior to the constitution of power; no more than it is what necessarily marks its disappearance or weakening. Civil war is not a sort of the antithesis of power, what exists before or reappears after it. Civil war and power are not mutually exclusive. Civil war takes place on the stage of power. There is civil war only in the element of constituted political power; it takes place in order to keep or conquer power, to confiscate or transform it. It is not that which is oblivious of or purely and simply destroys power, but always depends on elements of power. (Ibid., pp. 28-29)

Thus, for Foucault, civil war is neither prior to the relations of power nor implies their demise or breakdown; on the contrary, civil war is a constituent force and "is the matrix of all struggles of power, of all strategies of power, and, consequently, it is also the matrix of all the struggles regarding and against power" (Ibid., p. 25).[7] In fact, civil war stands as the very grid of intelligibility for analyzing relations of power.

To briefly summarize what we have discussed up to this point, in Foucault's works dating to the early 1970s, the notion of power denotes a warlike relationship: civil war is integral to the domain created by the relations of power and operates as the very model for both the exercise of power and also resistance to it. This perspective delineates a dynamic understanding of the political in which struggle and conflict stand as constituent forces rather than being seen as anomalies that should be completely subordinated to the notion of order. Power here no longer appears as a phenomenon originating from sovereignty, but

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[7] Yet there seems to be an exception in which one can speak of some sort of an antithesis between the civil war and power. From the standpoint of established power, or let's say from the perspective of the State, civil war appears as a threat from the outside.

> Third, it will be said that there is at least one region where we can recognize an antithesis between power and civil war: this is the level of established power, which is indeed what expels all civil war. Civil war is, indeed, what threatens power from the outside. In fact, we could show that civil war is, rather, what haunts power, not in the sense of a fear, but inasmuch as civil war occupies, traverses, animates, and invests power through and through. (Foucault, 2015, p. 31)

as only intelligible through an understanding of the tactics and mechanisms of domination and of various forms of resistance to them. Understanding how relations of power operate then becomes a matter of analyzing "material operations, forms of subjugation, and the connections among and the uses made of the local systems of subjugation" (Foucault, 2003, p. 34). What has taken place is the replacement of the juridical schema with that of a model based on the series of "civil war-repression-domination".

2.2 Power beyond the Civil War Thesis

In the early 1970s, Foucault formulates power in terms of a warlike relationship of domination. Yet, the civil war thesis does not seem to last long. Starting from the second half of the 1970s, there is a noticeable change in Foucault's tone. Besides a number of instances in which Foucault expresses his reservations regarding the bellicose model[8], the way in which he understands power changes substantially. First, he associates power with the regularizing and normalizing procedures deployed by the state—in other words, biopolitics—and second, in terms of more subtle strategies for directing conduct through his studies on liberal governmentality. In this sense, there seems to be a discontinuity distinguishing his earlier formulations from the subsequent ones. How can we make sense of such a discontinuity? One way is to understand it as a radical break and assume that Foucault has radically revised his position. From such a perspective, one would argue that as Foucault's earlier formulations "threatened above all to lead to an extremist denunciation of power—envisioned according to a repressive model", he "had reached an impasse and could go no further" and had to rebuild his formulations almost from the

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[8] Most notably, in an interview later published as "Eye of the Power", he openly stated that he did not "personally feel prepared to answer [...] with a definite yes or no" whether "[i]s the relation between forces in the order of politics a warlike one" (Foucault, 1980, p. 164).

ground (Pasquino, 1993, p. 79). Such a reading seems plausible as the three conceptual elements at work in the making of the civil war thesis, repression, domination, and violence are indeed subject to close scrutiny in Foucault's writings in the late '70s and '80s.

2.2.1 Limits of the Civil War Thesis

In the following years, starting with Foucault's genealogical studies on sexuality and gradually extending over the broader theoretical framework of power, the notion of repression becomes a potential culprit for a misconception of power: "[i]n defining the effects of power as repression [...] one identifies power with a law that says no—power is taken, above all, as carrying the force of a prohibition" (Foucault, 2000e, p. 120). For Foucault, this more and more becomes a serious problem as,

> [w]hat makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (Ibid., p. 120)

Understanding power purely in terms of repression carries the risk of failing to notice the productive aspect of how power operates and doing so will eventually end up with a one-sided and partial understanding of the concept. As one might easily see coming, the notion of domination also suffers a similar scrutiny. Foucault no longer seems to be formulating domination as the primary effect that power produces and the distinction between the former and the latter becomes much more noticeable. The following passage shows how Foucault now formulates domination in a different way from power:

> When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political or military means, one is faced with what may be called a state of domination. In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or

exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited. (Foucault, 1997, p. 283)

Domination now designates a specific configuration in which relations of power are blocked and go side by side with the use of violence and coercive techniques. More importantly, domination appears as one possibility amongst others, and, for Foucault, it is highly erroneous to equate the exercise of power with that of domination. Similarly, while Foucault does not posit a strict dichotomy between power and violence—as he argues, "[o]bviously the establishing of power relations does not exclude the use of violence" (Foucault, 2000d, p. 340)—Foucault still underscores a distinction between the two concepts: whereas "[a] relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities" (Ibid., p. 340), the exercise of power is more of a matter of arranging or directing those possibilities.

What we have, then, is a new and quite different conceptual vantage point that does not concentrate solely on the repressive effects of the exercise of power but also one that strives to give an account of how relations of power can function in multiple ways. The task to which Foucault then tends is an analysis of power's limits, how it might be deployed for emancipation or subjugation, and at what point power turns into a system of domination. Indeed, the Collège de France lectures in 74-75 and *Discipline and Punish* were mostly devoted to exploring the normative effects of power; the conceptual framing of biopower emerges in the first volume of *History of Sexuality* and throughout the 75-76 lectures, and the question of power is situated within the theoretical framework of governmentality starting from the mid-1970s onward. What we have is a new way of formulating power that goes beyond the model based on the triangulation of civil war-

repression-domination, and a theoretical move from the repressive dimension of power to that of the productive, extending first to an analysis of the normative and regulative modalities of power and later on to technologies for directing conduct, in which power seems to be posited less and less as primarily a matter of confrontation and conflict.

As I have discussed above, the assumption that Foucault has completely abandoned the bellicose model and radically revised his position in the following years would be one possible way to make sense of this transition. From this perspective, the civil war thesis would stand as a provisional answer to the question of how power operates, a conjectural reading culminating from a peculiar socio-political context, perhaps a transient phase towards the path of a more elaborate and refined conceptualization, or even be regarded as a premature or unsuccessful take. In the end, one might argue that this model put too much emphasis on the repressive dimension, and subsequently rendered the line of demarcation between power and violence almost indistinguishable. Yet there is another way to understand this transition. While acknowledging the inherent shortcomings of the civil war thesis and also the existence of an apparent discontinuity between Foucault's earlier and later formulations, it is also possible to regard the civil war thesis, and its model of conflict and struggle, as a problematic that runs across or at least complicates Foucault's later conceptualizations of power. I will therefore demonstrate how elements from the civil war thesis complicate the subsequent conceptualizations of power in terms of both biopolitics and governmentality.

2.2.2 Biopolitics and Biopower

The term biopolitics is a portmanteau word, the combination of *bios* and *politics*.[9] It can be simply understood as the politics of life. Whereas the first use of the concept of biopolitics could be traced back to the second lecture that Foucault gave at the State University of Rio de Janeiro in 1974, published later under the title "The Birth of the Social Medicine" (Foucault, 2000b)[10], a far more detailed account of the concept can be found in the Collège de France lecture held on March 17, 1976, and in the final chapter of the first volume of *History of Sexuality,* "Right of Death and Power over Life" (Foucault, 2003; Foucault, 1978). In both instances, Foucault defines biopolitics in terms of a general reconfiguration of the order of the political or, more precisely, as a historical transformation that placed

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[9] It should be noted that Foucault is not the one who coined the concept. The term "biopolitics" first appears in Rudolf Kjellén's (to whom we owe also the term geopolitics) book, *Stormakterna: Konturer Kring Samtidens Storpolitik* (*The Great Powers*), published in 1905. What distinguishes Kjellén's use of the term is its introduction of the biological into the realm of politics by raising an organicist and naturalistic perspective on the state (Lemke 2011; Esposito 2008). For Kjellén, "the political is nothing else but the continuation of nature at another level and therefore destined to incorporate and reproduce nature's original characteristics" (Esposito, 2008, p. 17). The theme of biopolitics can also be found in the works of those biologists who stress "the connection, not only analogical, but real, between politics and biology" (Ibid., p.18). And, not surprisingly, the term "biopolitics", this time largely conflated with racial themes, emerges in the discourses of ideologues aligned with the National Socialist movement. Finally, during the 1960s, the theme of biopolitics can also encountered in Anglo-American political science circles. This time, however, the concept is "grounded in the belief that in order to analyze political structures and processes, we need to take up research from the biology of behavior, socio-biological concepts and evolutionary theory" (Lemke, 2009, p. 2). While it is an open question whether Foucault was influenced by the uses of the concept that preceded his, the way he conceptualizes biopolitics is fairly different from previous iterations: the concept of biopolitics, through Foucault's use of it, does not aim at constructing an organicist political theory but as a concept to denote an historico-political paradigm shift that situates life in the realm of politics.

[10] "The Birth of Social Medicine" is the first text in which Foucault uses the term biopolitics. The concept of biopolitics here denotes political strategies that aim at maintaining the "society's control over individuals" especially within the context of the intensive process of medicalization in Western societies since the 18th century (Foucault, 2000b, p. 137). According to Foucault:

> Society's control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society, it was biopolitics, the biological, the somatic, the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. The body is a biopolitical reality; medicine is a biopolitical strategy. (Ibid., p. 137)

biological life in the matrix of power relations and at the center of politics in Western societies from the second half of the 18th century.

Throughout the texts of 1976, the concept of biopolitics designates above all the emergence of a new regime of power that functions on the basis of the biological characteristics of the human species and whose primary goal is to produce effects of regularization and normalization at the population level. Foucault refers to this novel modality of power as *biopower*: "a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 137). For Foucault, the emergence of biopower is closely tied with the broader transformation that has been taking place from the second half of the 18th century onwards in the European context. The technological and scientific innovations, including the rapid increase in industrial and agricultural output, developing scientific knowledge—especially the growing knowledge of human anatomy and physiology due to the breakthroughs in medicine—and unprecedented growth in the levels of the population made "a relative control over life" (Ibid., p. 142) possible. More importantly, for him, biopower denotes the "methods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them" (Ibid., p. 142).

The true extent of Foucault's conceptualization of biopower can only be understood within the context of the historical transition from the classical model of sovereignty to that of modern political regimes that deploy strategies and procedures where life becomes the privileged object of relations of power. For Foucault, while the turn toward biopoliticization of societies meant an increase in the State's control over life, the birth of

this new regime of power also has another significant meaning. The culmination of Western biopolitics goes side by side with the historical emergence of the capitalist mode of production. This novel regime of power was vital to the emergence of capitalism as it fulfilled two preconditions: first, the creation of productive bodies, and second, the maintenance of calculable populations.

The crucial aspect of Foucault's formulation is that the already existing regimes of power, based on the classical model of sovereignty and the divine right of kings, could no longer fulfil the urgent demands imposed by capitalism. For Foucault, power under the model of sovereignty functioned more or less as "a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136) and through the exercise of absolute right to rule over a given territory. This was clearly inadequate "to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it"; the sovereign model was obsolete and thus superseded by "a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering" (Ibid., p. 136).

How does biopower fulfil such a demand? What distinguished this new modality of power, according to Foucault, was its operationality through

> a set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on. It is these processes—the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity, and so on—together with a whole series of related economic and political problems […] which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, become biopolitics' first objects of knowledge and the targets it seeks to control. (Foucault, 2003, p. 243)

On the other hand, it was the invention of a new object for the exercise of power: the population. Foucault argues,

One of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded. Governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a 'people,' but with a 'population,' with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation. (Foucault, 1978, p. 25)

In other words, what biopower aims at is the creation of optimal outcomes, in that case, an equilibrium or state of *homeostasis*, by the administration at the level of population.[11] That means, the exercise of biopower does not involve direct interventions targeting the individual bodies, but it functions primarily as a regulative technology of power exercised at the level of the population; it aims to enhance the overall 'well-being' of it.[12] In other

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[11] During the Collège de France lecture on March 17, 1978, Foucault states that:

> The mechanisms introduced by biopolitics include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures. And their purpose is not to modify any given phenomenon as such, or to modify a given individual insofar as he is an individual, but, essentially, to intervene at the level at which these general phenomena are determined, to intervene at the level of their generality. The mortality rate has to be modified or lowered; life expectancy has to be increased; the birth rate has to be stimulated. And most important of all, regulatory mechanisms must be established to establish an equilibrium, maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis, and compensate for variations within this general population and its aleatory field. (Foucault, 2003, p. 246)

[12] For Foucault, the disciplinarization of individual bodies and the regularization of populations are two fields for the deployment of biopolitics. However, it is crucial to note here that the concept of biopower does not denote a condition in which the disciplinary techniques simply diffuse through the whole social fabric. While complementing each other, biopower and disciplinary power are still two distinct modalities of power. As Foucault states:

> Now I think we see something new emerging in the second half of the eighteenth century: a new technology of power, but this time it is not disciplinary. This technology of power does not exclude the former, does not exclude disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques. This new technique does not simply do away with the disciplinary technique, because it exists at a different level, on a different scale, and because it has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments. (Foucault, 2003, p. 242)

To put it in a different way, whereas disciplinary power means the "anatomo-politics of the human body", biopower denotes the "biopolitics of the population" (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). For Foucault, biopower and disciplinary power complement each other and modern techniques of power develop from "the body-organism-discipline-institutions series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State" (Foucault, 2003, p. 250).

words, what is at issue for Foucault is the inherent tendency of power's increasing hold over life which places it at the center of politics.

For Foucault, the most important aspect to this historical transition is the altered status attributed to life. The emergence of biopolitics, as a radical change in the ways in which power is to be exercised, implies a transition from the "right to take life or let live" to "a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). To start with the first part of the formula, for Foucault, the sovereign had an eerily large repertoire of procedures and techniques for taking lives away, and the power he wielded was actually marked by a capacity for dismantling life; "death was the moment of the most obvious and most spectacular manifestation of the absolute power of the sovereign" (Foucault, 2003, p. 248). [13] In other words, from Foucault's perspective, "[t]he sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). Yet, there was a significant problem: the sovereign does not have a similar capacity to establish control over life, and even less so to foster life; only "being able to reach life only via death, by killing or refraining from killing" (Protevi, 2014, p. 544). What is at disposal at the sovereign's hands is nothing more than a mechanism of deduction and all he can do is to grant life, in other words, the sovereign's power is actually not so much other than letting his subjects live. As Protevi writes, "[s]o the sovereign has a "dissymmetrical" right with regard to the life of subjects", or therein lies a gap between his capacity for fostering and dismantling life (Ibid., p. 544).

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[13] Foucault traces the sovereign right of life and death back as far as *patria potestas*, the ancient Roman familial law. For him, *patria potestas* "granted the father of the Roman family the right to 'dispose' of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life, so he could take it away" (Foucault, 1978, p. 135).

The second part of the formula, the "power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death", brings us to the terrain on which biopolitical regimes operate (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). For Foucault, biopower involves multiform strategies aimed at the enhancement of the well-being of populations on the basis of their basic biological traits. However, the most substantial difference involves the altered role death plays in this conceptual framework. The highest function of biopower no longer denotes the capacity for dismantling lives:

> Now that power is decreasingly the power of the right to take life, and increasingly the right to intervene to make live, or once power begins to intervene mainly at this level in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies, death becomes, insofar as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too. Death is outside the power relationship. (Foucault, 2003, p. 248)

However, even though this new configuration might seem diametrically opposed to the right of life and death wielded by the sovereign power now deemed obsolete, it is not so much the case that, for Foucault, what is at issue here is the complete erasure of power of death from the domain of politics. For him, this is not the case at all. In his 1982 lecture in Vermont, Foucault claims that:

> It [the modern state] wields its power over living beings as living beings, and its politics, therefore, has to be a biopolitics. Since the population is nothing more than what the state takes care of for its own sake, of course, the state is entitled to slaughter it, if necessary. So the reverse of biopolitics is thanatopolitics. (Foucault, 2000c, p. 416)

"Thanatopolitics", or the circumstance in which biopolitics turns into its opposite, is one of the most controversial aspects of Foucault's conceptualization. He was well aware that modernity was marked by perhaps the most brutal political regimes ever to exist, ranging from the dark legacy of colonialism to Nazism and also to wars that "were never as bloody

as they have been since the nineteenth century" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). He attempted to address this seeming contradiction through the concept of state racism. For Foucault, state racism was a form of "racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products" (Foucault, 2003, p. 62) it primarily functioned by making the ultimate decision on "what must live and what must die" (Ibid., p. 254). Foucault does not attribute state racism particularly to Nazism or other kinds of totalitarian regimes, "but [it] become[s] one of the basic dimensions of social normalization" and it is indeed inscribed in modern politics (Ibid., p. 62). The long and bloody history of ethnic cleansings, mass murders, and racisms throughout the 19th and 20th centuries went side by side with the strategies and procedures for augmenting the living conditions of the population.

The problem is that while the notion of state racism could serve us well as a descriptive politico-historical concept, it does not tell us much about the exact terms of the reversibility between biopolitics and thanatopolitics. Should we take the concept of thanatopolitics as some sort of an exception to biopolitics or as something integral to it from the very start? As Roberto Esposito notes, Foucault does not draw a definitive conclusion, and he oscillates between what Esposito identifies in terms of the "discontinuist hypothesis" and "continuist hypothesis":

> if the thesis of indistinction between sovereignty, biopolitics, and totalitarianism were to prevail—the continuist hypothesis—he would be forced to assume genocide as the constitutive paradigm (or at least as the inevitable outcome) of the entire parabola of modernity. Doing so would contrast with his sense of historical distinctions, which is always keen. If instead the hypothesis of difference were to prevail—the discontinuist hypothesis—his conception of biopower would be invalidated every time that death is projected inside the circle of life, not only during the first half of the 1900s, but also after. (Esposito, 2008, p. 43)

This kind of indecision that could be located in Foucault's theoretical account could also be seen as another expression of the long-standing tension that exists between the productive and repressive dimensions of power.

In the end, what constitutes the kernel of Foucault's earlier formulations of civil war—conflict, repression, and domination—now returns as an unresolved problem that complicates the theoretical framing of biopolitics. Let's recall Foucault's account of the revolt of Nu-Pieds. The regime of repression that had designated almost the entire population of the region of Normandy as social enemies and perhaps more significantly— what he called in terms of armed justice—the series of violent military operations equipped to deal with the revolt with sheer force could be easily located in the framework of thanatopolitics. Similarly, as the civil war thesis of 72-73 lectures demonstrates, the conceptual framing of relations of power in terms of a ceaseless civil war wherein one segment of society exerts itself upon others, denotes nothing but a thanatopolitical vision as well. While it is more than evident that Foucault abandoned the civil war thesis due to its inherent flaws—most notably, the risk it carries for reducing power to domination while overlooking the productive dimensions of power—it nonetheless continues its existence as an unresolved problem that still haunts Foucault's conception of power.

2.2.3 Governmentality

After the one-year gap following the 1976 lectures, Michel Foucault originally planned to devote the 78-79 and 79-80 lectures at the Collège de France for further analysis of biopower. But something strange happens along the way. Though Foucault seems to be inclined to develop his conceptualization of biopower in the subsequent years—even the title of the 79-80 lectures, which was *Birth of Biopolitics*, strongly suggested this—his

work takes another unexpected turn. After the year 1978, the subject of "government" or "governmentality" becomes a central theme and a privileged area of interest in Foucault's research.[14] During the lectures covering these two years, Foucault presents a detailed analysis of government models starting from the 2nd century Christian pastoral setting to the late 20th century models of (neo)liberalism. According to Michel Senellart, who was one of the editors of *Security, Territory, Population*, this shift changes the focal point from "the question of biopower to that of government, to such an extent that in the end the latter almost entirely eclipses the former" (Senellart, 2009, p. 370). What is extremely important for us here is that this shift from biopolitics to governmentality denotes another turning point in Foucault's formulation of power: what the notion of governmentality brings to the table is an understanding of power that moves even farther away from the civil war thesis. Power now seems to be formulated in terms of the deployment of much more indirect and subtle techniques for directing conduct rather than being a matter of direct intervention, confrontation, and conflict.

What does the notion of governmentality imply and how is it differentiated from Foucault's previous formulations of power? For Foucault, the question of governmentality "is not simply a matter of governing institutions", but it denotes the culmination of "the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power" (Foucault, 2009, p. 108). This particular modality of power, having its roots in the Christian pastoral setting, emerges as a politico-historical phenomenon circa the 16th century as a general

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[14]Indeed, in one of the last interviews he gave before his death, he responds in the following way:
> "Q: Isn't it logical, given these concerns, that you should be writing a genealogy of biopower?
> MF: I have no time for that now, but it could be done. In fact, I have to do it." (Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 232).

problem of governance.[15] Before gaining its foothold in the sphere of the state, the question

of governance was posed to address the multiple aspects of social life: in terms of how one

should govern herself or himself, how to govern a household, how to govern souls, how to

govern children, and so on. For Foucault, what might be called the first historical phase of

governmentality correlates with the birth of the modern state.[16] This first phase delineates

a model of governance through regulatory techniques at the level of population in a way

that resembles his earlier formulation of biopower. However, it is with the emergence of

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[15] For Foucault, the model of pastorship has its roots in Ancient Near East civilizations, particularly Egypt, Assyria, and Judaea, and also a common theme in Abrahamic religions. Pastorship involves a political or social arrangement modeled akin to the one that exists between a shepherd and his/her flock; it functions as a modality of power by way of constant care or ensuring, sustaining, and improving the conditions of life of its members. In other words, the model of pastorship depends on the devotedness of the shepherd for ensuring the salvation of his flock. Pastoral power, for Foucault, is an individualizing power; it is not exercised on the level of community, but is based on individual attention to each member. According to Foucault, the theme of pastorship gradually vanishes in the European continent throughout the Middle Ages, which can be explained in part by the extreme poverty and ruralness of the medieval economy. However, for Foucault, the most important factor was the emergence of feudalism, which presupposes different kind of intrapersonal ties compared to the model of pastorship involves. According to Foucault, the model of pastorship does not completely vanish away and continues to exist in a number of religious communities until its combination with its opposite, the state, in the 16th century.

[16] For Foucault, there are two key concepts that explain the model of governmentality through which the modern state operates: *raison d'État* and the technology of police. The concept of *raison d'État* refers to the "type of rationality that will allow the maintenance and preservation of the state once it has been founded, in its daily functioning, in its everyday management" (Foucault, 2009, p. 238) or "principles capable of guiding an actual government" (Foucault, 2000a, p. 315). Theories of *raison d'État* are not founded on the grounds of "divine, natural, or human laws" (Ibid., p. 317) and do not advance a territorial definition of the State; in this respect, they advance a substantially different form of governance compared to the traditional definitions of sovereignty. From Foucault's perspective, the governmentalization of the state also brings about the statification (*étatisation*) of the society; various aspects of societies, matters such as education, health, or economy, are presented as matters of the state and dealt within the rationality that ultimately aims the maximization of states' strength as well as guaranteeing its preservation. When it comes to the technology of police, it simply refers to the "technology of state forces" (Foucault, 2009, p. 367). Drawing from Louis Turquet de Mayerne's *La Monarchie aristodémocratique, ou le Gouvernement composé et meslé des trois formes de legitimes Republiques*, Foucault writes:

> The police includes everything. But from an extremely particular point of view. Men and things are envisioned as to their relationships: men's coexistence on a territory; their relationships as to property; what they produce; what is exchanged on the market. It also considers how they live, the diseases and accidents that can befall them. What the police sees to is a live, active, productive man. Turquet employs a remarkable expression: "The police's true object is man." (Ibid., p. 319)

In other words, for Foucault, policing involves the implementation of rational ways of governing the population within a specified milieu—that is, a state's boundaries—through regulatory techniques and procedures. For Foucault, the combination of *raison d'État* and the technology of police constitutes "the regulatory idea of governmental reason" (Ibid., p. 286).

liberalism in the 18th century that Foucault sees the culmination of a genuinely novel regime of power that departs from the juridical schema of sovereignty, the prescriptive nature of the disciplinary model, and also the regularizing methods deployed by biopolitical regimes of power.

Foucault defines the liberal model of governance as a regime of power "that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault, 2009, p. 108). To start with the notion of population, Foucault's emphasis on the concept was not entirely new and biopower was also a modality of power to be exercised on the level of population, but with the emphasis on governmentality, Foucault proposes a more elaborated understanding of this concept. In *Security, Territory, Population*, the concept of population is defined first as a "multiplicity of individuals who are and fundamentally and essentially only exist biologically bound to the materiality within which they live", or in other words, a grouping of people who exist in a given milieu (Ibid., p. 21). Second, Foucault remarks that population emerges as a "thick natural phenomenon" consisting of a series of natural regularities and, more importantly, modifiable variables such as birth rates, death rates, longevity, and so on (Ibid., p. 71). Such a formulation seems more or less in line with the analysis of biopower. However, what differentiates population in the framework of liberal governmentality, especially in the eye of 18th-century liberal theorists, is that it no longer denotes a passive aggregate of living beings or mere objects waiting to be regulated. In light of the emphasis on governmentality, Foucault argues that the population gains the status of being a "subject". This does not mean that the population is taken as "a collection of juridical subjects in an individual or collective relationship"; rather, it stands as "a new

collective subject absolutely foreign to [...] political thought of earlier centuries" (Ibid., p. 42). The concept of population now denotes a novel form of a subject-object of power (Hoffman, 2014). To understand the true extent of this very claim, we have to discuss the other two elements of Foucault's governmentality formula: "political economy as its major form of knowledge" and "apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault, 2009, p. 108).

For Foucault, the historical emergence of liberal models of governance correlates with the culmination of political economy as a mature scientific discipline and liberalism flourishes within a paradigm of strategies and procedures seeking to maintain and amplify the State's strength. In the face of the rapidly expanding market and the emergence of capitalism, the only viable strategy for achieving this was the prospect of a strong economy. Political economy offered a set of tools for "quantifying wealth, measuring its circulation, determining the role of currency, and knowing whether it was better to devalue or revalue a currency, insofar as it was a question of establishing or supporting the flows of external commerce" and an almost entirely new understanding of the market (Ibid., p. 76). This entailed not simply the discovery of the idea of a 'free market', but also the understanding of the market as "a natural phenomenon" (Ibid., p. 71). That means, from the perspective of political economy, the market was no longer taken primarily as a site of jurisdiction "invested with extremely prolific and strict regulations" (Foucault, 2008, p. 30) but was seen as a self-sufficient domain that had its own rules and, more importantly, endowed with intrinsic mechanisms for regulating itself. In other words, the liberal political economy did "contrive a free space of the market within an already given political society" (Ibid., p. 131).

From then on, running a prosperous economy was no longer a matter of implementing interventions from above, but of enabling it to flourish naturally via the supposed equilibrium between the cost of a commodity or service and the scale of demand. As Foucault puts it, "[t]he game of liberalism—not interfering, allowing free movement, letting things follow their course; *laisser faire*, *passer et aller*—basically and fundamentally means acting so that reality develops, goes its way, and follows its own course according to the laws, principles, and mechanisms of reality itself" (Foucault, 2009, p. 48).

According to this analysis, liberal governmentality demanded a self-limitation on governance. However, what was at issue was not solely a disdain for too much interference. Liberal governmentality also meant the emergence of a new rationality, through the maximization of efficiency or by achieving the greatest results with the least possible input. Liberal models of government thus operate through the economization of governance. This tendency only intensifies with the emergence of neoliberalism. Throughout the lectures between 1979 and 1980 at Collège de France, which is later published under the title of *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault speaks of a crucial "point of inflection in the curve of […] development" of liberalism within the context of the advent of Chicago school driven US neoliberalism in the second half of 20th century (Foucault, 2008, p. 28). For the advocates of the neoliberal school of thought, Foucault claims, what needed to be done was not so much of a matter of limiting the state intervention in the market or "freeing an empty space, but of taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government" (Ibid., p. 131). In effect, theorists of

neoliberal governmentality ceaselessly sought various ways to further spread the economic rationalities of the market to the almost entire political realm and spheres of society.

From Foucault's perspective, "*homo economicus*" stands as the central figure for understanding neoliberalism:

> someone who pursues his own interest, and whose interest is such that it converges spontaneously with the interest of others. From the point of view of a theory of government, homo economicus is the person who must be let alone. With regard to homo economicus, one must laisser-faire; he is the subject or object of laissez-faire. And now, [...] homo economicus, that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. (Foucault, 2008, pp. 270-271)

Furthermore, *homo economicus* stands as "the surface of contact between the individual and the power exercised on him, and so the principle of the regulation of power over the individual" (Ibid., pp. 252-253). This new subject/object of the relations of power is no longer the product of a regulation imposed externally, but should be thought of to be functioning as self-regulating individuals who are expected to continuously invest in their human capital and act in a way incentivized by the mechanisms of competition. In short, for Foucault, what lies at the heart of the notion of *homo economicus* is a novel formulation of the rational and autonomous subjects who are endowed with a capacity to act but are "eminently governable" and "becomes the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables" (Ibid., p .270).

The intention, then, is to designate the exact mechanisms through which this new modality of power operates, and this is where apparatuses of security come into play. What is an apparatus or *dispositif* of security? For Foucault, an apparatus of security does not

designate what one might first assume. What is implied here by security is not a matter of defending the rights of the sovereign, the integrity of a state, or the protection of a given territory. In Foucault's use, an apparatus of security stands for a combination of multiform procedures and techniques that target to achieve a relative degree of control over contingencies, risks, or dangers a given population could ever face:

> Putting it in a still absolutely general way, the apparatus of security inserts the phenomenon in question [...] within a series of probable events. Second, the reactions of power to this phenomenon are inserted in a calculation of cost. Finally, third, instead of a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, one establishes an average considered as optimal on the one hand, and, on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must not be exceeded. (Foucault, 2009, p. 6)

Foucault's account puts apparatuses of security in close proximity to the rationality of the market. The drive for efficiency and calculability are two indispensable aspects of the way an apparatus of security functions. However, perhaps the most crucial aspect to Foucault's formulation is that "[t]hese mechanisms do not tend to a nullification of phenomena in the form of the prohibition, 'you will not do this,' nor even, 'this will not happen,' but in the form of a progressive self-cancellation of phenomena by the phenomena themselves" (Ibid., p. 66).

The last part of this formulation, "a progressive self-cancellation of phenomena by the phenomena themselves", is the crux of Foucault's formulation (Ibid., p. 66). Besides denoting how apparatuses of security deal with the potential threats and contingencies, this formulation foreshadows a radically different modality of governance. When the apparatuses of security are taken into consideration, government cannot be seen merely as a matter of intervention targeting an individual body—a Foucauldian security mechanism does not seek to normalize, discipline, or prescribe anything on an individual body—rather,

what is at issue here is more of a subtle interference within the circuits of action by "adjusting an optimal middle within a spectrum of variations" (Lemke, 2011, p. 47). An apparatus of security is less of a restrictive mechanism that says "no" but emerges as a means for directing conduct or the *conduct of conducts*. That means, government no longer relies on imposing restrictions but involves orienting, incentivizing, and organizing the desired set of behaviors. From this perspective, the exercise of power, then, is neither a matter of producing regularizing effects on the level of population, nor a matter of establishing a state of *homeostasis*, but becomes more of coding and directing flows. Power becomes synonymous with governance through the management of possibilities, risks, and probable events, and incentivizing certain kinds of behaviors to enable societies to follow their "natural" course by allowing "free movement". Indeed, for Foucault, the rationality imbued in apparatuses of security is intrinsic to the modern framing of the concept of freedom. Freedom not only stands as a prerequisite for the operationality of liberal governmentality, but

> [a]n apparatus of security [...] cannot operate well except on condition that it is given freedom, in the modern sense [the word] acquires in the eighteenth century: no longer the exemptions and privileges attached to a person, but the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things. I think it is this freedom of circulation, in the broad sense of the term, it is in terms of this option of circulation, that we should understand the word freedom, and understand it as one of the facets, aspects, or dimensions of the deployment of apparatuses of security. (Foucault, 2009, pp. 48-49)

Thus, from Foucault's perspective, the liberal art of government stands as a model of power that takes population both as its subject-object, projects the principles of the market economy to its *dispositifs*, functions by deploying techniques for directing conduct, and, in

the end, is nothing but the "rationalization of the art of government on the rational behavior of those who are governed" (Foucault, 2008, p. 312).

2.2.4 A New Formulation of Power

Foucault's formulation of (neo)liberal governmentality denotes a modality of power differentiated both from the earlier model of civil war and, to a lesser extent, the model proposed in terms of biopolitics. In "Subject and Power", a later text dating to 1982, Foucault clearly states that "what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. [. . .] [I]t acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault, 2000d, p. 340). In other words, what is at issue here is that power no longer denotes a warlike relationship in which one tries to lay dominance over others or the production of regularizing and normative effects throughout societies:

> [a] power relationship [...] can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. (Ibid. p. 340)

There are two elements that need closer attention. First, what does it mean that the one over whom power is exercised should be recognized and maintained as a subject capable of acting? The answer is, in Foucault's later formulations, the one over whom power is exercised is no longer merely a static object but a semi-autonomous and active individual endowed with subjectivity. Second, the exercise of power should be thought of as a process that functions by opening up a whole range of new possibilities. The exercise of power now becomes the management of contingencies, establishing a regime of control by

wielding techniques of incentivization of certain behaviours rather than thought of as a restrictive force that relies on the use of repressive tactics, or regulatory techniques and procedures. On the contrary, Foucault makes a paradoxical claim that posits freedom as the condition of the possibility of power:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are "free." By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available. Where the determining factors are exhaustive, there is no relationship of power: slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains, only when he has some possible mobility, even a chance of escape. (Ibid., p. 342)

This surely does not mean that the one who exercises power and the one over whom power is exercised are to be seen as equals: some still "get an advantage, socially, economically, politically, institutionally, etc." (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). This also does not mean that power is purely a matter of consent, although Foucault acknowledges that "the exercise of power can never do without it" (Foucault, 2000d, p. 340), but power is precisely "the conduct of conducts".[17]

What then becomes of struggle, confrontation, or resistance? Apparently, Foucault's later account substantially differs from the one he endorsed in the early seventies. Again in "Subject and Power", he clearly states that "[b]asically, power is less a

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[17] The following excerpt from an interview is illustrative of Foucault's later formulations of power:
> I influence your behavior, or I try to do so. And I try to guide your behavior, to lead your behavior. The simplest means of doing this, obviously, is to take you by the hand and force you to go here or there. That's the limit case, the zero-degree of power. And it's actually in that moment that power ceases to be power and becomes mere physical force. On the other hand, if I use my age, my social position, the knowledge I may have about this or that, to make you behave in some particular way— that is to say, I'm not forcing you at all and I'm leaving you completely free—that's when I begin to exercise power. It's clear that power should not be defined as a constraining act of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon. (Foucault, 1988, p. 2)

confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement" and "the relationship proper to power would therefore be sought not on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary contracts [...] but, rather, in the area of that singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government" (Ibid., p. 341).

But does Foucault completely drop the concept of resistance? Throughout 77-78 Collège de France lectures, Foucault clearly puts a great emphasis on what he calls 'counter-conducts' (Foucault, 2009). As the liberal art of governance is not much of a process of top to down intervention and less so a relationship of coercion—in the end, it needs actively participating subjects who are endowed with a relative freedom to act— what power presupposes in terms of the conduct of conducts is nothing other than counter-conducts. Foucault formulates governance as a play between conducts and counter-conducts and, at first glance, such a formulation manifests similarly to the way he positions resistance to power.[18] However, there seems to be a nonnegligible difference. In "What is Critique", Foucault discusses what he terms "the critical attitude" or "the art of being not governed" (Foucault, 2007a, p. 45). By 'how not to be governed' what Foucault does *not* mean is a position

> opposed in a kind of face-off by the opposite affirmation, 'we do not want to be governed and we do not want to be governed at all.' I mean that, in this great preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for the ways to govern, we identify a perpetual question which would be: "how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them. (Ibid., p. 44)

[18] As I have discussed earlier, resistance appears as an integral part of Foucault's conceptualization of power in the civil war thesis or the bellicose model and this is no different in the case of his analysis of biopolitics. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, resistance is presented as a phenomenon integral to how power operates. As he writes: "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95).

What Foucault identifies in terms of the counter-conducts is not so much a radical refusal of and a head-to-head struggle against power, as it was in the civil war thesis of the early '70s or the conceptual framing of resistance he later embraced, but more of a transgression that challenges the already established circuits or matrix of governmentality from inside.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the relationship between the notions of civil war and power in Foucault's work through a close examination of the civil war thesis from the early 1970s, in which civil war was posited as the matrix of relations of power and raised the question of why Foucault abandoned it in the following years. The substantial change that Foucault's formulations underwent enabled him to overcome the long-standing tension between the repressive and productive dimensions of power, though much in favor of the latter, and brings about an arguably more refined understanding of power: first, in terms of biopolitics, a regime of power that attends life at the level of population, and second, through his analyses of governmentality, a projection of the principles of the market to the general domain of politics. It could be plausibly argued that Foucault has successfully overcome the intrinsic problems that the bellicose model carries within itself, that is to say, the risk of reducing relations of power to domination and putting too much emphasis on its repressive side by reformulating power in terms of "the conduct of conducts" or subtle procedures and strategies that aim to incentivize and orient certain behaviours over others.

As I have previously discussed, Foucault's conceptualization of power presents itself as *an analytics of power*, that means "rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary" (Foucault, 1991,

p. 76). His approach strives to give an answer to the question of how "[t]he relations of power fashion and traverse our lives, making us be what we are at the intersection of the multiple determinations that the relations imply" (Revel, 2014, p. 377). In this sense, understanding the true extent of the transformation that Foucault's formulations had gone through also requires an understanding of the politico-historical context he ultimately reflects upon. The civil war thesis, and also the reason Foucault dropped it, should be seen in this light, as a response to the emergence of radical socio-political movements in the late '60s and their demise.

First, Foucault's situating civil war as the matrix of relations of power cannot be properly understood outside the context of the turbulent political atmosphere created by the worldwide conflicts and struggles of the 1960s. As Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani puts it in:

> [f]or the record, let us briefly recall that these were the years of war in Vietnam, of "Black September" in Jordan (1970), of student protests against the Salazar regime (1971) three years before the Carnation Revolution, of the IRA's terrorist offensive in Ireland (1972), of the resurgence of the Arab Israeli conflict in the Yom Kippur War, of normalization in Czechoslovakia, or the colonels' regime in Greece, of the fall of Allende in Chile, of fascist terrorism in Italy, of the miners' strike in England, of the terrible death agony of Francoism in Spain, of the Khmer Rouge's seizure of power in Cambodia, and of civil war in Lebanon, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, and many African states. (Fontana & Bertani, 2003, p. 285)

It should be noted that the series of revolts and protests of '68 signifies a break in Foucault's approach. Although, not being at France during the height of the May '68 uprising, Foucault "encounters a militant student movement at the University of Tunis, whose Marxism he perceives as a mobilising moral energy of the Sorelian myth type" (Rehmann, 2022, p. 135). Foucault, whose most recently published book, "*The Order of Things* from

1966, had been regarded by many as a book of the 'right' owing to the sharp reckoning with Marx whose work was considered on the right up until that time" (Ibid. p. 135)[19], starts to show an interest in the writings of Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Che Guevara, and the Black Panthers (Defert, 2013). His interest in subversive or revolutionary politics is not just on a theoretical level. As Jan Rehmann notes:

> [r]eturning to Paris, he takes part in 1969 in the legendary 'battle at Vincennes' as dean of the philosophy department, and participates in the intellectual milieu of the '*Gauche prolétarienne*'. When the organisation is forbidden in 1970, and numerous representatives of 'Gauchism' are in prison, he founds with other well-known intellectuals the '*Groupe d'information sur les prisons*' (gip), which records and publishes the inhuman prison conditions and life stories of the prisoners. Within a short time the group succeeds in building a network of up to 2,000–3,000 intellectuals and begins to support the revolts in the prisons with a publicly effective prison-critical movement. (Rehmann, 2022, p. 136)

Moreover, the strong emphasis that the civil war thesis puts on repression also reflects the regime of restoration following the May '68 uprisings in France. In François Ewald and Bernard E. Harcourt's words:

> 'Repression' is on the agenda. It is aimed most specifically at the Maoist movement of the '*Gauche prolétarienne*'. Leaders and militants are imprisoned, its paper—*La Cause du peuple*—is banned, and the editors of the paper are imprisoned. There is always a very heavy police presence in the Latin Quarter. Access to the major university buildings is controlled. Foucault is no doubt alluding to this in the first sentences of the course. One still has to pass through several police cordons to enter the Collège de France when Foucault is giving his lectures. (Ewald & Harcourt, 2019, p. 244)

In short, the understanding of power that the civil war thesis proposes, in terms of a triangulation of "civil war-repression-domination", reflects the revolutionary political climate of the '60s both in France and worldwide.

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[19] Also see, James Miller's *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Miller, 1993).

How, then, should we understand Foucault's move away from the civil war thesis? From a certain perspective, Foucault's new formulations of power, especially the one raising from his analysis of (neoliberal) governmentality, emerge in the context of the sustained defeat of the radical social movements of the 1960s and the rise of the triumphant neoliberal 'counter revolution'. The gradual replacement of the rigid structures of power with that of flexible arrangements, the deregulation of the economy, and the containment or the capture of revolutionary social and political movements in the circuits of a market-driven neoliberalism created a substantially different political landscape. Indeed, Foucault's encounter with the (neo)liberal theorists' work takes place in this context: "Margaret Thatcher would be elected exactly one month after the course [78-79 lectures] finished; Ronald Reagan at the end of the following year" (Elden, 2016, p. 103). Given that Foucault's aim was essentially carving an analysis of "the relations of power in the most scrupulous and attentive manner possible, looking into all the domains of its exercise, […] not the same thing as constructing a mythology of power as the beast of the apocalypse" (Foucault, 1988, p. 12), his new position is an attempt at reflecting this new configuration of relations of power: less in terms of a warlike relationship where the repressive strategies and restrictive force from above were commonplace and more in terms of the 'conduct of conducts' or multiform techniques that aim to "orient behaviors, administer modes of life, and erect and organize productive potentialities" (Revel, 2014, p. 382).

However, it is also clear that such a move is at the expense of the possibility of formulating a clear passage between the notions of civil war and power. In fact, the theme of civil war all but vanishes away. This is an unfortunate outcome, as Foucault's understanding of civil war is uniquely manifesting as one of the most potent alternatives to

the Hobbesian conceptual framing of civil war. There is also another important outcome; this time it is regarding Foucault's understanding of neoliberalism. While Foucault's conceptualization of neoliberalism offers us an extremely fruitful way of rethinking how power functions in the wake of the transformation that has been taking place since the '80s, it at the same time carries the risk of overlooking the repressive dimension of neoliberalism, especially the coercive side of financialization and the violence that it is both founded upon and carries within itself. Indeed, it could be said that what pertains to the model of civil war, the triangulation of struggle, domination, and political violence, still poses a significant problem, however, this is due to its complete absence from the picture. As we will discuss in the following chapter, this issue is taken up as a crucial theme and stressed by several of Foucault's commentators and critics keen on reinvigorating the civil war model.

CHAPTER 3: CIVIL WAR AS THE PARADIGM OF (BIO)POLITICS

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Michel Foucault conceptualized civil war as the matrix of relations of power in the early 1970s and why he abandoned such a formulation in the following years. Foucault's civil war thesis was unique as a radical alternative to the canonical Hobbesian framing of civil war that had placed the concept at the outer limits of the political. Yet this peculiar theoretical perspective was not a long-lived one and gradually vanished away in Foucault's later works. The civil war thesis, or bellicose model, was all but forgotten outside of the circles strictly specialized in Foucault's work until the publishing of the 72-73 Collège de France lectures and their subsequent translations into English. In the early 2000s, however, one can speak of a revival of interest in the theme of civil war and Giorgio Agamben is one of the first thinkers who is keen to explore and put the concept of civil war into use, without an explicit reference to Foucault's work nonetheless resonating, while establishing his theoretical perspective.[20] In this chapter, I will discuss how Agamben positions civil war as the paradigm of politics and how his account opens up a possibility for rethinking the said concept in the framework of biopolitics.

3.1 Civil War as the Fundamental Threshold of Politicization

In a series of public lectures at Princeton University in 2001, Agamben, echoing Foucault's claims after almost 30 years, expresses his discontent with the lack of a current theory of

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[20] Beginning in the 2000s, Foucault's earlier formulations have been rediscovered by several political theorists and philosophers who made different interpretations and readings. Some, most notably Tiqqun and Invisible Committee, took Foucault's earlier formulations and strived to develop them further for laying the groundwork for an insurrectionary theory (Tiqqun, 2010; The Invisible Committee, 2009). Others, including Judith Butler and Bernard E. Harcourt—while acknowledging the merits of the primacy that is given to struggle as the constituent force that shapes the political—were more reserved about the risks it carries for binary logic (Butler, 2015; Harcourt, 2020).

civil war. He asserts that there does not exist a coherent 'stasiology', a theory of civil war, comparable to 'polemology', a theory of war, or an 'irenology', a theory of peace (Agamben, 2015). While establishing a full-fledged theory of civil war was not among the goals of these seminars—Agamben claims that he restricts himself "to examining the topic as it appears within Western political thought at two moments in its history: in the testimonies of the philosophers and historians of Ancient Greece and in the thought of Thomas Hobbes" (Ibid., p. 4)—the 2001 Princeton seminars, which were later published under the title of *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* and would eventually become the third installment of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project, provide us with a succinct yet thought-provoking theoretical account for understanding not only of Agamben's use of the concept of civil war but also shows how he links the said concept to his reinterpretation of Foucauldian notion of biopolitics.

For Agamben, civil war is not a phenomenon that points to the demise of the political but stands as the very paradigm of politics in the wake of the War on Terror, a period in which he sees the culmination of a global civil war. In the first part of 2001 seminars at Princeton University, titled *Stasis*, Agamben makes a rather bold claim that situates civil war as the very foundation of Western politics: for him, civil war has been functioning as nothing but the fundamental threshold of (bio)politicization dating back to classical Greece. In the first part of the 2001 Princeton seminars, and in the short text arising from it, Agamben attempts to rethink the classical Greek notion of *stasis* in the wake of the 21st century and, more importantly, within the theoretical framework of biopolitics.

3.1.1 The Concept of *Stasis*

In *Stasis*, one of the main sources Agamben refers to is French historian Nicole Loraux's seminal work on classical Greece. There are two reasons why Loraux is important for Agamben. First, Agamben claims that what distinguishes Loraux from her contemporaries and predecessors, including highly prominent figures such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, Gustave Glotz, and Fustel de Coulanges, is the strong emphasis she puts on the notion of *stasis*, or more precisely the role she attributes to civil war in the making of history of classical Greece. For Agamben, almost every historian of classical Greece "had underscored the importance of stasis in the Greek *polis* prior to Nicole Loraux" (Ibid., p. 5). However, Agamben argues that the true novelty of Loraux's approach comes from how "she immediately situates the problem in its specific locus, which is to say, in the relationship between the *oikos*, the family or the household, and the *polis*, the city" (Ibid., pp. 5-6). In effect, for Agamben, what Loraux did was nothing less than redrawing the commonplace topography between the *oikos* and *polis* by introducing the notion of *stasis* right into the play.

How does Loraux do that? For Agamben, the answer lies in the ambiguity Loraux attributes to civil war while she was tracing the said notion in the context of classical Greece. While the Greeks did not use the exact term 'civil war'—it was the Romans who invented civil war in terms of *bellum civile*—and *polemos*, the word they use for designating war, stood as a form of conflict that pitted the *polis* against the external threats, Loraux takes civil war in terms of "the name that the Greeks give to this confrontation:

stasis" (Ibid., p. 24).[21] *Stasis*, as Loraux puts it succinctly, denotes "simultaneously partisanship, faction, sedition, and—as we say in an expression with very Roman connotations—civil war" and refers "etymologically […] to a position; that the position should become a party, that a party should be constituted for the purpose of sedition, that one faction should always call forth another, and that civil war should then rage" (Ibid., p. 24). According to Loraux, what the Greeks saw in *stasis* "was the abomination of desolation", "the division that tears apart and tears open", and "from Solon to Aeschylus, […] a deep wound in the body of the city" (Loraux, 2006, p. 24). In short, at least at first glance, *stasis* designates a destructive force that is capable of dissolving the established socio-political order of the *polis*.

When it comes to the question of where the Greeks identified the source of civil war, things get more complicated. Loraux points out two contradictory historical traditions that designate different loci; first, the outside of the *polis* and, second, within the *polis* itself. The first explanation, which Loraux thinks was the more common one among the Greeks, defines the notion of civil war as an evil coming from the outside:

> outside the city, perhaps even outside humanity, civil war is a catastrophe that rains down on human societies like a plague (*loimos*), an epidemic, a tempest, or like the nefarious consequences of an external war; battling the storm, the city is weakened, even wounded, yet it waits hopefully for the moment when it will recover its integrity after ridding itself of an evil that has come from the outside. (Ibid., p. 65)

However, Loraux adds, there also exists another—and to some extent contradictory— narrative that posits civil war as the culmination or intensification of the internal strife

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[21] As Agamben notes "the very expression *oikeios polemos* is, to the Greek ear, an oxymoron: polemos designates external conflict and, as Plato will record in the Republic (470c), refers to the *allotrion kai othneion* (alien and foreign), while for the *oikeios kai syggenēs* (familiar and kindred) the appropriate term is *stasis*" (Agamben, 2015, pp. 6-7).

(*eris*), or in other words, one that formulates civil war as something emerging from the *polis* itself:

> [T]here is also the much more dreadful feeling, which is rarely expressed—and when it is, always fleetingly, reluctantly, and incompletely—that *stasis* is born from within the city: in Theognis, it is what the city is pregnant with—the terrible gestation of murders between fellow citizens—and, more generally, Greek tradition interprets civil war as a sickness of the *polis*. (Ibid., p. 65)

It is this second way of framing civil war, emerging within the boundaries of the *polis*, that Loraux primarily focuses on.

For Loraux, the crucial problem then becomes a matter of identifying how civil war or *stasis* arises within the boundaries of the *polis*. In her prolific essay titled "La guerre dans la famille", Loraux provides us with an account addressing this very problem (Loraux, 1997). Using Plato's unusual use of the phrase *ho oikeios hēmin polemos* (our war at home) in the *Menexenus* dialogue as her point of departure, Loraux carefully traces the origin of *stasis* to the *oikos* (the household) or the family.[22] For Loraux, civil war is indeed an internecine war that emerges from the *oikos* and is fought within the members of *phylon* (the kinship). As Agamben claims, from Loraux's perspective:

> [c]ivil war is the *stasis emphylos*; it is the conflict particular to the *phylon*, to blood kinship. It is to such an extent inherent to the family that the phrase *ta emphylia* (literally, 'the things internal to the bloodline') simply means 'civil wars'. According to Loraux, the term denotes 'the bloody relationship that the city, as a bloodline (and, as such, thought in its closure), maintains with itself.' (Agamben, 2015, p. 7)

According to Agamben's interpretation, Loraux posits civil war as a form of socio-political conflict that threatens to dissolve the bonds of the *phylon* and the prevailing order in the

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[22] Polemos, as Agamben points out, is "to the Greek ear, an oxymoron: polemos designates external conflict" (Agamben, 2015, p. 6) and is usually reserved for war proper.

oikos. In this sense, "[i]nsofar as civil war is inherent to the family—insofar as it is, that is to say, an *oikeios polemos*, a 'war within the household'—it is, to the same extent […] inherent to the city, an integral part of the political life of the Greeks" (Ibid., p. 8). At this point, the origin of *stasis* or civil war according to Loraux might appear straightforward. However, there seems to be a catch and this is what gives Loraux's formulation of the notion of *stasis* its ambiguity. For Loraux, the *oikos* is not solely the origin from which civil war emerges; it is, at the same time, civil war's only remedy. In other words, civil war itself constitutes the very possibility of reconciliation. It is in this sense that *stasis*, in the context of classical Greece, functions both as a process of association and disassociation. For Agamben, this ambiguity "of the *stasis*, according to Loraux, is thus attributable to the ambiguity of the *oikos*" (Ibid., p. 7).

In the 2001 Princeton seminars, Agamben stresses the dual characteristic that Loraux attributes to the *oikos* and raises the question "[if] the *oikos*, insofar as it contains strife and *stasis* within itself, is an element of political disintegration, how can it appear as the model of reconciliation" (Ibid., p. 13). Loraux's answer could be reformulated in the following way: while it is true that civil war, in terms of *stasis*, denotes a condition through which familial bonds are broken down and the *oikos* is shattered—in the end, civil war is nothing other than an internecine war among those who were previously bonded by the relations of kinship. However, for Loraux, the notion of *stasis* also carries the very possibility of reconciliation by way of the creation of another kind of bond: citizenship. For Loraux, the model of citizenship functions exactly in terms of creating a 'false fraternity', and the very ground upon which the Greek *polis* is constituted. In Agamben's words:

The *oikos*, the origin of civil strife, is excluded from the city through the production of a false fraternity. The inscription that has transmitted this information to us specifies that the neo-brothers were to have no family kinship between them: the purely political fraternity overrules blood kinship, and in this way frees the city from the *stasis emphylos*. With the same gesture, however, it reconstitutes kinship at the level of the polis: it turns the city into a family of a new kind. It was a 'family' paradigm of this kind that Plato had employed when suggesting that, in his ideal republic, once the natural family had been eliminated through the communism of women and goods, each person would see in the other 'a brother or a sister, a father or a mother, a son or a daughter.' (Ibid. p. 9)

In other words, Loraux argues that the citizenship model that the *polis* brings about could indeed be thought of as another kind of *phylon*, this time at the level of the *polis*, which is only to be realized by a reconciliation following *stasis* or civil war. For Loraux, civil war is a crucial dimension of politicization in the context of classical Greece: it is precisely the process through which the *polis* overcomes the *oikos* and the familial bonds are replaced with that of citizenship. In this sense, civil war functions as the revealer of the constant tension between these two poles that are at work in the making of political communities (Loraux, 1997).

While there is no doubt that Agamben greatly appreciates the emphasis that Loraux laid on the notion of *stasis* in her analysis of classical Greece, his formulations of civil war differ from hers on several points. First, Agamben does not agree at all that civil war should be understood as it is confined to the limits of the *oikos*. He asks, "[w]hy would civil war be a secret of the family and of blood, yet not a political mystery", adding that "[p]erhaps the location and generation of the *stasis* within the *oikos*, which Loraux's hypotheses seem to take for granted, needs to be verified and corrected" (Agamben, 2015, p. 13). Second, closely related to his first line of criticism, Agamben also problematizes Loraux's claim that the *polis* overcomes the *oikos* or that the latter is excluded from the former through the

stasis. For him, what is taking place should not be understood in terms of a simple process of overcoming or exclusion. Instead, he underscores "[w]hat is at issue is […] a complicated and unresolved attempt to capture an exteriority and to expel an intimacy" (Ibid., p. 13).

What, then, exactly is Agamben's alternative? In the 2001 Princeton seminars, Agamben provides us with a clear answer to this question in the form of two short theses:

> 1) The stasis does not originate in the *oikos*; it is not a 'war within the family', but forms part of a device that functions in a manner similar to the state of exception. Just as in the state of exception, *zōē*, natural life, is included in the juridical-political order through its exclusion, so analogously the *oikos* is politicised and included in the *polis* through the *stasis*.
>
> 2) What is at stake in the relation between *oikos* and *polis* is the constitution of a threshold of indifference in which the political and the unpolitical, the outside and the inside coincide. We must therefore conceive politics as a field of forces whose extremes are the *oikos* and the *polis*; between them, civil war marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'. (Ibid., p. 22)

While these two theses may seem straightforward, to get a better understating of the full extent of Agamben's claims, we need to examine them step by step. A closer examination will reveal how Agamben situates the notion of civil war in the broader theoretical framework of biopolitics—a conceptual pairing absent from Foucault's prior formulations.

3.1.2 Life in terms of *Zōē* and *Bios*

What does Agamben mean when he refers to the inclusion of *zōē* to the juridical-political order by way of its very exclusion? To better understand this distinction, we need to focus on Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* to discuss the exact terms of the distinction he posits between two different conceptualizations of life: *zoē* and *bios*

(Agamben, 1998). In the making of Agamben's theoretical account, this distinction has a role of central importance and, for him, lays the foundations of the Western political tradition. As Agamben explains:

> The Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word "life." They used two terms that, although traceable to a common etymological root, are semantically and morphologically distinct: *zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. (Agamben, 1998, p. 1)

In other words, whereas the concept of *bios* denotes the politically qualified form of life that is thought to be the basis of the life in the *polis*—and is almost always framed as *bios politikos*—*zoē* has no such political significance; rather, it indicates the mere natural or biological existence which is only confined to the *oikos* in terms of "the reproduction and the subsistence of life" (Agamben, 1998, p. 2).[23] For Agamben, the *polis* is built upon the exclusion of natural or biological life from the political realm. Indeed, as Agamben remarks, "to speak of a *zoē politikē* of the citizens of Athens would have made no sense" (Agamben, 1998, p. 1).

However, for Agamben, what is at issue here is not a simple exclusion. There is more to the distinction between *zoē* and *bios* than a separation of biological or natural life from political life. The distinction between the two functions as a complex *dispositif* in which biological or natural "is simultaneously excluded from, and included in, the sphere of politics and, further, this 'inclusive exclusion' forms the foundation of" the political

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[23] Aristotle's writings on the origin of the *polis*, especially *The Politics* (Aristotle, 1992), is one of the sources that Agamben draws from.

community (Mills, 2018, p. 39). In other words, the inclusion of biological life in the political order by its exclusion animates the processes involved in the politicization of life.

The question then becomes identifying the exact mechanisms that are at work in process of separation of political life from that of the biological. Two concepts play a pivotal role here: *bare life* and the *sovereign ban*. Agamben derives the concept of bare life from the historical figure of *homo sacer,* the sacred man, in archaic Roman law.[24] For Agamben, *homo sacer* is the one who "can be killed but not sacrificed" (Agamben, 1998, p. 101). The figure of *homo sacer* was banished from both the political and the social domain; killing *homo sacer* was not considered an act of homicide, and sacrificing him was not permitted. Thus, the figure of *homo sacer* involves a conceptualization of life different from both *bios* and *zōē*, that of what Agamben terms "bare life". It is relatively easy to understand how bare life is conceptualized in a radically different way compared to, or perhaps diametrically opposed to, life in terms of *bios*; for him, the concept of *bios* implies a form of life that is qualified to participate in political life whereas bare life is banished from it. And while both bare life and *zōē* exist para-politically, "bare life does not refer to a natural, original or ahistorical nakedness but presents an artificial product" (Lemke, 2005, p. 5). Where, then, should we locate bare life in relation to the distinction between *bios* and *zōē*? The answer Agamben gives is that the concept of bare life constitutes a zone of indistinction and the threshold that separates *zoē* from *bios*, mere biological life from

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[24] The following passage from Pompeius Festus's *De Verborum Significatione* (On the Significance of Words) presents us a definition of the figure of *homo sacer* in the context of Rome:

> The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide; in the first tribunitian law, in fact, it is noted that 'if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide'. This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred. (Agamben, 1998, p. 71)

political life. Or in more precise words, the production of bare life is the process through which natural life becomes politicized. In other words, for Agamben, the production of bare life is nothing other than the originary political relationship.

How to situate the concept of the sovereign ban in the conceptual schema Agamben depicts, then? The answer lies in how Agamben conceptualizes the figure of *homo sacer* as the one who is essentially banned from the social and political domain and the production of bare life as an act of banishment. In more precise words, for Agamben, bare life "emerges through the irreparable exposure of life to death in the sovereign ban, such that the politicization of life is ultimately nothing other than its exposure to death, particularly in and through sovereign violence." (Mills, 2018, p. 45). In this sense, the concept of the sovereign ban has a role of central importance: for Agamben, "[t]he original political relation is the ban" (Agamben, 1998, p. 181). It is also important to note here that what is at issue regarding the production of bare life is not simply a relationship of abandonment or exclusion. Agamben claims:

> [W]ho has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order. (Agamben, 1998, p. 28)

That means that, for Agamben, bare life is not located entirely outside of the juridico-political domain nor is it merely relegated to the margins of the juridico-political order. On the contrary, the production of bare life through the sovereign ban precisely lays the very grounds required for the implementation of the political structure of sovereignty. Agamben claims that it is only through the production of bare life that the sovereign power "encompasses living beings" (Agamben, 2005, p. 3) by making the ultimate decision

between who deserves to live and who does not. For Agamben, this process of banishment is nothing other than the *dispositif* that inscribes life to the political order, or in other words, how the *politicization of life* takes place. In the end, it is in the production of bare life through the sovereign ban that Agamben locates the foundation of Western (bio)politics.

3.1.3 A Permanent State of Exception

I now turn to the nature of the notion of sovereignty in Agamben's conceptualization. Agamben departs from the traditional juridico-political formulations of sovereignty which equate the concept with the right to legislate laws, ruling accordingly, and wielding violent means within the legal limits. Drawing from Carl Schmitt, Agamben's understanding of sovereignty involves the concept of the state of exception.[25] In order to understand Agamben's adaptation of the state of exception, we need to start with Schmitt. Schmitt's conceptualization of sovereignty could be encapsulated in the following formula: "[s]overeign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt, 2005, p. 5). As such a formulation suggests, from Schmitt's perspective, the sovereign is not necessarily the one who exercises his power according to laws but is the one who can make the decision that leads to the suspension of the law altogether. Schmitt's positing of sovereignty as a capacity for deciding on the exception marks a radical difference that separates his from the traditional juridical formulations upon which that Western political theory is built upon. It especially challenges the liberal theories of the state in which the normative nature

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[25] Carl Schmitt was a German political philosopher and legal theorist whose work is often overshadowed by his relationship with the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) between 1933 and 1936. Schmitt was heavily influenced by the Labandian school of legal thought, which attributes the state to a central role in the juridico-legal system and the preservation of order and unity was posited as the primary goal to be pursued at all costs. Schmitt's work challenges theories of political liberalism and has been reinterpreted in a variety of ways by theorists from both left and right traditions. For a detailed biography of Carl Schmitt, see: *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (Balakrishnan, 2000).

attributed to the law stands as the grounds for the possibility of the exercise of power. In Schmitt's alternative account, the sovereign guarantees the continuity of the juridical order without being tethered to it. However, this does not mean that Schmitt locates the sovereign entirely outside of the juridico-legal order; this would contradict with his aims. After all, what Schmitt sought was a theory that prioritizes "the preservation of the state and the defence of legitimately constituted government and the stable institutions of society" (Hirst, 1999, p. 12) before anything else. In this sense, Schmitt's formulation has a paradoxical nature.

How are we to understand the paradoxical nature of the Schmittian notion of exception? As Agamben explains, "[b]eing-outside, and yet belonging: this is the topological structure of the state of exception, and only because the sovereign, who decides on the exception" (Agamben, 2005, p. 35). Although the state of exception has a temporary nature for Schmitt, it is important to mention here that what is at issue with the concept is not just a last-ditch effort to preserve the state, or it should not be understood merely as a state of emergency. Rather, the notion of exception plays a central role in the making of Schmitt's juridical theory.[26] From Schmitt's perspective, there is a crucial distinction that

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[26] It is worth noting that the state of exception also plays an epistemological role in the making of Schmitt's account: he argues that to understand the rule properly, one should have a clear grasp of the exception. Indeed, Schmitt ends the first chapter of Political Theology with a quote from Søren Kierkegaard's *Repetition*:

> The exception explains the general and itself. And if one wants to study the general correctly, one only needs to look around for a true exception. It reveals everything more clearly than does the general. Endless talk about the general becomes boring; there are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then the general also cannot be explained. The difficulty is usually not noticed because the general is not thought about with passion but with a comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion. (Kierkegaard, in Schmitt, 2005, p. 15)

In other words, for Schmitt, "[t]he rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: it confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception" (Ibid., p. 15).

separates the juridical norm and its applicability: the former on its own does not necessarily guarantee the latter. Schmitt writes:

> All law is 'situational law.' The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. He has the monopoly over this last decision. Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide. The exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state's authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law. (Ibid., p. 13)

In other words, for Schmitt, there are instances in which the applicability of juridical norms necessitates the suspension of the norm itself. In this sense, the state of exception designates a *lacuna* in the midst of the juridico-political order. As he puts it, his notion of sovereignty is more of a borderline concept that is "associated with a borderline case and not with routine" (Ibid., p. 5).

Agamben takes one step further than Schmitt to conceptualize the notion of the state of exception as permanent, especially in the context of biopolitical regimes of modernity. In Agamben's use of the concept, the state of exception loses all of its temporary nature; it is no longer a safeguard in a latent form waiting for its activation but becomes an essential part of day-to-day practices of government. In other words, for Agamben, the exception becomes the only rule, or in more precise words, it "does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule" (Agamben, 1998, p. 18). In this sense, the integrity and continuity of the juridico-political domain are sustained almost always by the use of extra-juridical violence. In other words, Agamben proceeds with a formulation in which "the rule of law ultimately hinges on an abyssal act of violence (violent imposition) which is grounded in itself; that is, every

positive order to which this act refers, to legitimize itself, is self-referentially posited by this act itself" (Žižek, 1999, p. 18). As one might gather, Agamben draws a close affinity between the production of bare life under the sovereign ban and the state of exception. For him, the permanent state of exception that we are living through is the ever-growing lacuna, or a zone of indistinction, in which both bare life and sovereign authority are in an almost symmetrical relationship[27]. In effect, for Agamben, the state of exception becomes the only paradigm of contemporary biopolitics.

3.2 Civil War and Biopolitics

I would like to shortly summarize what we have discussed up until now. First, for Agamben, the distinction between *zōē* and *bios* is central to the politicization of life, which occurs when biological or natural life is included in the juridico-political domain by way of its exclusion. Second, the production of bare life through the sovereign ban is the precise mechanism at work in the process of inscription of life into the juridico-political order. And, finally, the politicization of life takes place in a juridico-political lacuna manifested by a permanent state of exception in which the exception itself becomes the sole rule.

How then does civil war fit into this picture? For Agamben, "Loraux's hypotheses […] needs to be verified and corrected" (Agamben, 2015, p. 13), "the relations between the *oikos* and the *polis* need to be rethought from scratch" (Ibid., p. 11), and what he proposes as an alternative could be reformulated in the following way: civil war no longer denotes a war within the *oikos* or the *phylon* as it did in Loraux's work and "[j]ust as in the

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[27] Agamben writes, "[a]t the two extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and *homo sacer* present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns" (Agamben, 1998, p. 84).

state of exception, *zōē*, natural life, is included in the juridical-political order through its exclusion, so analogously the *oikos* is politicised and included in the *polis* through the *stasis*" (Ibid., p. 22). In this sense, civil war no longer appears as a process through which the *polis* overcomes the *oikos* but it "functions in a manner similar to the state of exception" (Ibid., p. 22). That means, with Agamben's reformulation, civil war now becomes a zone of indifference and renders "politics as a field of forces whose extremes are the *oikos* and the *polis*" and "marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Ibid., p. 22). What is more crucial for Agamben is that civil war is precisely the expression of the irresolvable tension between these opposite poles, a condition that could never be completely warded off from the domain of politics.[28]

One issue that is surprisingly undertheorized in the 2001 Princeton seminars is the possible link between biopolitics and civil war in Agamben's account. Although Agamben

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[28] From a certain perspective, it is possible to speak of a parallelism between Agamben's formulation of civil war as the threshold of politics and the Schmittian understanding of the political as the friend-enemy distinction. For Schmitt, "political struggle […] gives rise to political order" (Hirst, 1999, p. 9) and the central category for understanding politics is none other than the distinction he posits between the figures of friend and enemy. It is important to note that the friend and enemy figures here are not taken in a "private-individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies" (Schmitt, 2007, p. 28). On the contrary, for Schmitt:

> The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the broader sense (Ibid, p. 28).

It is also important to note here that Schmitt uses the friend-enemy distinction to refer to an existential and concrete struggle, not a metaphorical one. Furthermore, Schmitt asserts that the friend-enemy distinction "denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation" (Ibid., p. 26) and, for him, virtually anything can be politicized as long as it accommodates a sufficient degree of antagonism that groups people as friends and enemies. Therefore, since the enemy figure always harbors with it the notion of an existential threat, for Schmitt, the political realm is always a site of struggle or conflict, and as such, extreme cases of conflict with the enemy are a real possibility. Although Schmitt claims that his understanding of the political "neither favors war nor militarism" (Schmitt, 2007, p. 33), war stands as a tangible possibility on the horizon. Indeed, war, or forms of violent confrontation in general, constantly haunts the political realm and this appears to be one of the most significant characteristics of Schmitt's political thought.

paves the way for establishing such a link, he does not pursue such a trajectory to its fullest extent, only briefly mentioning it at the very end of these lectures. Situating civil war in the theoretical framework of biopolitics opens up the possibility of rethinking what was absent in Michel Foucault's account. Although Foucault's formulation of thanatopolitics does indeed converge with the definitions of the civil war thesis, there is a discontinuity between his earlier formulations in which civil war was the very matrix for understanding how relations of power operate and his understanding of biopolitics, the regime of power in which life becomes the object for the exercise of power. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, this problem was to a great extent due to Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis. From the mid-70s on, it has become apparent that Foucault was more concerned about the risks his earlier formulations carried in reducing power to means of repression and overlooking how power functioned as a productive network as well. Indeed, with his formulations of biopolitics and governmentality, his work took a turn that led to the abandonment of the civil war thesis. What I would like to discuss now is whether Agamben's account could assist us in establishing a conceptual link between civil war and biopolitics and provide a satisfactory solution to the problematic relationship between the repressive and the productive dimensions of power while doing so. I will start by considering what the Agambenian notion of biopolitics involves and how it differentiates from Foucault's earlier formulations.

3.2.1 Agambenian Concept of Biopolitics

What does the notion of biopolitics imply in Agamben's work? In Agamben's use of the concept, biopolitics no longer denotes a historical shift that situates biological life within the matrix of power relations in Western societies beginning in the late 18th century, but it

is rather "the catastrophic endpoint of a political tradition that originates in Greek antiquity and leads to the National Socialist concentration camps" (Lemke, 2005, p. 4). In comparison with Foucault's prior formulation of the concept, the first point of departure, and perhaps the most apparent one, is how Agamben delineates the proximity between the notion of sovereignty and biopolitics. Whereas the notion of sovereignty "constitutes the negative pole of Foucault's oeuvre in contrast to which Foucault's exploration of power relations unfolds" (Bargu, 2014, p. 456) and denotes a modality of power that is "negative, repressive, punitive, prohibitive, and enunciated through the law", biopolitics involves one that is "productive, generative, disciplinary, regularizing, normalizing, decentered, capillary, heterogeneous, and polymorphous" (Mendieta, 2014, p. 144). When it comes to Agamben, this is not so much the case: biopolitics does not denote the emergence of a new regime of power that is radically different than the model of sovereignty, nor does biopolitics render sovereign rule obsolete. As the politicization of life occurs through the production of bare life under the sovereign ban—which is nothing other than the originary political relationship—any political system based on the structure of sovereignty is already a biopolitical regime. Indeed, Agamben's theoretical project is an attempt at mapping out the "hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power" (Agamben, 1998, p. 6). In Agamben's words:

> [T]he inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original-if concealed-nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception. (Ibid., p. 6)

In short, from Agamben's perspective, there is no categorical distinction between how power is exercised under the political structure of sovereignty or under the conditions of what Foucault calls biopolitics; in fact, these two concepts are almost synonymous.

This brings us to the second line of difference. In his works, Agamben dehistoricizes the concept of biopolitics. For Foucault, the notion of biopolitics more or less involves the emergence of a novel regime of power in Western societies beginning in the 18th century that situated biological life within the matrix of the relations of power. In Agamben's work, however, biopolitics does not mark a decisive historical turning point; his formulation of sovereign rule is ahistorical. Why this is so? As the Agambenian concept of biopolitics is essentially synonymous with the production of the bare life through the sovereign ban, for him, "Western politics is a biopolitics from the very beginning" (Ibid., p. 181). In other words, the notion of biopolitics does not imply a discontinuity or a point of inflection in the ways in which power is exercised, on the contrary, it effectively constitutes a continuum in the making of Western political history. Another important distinction, which is closely related, involves the status that is attributed to modernity. As we have discussed earlier, for Foucault, the emergence of biopolitical regimes of power marks the "threshold of modernity" and the introduction of the "modern man [as] an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (Foucault, 1978, p. 143). This is not so much the case in Agamben's reformulation of the concept, where politics is biopolitics from the beginning—what modernity brings to the scene is not that inconsequential:[29]

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[29] Jacques Derrida points out the ambiguous status of modernity in the making of Agamben's account:

> [If] biopolitics is an arch-ancient thing, why all the effort to pretend to wake politics up to something that is supposedly 'the decisive event of modernity'? In truth, Agamben, giving nothing up, like the unconscious, wants to be twice first, the first to see and announce, and the first to remind: he wants both to be the first to announce an unprecedented and new thing, what he calls this 'decisive event of modernity' [the birth of biopolitics], and also to be the first to recall that in fact it's always been like this, from time immemorial. He is the first to tell us two things in one: it's just happened for the first time, you ain't seen nothing yet, but nor have you seen, I'm telling you for the first time, that it dates from year zero. (Derrida, 2009, p. 330)

> Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life, thereby reaffirming the bond (derived from a tenacious correspondence between the modern and the archaic which one encounters in the most diverse spheres) between modern power and the most immemorial of the *arcana imperii*. (Agamben, 1998, p. 6)

While Agamben seems to be in agreement with Foucault in terms of a shared interest in illuminating the politicization of life, there remains an important difference between these two theorists: what is at issue for Agamben is the further generalization of bare life within the procedures and mechanisms of the modern State. For Agamben, the modern State not only functions as the revealer of the hidden tie between the production of bare life and the sovereign power, but at the same time, it involves an intensification or absolutization of the biopolitical nature of Western politics. What is important for Agamben is that, in the circuits of the modern State, bare life no longer represents a precarious existence at the limits of the political sphere. Rather, in the socio-political context of modernity, biopolitics in terms of the production of bare life under the sovereign ban becomes the sole and hidden paradigm of politics.

Within the context of the genocidal political regime established by National Socialism, Agamben argues that the 20th century bears witness to the highest degree of biopoliticization.[30] The phenomena of the Nazi camps and the final solution have a central role of importance in Agamben's analysis: by making the ultimate decision on who deserves to live and who does not, producing perhaps the most explicit example of bare

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[30] Agamben and Foucault approach the question of the final solution in different ways. For Foucault:

> Nazism is the product of an extreme state of crisis, the final point towards which an economy and a politics unable to overcome their contradictions are carried, and Nazism as the extreme solution cannot serve as an analytical model for general history, or at any rate for the past history of capitalism in Europe. (Foucault, 2008, p. 110)

On the contrary, for Agamben, *the final solution* is the concealed paradigm of politics.

life, the uncanny figure of *Musselmann* of the Nazi death camps, is nothing other than what expresses the true, yet at the same time hidden, nature of the modern biopolitics (Agamben, 2008)[31]. Agamben writes:

> Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen. (Agamben, 1998, p. 171)

While Agamben topically focuses on the Nazi death camps in his works, for him, the camp is not a phenomenon exclusive to Nazism. It would be erroneous to understand Agamben's conceptualization of the camp simply as an extreme historical case or an anomaly. On the contrary, the camp is an "event that repeats itself on a daily basis" and denotes almost every physical site of confinement, as in the cases of "the concentration camps of National Socialism, the refugee detention centres of our own period and most infamously America's Camp Delta at Guantánamo Bay" (Panagia, 1999, p. 3). However, what is more significant is the following. For Agamben, the emergence of the camp:

> appears as an event that decisively signals the political space of modernity itself. It is produced at the point at which the political system of the modern nation-state, which was founded on the functional nexus between a determinate localization (the territory) and a determinate political juridical order (the State) and mediated by

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[31] For Agamben, the *Musselmann* stands as the most explicit figure of bare life. He writes:
Now imagine the most extreme figure of the camp inhabitant. Primo Levi has described the person who in camp jargon was called "the Muslim," *der Muselmann*—a being from whom humiliation, horror, and fear had so taken away all consciousness and all personality as to make him absolutely apathetic (hence the ironical name given to him). He was not only, like his companions, excluded from the political and social context to which he once belonged; he was not only, as Jewish life that does not deserve to live, destined to a future more or less close to death. He no longer belongs to the world of men in any way; he does not even belong to the threatened and precarious world of the camp inhabitants who have forgotten him from the very beginning. Mute and absolutely alone, he has passed into another world without memory and without grief. For him, Hölderlin's statement that "at the extreme limit of pain, nothing remains but the conditions of time and space" holds to the letter. (Agamben, 1998, p. 185)

automatic rules of the inscription of life, enters in a lasting crisis, and the State decides to assume directly the care of the nation's biological life as one of its tasks. (Agamben, 1998, p. 174)

But how does the camp function in this way? Agamben's answer is that "[t]he camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule" (Ibid., pp. 168-169). From this perspective, the camp does not need to be defined by any fixed spatio-temporal boundaries; it delineates a socio-political model. While it is true that Agamben sees in the camp the unprecedented spatial absolutization of biopolitics, given how Agamben reformulates the Schmittian state of exception in terms of the permanent state of exception, the camp becomes "the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West" (Ibid., p. 181). In other words, for Agamben, the camp is nothing other than the ever-growing lacuna where the exception becomes the rule and where the bare life is produced: The camp is "the nomos of the political space in which we still live" (Ibid., p. 111).

Another crucial distinction is due to the repressive nature that Agamben attributes to biopolitics. This does not mean that Foucault was unaware that "wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136-137). In other words, for Foucault, biopolitics was under a constant threat by a "formidable power of death", or in more precise terms, by thanatopolitics (Ibid., p. 137). In the end, these two opposing forces, power of life and power of death, create a nearly unresolvable tension in Foucault's formulation of biopolitics. When it comes to Agamben's reformulation, it is hard to speak of any sort of tension between the productive and the repressive dimensions of biopolitics evident in Foucault's earlier formulations. Agamben does not see in biopolitics regimes of power that foster life; on the contrary, the very

concept becomes the name that he attributes to the process through which life undergoes an "unconditioned exposure to death", how life is inscribed into the political order by its very exclusion (Agamben, 2015, p. 24). Biopolitics, by definition, is a process marked by violence, subjugation, and domination.

Finally, Agamben and Foucault's accounts also greatly differ on the question of power. In fact, these two theorists tend to conceptualize power in nearly opposite directions. While his formulations radically changed over time, Foucault always strove to understand power at the capillary level and within localized contexts. From a methodological perspective, he prioritized relationality, multiplicity, and immanence before anything else. Such an approach meant a head-on challenge against the once-dominant juridico-political theories of power that posit the notion of sovereignty both as the very ground and the only source for the exercise of power. Foucault's was a radical critique of Western political theory's obsession with the sovereign personae: His was an attempt "to study power […] outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the State" (Foucault, 2003, p. 34) and his aim was "to cut off the king's head" (Foucault, 2000e, p. 122) in political theory.

Foucault's positing of civil war as the matrix "of all the struggles regarding and against power" (Foucault, 2015, p. 13) served exactly this purpose: The civil war thesis was indeed both an alternative to and a criticism of enduring juridico-political theories of power. As one might expect, given his proximity to the Schmittian theory of sovereignty based on decisionism, this is not the case in Agamben's understanding of power. Agamben does not have any intention to discard the concept of sovereignty at all. On the contrary, sovereignty has a central role in Agamben's theoretical framework; it is the foundation of

Western politics. If we stick to a Foucauldian perspective, Agamben's understanding of power is more or less a relapse to the Western juridico-political canon due to his heavy reliance on the conceptual framework of sovereignty which renders his understanding of power "a fundamentally vertical or top-down model of power" (Debrix & Barder, 2012, p. 31). On the other hand, "Foucault's approach is precisely meant to be a challenge to these hierarchically structured conceptualizations of force, authority, and political control" (Ibid., p. 31).

Perhaps the starkest difference between the two theorists lies in the negativity that Agamben ascribes to power. For Agamben, power is fundamentally a relationship of domination; it "is basically a capacity to give orders" that, in the end, aims to establish "obedience and initiates an action" (Diken, 2021, p. 48). From such a point of view, the exercise of power no longer requires a degree of freedom, denotes a process of subjectification, and even less so a productive network running through the veins of a given society as it clearly did for Foucault. For Agamben, power is a plain and simple relation that functions through violence, desubjectification, and subjugation.[32] In the end, Agamben's theoretical stance is nothing other than an extreme denunciation of power of precisely the sort that Foucault strongly argued against.

Lastly, Agamben and Foucault's formulations of power also differ on the question of resistance. For Foucault, power and resistance are inseparable, particularly in the first

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[32] The following passage clearly demonstrates Agamben's perspective:

> Contemporary societies, therefore, present themselves as inert bodies going through massive processes of desubjectification without acknowledging any real subjectification. Hence the eclipse of politics, which used to presuppose the existence of subjects and real identities (the workers' movement, the bourgeoisie, etc.), and the triumph of the *oikonomia*, that is to say, of a pure activity of government that aims at nothing other than its own replication. The Right and the Left, which today alternate in the management of power, have for this reason very little to do with the political sphere in which they originated. (Agamben, 2009, p. 22)

volume of *History of Sexuality* where he explicitly claims that what the exercise of power presupposes is nothing other than resistance, and in his later work on governmentality, in which he describes the process of governing as a play between various forces in terms of conducts and counter-conducts. When it comes to Agamben's theoretical perspective, while not being in a relationship of complete exteriority to power, the possibility for resistance seems to be deferred indefinitely. Resistance can only emerge at the level of life's bare existence, and such resistance to power is a silent one that is always too late—it is, at best, a last-ditch effort. Power, on the other hand, is an all-encompassing and totalizing political phenomenon.[33]

To summarize, biopolitics, for Agamben, is in effect the politics of the production of bare life. Given that Agamben sees the genesis of politics in the production of bare life under the sovereign ban, biopolitics thus stands as an ahistorical concept rather than designating the emergence of a novel regime of power that eclipses the political paradigm of sovereignty by "exert[ing] a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 137). For Agamben, there is no such categorical distinction between biopolitics and political systems based on the exercise of sovereign power; the two have always been closely linked together. While claiming that Western politics has always been

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[33] Agamben's reinterpretation of the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif* shows such a difference quite well:

> Further expanding the already large class of Foucauldian apparatuses, I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, mad houses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and-why not-language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses-one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face. (Agamben, 2009, p. 14)

biopolitics from its inception, with the emergence of the modern State, Agamben sees a further generalization of biopolitics. More precisely, the camp, which "decisively signals the political space of modernity", acts as the "fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West" (Agamben, 1998, p. 181). Lastly, in Agamben's reformulation of the concept, there does not exist any noticeable tension between its productive and repressive dimensions. As far as life becomes politicized through an unconditioned exposure to death, it could be conveniently argued that Agamben's portrayal of biopolitics is based on a model of repression and marked by an elevated degree of violence. In this sense, it is almost impossible to distinguish biopolitics from thanatopolitics in Agamben's work; any meaningful difference seems to be effectively flattened to the extent that the latter could be regarded as completely eclipsing the former. In the end, Agambenian biopolitics is "the catastrophic endpoint of a political tradition that originates in Greek antiquity and leads to the National Socialist concentration camps" (Lemke, 2005, p. 4).

3.2.2 Civil War as the Paradigm of Biopolitics

How can a connection be made between the notions of civil war and biopolitics? There is a significant overlap between Agamben's formulations of these two concepts. For Agamben, biopolitics simply means the politicization of life: it is the process that results in the inclusion of life into the sphere of the political through its very exclusion and, more significantly, by its exposure to death. (Bio)politicization takes place in the juridico-political lacuna, or zone of indistinction, created by the sovereign's right to decide on exception and marks the threshold that separates the natural life from the political life—or in other words, the *oikos* from the *polis*. Let's recall how exactly Agamben formulates civil war: civil war, or *stasis*, stands precisely as the fundamental threshold of politicization. In

more precise words, civil war "marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Agamben, 2015, p. 22). For Agamben, as well as revealing the tension between the *oikos* and the *polis*, civil war functions in a quite similar way to the state of exception by way of creating a zone of indistinction between them. In this sense, it would be more than plausible to argue that besides functioning in the exact same conceptual milieu, a zone of indistinction, Agamben's understanding of both civil war and biopolitics also rely on similar procedures and mechanisms: functioning both as the threshold for the politicization and the hidden paradigm of politics.

More significantly, at the very end of the 2001 Princeton seminars on Loraux's work, Agamben provides us with a relatively clear perspective on how he delineates the connection between the notions of civil war and biopolitics. In the wake of the political atmosphere following the 9/11 attacks and the US-led Global War on Terrorism, Agamben argues almost in an enigmatic way that the key to understanding this conceptual connection lies in global terrorism. While he does not elaborate much on this claim—and what he refers to as global terrorism is loosely defined—the following passage nonetheless provides context to the conceptual link:

> The form that civil war has acquired today in world history is terrorism. […] [G]lobal terrorism is the form that civil war acquires when life as such becomes the stakes of politics. Precisely when the *polis* appears in the reassuring figure of an *oikos*—the 'Common European Home', or the world as the absolute space of global economic management—then *stasis*, which can no longer be situated in the threshold between the oikos and the polis, becomes the paradigm of every conflict and re-emerges in the form of terror. (Agamben, 2015, p. 24)

What needs to be immediately highlighted here is Agamben's emphasis on the erasure of the demarcation line between the economy and politics in the age of triumphant neoliberalism and how he frames such a configuration in terms of a global civil war. Given

that Agamben locates civil war at "the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Ibid., p. 22), the erasure of the line of demarcation between the *oikos* and the *polis* presents two possible outcomes: either civil war fades out in the circuits of global capitalism and becomes an outdated concept, or such an erasure results in the diffusion of *stasis* or civil war to the entire political sphere on a global scale. Needless to say, for Agamben, civil war is far from being an outdated concept; what he depicts is indeed a "'global civil war' which time and again invests this or that zone of planetary space" (Ibid., p. 24). The second important aspect is surely Agamben's emphasis on terrorism. How exactly could terrorism function in a way that entangles life into this seemingly globalized form of civil war? Without any surprise, for Agamben, the answer lies in the concept of bare life: "[t]he sole form in which life as such can be politicised is its unconditioned exposure to death—that is, bare life" and "[i]t is no coincidence that the 'terror' should coincide with the moment in which life as such […] became the principle of sovereignty" (Ibid., p. 24). Given that biopolitics is fundamentally the politics of the production of bare life—essentially the politics of life's exposure to death—civil war under the guise of global terrorism functions as the very paradigm through which our contemporary biopolitical societies operate.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the connection between the role civil war plays in Agamben's theoretical framework. As I have demonstrated, from Agamben's perspective, there exists a close affinity between the concepts of biopolitics and civil war. But does this mean that Agamben manages to overcome the cluster of issues that create an incompatibility between the civil war thesis and later formulation of biopolitics that eventually led Foucault to

abandon the former? If that is the case, what kind of a relationship does Agamben posit between these two concepts from the theoretical vantage point of power? It is more than apparent that Agamben's conceptualization of civil war does not entail a dynamic field of power relations and resistance, nor does it evidence an alternative model to sovereignty as it did for Foucault. Instead, Agamben emphasizes the intensified degree of political violence inherent to the concept. In Agamben's understanding, civil war means a constituent or originary political violence that both initiates and shapes the juridico-political structure of sovereignty. This is the exact point for establishing a conceptual connection between civil war and biopolitics: if civil war is the threshold of politicization and politics has always been biopolitics—by virtue of life's exposure to death and the production of bare life through the sovereign ban—these two concepts are rendered almost indistinguishable from each other.

How might Agamben's formulations inform our understanding of contemporary politics and how to situate his work historically? Compared to Foucault's civil war thesis, situating Agamben's account of civil war involves an additional degree of difficulty. First, Agamben is primarily a political philosopher who seems to be more attentive to the questions of origin and hidden paradigms embedded in political phenomenon rather than giving an account of how political phenomena historically unfold themselves in concrete and localized settings. As William E. Connolly notes, Agamben's work "carries us through the conjunction of sovereignty, the sacred, and biopolitics to a historical impasse" (Connolly, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, as Sergei Prozorov writes:

> The readers interested in what Agamben has to say about various issues in contemporary politics, from the financial crisis to the war on terror, from the Arab Spring to anti-Putin protests, from gay marriage to gun control, are bound to be

disappointed. With a few exceptions Agamben's works rarely address concrete contemporary or historical events and when they do, it is usually in an abstruse historico-philosophical context that is apparently devoid of immediate political significance. Moreover, Agamben's own repeated references to the 'eclipse' of politics in our day and age […] may create an impression of an apolitical philosopher who loftily dismisses all present-day concerns and has little to say to us about contemporary politics. (Prozorov, 2014, pp. 1-2)

However, this does not mean that Agamben is altogether apolitical in his philosophical approach. On the contrary, "almost all of Agamben's books make explicit or implicit references or allusions to politics and the most esoteric philosophical formulations are presented as responses to an immediate political exigency" (Ibid., p. 2).

Although it is true that Agamben's reinterpretation of biopolitics does not share the same historically grounded methodology Foucault deploys while framing the concept as a historical shift in the regimes of power, his work nonetheless provides us with an account of how the history of Western politics, starting from Greek antiquity, unfolds itself as a history of politicization of life through the continual exposure to death. In so doing, he reveals a hidden paradigm in contemporary politics; the National Socialist concentration camps are far from a disastrous legacy of the past. In the backdrop of the Rwandan genocide that shocked the entire world, the ethnic cleansings during the Bosnian war that brought genocide to the European continent once again, and the detention centers that are part of harsher anti-immigration policies, it is no secret that Agamben's 1995 book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, gains a lot of attention both in the academic and non-academic circles in the early 2000s.

When it comes to Agamben's treatment of civil war, it could be said that his formulations resonate with the political state of affairs in an epoch marked by the 'Global War on Terrorism'. It is worth mentioning that Agamben delivered the Princeton lectures

in October 2001, barely a month after the 9/11 attacks that irrevocably altered the socio-political terrain on both global and local levels. Agamben's description of terrorism as the fundamental paradigm for understanding our contemporary politics may appear strange, but his diagnosis of a global civil war in the context of global terrorism eerily foreshadows what is yet to come in the following decades. First, Agamben's approach provides us with a grid of intelligibility for understanding the historical process that starts with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and soon turns into temporally and spatially indefinite series of armed conflicts, including the counter-insurgency techniques that blur the line of demarcation between combatants and civilians in seemingly never-ending wars waged against a spectral enemy on a planetary level.

Second, Agamben's strong emphasis on the permanent characteristic of the state of exception reflects upon the culmination of the widespread extra-juridical practices of security apparatuses of the states. The culmination of counterterrorism acts—the US Patriot Act is an almost perfect example[34] —which enables the states and security agencies to enjoy almost unlimited powers outside the boundaries of both national and international legal boundaries proves the relevancy of Agamben's claims on their own. Third, Agamben's formulation of bare life, or the politicization of life by an originary violence or exposure to death, points out the biopolitical significance of this new political landscape shaped by the political paradigm of terrorism and counterterrorism. The status of the detainees of Abu Ghraib Prison or Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp animates Agamben's

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[34] Signed into law by the former US president George W. Bush in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Patriot Act, or formally *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001*, dramatically expands the reach of the US security apparatus by making provisions such as expanding the scope of surveillance, indefinite detention without trials, giving law enforcement agencies the permission to search property without a warrant, and alike. For the act itself, see: https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ56/PLAW-107publ56.pdf

claims to the extent that their imprisonment involves a radical erasure of "the juridical status of an individual, thereby producing a being that is juridically unnamable and unclassifiable" (Agamben, 2005, p. 3) and reveals a caesura "whereby the law refers back to life and includes it by means of its own suspension" (Gulli, 2007, p. 235).

Agamben's short and prolific assessments of civil war could indeed be seen as a promising conceptual framework for delineating a zone of indifference where the production of bare life, intensified political violence, and unhinged political power become intertwined. However, it is worth asking whether the situation that Agamben depicts is really a civil war or merely a theoretical account of terrorism. It is not too farfetched to come to a conclusion that Agamben's proposal is more akin to an overstretched conceptualization of terrorism. Besides attributing a purely negative connotation to the concept of civil war, Agamben's understanding of the concept is a highly restrictive one for a couple of reasons. First, Agamben's formulation strips off the reciprocal character of civil war; it is not much of a play between various forces with an uncertain outcome. Instead, such an equation of civil war with terrorism attributes an instrumental and predetermined role to the concept. Second, even though Agamben seems to have established a conceptual link between biopolitics and civil war, this seems only possible due to his reduction of biopolitics purely to thanatopolitics. In other words, Agamben also completely strips off the productive dimension that we can locate in the Foucauldian conceptualization of biopolitics. That means, in Agamben's formulation, it is no longer possible or even meaningful to discuss any kind of tension between the civil war model and biopolitics when considering relations of power. Third, this time from the perspective of power, as long as power is equated with domination and coercion, any kind of distinction

between political violence and power seems to be flattened; there is no way to tend to the reversibility of civil war and power in Agamben's formulation.

While these criticisms should be taken seriously, it does not necessarily mean that Agamben's attempt is entirely unsuccessful in rethinking civil war. Even Agamben's reinterpretation of Loraux's work is generative in its own right. Moreover, Agamben's theoretical perspective can still inform discussions around our contemporary political context, especially on the political regimes that rely upon an unprecedented degree of polarization, extra-juridical means, and multiple forms of intensified political violence. Moreover, one particular aspect of Agamben's formulation—his insight of thinking civil war alongside the erasure of the line of demarcation between economy and politics, where governmental and juridico-political rationalities merge—provides us with a promising means of reinterpreting civil war. As we will discuss in the following chapter, both Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri push such a line of thinking to its limits when they attempt to locate civil war within the circuits of global capitalism.

CHAPTER 4: CIVIL WAR AND CAPITALISM

The previous chapters traced the role the concept of civil war plays in the making of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben's theoretical perspectives: in the second chapter, I discussed how Foucault posits civil war as the matrix of relations of power and why this formulation does not last long in his later works. The third chapter, on the other hand, considered the merits and limitations of Agamben's rethinking of civil war as the fundamental threshold of (bio)politics in the wake of the 21st century. This chapter now analyzes theoretical perspectives that emphasize the relationship between civil war and capitalism, particularly in the context of globalized regimes of neoliberalism. I introduce and discuss two contemporary theoretical approaches that explore the conceptual nexus between capitalism and civil war. First, I focus on Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's conceptualization of global civil war as an incessant conflict between two opposing global socio-political tendencies, *Empire* and *the multitude*, which shape the politics in our contemporary world. Second, I discuss Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato's account of how (neo)liberal governance functions akin to civil war in the circuits of financialized global capitalism and provide a reassessment of their theoretical perspective.

4.1 Civil War in the Circuits of Global Capitalism

In line with Foucault and Agamben, the concept of civil war also plays a significant role in the making of Hardt and Negri's theoretical perspective. Hardt and Negri's *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, the second installment of the trilogy that starts with *Empire*, depicts a vision of our contemporary world in which "[w]ar is becoming a general phenomenon, global and interminable" and indistinguishable from a condition of civil war (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 3). At first glance, Hardt and Negri's approach shares some

noticeable similarities with both Agamben and, as we will see, Alliez and Lazzarato's assessments. First, in a quite similar way to Agamben, Hardt and Negri stress the generalized nature of civil war in the making of the contemporary socio-political world. Second, as we will discuss later, much like Alliez and Lazzarato, they also establish a close affinity between globalized forms of capitalism and civil war. What distinguishes Hardt and Negri's approach from others is how they locate a globalized condition of civil war in the antagonistic relationship between two political tendencies, "Empire" and "the multitude". In order to get a clear understanding of their theoretical perspective, I begin my analysis with an explanatory primer of these two concepts to demonstrate how they function in an antagonistic relationship.

4.1.1 The Concept of Empire

What does the concept of Empire denote? Hardt and Negri define Empire in terms of "a global order, a new logic of structure and rule—a new form of sovereignty" that goes side by side with the rapid expanse of "the global market and global circuits of production" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xi). Even though Hardt and Negri characterize Empire as a form of sovereignty, it would be an error to understand their conceptualization as an attempt at revitalizing or adapting traditional conceptions of sovereignty to explicate the socio-political contexts of the 21st century. On the contrary, for them, such conceptions should be dismantled:

> Just as Kant sweeps away the preoccupations of medieval philosophy with transcendent essences and divine causes, so too must we get beyond theories of sovereignty based on rule over the exception, which is really a holdover from old notions of the royal prerogatives of the monarch (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 6).

For Hardt and Negri, the problem a return to the notion of sovereignty creates is the risk it carries for establishing an account in which "transcendent authority and violence eclipses and mystifies the dominant forms of power that continue to rule over us today—power embodied in relations of property and capital" (Ibid., pp. 3-4).

On the contrary, the concept of Empire proposes a different way to understand sovereignty from what is implied in the traditional use of the concept: for Hardt and Negri, Empire neither has a territorial center nor is transcendental to the domain created by relations of power and production. Instead, Empire is immanent to and diffused through the vast networks of power and production on a global scale. In this sense, Empire proposes a hybrid model of sovereignty that first and foremost functions as a machine of command and regime of control that is "characterized by the tight interlocking of economic structures with juridico-political arrangements" (Lemke, 2016, p. 112).

Moreover, the passage to Empire delineates a globalized political system in which the nation-states seem to be losing their privileged status in the matrix of global politics. In addition to losing their decisive role to the supra-national political and economic organizations such as the European Union, United Nations, the World Bank, or International Monetary Fund, their status was also challenged by the unprecedented growth of multi-national corporations in a global market where in which all boundaries are removed. It is also extremely important to mention here that Hardt and Negri neither attempt to revive old theories of imperialism in the context of the 21st century globalism nor advance a theory of 'new imperialism'. For them, Empire presents a fundamentally different model than what is at issue with the theories of imperialism:

> The boundaries defined by the modern system of nation-states were fundamental to European colonialism and economic expansion: the territorial boundaries of the nation delimited the center of power from which rule was exerted over external foreign territories through a system of channels and barriers that alternately facilitated and obstructed the flows of production and circulation. Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries. Eventually nearly all the world's territories could be parceled out and the entire world map could be coded in European colors: red for British territory, blue for French, green for Portuguese, and so forth. Wherever modern sovereignty took root, it constructed a Leviathan that overarched its social domain and imposed hierarchical territorial boundaries, both to police the purity of its own identity and to exclude all that was other (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xii)

Rather than denoting the subordination of the periphery to the center, and a rigid segregation separating the world into two separate camps, the concept of Empire involves an all-encompassing and intensified system of capitalist exploitation and a novel political regime of subjugation that goes beyond the boundaries of any nation-state, or any kind of fixed or pre-existing boundaries at all. To put it in a different way, according to Hardt and Negri, there does not exist an outside to Empire, and "the entire globe is its domain" (Ibid., p. 190). However, does this mean that Hardt and Negri's perspective is overly pessimistic and, in a sense, fatalistic?

4.1.2 The Concept of the Multitude

Quite the contrary; for Hardt and Negri, there does exist an alternative to, or better put a possibility of an exodus from Empire, as it "creates a greater potential for revolution than did the modern regimes of power because it presents us, alongside the machine of command, with an alternative: the set of all the exploited and the subjugated, a multitude that is directly opposed to Empire, with no mediation between them" (Ibid., p. 393). This is where the concept of multitude enters the scene. Whereas Empire stands as a global system of control and machine of command in the service of capital, from the perspective

of Hardt and Negri, the concept of multitude designates "a political project that must be brought into existence through collective struggle" (Hardt, 2005) and carries the possibility for the creation of a post-capitalist democracy "within Empire and against Empire" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 61).

In Hardt and Negri's use of it, the concept of the multitude has three distinct yet interconnected connotations: the multitude a) as an irreducible multiplicity, b) as a concept of class, and c) as a concept of power. First, as an irreducible multiplicity, the multitude is "philosophical and positive: the multitude is defined as a multiplicity of subjects" (Negri, 2004, p. 113). It denotes a heterogeneous and irreducible multiplicity that consists of "innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity— different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labour; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. xiv). In short, the multitude manifests itself as a manifold of irreducible singularities.

Second, the multitude also stands as a concept of class and denotes "the class of productive singularities, the class of operators of immaterial labor" (Negri, 2004, p. 114). As a concept of class, the multitude implies three things: first, a change in the site of production that involves the diffusion of labor to the entire society; second, a change in the composition of the working class extending to the segments of society which are usually excluded in more traditional analyses; and third, a change in the nature of labour itself. We should analyze each of these elements separately. First, in order to understand why the multitude means the diffusion of production to the whole society, we should start with the

earlier Autonomist Marxist formulation of the "diffuse factory" (Negri, 1989, p. 89)[35]. The Autonomist Marxist theorists locate a transformation in the circuits of production in the context of the gradual passage from Fordism to post-Fordism[36] that results in an increased degree of socialization of labour (Negri, 1989). In other words, what is at issue here for Hardt and Negri is the diffusion of labour processes into the entire range of social relations due to "the growth of mobility, of part-time, casual and domestic work, the absence of job fixity, the diffusion of production in the 'informal' economy, the unity of production, circulation and reproduction" (Negri, 1988, p. 100). Under these conditions, production can no longer be properly thought of as it is limited to the physical boundaries of a factory or solely defined by the production of commodities.[37] In Mario Tronti's words:

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[35] For further readings on the history of Autonomist Marxism, see: Steve Wright's *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno's *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, and Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi's *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (Wright, 2017; Virno & Hardt, 1996; Lotringer & Marazzi, 2007).

[36] The Autonomist Marxist account of the socialization of production could be read in parallel to Deleuze's formulation of the transition from the disciplinary societies to the societies of control. In "Postscript on the Societies of Control", Deleuze delineates a gradual transformation of a "general breakdown of all sites of confinement" and the further diffusion of relations of power through the networks of the social (Deleuze, 1995):

> In the prison system: the attempt to find "alternatives" to custody, at least for minor offenses, and the use of electronic tagging to force offenders to stay at home between certain hours. In the school system: forms of continuous assessment, the impact of continuing education on schools, and the related move away from any research in universities, "business" being brought into education at every level. In the hospital system: the new medicine "without doctors or patients" that identifies potential cases and subjects at risk and is nothing to do with any progress toward individualizing treatment, which is how it's presented, but is the substitution for individual or numbered bodies of coded "dividual" matter to be controlled. In the business system: new ways of manipulating money, products, and men, no longer channeled through the old factory system. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 182)

For Deleuze, such a transformation involves a change in the ways in which power is exercised. Power no longer operates by shaping individual bodies in strictly organized sites of confinement, but through the intricate techniques that aim to establish control over the flows "like a selftransmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another" (Ibid., p. 179). For Deleuze, this transition from disciplinary societies to societies of control involves a radical change "not just in the system we live under but in the way we live and in our relations with other people too" (Ibid., p. 180).

[37] Negri writes:

> While production is carried on through social networks and is closely connected with the processes of commodity-circulation, and while productive labour (which, though diffuse, is above all socially integrative) is to be found everywhere, by means of the social, production and reproduction constitute a completely uniform, undifferentiated network. […] From this point of view, work has

> At the highest level of capitalist development, this social relation becomes a moment of the relation of production, the whole of society becomes an articulation of production, the whole society lives in function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive dominion over the whole society. […] The process of the unitary composition of capitalist society, imposed by the specific development of its production, no longer tolerates the existence of a political terrain even formally independent of the web of social relations. (Tronti, 2019, pp. 26-27)

In other words, what is at issue here is nothing other than societies' turning into a network of production, or the integration of "the collective forces of labor even as it turned society into a giant factory" (Negri & Guattari, 2010, p. 34). In fact, with the concept of multitude Hardt and Negri take one step further: not only production now extends to all social spheres, but it also starts encompassing life in its entirety. In other words, from the vantage point the concept of multitude provides us with, production becomes biopolitical production, "the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xiii).

Second, the concept of multitude also marks a substantial change in the class composition: it signifies a break from the *factoryist* conceptualizations of the working class by extending the concept to include "casual, part-time, and non-guaranteed work and the underground economy, as well as housework and non-remunerated work" erasing the long-standing dichotomy between production and reproduction (Thoburn, 2003, p. 86).[38] Lastly, the multitude is both the driving force behind and at the same time the product of "the

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even less to do with the factory. The latter is no longer recognized or considered to be the specific site of the consolidation of labouring activity and its transformation into value. Work abandons the factory in order to find, precisely in the social, a place adequate to the functions of concentrating productive activity and transforming it into value. The prerequisites of these processes are present in, and diffused throughout, society (Negri, 1989, p. 89).

[38] For Hardt and Negri, the conceptual framing of the proletariat or "the working class is a limited one both from the point of view of production (since it essentially includes industrial workers), and from that of social cooperation (given that it comprises only a small quantity of the workers who operate in the complex of social production)" (Negri, 2008, p. 115).

historical transformation of capitalist production itself to include language, subjectivity, affects, and desire" (Read, 2010, pp. 25-26), and defined in terms of the subject of immaterial labor which involves the "reconsideration of production not simply as the production of things but as the production of relations and subjects, as the constitution of the world" (Ibid., pp. 25-26). Hardt and Negri write:

> [T]he dominant form of contemporary production, which exerts its hegemony over the others, creates "immaterial goods" such as ideas, knowledge, forms of communication, and relationships. In such immaterial labor, production spills over beyond the bounds of the economy traditionally conceived to engage culture, society, and politics directly. What is produced in this case is not just material goods but actual social relationships and forms of life. (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 94)

In short, as a concept of class, the multitude delineates a new regime of socialized labour outside of the walls of the factory and the emergence of a new collective subject of production composed not only of the members of the industrial working class, but also a one in which virtually every individual is incorporated into the relations of production, thus, meaning an unprecedented increase in social cooperation.

Third, Hardt and Negri describe the multitude also as a concept of power. It is important to note here that Hardt and Negri's formulation of power is not just a narrative of further subordination and exploitation of labor by capital. While it is true that Hardt and Negri are well aware that the multitude exists in a socio-political landscape where "the integration of labor into capital becomes more intensive than extensive and society is ever more completely fashioned by capital" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 255)—or where the transition from the processes of *formal subsumption to the real subsumption of labor under*

capital is nearly complete[39]—unlike many critiques of neoliberalism, Hardt and Negri, as well as a number of other post-Autonomist Marxist theorists and philosophers, stress how these changing labor processes also create viable conditions for the emergence of new forms of struggle. Indeed, the concepts of the multitude and Empire harbor two different modalities of power that are diametrically opposed to each other.

It is important to note here that such an innate antagonism between the multitude's constituent power and Empire's constituted power is greatly shaped by Negri's prior works on Spinoza.[40] In *Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Negri, 1991), Negri argues that in Spinoza's work, power is presented to us as two opposing concepts, in terms of *potentia* and *potestas*, and what makes Negri's interpretation unique is his inclination to elevate the difference between these two concepts to an antagonistic level: Negri locates a non-negotiable antagonism between *potentia* and *potestas*, rendering the former the horizontal, immanent, affirmative power which is productive and constituent, and the latter as the hierarchical, transcendental, constituted power of command and appropriation.

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[39] In Marx's writings, the concept of subsumption implies the integration of labor into the processes of capital accumulation. Marx identifies two stages of the subsumption process: formal subsumption and real subsumption. The concept of formal subsumption describes the situation in which the accumulation of capital takes place within the already existing modes of production and reproduction, i.e. workers may still have access to some means of subsistence beyond the reach of the capital. In other words, the accumulation of capital "begins with formal subsumption, the imposition of the wage form and commodity production over existing labor relations; nothing changes but the form, the relations of production" (Read, 2009, p. 350). On the other hand, the concept of real subsumption refers to the situation in which all existing relations of production and reproduction are completely integrated into the circuits of capitalism. It denotes the condition in which all modes of labor and social relations conform to the demands of capital. For Marx, [w]ith the real subsumption of labor under capital a complete (and constantly repeated) revolution takes place in the mode of production, in the productivity of the workers and in the relations between workers and capitalists (Marx, 1992, p. 1035). For further readings: see, the appendix, "Results of The Immediate Process of Production", of the first volume of *Capital* (Marx, 1992)

[40] A close discussion on both Spinoza's conceptualization of power and Negri's interpretation is reserved for the following chapter.

This distinction is carried further, possibly to its limits, when Hardt and Negri apply it to explain the antagonistic relationship between Empire and the multitude. As a concept of power, the multitude is formulated as a creative, horizontally organized, creative and subversive network of power that is diametrically opposed to the overarching model of sovereignty that defines Empire. For Hardt and Negri, the multitude "embodies a mechanism that seeks to represent desire and to transform the world—more accurately: it wishes to recreate the world in its image and likeness, which is to say to make a broad horizon of subjectivities that freely express themselves and that constitute a community of free men" (Negri, 2004, p. 114).

4.1.3 Global Civil War

How do Hardt and Negri conceptualize civil war? From a certain perspective, Hardt and Negri's understanding of civil war departs significantly from those theorists' work which I have discussed so far: it does not align with Foucault's conceptualization of civil war as the matrix for relations of power; and unlike Agamben's formulation, it does not appear to be the fundamental threshold for politics; and, as we will discuss, it does not share Alliez and Lazzarato's strong insistence for the equation of civil war with neoliberal governance. At least at first glance, Hardt and Negri's understanding of civil war mirrors the more traditional use of the concept as a deterioration of an already existing political order or as an internecine political violence. Moreover, they also seem to posit some sort of a distinction between war proper and civil war: whereas war proper, for them, is "conceived traditionally by international law, […] [and as] armed conflict between sovereign political entities", civil war first and foremost denotes an "armed conflict between sovereign and or nonsovereign combatants within a single sovereign territory" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 3).

However, what makes their account quite distinct is how Hardt and Negri situate civil war within the conceptual framework of Empire and the multitude.

Given that Hardt and Negri formulate Empire as the tendency for the transformation of the whole globe into a single sovereign territory, for them, "innumerable armed conflicts waged across the globe today, some brief and limited to a specific place, others long lasting and expansive […] might be best conceived as instances not of war but rather civil war" (Ibid., p. 3). Moreover, Hardt and Negri write:

> civil war should be understood now not within the national space, since that is no longer the effective unit of sovereignty, but across the global terrain. [...] From this perspective all of the world's current armed conflicts, hot and cold—in Colombia, Sierra Leone, and Aceh, as much as in Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq—should be considered imperial civil wars, even when states are involved. This does not mean that any of these conflicts mobilizes all of Empire—indeed each of these conflicts is local and specific—but rather that they exist within, are conditioned by, and in turn affect the global imperial system. Each local war should not be viewed in isolation, then, but seen as part of a grand constellation, linked in varying degrees both to other war zones and to areas not presently at war. (Ibid., p. 3)

Indeed, for Hardt and Negri, from the conceptual vantage point of Empire there is no feasible or meaningful way to distinguish war proper from that of civil war: the passage to Empire renders every single armed conflict as a theater of a looming global civil war. Hardt and Negri's identification of a civil war in the circuits of globalized capitalism relies upon two different standpoints. The first one is from the vantage point of Empire. For Hardt and Negri, the concept of Empire denotes a tendency rather than a fully established global system and "the passage to Empire was punctuated by many extremely violent conflicts" (Negri, 2004, p. 60). The United States' invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan exemplify how, for Hardt and Negri, civil war stands as an integral element in the passage to Empire.

Besides the forceful integration of new territories into the circuits of global markets or networks of governance, the global civil war also involves armed conflicts in varying intensities between the states or non-state actors, "who are struggling rather for relative dominance within the hierarchies at the highest and lowest levels of the global system" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 4).

The second, and perhaps more significant, Hardt and Negri's formulation of civil war has its roots in the antagonistic relationship between Empire and the multitude. As I have discussed above, whereas the concept of Empire signifies the tendency for the emergence of a novel form of global sovereignty that operates as a machine of command and apparatus of control in the service of capital, the multitude stands as an irreducible multiplicity in becoming, a productive and subversive network of power, and "a political project that must be brought into existence through collective struggle" (Hardt, 2005). that could dismantle Empire and replace it with a postcapitalist democracy. In other words, as well as denoting a political landscape that is marked both by an intensified degree of exploitation and subjection, the passage to Empire also suggests the emergence of new forms of resistance and struggle. Indeed, it is in this very antagonism, without the possibility of any kind of mediation, that Hardt and Negri locate a globalized condition of civil war: precisely between Empire's exercise of oppressive violence and the multitude's creative yet at the same time subversive resistance. From this perspective, on the one hand, civil war functions as nothing other than Empire's "continuous police activity that supports the regulative foundation of administration and political control" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 239). On the other hand, it implies the emergence of multiple forms of resistance, insurgencies, and incessant political conflict. Under the conditions of the innate antagonism

between Empire and the multitude, civil war becomes a permanent condition that traverses the entire globe.

Does Hardt and Negri's formulation position civil war as a liberatory path for a post-capitalist future embodied in the political project of the multitude? Not so much, the political strategy that they propose is not a call for accentuating the globalized condition of civil war embedded in the circuits of Empire, nor does it suggest a deepening of political polarization in the hopes that violent action spurs an anti-capitalist revolution that could hit capitalism a death blow. Their alternative is, in a sense, more subtle and nuanced. While Hardt and Negri abstain from completely dismissing the role of some forms of political violence—their discussions on the democratic use of violence and how they characterize EZLN and the Intifada clearly show us this—they nonetheless point out the limits of political strategies that advocate armed struggle (Hardt & Negri, 2004). For Hardt and Negri, what needs to be done is nothing other than a rigorous experimentation of new ways of life in common —which is a call for the invention of horizontal political bodies, creating new lines of alliances and new forms of resistance—and creative yet subversive democratic politics that could transgress and challenge the boundaries of Empire, this novel system of global sovereignty in the service of capital:

> It is not unreasonable to hope that in a biopolitical future (after the defeat of biopower) war will no longer be possible, and the intensity of the cooperation and communication among singularities (workers and/or citizens) will destroy its possibility. A one-week global biopolitical strike would block any war. In any case, we can imagine the day when the multitude will invent a weapon that will not only allow it to defend itself but will also be constructive, expansive, and constituent. It is not a matter of taking power and commanding the armies but destroying their very possibility. (Ibid., p. 347)

In this sense, the post-capitalist democratic future that the multitude embodies is a project that "poses peace as its highest value" (Ibid., p. 311). What they argue for is not peace

simply as the absence of war, but the peace in strictly Spinozist terms: a harmonious existence between one and others, or in Hardt and Negri's own words, "a fundamental condition of knowledge and more generally of our being in this world" (Ibid. p. 311)[41].

4.2 Civil and Neoliberalism

Written in the aftermath of struggles that began with alter-globalization and accelerated with the occupation movements and popular uprisings of the early 2010s, and within the context of the rise of the New Right, ever-deepening social and political divisions, and intensified and widespread political violence, Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato's recent coauthored work, *Wars and Capital*, starts with a straightforward claim: "[w]e are living in the time of the subjectivation of civil wars" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 11). In a similar way to Hardt and Negri's formulations, civil war also plays a significant role in the making of Alliez and Lazzarato's account; they depict a condition of generalized civil war in the circuits of global capitalism.

At first glance, Alliez and Lazzarato's approach resembles Agamben's prior formulations due to their strong emphasis on the all-encompassing nature attributed to civil war. However, Alliez and Lazzarato's understanding of civil war does not denote a quasi-metaphysical political concept as it did for Agamben. Theirs is more of an attempt to frame a politico-historical phenomenon that resonates with the development of capitalism, stressing especially the question of how civil war becomes an intrinsic aspect to how financialized capitalism operates. Indeed, *Wars and Capital* could be well read in this light as a genealogy of capitalism in terms of a counter-history that traces its points of

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[41] For Spinoza, "[p]eace isn't the privation of war, but a virtue which arises from strength of mind" (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 530) or consists "in a union or harmony of minds" (Ibid., p. 533).

intersection with the culmination of multiple modalities of warfare. In this sense, Alliez and Lazzarato's use of the concept resonates more with that of Foucault's genealogical or historical approach, if we recall his formulation of civil war as the paradigm of relations of power in the wake of the emergence of the modern state. Does this mean that Alliez and Lazzarato simply repeat what Foucault argued in the early seventies? While it would not be wrong to frame Alliez and Lazzarato's attempt as some sort of a return to Foucault's formulations from the early 70s, drawing from Marx, they provide us with a unique way of reading Foucault's civil war thesis.

4.2.1 Capitalism and Civil War

Let me start with the question of how Alliez and Lazzarato conceptualize civil war and relate it to politics. First, for these authors, civil war is not a condition that implies the deterioration of an already existing political order. Quite the opposite:

> Far from being that moment of atomic disintegration requiring the intervention of a constitutive and pacifying mediation (the sovereign as founding principle of the social body), civil war is the very process through which new communities and their institutions are established. It is not limited to being the expression of a temporally limited, constitutive power since it is always at work. (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 274)

Largely resonating with Foucault's civil war thesis, Alliez and Lazzarato argue that "power does not come after civil war, it does not follow a conflict like its pacification; inversely, civil war is not the result of the dissolution of power", but of "[d]ivision, conflict, civil war, and stasis structure and de-structure power; they form a matrix within which elements of power come to function, are reactivated, break up" (Ibid., pp. 274-275). Here, we see a close affinity between Alliez and Lazzarato's account and the Foucauldian theoretical perspective of the early 70s. The difference, however, becomes much more noticeable

when it comes to the question of how civil war should be understood in the context of neoliberalism.

While it is true that neoliberalism appears to be characterized as an intensified or generalized condition of civil war in Alliez and Lazzarato's work, it would be a mistake to assume that their diagnosis is only particular to the neoliberal forms of capitalism. For Alliez and Lazzarato, from its emergence as a dominant mode of production, civil war is immanent to how capitalism operates, or as they put it: "[c]ivil war is the 'permanent state' of capitalism" (Ibid. p. 274). But how does capitalism, which is, at first sight, a model of production, implicate civil war and why does neoliberalism coincide with an intensified or generalized form of civil war?

To answer these questions, we need to first take a closer look at how Alliez and Lazzarato conceptualize capitalism. The most important aspect of Alliez and Lazzarato's formulation is that capitalism is not solely a mode of production or purely an economic category. They argue that capitalism is nothing other than the historical product of the articulation of "war, money, and the State" which are the "constitutive or constituent forces" of capitalism (Ibid., p. 15). It is relatively easy to understand why Alliez and Lazzarato insist on the role money plays in the development of capitalism. Being nothing short of "an exclusive form of the law of value", money ensures "the relationship of enslavement (*asservissement*) of (abstract) labor to (the becoming concrete of) Capital" and "functions both as the motor of the unlimited movement of capital and as the apparatus (dispositif) of strategic command in the hands of capitalists" (Ibid., p. 35). However, they argue, it would be a mistake to see money as "a simple economic 'capital', as seen in its market origins"; for them, money "has less a function of redistribution than of expanded

reproduction of positions of power in society" (Ibid., p. 39) and "remain[s] empty (economic) "abstractions" without the flow of power" (Ibid., p. 44). The crucial question then becomes: how does money produce and maintain positions of power in society?[42] This is the point where the states and war come into play in Alliez and Lazzarato's account. As they write,

> Capital's accumulation and monopoly on force and the state's accumulation and monopoly on force sustain each other reciprocally. Without war being waged externally (colonial and inter-state war) and without the state waging civil war and internal wars of subjectivities, capital would never have formed, and inversely: without capture and the valorization of wealth operated by capital, the state would never have been able to exercise its "sovereign" functions, all of which are based on the organization of an army. (Ibid., p. 44)

From Alliez and Lazzarato's perspective, the history of capitalism goes side by side with the history of states and the history of wars. How do these three constituent forces intersect and give rise to capitalism? The answer, according to Alliez and Lazzarato, is plain and simple: throughout the process of constant primitive accumulation.

4.2.2 Primitive Accumulation and Colonialism

The concept of primitive accumulation first and foremost involves Marx's criticism of classical economists' accounts of the genesis of capitalism and appears in Part 8 of *Capital, Vol. I*, "So-Called Primitive Accumulation" particularly Chapter 26, "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation" (Marx, 1992). For Marx, rather than being a story based on

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[42] Alliez and Lazzarato refer to Michel Foucault's analysis of the emergence of money in classical Greece. As they put it:

> The institution of money, as Foucault asserts in his first course at the Collège de France (1970–1971) focusing on its introduction in ancient Greece, cannot be explained for market, commercial, or mercantile reasons: while the use of money developed in the "exchange of products," its "historical root" is not found there. (Ibid., p. 36)

For Foucault, the emergence of 'Greek money' instead "is first and above all connected to a displacement in the exercise of power" and could be traced back to the Hoplitic revolution. For further readings see: Foucault's *Lectures on the Will to Know* (Foucault, 2013).

differing moral attitudes[43], the emergence of capitalism as a dominant mode of production is more complex—a vicious cycle or a paradox: for Marx, "the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalistic production; capitalistic production presupposes the pre-existence of considerable masses of capital and of labor power in the hands of producers of commodities" (Marx, 1992, p. 873).

As Marx's formulation of capitalism delineates an economic system based on the siphoning of surplus value, its emergence as a dominant mode of production depends on the pre-existence of a reservoir of labouring subjects, the proletariat, who exchange their labor power for wages. For Marx, under feudalism or any kind of pre-capitalist regime of production the proletariat simply does not exist and the creation of a class of wage laborers stands as the very objective to be attained in setting up the conditions for the accumulation of capital. Marx does not see in this process of 'so-called primitive accumulation' an idyllic process of transition from one mode of production to another, but the separation of the laborer from the means of production. That is to say, the sale of labor power in exchange for wages is not decided upon by mutual consent. On the contrary, what Marx saw was a history of violence, expropriation, and the use of force: the birth of capitalism arose from the intersecting history of "colonial conquest; the birth of public debt and the credit system;

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[43] In *Anti-Capitalist Chronicles*, David Harvey provides us with a succinct account of how classical liberalism frames the origins of capital accumulation:

> The political economists of the time presented the story of how capital began as a virtuous story. There were some people who were careful and thoughtful, abstemious and responsible, who looked to the future and were capable of deferring gratifications. Then there were those who were profligate and who chose to spend their time in riotous living. The virtuous people became the entrepreneurs who deferred gratification, who saved, accumulated and looked to the future. The profligate individuals were left with the only possibility of making a living; which was to offer their labor power to the frugal capitalists who took responsibility for how it might be fruitfully put to work. (Harvey, 2020, p. 113)

and the 'freeing' (or separation) of the laborer from the land and into the selling of wage labor as the only means for survival" (Rosenberg, 2019, p. 364).

In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx provides us with a brief history of how this separation from the means of production takes place. For Marx, the point of origin is the movement of enclosures. Starting in 16th century England and expanding to the whole of Europe not long after, the movement of enclosures turns the common lands into private property, "'setting free' the agricultural population as a proletariat for the needs of industry" (Marx, 1992, p. 886). This did not mean that people, displaced from their lands and expropriated from their means of subsistence, were turned into a class of wage laborers overnight. What enclosures entailed was the forced immigration of the now-dispossessed agricultural population to the urban centers.[44] For Marx, this process was akin to an all-out war against the pre-capitalist methods of production in which the aim was "the dissolution of the regime of the guilds, the breakdown of the system of peasant landownership, and the massive disintegration of existing structures of wealth" (Read, 2007, p. 32). In other words, the genesis of capitalism was not a 'natural' process shaped by the demands of the market as liberal theorists argue, but one in which the state had a role of central importance, waging an implicit warfare, or a war by other means, to dismantle any kind of obstacle that would impede the development of capitalism.[45]

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[44] In the eyes of the state and the capitalist class, this newly formed group of people was indeed something akin to what Foucault called the dangerous individuals. For further reading, see: *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1979).

[45] However, it would be a mistake to understand the role the states played only in terms of the use of brute force, as it was in fact legislatures targeting vagrancy with harsh punishments. An example Marx gives is how the invention of public debt and credit system was crucial for primitive accumulation:

> The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows unproductive money with the power of creation and thus turns it into capital, without forcing it to expose itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The state's creditors actually give nothing away, for the

Furthermore, for Marx, primitive accumulation was not limited to the confines of any one nation. The history of capitalism goes side by side with the history of colonialism. Marx argues that capitalism almost owes its existence to the colonial conquest: "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production" (Marx, 1992, p. 915). In other words, colonialism sets the conditions for the emergence of capitalism by siphoning resources, concentrating immense amounts of wealth in the hands of the complicit state sponsored actors or funneling it to the soon-to-be capitalist class, and opening up new foreign markets for commodities ensuring the realization of surplus value. For Marx, colonies are where the "beautiful illusion" of primitive accumulation "is torn aside", in other words, where the true nature of primitive accumulation is exposed: The history of primitive accumulation in the colonies was a history of brutality, intensified violence, and coercion before anything else (Marx, 1992, p. 935).

If we return to how Alliez and Lazzarato make use of the concept of primitive accumulation, two points should be highlighted. First, for Alliez and Lazzarato—along with a growing number of contemporary theorists including David Harvey, Silvia Federici, and Jason Read—primitive accumulation is not just an originary event that has happened once, but an enduring aspect of capitalism that repeats itself almost on a daily basis

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sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would. But furthermore, and quite apart from the class of idle rentiers thus created, the improvised wealth of the financiers who play the role of middlemen between the government and the nation, and the tax-farmers, merchants and private manufacturers, for whom a good part of every national loan performs the service of a capital fallen from heaven. (Marx, 1992, p. 919)

(Federici, 2004; Harvey, 2003; Read, 2003). This brings us to the second significant aspect of their use of the concept of primitive accumulation. Second, the colonial form of primitive accumulation designates the point where the state, war, and money perfectly align.

Moreover, in the making of Alliez and Lazzarato's theoretical account, colonialism has another significant role that goes well beyond the siphoning of wealth that primes the genesis of the capitalist mode of production. Colonialism functions as a hotbed for the emergence of a particular form of warfare: colonial war. From Alliez and Lazzarato's perspective, "[c]olonial war was never a war between States but, in essence, a war amongst and against the population, where the distinctions between war and peace, between combatants and non-combatants, between economy, politics, and military were never used" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 27). Such modality of warfare involves a bloody strategy of counter-insurgency and violent suppression of the most basic rights of colonial subjects.

However, Alliez and Lazzarato do not think that this novel modality of 'social' warfare was only limited to the colonial settings—or at least not for long. On the contrary, they argue that with the rapid globalization of capitalism, colonial war, or at least the logic at work behind its practice, colonialism expands to nearly every corner of the earth and effectively becomes the matrix of global civil war. Borrowing from Michel Foucault, what is at issue here for Alliez and Lazzarato is the "boomerang effect" of colonialism.[46] The

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[46] In Michel Foucault's words: "it should never be forgotten that while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. a whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was

techniques of power and violence that were utilized to subjugate populations and siphon resources from the colonial world now are brought home by the capital in order to be used in the service of capital to be exercised on their own populations. In other words, for Alliez and Lazzarato, the internal colonization or what Paul Virilio once called endocolonization goes side by side with the external one.[47]

The kind of civil war Alliez and Lazzarato locate in the circuits of global capitalism should not be taken solely in terms of class warfare in a traditional Marxist sense. On the contrary, what Alliez and Lazzarato depict is a series of "interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on 'minorities,' wars on women, wars of subjectivity" that operate on the basis of the model colonial war provides (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 27). For Alliez and Lazzarato, the practices of and logic behind colonial warfare first return home with the movement of enclosures effectively transforming the European peasants into a class of wage laborers. Citing Silvia Federici's seminal work, Alliez and Lazzarato argue, they go side by side with the witch-hunts that aim to forcefully integrate women into

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that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself" (Foucault, 2003, p. 103).

[47] Alliez and Lazzarato refer to Virilio's concept of endocolonization:

> [T]he concept of endocolonization, which Paul Virilio used to define the change in the army and war after 1945 into war amongst and against the population, can be useful in several ways. It immediately configures governmentality as a set of civil war apparatuses (*dispositifs*). It politically identifies the concept of 'biopolitics' to the extent that colonization, which holds together, since primitive accumulation, race war and the war on women for control of bodies, is now applied directly to class conflicts. Greece was very naturally spoken of as a 'colonized' country, a population placed under a colonial 'mandate' to the extent that all the apparatuses (dispositifs) of the war machine of Capital are mobilized to organize an endocolonization of all social relations. and finally, the concept presents in a new light the reality of contemporary civil wars: 1/ because endocolonization establishes an immediate continuity between the Norths and Souths of the world-economy and reveals the way the Souths are lodged in the Norths; 2/ because all the wars of which we have described the nature and development since primitive accumulation converge on the endocolonized; 3/ because the techniques of colonial wars, first applied to the populations of the 'colonies of the interior,' are then generalized to the entire population, and notably to protest movements (during the protests against the 'labor law' in France, the techniques of controlling the protests and the use of police violence in all evidence crossed a threshold in relation to the security state) (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 374).

the patriarchal order of reproduction, and this time in reference to Foucault's 75-76 College de France lectures, they surface in the discourses of racism and race wars of the 19th century, which paved the road for the worst atrocities of 20th century (Marx, 1992; Federici, 2004; Foucault, 2003).

For Alliez and Lazzarato, the kind of civil war that capitalism carries within itself is at the same time a wars of subjectivity that involves the "[c]onstruction of the 'majoritarian model' of Man as male, white, and adult, transforming women into a minority gender and the colonized into a minority race" in an attempt for creating docile subjects by accentuating already existing divisions and creating new ones (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 54). In short, from Alliez and Lazzarato's perspective, through a constant process of primitive accumulation—the procedures of expropriation of labor, appropriation of the land, control mechanisms over production and reproduction, and violence—capitalism carries civil war within itself "like clouds contain storms" (Ibid., p. 11).

4.2.3 Neoliberalism and Civil War

Why do Alliez and Lazzarato argue that neoliberalism corresponds to an intensification of civil war? After all, wasn't it Foucault's studies on (neo)liberalism that made him drop his civil war thesis? However, the way Alliez and Lazzarato frame neoliberalism is quite different than how Foucault did so. In fact, their formulation of neoliberalism harbours a rather sharp critique of Foucault's theoretical position. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, with the expansion of his analysis over (neo)liberal theories of governmentality during the second half of the 70s, a radical shift emerges in the way in which Foucault formulates power. For Foucault, what neoliberalism brought to the scene was the culmination of a modality of power based on the "rationalization of the art of government

on the rational behavior of those who are governed" (Foucault, 2008, p. 312). From then on, for Foucault, power was less a matter of a warlike relationship of forces through which one tries to establish dominance over others, but more an ensemble of more subtle strategies that rely more and more upon incentivization of certain behaviours rather than trying to suppress them with violent means. Such a formulation of power, in terms of the conduct of conducts or action upon actions, was indeed a radically different way to understand power compared to what was at issue in the civil war thesis or bellicose model. While this departure from the civil war thesis permitted the possibility to conceptualize power beyond repression—precisely by distinguishing power from domination and violence—it risked losing sight of the role that conflict, violence, and resistance play. This, in the end, also carries a considerable risk of establishing an overly optimistic viewpoint on what the neoliberal future could bring about.

Where Foucault saw in neoliberalism a novel regime of power imbued with the possibility for more autonomous and less governed societies—an alternative to the hierarchical power structures that maintain the modern state form, and perhaps as a safeguard from the repeating of the atrocities of the early 20th century—Alliez and Lazzarato see a grave theoretical and political error in this line of thinking for two reasons. First, as Lazzarato highlights in his 2019 book *Capital Hates Everyone: Fascism or Revolution*, he criticizes the methodology Foucault uses in his analysis of neoliberalism:

> Governmentality, entrepreneurship of oneself, competition, freedom, "rationality" of the market, etc., all these fine concepts that Foucault found in books and never measured against real political processes. (Lazzarato, 2021, pp. 21)

Lazzarato claims that such an approach overlooks both "the "violence that founded" neoliberalism, incarnated by the bloody dictatorships of South America" and the "'violence

that preserves' the economy, the institutions, law, and governmentality—tested out for the first time in Pinochet's Chile" (Ibid., p. 8). Second, Lazzarato is not content with the equation of power with governance—the conception of power in terms of the conduct of conducts instead of a direct relationship of force that is exercised upon bodies—that could be found in Foucault's later works. As Lazzarato remarks in *Capital Hates Everyone: Fascism or Revolution,*

> The conception of power that results from this is pacified: action upon action, government upon behaviors (Foucault) and not action upon persons (of which war and civil war are the peak expressions). Power would be incorporated into impersonal apparatuses that exert a soft violence in an automatic way. Quite to the contrary, however, the logic of civil war that is at the foundation of neoliberalism was not absorbed, erased, replaced by the functioning of the economy, law, and democracy. (Ibid., pp. 8-9)

Third, and closely related to their critique of the formulation of power in terms of the conduct of conducts, Alliez and Lazzarato also take issue with the relatively rigid distinction between war and governance that could be found in Foucault's later work. For them, neoliberal "governmentality does not replace war", but rather "organizes, governs, and controls the reversibility of wars and power", and, in this sense, "is the governmentality of wars" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 282).

The crucial question that needs to be answered is how neoliberalism can be understood as the governmentality of wars. Alliez and Lazzarato's diagnosis rests upon their reading of the historical development of neoliberal modes of governance. For Alliez and Lazzarato, neoliberalism is not only a response to crisis-ridden and dilapidated Keynesianism. In other words, the rise of neoliberalism does not occur purely in an economic sense, but first and foremost appears as a counteroffensive, or in more precise terms as a counterrevolutionary strategy, to contain the revolutionary movements of the

60s. What Alliez and Lazzarato saw in these movements was a revolt against what they call the 'majoritarian model'. The movement of 1968 was shaped by the struggles of women challenging the patriarchal order, radical workers' movements who imagined a life beyond work, racial minorities' fight against white supremacy, the movement of gay liberation, and anti-imperialist movements fighting the neo-colonial tendencies of capitalist nations culminated in the Cold War period. For Alliez and Lazzarato, the response of capital was an attempt to capture these radical socio-political forces that are escaping them, and thereby rerouting them into a relatively stabilized grid of relations of power.

For Alliez and Lazzarato, this neoliberal counteroffensive was multifaceted and involved a wide repertoire of strategies. The brutal dictatorships, military juntas, the relentless dismantling of the welfare state, and the war against the trade unions were surely on the table for proponents of neoliberalism, but the driving force behind this transformation was rampant financialization. And, no, unlike Foucault's formulation, financialization—the spread of economic rationality to almost every social and political domain—does not appear to Alliez and Lazzarato as the least intrusive and violent regime of power, it does not guarantee the dismantling of the arbitrary norms of disciplinary institutions. While Alliez and Lazzarato agree that the triumph of neoliberalism involves a discontinuity in the lineage of the sovereignty of centralized states and the normative order of disciplinary societies, it only replaces them with another kind of centralization and another set of norms. To be more precise, "[t]he multiplicity of State forms and transnational organizations of power, the plurality of political-institutional ensembles defining the variety of national 'capitalisms' are violently centralized, subordinated, and commanded by globalized financial Capital in its aim of 'growth'" (Ibid., p.18). Moreover,

for Alliez and Lazzarato, neoliberalism has never been a more 'egalitarian' market regime regardless of the participants' backgrounds and their seemingly commensurate position with their human capital. Rather, neoliberalism is a regime of "[a]ccentuating divisions, aggravating the polarization of every capitalist society" in pursuit of infinite growth (Ibid., p. 27).

Indeed, this is one of the key aspects to understand the close affinity between civil war and neoliberalism in the making of Alliez and Lazzarato's theoretical account. As Lazzarato writes, neoliberalism

> has its strategic center in finance, whose "commodity," money, circulates at a speed beyond comparison […] maintains a very close relationship with war and particularly with the war against populations, for which it will constitute the most formidable weapon. Indeed, the global market, especially with neoliberalism, doesn't integrate without differentiating through racist, segregationist, sexist techniques; or homogenize without worsening inequalities; or unify without accentuating "wars" between nation-states, wars of class, of sex, and of race. (Lazzarato, 2021, p. 71)

It is important to mention here that this very tendency for accentuating already existing divisions and inequalities that they attribute to neoliberalism effectively changes the meaning of governance. For them, the neoliberal governmental model becomes indistinguishable from an endless campaign of counter-insurgency that strives to maintain the very conditions that render capital accumulation a generalized and permanent condition of crisis. In this sense, the triumph of neoliberalism fundamentally alters the nature of war. For Alliez and Lazzarato, within the context of neoliberalism, it is no longer possible or even meaningful to distinguish war from peace, or war proper from civil war. Alliez and Lazzarato point out that how even inter-state wars have become more and more waged through unconventional tactics since the end of the Cold War period: the rise of small wars,

the use of economic and informational means—for example, trade wars, currency manipulation operations, targeted sanctions on individuals and corporations, the culmination of cyber-war and information warfare—have become commonplace practices and the end goal of this new modality of warfare is nothing other than the "[p]acification obtained by any means ('bloody' and 'not bloody')" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 17). In short, far from rendering civil war an obsolete idea, for Alliez and Lazzarato, civil war is the model that defines neoliberalism; it is immanent to how power operates under this regime.

4.2.4 The Invention of Democratic and Anti-capitalist War Machines

Do Alliez and Lazzarato think that whether there is a way to exit from this seemingly hellscape created by neoliberalism? It is more than plausible to argue that while Alliez and Lazzarato's account has a somber tone, for them, the situation is hardly a hopeless one. As the relations of power are grounded in civil war, which itself denotes a groundlessness, and is by its very definition open to dynamic confrontations, they argue that there still exists a potential for creating ruptures in the relations of power and polarizations against the forces of capital. Such a task requires going beyond the limits of "generic democracy" to "the invention of anti-capitalist, democratic war machines" (Ibid., p. 384). One of Alliez and Lazzarato's main sources of inspiration for advancing such a political strategy is Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's unique positioning of war in relation to the distinction between the apparatus of capture and war machines. In order to get a clear understanding of the political strategy that Alliez and Lazzarato suggest, we need to discuss Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the apparatus of capture and war machines.

In Deleuze and Guattari's coauthored *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* the distinction between the apparatus of capture and war machines has a role of central importance: it delineates a constant struggle at the heart of politics, an "[o]pposition […] in the struggle between destratification and stratification" (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 203).[48] The concept of apparatus of capture stands as the kernel of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the state: "sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 360).[49] This formulation of state apparatus as a capacity for internalizing and appropriating primarily

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[48] One of the most important sources for Deleuze and Guattari was anthropologist Pierre Clastres, whose work resonated for a couple of reasons: first, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Clastres challenges the Hegelian/Marxist evolutionary thesis that identifies societies without a state as primitive or less complex social organisations compared to those that develop state structures. For Clastres, this is not the case; there does not exist a succession from the so-called primitive people to that of the state. What is at stake is something quite different. For Clastres, fully fledged and complex social formations could well exist outside the state formation. In fact, Clastres goes further and claims that "war in primitive societies as the surest mechanism directed against the formation of the State" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 357). In other words, for Clastres, war wards off the formation of the state apparatus. But how does war function in such a way? Clastres's answer would be that war does so by constantly creating multiplicities and more importantly it "is firstly a way of preventing oneness; oneness is above all unification; that is, the state" (Clastres, 2015, p. 35). In other words, war "functions as the machine of dispersion […] against the machine of unification" (Clastres, 2010, p. 277). In this sense, for Clastres, war is a permanent condition in stateless societies, and what the state essentially does is nothing but to prevent the very condition that makes war possible. However, it is important to mention here that this does not mean that war ceases to exist in the sphere of the state. As Clastres remarks, it is civil war that the state cannot endure, not war in general. Clastres argues that "the meaning of war changes completely in a society with a state" (Clastres, 2015, p. 54). One can see that Clastres's account is directly opposed to that of Thomas Hobbes. In Clastres's words, for Hobbes, "the social link institutes itself between men due to 'a common Power to keep them all in awe:' the State is against war. What does primitive society as a sociological space of permanent war tell us in counterpoint? It repeats Hobbes's discourse by reversing it; it proclaims that the machine of dispersion functions against the machine of unification; it tells us that war is against the State" (Clastres, 2010, p. 277). While Clastres's formulation of the relationship between war and the state was to a great extent adopted by Deleuze and Guattari, they locate a crucial problem in Clastres's account: the absence of the path from the stateless societies to the states and more importantly the relative autarky that Clastres attributes to stateless societies, especially in his later writings.

[49] Georges Dumezil's central thesis was that the ancient Indo-European societies were organised through a class or caste structure that consists of priests, warriors, and herders-cultivators. For Dumezil, this hierarchical division maintains three social functions: Sovereignty, military force, and production. Dumezil argues that while this socio-political formation gradually fades away, it nonetheless continues to manifest itself, in terms of what he calls the tripartite ideology, through myths, religious beliefs, and legends. While these three functions are distinct, they permeate each other and sustain the unity of the social structure. For further readings on Dumezil's tripartite model, see: *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty* (Dumezil, 1988).

denotes how the state-form operates by appropriating land and power, by establishing systems taxation and levies, and by imposing bonds on the basis of the creditor-debtor relationship. On the other end of the spectrum, there lies the war machines. Whereas the State functions by producing a striated internality and centralization, for Deleuze and Guattari, the war machine implies a pure form of exteriority and a constant movement. The concept of war machine also entails a different kind of socio-political composition. While states proceed with the territorial organization of populations, turning both the land and the people into objects of calculation and production, war machines rely on the arithmetic organization of multiplicities that are distributed through smooth spaces.[50] In fact, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of war machines is based on how nomadic societies organize themselves. In David Lapoujade's words:

> Nomadic societies are inseparable from a "war machine," which distributes populations within a smooth space, a steppe or a desert. Nomads are the multiplicities of the nomos. They are deterritorialized but, above all, they are the ones who deterritorialize the earth. It even seems as if it is not nomads but the earth that moves, while they remain stationary on their mounts, being reterritorialized on their movement itself. (Lapoujade, 2017, p. 235)

By their very definition, nomadic war machines point out another kind of social arrangement that harbors a revolutionary or liberatory exit strategy.

The crucial question now is how should one situate war in this polar opposition between the apparatus of capture and war machines? Deleuze and Guattari's answer to this question may seem paradoxical. On the one hand, they argue that the State is not capable

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[50] It is important to mention here that, for Deleuze, while the state apparatus and nomadic war machines designate two distinct poles, this does not mean that they cannot form mixtures. In other words, the states could emerge from war machines, or the opposite, a state apparatus could break down into nomadic war machines.

of conducting war by itself. On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari also argue that war machines do not have war as their object. While it is true that the State does not have a war machine at its disposal initially, land, money, and populations are not the only things that the State can capture; the State can also capture and subjugate a war machine.

How the State can capture a war machine, then? The answer lies in the two poles Deleuze and Guattari attribute to the concept of war machine. For them, the first pole seems:

> to be the essence; it is when the war machine, with infinitely lower "quantities," has as its object not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space. At this other pole, the machine does indeed encounter war, but as its supplementary or synthetic object, now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 422)

In other words, war is not the war machines' object; indeed, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the nomadic war machines have an extremely variable relation to war itself. War is a supplement to the nomadic war machines, in order "to prevent the sedentarization and centralization of their societies" (Reid, 2003, p. 63) in their inescapable collision or encounter with states. However, there also exists another pole which:

> takes war for its object and forms a line of destruction prolongable to the limits of the universe. But in all of the shapes it assumes here-limited war, total war, worldwide organization-war represents not at all the supposed essence of the war machine but only, whatever the machine's power, either the set of conditions under which the States appropriate the machine, even going so far as to project it as the horizon of the world, or the dominant order of which the States themselves are now only parts. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 422)

This is exactly what enables the State apparatuses to capture or appropriate war machines, make them their own, and deploy them purely as a destructive force. In fact, for Deleuze and Guattari, this moment of appropriation of a war machine by the State marks the genesis

of the military organizations as purely destructive apparatuses through which the State conducts warfare.

However, from such a perspective, war, and especially civil war, is still in a relationship of exteriority to the State. In other words, wars take place in a zone of indistinction or gray area that exists between the State apparatus and war machines. In this sense, there is always a possibility of a war machine turning against the State. As Deleuze claims, "[w]hen war machines turn against the State apparatuses, these can be very ambiguous moments, and it can occur under the form of certain revolutionary movements" (Deleuze, 1979). Alliez and Lazzarato's call for 'the invention of anti-capitalist, democratic war machines' should be seen precisely in this light. The unsustainable and crisis-laden condition created by capital's relentless civil war waged on populations worldwide also opens up a potentially fertile ground for building a revolutionary movement capable "for resistance and attack, the accumulation and exercise of force, and processes of subjectivation have as their condition the neutralization of these divisions and the construction of revolutionary connections between 'minorities'" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 392).

4.3 Conclusion

As we have discussed above, in their writings, both Hardt and Negri along with Alliez and Lazzarato stress a close affinity between civil war and capitalism. Whereas Hardt and Negri formulate civil war as an incessant conflict between Empire—the tendency for the emergence of a global system of control and machine of command in the service of capital—and the multitude—a radical democratic political project in becoming that carries the potential for building a post-capitalist future through collective struggle—Alliez and

Lazzarato tend to locate civil war as an integral aspect to how power operates embedded in globalized neoliberal political regimes. Both Hardt and Negri's, and Alliez and Lazzarato's theoretical accounts could be seen as responses to the changing social and political landscape beginning in the 21st century. In order to evaluate their successes and failures while thinking civil war alongside power, we need to situate them historically.

Starting with Hardt and Negri's account, the breadth of the theoretical intervention they make in their coauthored trilogy, *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*, cannot be properly understood outside of the socio-political context of the early 2000s. Hardt and Negri's theorizations appear in a historical period following the collapse of real existing socialisms, the retreat of social democracies and welfare states, and the triumph of neoliberalism that goes side by side with the rise of market ideologies that cherish the theses on 'the end of history'. The early 2000s was a period of time in which one can speak of the culmination of the neoliberal model that has its roots in the 1980s—a paradigm shift resulting in a condition in which the market norms were diffused to the entire spheres of the social and the global politics was shaped largely by the interests of global corporations and supervised by supranational political and economical organizations. At least at first glance, the early 2000s was a period of time marked by a decisive victory of capitalism which now seems to become the only game in town.

However, it would be a mistake to understand the political state of affairs of the early 2000s purely in terms of a unilateral and full-spectrum domination by the forces of global capitalism. On the one hand, this new political terrain was laden with a new kind of global warfare that had destabilizing effects on politics both on global and local levels, of which Hardt and Negri see as a violent and accelerated process of the integration of new

territories to the 'free market' and as a clash between state and non-state actors competing for appropriating the machine of command of this novel model of global sovereignty. They also see this period as a hotbed for the emergence of a new kind of subversive politics, the alter-globalization movements, that challenged the intensified capitalist subjugation inherent to neoliberal globalization. Beginning in the late '90s, the alter-globalization movements manifested in the widespread protests targeting the summits of supranational organizations, such as the 1999 Seattle WTO and 2001 Genoa G8 protests, anti-war movements, the emergence of alternative global organizations such as the World Social Forum (WSF), and indigenous political movements such as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). These movements were not nostalgic and reactive in their intention to revert the rampant neoliberal globalization only in order to return to the 'good old days' of nationalistic politics; in fact, they were novel social and political movements that began to develop in an opposition to global capitalism and strived to reinvent another kind of globalization beyond the dictates of neoliberal logic.

Indeed, the way in which Hardt and Negri identify civil war as an incessant conflict in the circuits of global capitalism both reflects upon and draws inspiration from such a configuration of politics. From their perspective, civil war becomes an encounter between the repressive forces of a global structure of sovereignty, Empire, and the productive and subversive networks of constituent power, the multitude. In this sense, Hardt and Negri's formulation of civil war is not simply a return to Foucault's earlier position. Rather than painting a picture of an over-encompassing model of domination in which power is understood purely in terms of warlike relation, they draw from Spinoza's distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* to establish a conceptualization of power that addresses both

the repressive and productive dimensions of power. Where Hardt and Negri's theoretical account falls short, however, is in the dichotomous logic such a formulation harbors: it risks a Manichaean understanding of politics wherein sides are clearly marked. This is the point of Hardt and Negri's perspective that should be problematized. Indeed, it is questionable whether civil wars such as the one in Syria or the divisive politics of the New Right fit into this clearly defined antagonistic model. Such an approach in the end attributes too much certainty to a condition that is essentially complex, uncertain, and ambiguous.

When it comes to Alliez and Lazzarato's account, their writings emerge from a fairly different political terrain, and they address fairly different theoretical exigencies as well. First, the late 2010s signifies an era of the sustained defeat of the radical social movements that emerge in the last decade, such as the "Occupy Wall Street in the US, the Indignados in Spain, the student movements in Chile and Quebec, and Greece in 2015 [who] all fought with unequal arms against the debt economy and austerity policies" (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016, p. 11). Moreover, as the experiences of "[t]he 'Arab Spring,' the major protests in Brazil, and the Gezi Park clashes in Turkey" has shown in a bitter way, these movements have not resulted in the invention of new lines of alliances that could pave the road to a non-capitalist future and, more importantly, not in the creation of lasting political organizations that could counter the ever-deepening exploitation, the looming climate catastrophe, or the racial injustices inherent to neoliberalism (Ibid., p. 11-12).

Second, Alliez and Lazzarato's work emerges in a context in which the optimistic political visions of multiculturalism, that have culminated in early 2000s neoliberalism, begin to fade from view. In their place, we have seen "an authoritarian and policed post-democracy managed by market technicians to stoke the flames of its predatory economic

policies, while the new right […] declares war on foreigners, immigrants, Muslims, and the underclasses" (Ibid. p. 12). Moreover, the culmination of novel forms of intensified political violence in the wake of the rise of the far right—whose power depends on their tremendous successes to deepen the already existing divisions in today's societies and mobilize their followers into taking political actions that would previously be deemed unimaginable—not only corresponds but also helps to explain how Alliez and Lazzarato's understanding of our contemporary political world as one ridden by civil war.

It could be argued that Alliez and Lazzarato's formulation signifies a return to Foucault's civil war thesis. In fact, by way of making a cross-reading with Marx's conceptualization of primitive accumulation, they extend the scope of such a theoretical model to explicate neoliberal modes of governance. There is no doubt that Alliez and Lazzarato offer us an extremely rich, and at the same time, timely theoretical perspective. Yet, in a similar fashion to Agamben's take on the concept, their account also carries the risk of embracing a radical denunciation of power: the story Alliez and Lazzarato tell us is a one that of a unilateral system of domination where power is presented to us more or less as the sum of techniques and procedures that initiates and maintains capitalist subjugation. This is a problematic outcome for at least two reasons. First, Alliez and Lazzarato's formulation threatens a reductive understanding of how power functions in multiple ways. It especially neglects to explain how regimes of power at work in late capitalist societies function as a productive network as well as through multiform processes of subjectification and desubjectification via the circuits of capital and market relations. Second, it overlooks the difference between war and power, flattening any meaningful distinction between the two. In this sense, Alliez and Lazzarato arrive at the same position Foucault held in the

early 70s, without either addressing or offering a viable solution to the issues that led Foucault to abandon it.

CHAPTER 5: RETHINKING CIVIL WAR AND POWER FROM A SPINOZIST PERSPECTIVE

In the previous chapters, starting with an in-depth analysis of Michel Foucault's formulations in the 72-73 College de France lectures and continuing with the discussions on the works of more contemporary theorists, I attempted to map out the conceptual nexus between civil war and power. A central theme of our discussions was the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power while situating the concept within the theoretical framework of civil war. I have discussed how Foucault, Agamben, Hardt and Negri, along with Alliez and Lazzarato position themselves in relation to this aporia, and the success or failure of their attempts. In this chapter, I will offer an alternative reading arising from Spinoza's political philosophy and suggest that a Spinozist perspective opens another pathway to rethink the relationship between civil war and power without being constrained by such a dichotomy, and, at the same time, without a ratification of domination and sovereignty.

Unlike other theorists and philosophers whose work I have discussed so far, Spinoza never wrote explicitly on civil war. Spinoza's political philosophy nonetheless presents us with an extremely rich conceptual toolset for thinking the conceptual nexus between civil war and power. In this chapter, I suggest a reading of Spinoza's work focusing on two interrelated issues: first, the relationship between power in terms of *potentia* and *potestas*, and second his critique of—and alternative to—a Hobbesian understanding of the passage from the state of nature to the political realm. As well as examining primary texts written by Spinoza, I will also trace these two themes in the commentaries written on Spinoza's work, including those of Antonio Negri, Gilles

Deleuze, Alexandre Matheron, and Filippo Del Lucchese, and I will discuss whether Spinozist political philosophy could provide us with a conceptual toolset for pinpointing the uncertain and volatile nature of the relationship that exists between civil war and power.

5.1 Spinoza's Conceptualization of Power

Be it in his metaphysical works or later political writings, the concept of power plays a significant role in Spinoza's philosophy; indeed, as Gilles Deleuze once put it, Spinoza's work "presents itself as a theory of power" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 104). Yet, Spinoza never explicitly defines his concept of power, and his use of two separate Latin terms for denoting power, *potentia* and *potestas*, creates a degree of difficulty, especially when such distinction is carried into English.[51] Analyzing the difference between these two distinct—and at the same time, closely interrelated—terms denoting power is not only crucial for understanding Spinoza's perspective, but also central to our exploration of the conceptual nexus between civil war and power.

Before moving any further, a clarification seems necessary. The trajectory that I propose here may seem suspiciously similar to what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri pursued in their attempt to locate civil war in the antagonistic relationship between two modalities of power denoted by the concepts of Empire and the multitude, which was also based on a specific reading of Spinoza's work. The reader may justifiably wonder what differentiates my approach. Rather than assuming the inherent antagonism of *potentia* and *potestas*, I will propose an alternative reading that shows how this pair of concepts function

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[51] While most of the Indo-European languages have two distinct words to designate this difference (*potentia* and *potestas* in Latin, *puissance* and *pouvoir* in French, *potenza* and *potere* in Italian, *Vermögen* and *Macht* in German), both meanings in English are covered by a single word: power. In order to prevent any confusion, I will use the Latin versions of the concepts.

in a complementary yet irreducible way. But before presenting my own reading of Spinoza I believe that it would be beneficial to interpret Negri's engagement with Spinoza.

5.1.1 Negri's Interpretation of Spinoza

In the second half of the 20th century, there was renewed interest in Spinoza, especially the cluster of issues revolving around his conceptualization of power. This theoretical revival owes much to Negri's seminal interpretation of Spinoza's political philosophy. While it is true that Negri was not the first to give new attention to Spinoza's political philosophy—Louis Althusser, Alexandre Matheron, Étienne Balibar, and to some extent Gilles Deleuze's work predates Negri's—his was an almost complete revaluation and, perhaps more importantly, an adaptation of Spinozist political concepts and categories to address the issues of the present.[52]

What made Negri's reading so influential, and at the same time so provocative, is his emphasis on the distinction between two terms, *potentia* and *potestas*, that Spinoza uses to describe power. In a foreword to Negri's *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Negri, 1991), Michael Hardt, who was the book's translator, provides us with a succinct account of Negri's position:

> Throughout Negri's writings we find a clear division between Power and power, both in theoretical and practical terms. In general, Power denotes the centralized, mediating, transcendental force of command, whereas power is the local, immediate, actual force of constitution. It is essential to recognize clearly from the outset that this distinction does not merely refer to the different capabilities of subjects with disparate resources and potentialities; rather, it marks two fundamentally different forms of authority and organization that stand opposed in

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[52] Although Deleuze's *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy* predates any of Negri's writings, it could hardly be seen as dealing with the question of politics (Deleuze, 1992).

both conceptual and material terms, in metaphysics as in politics-in the organization of being as in the organization of society. (Hardt, 1991, p. xiii)

There are three things that need to be highlighted in Negri's reading of Spinoza. First is the non-negotiable antagonism Negri locates between *potentia* and *potestas*: while the former implies the horizontal, immanent, affirmative power which is productive and constituent, the latter designates the hierarchical, transcendental, constituted power of command and appropriation.[53] Second, for Negri, *potentia* has primacy over *potestas* by definition, or put it differently, the latter is ontologically subordinate to or a degenerated form of the former. For Negri, this leads to

a real antimony: *potentia* and *potestas*, power against Power. *Potentia* as the dynamic and constitutive inherence of the single in the multiplicity, of mind in the body, of freedom in necessity—power against Power—where *potestas* is presented as the subordination of the multiplicity, of the mind, of freedom, and of *potentia.* (Negri, 1991, p. 191)

Third, Negri argues that Spinoza equates the notions of constitution and production precisely by way of framing *potentia* both as a productive force, in terms of *cupiditas* or desire, and at the same time as a constituent social force that could bring about subversive collective modes of existence.[54] For Negri, Spinoza provides a theoretical perspective in which "[m]aterial production, political organization, ethical and cognitive liberation are all posed at the intersection between production force and the positive constitution of the

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[53] As Negri writes,

Power (*potestas*) is subordinated to power (*potentia*). Political constitution is always set in motion by the resistance to Power. It is a physics of resistance: No complexity of constitution is given that is not also a complexity of declarations of power, of expressions of production. Political constitution is a productive machine of second nature, of the transformative appropriation of nature, and therefore a machine for the attack and the destruction of Power. Power (*potestas*) is contingency. The process of being, the always-more-complex affirmation of subjective power, and the construction of the necessity of being all excavate the basis of Power, to demolish it. Power (*potestas*) is superstition, the organization of fear, nonbeing; power opposes it by constituting itself collectively (Ibid., p .226).

[54] In other words, "[i]t is power (*potentia*), the power of being and the infinite extension of the productive causality" (Ibid., p. 57).

world" (Ibid., p. 224). *The Savage Anomaly* offers the reader an almost completely new portrait of Spinoza as a revolutionary, subversive, or as Negri puts it, a "savage" *conceptual persona* rather than presenting him as an obscure rationalist thinker of early modernity.

Negri's interpretation of Spinoza's work, based on the antagonistic distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*, with primacy given to the former over the latter, and the identity between production and constitution, is crucial for Negri's own philosophical and political project. It lays the foundations for a Spinozist Marxism; both a Marxist reading of Spinoza and a Spinozist reading of Marx.[55] Negri's interpretation is an attempt at establishing an immanent materialist philosophical point of view, warding off Hegelian metaphysics by displacing the dialectical framing of contradiction with that of an absolute antagonism without any kind of mediation. Translated into a Marxist theoretical framework, such a move not only envisages a non-dialectical antagonism between the productive forces and the relations of production, but also points to an immediate passage from productive forces to collective praxis by way of a struggle between constituent and constituted powers.[56] In this sense, Negri outlines a novel political program for the passage

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[55] In his article "Marx before Spinoza", Cesare Casarino divides Spinozist Marxism into five categories:
> (1) Thinkers who have written about Marx and Spinoza in separate yet closely related works. For example, Negri and Balibar. […] (2) Thinkers who refer implicitly or in passing to the relation between Spinoza and Marx, such as Althusser. […] (3) Thinkers whose entire thought is imbued thoroughly with Spinozian and Marxian problematics, see Deleuze's thought and Negri and Hardt's collaborative works. […] (4) Thinkers who confront the Spinoza-Marx relation indirectly yet significantly via the examination of a third and related thinker, the best example being Macherey's book entitled Hegel or Spinoza. […] (5) Thinkers who directly refer to both Spinoza and Marx, and Frédéric Lordon is one of them. (Casarino, 2011, pp. 218-219)

[56] As Negri puts it:
> Spinoza, pushing forward the identity of production and constitution, at the origins of capitalist civilization, destroys the possibility of a dialectic of Power (*potestas*) and opens the perspective of power (*potentia*). Scientifically, this rupture expresses the necessity for and shows the form of a phenomenology of collective praxis. Today, in an epoch characterized by the crisis of capitalism, this rupture between (capitalistic) relations of production and (proletarian) productive force has again reached a point of extreme tension. *Potestas* and *potentia* are presented as an absolute antagonism. The independence of productive force, then, can find in Spinoza an important source

to communism beyond the constraints of the state-form, a viable alternative to the disastrous legacy of 'real socialism' and orthodox currents of Marxism.

Negri's reading gives us a productive way to rethink Spinoza's work politically. Yet it involves an oversimplification that risks overlooking the richness and complexity of Spinoza's theory of power. Locating civil war within an absolute antagonism between two types of power may end up with a Manichaean understanding of politics and attribute too much certainty to a condition that is essentially uncertain and ambiguous. In this chapter, I offer an alternative path by discussing two interrelated issues: first, an alternative reading of the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*, and second, Spinoza's counterargument to the Hobbesian understanding of politics in the transition from the state of nature to state sovereignty. While I will primarily focus on these two interrelated issues from a perspective that prioritizes their political implications, given that Spinoza's political theory, ontology, and theory of affects are closely intertwined, tracking the trajectory running from the ontological framing of power to the political one seems necessary.

5.1.2 The Concept of *Potentia*

To start with power in terms of *potentia*: what does it denote? Although *potentia* is an important concept in Spinoza's writings, he never explicitly defines the term. The same goes for the concept of *potestas* and indeed for how these two concepts of power diverge from each other. Yet this does not mean that we are completely left in the dark. A very general way to define *potentia* would be to associate the concept with the ability to do something. It is important to point out here that the concept of *potentia* has nothing to do

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of reference, it can find in the development of his hypothesis a line on which to historically organize itself. (Negri, 1991, p. 229)

with potentiality in an Aristotelian sense. This observation is consistent with both the general usage of the term in Latin and also Spinoza's use of it (Curley, 2016). Indeed, if we take a closer look into Spinoza's writings, we can see how he associates *potentia* with the capacity to act, *potentia* is always actual or in action; it is usually used as *potentia agendi*, or power to act.

As power to act, *potentia* is not a relational concept of power; rather, it implies a degree of intensity. For Spinoza, each thing acts in various ways proportionately according to its power. But what is the source of their power to act? The answer Spinoza gives may not please everyone, at least not at first sight: for him, the source of *potentia* is none other than God. Does this mean that Spinoza simply gives a theological explanation of power? While operating within the conceptual vocabulary of Scholastic philosophy and Hebrew theological thought, Spinoza provides a conceptualization of God quite different than what is implied in the traditional sense. Spinoza's God first and foremost functions as a philosophical or ontological concept rather than a theological one. Spinoza defines God as the singular substance, an infinite and eternal entity whose essence necessarily involves existence.[57] God is perceived through its attributes, extension and thought, and each of these attributes expresses the eternal and the infinite essence of God.[58] All other existing things, corporeal or incorporeal, are produced by God through its attributes in infinite ways and are affections or modifications of God's essence. But what made Spinoza's conceptualization so provocative and revolutionary in his time, and eventually paved the

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[57] It is important to mention here that Spinoza's conceptualization of God as the singular substance should not be understood in a similar way to Plotinus's concept of the One. Spinoza's substance does not function via emanation, in other words, God or Nature is the immanent cause, not the transitive one.

[58] For Spinoza, humans conceive two attributes: extension and thought. For further reading, see: the first part of *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1985).

road to his excommunication from the Jewish community in Amsterdam and a failed attempt at assassination[59], was his naturalization of God. In Spinoza's use of the concept, God, if not entirely synonymous with Nature, is interchangeable with it, and best expressed by his famous formula: *Deus sive Natura,* God or Nature. To be more precise, Spinoza's God is posited as *Natura Naturans*, nature naturing, and involves an active, expansive, and productive potency.[60] In this sense, Spinoza "denies the existence of a moral, transcendent, creator God" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 17) who has a coercive power comparable to that of a sovereign over his subjects.[61] For him, God or Nature's power (*potentia*) is precisely its inexhaustible productive activity and is distributed among the modifications that it produces.

When we move from God or Nature to its modifications, the finite things that are part of *Natura Naturata*, Nature natured or the created nature, *potentia* is now posited as

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[59] For a detailed biography of Spinoza, see: Steven Nadler's *Spinoza: A Life* (Nadler, 1999).

[60] Spinoza defines the concepts of *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* in the following way: "by Natura naturans we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attribute of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, i.e. […], God, in so far as he is considered as a free cause" and "by Natura naturata I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, i.e., all the modes of God's attributes in so far as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 434).

[61] As he puts it in *Ethics*:

> By God's power [*potentia*] ordinary people understand God's free will and his right over all things which are, things which on that account are commonly considered to be contingent. For they say that God has the Power [*potestas*] of destroying all things and reducing them to nothing. Further, they very often compare God's power with the power of Kings. But we have refuted this […] and we have shown that God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself, i.e., just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as everyone maintains unanimously) that God understands himself, with the same necessity it also follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes. And then we have shown […] that God's power is nothing except God's active essence. And so it is as impossible for us to conceive that God does not act as it is to conceive that he does not exist. Again, if it were agreeable to pursue these matters further, I could also show here that that power which ordinary people fictitiously ascribe to God is not only human (which shows that ordinary people conceive God as a man, or as like a man), but also involves lack of power […] For no one will be able to perceive rightly the things I maintain unless he takes great care not to confuse God's power with the human power or right of Kings. (Spinoza, 1985, p. 449)

the essence of every existing thing.[62] For Spinoza, each thing expresses a degree of God or Nature's infinite and inexhaustible power to act and "corresponds to a specific degree of power different from all the others" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 65). As long as the effectuation of power to act is determined through the encounters (*occursus*) one has with others, be it beneficial or harmful to itself of which "it has to resist external causes which sometimes run contrary to it and can even destroy it when their power is stronger", power in terms of *potentia* is strictly tied to the effort or striving for preserving existence, or what Spinoza simply calls as *conatus* (Jaquet, 2011, p. 293).[63] From this perspective, *potentia* stands as the active and intrinsic force of existing, or "another word he employs as a synonym [to *potentia agendi*]: *vis existendi*" (Deleuze, 1978).[64] In other words, from Spinoza's perspective, "everything tries to remain in existence and to assert all the consequences included in its essence proportionately to its power" (Jaquet, 2011, p. 293) and it is in this sense that power in terms of *potentia* does not have a definite object: it is a relationship formed with the totality of the world, as we will discuss, in ways both productive and destructive, constituent and destituent.

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[62] In the second book of Ethics, Spinoza gives this lengthy definition: "to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 447). When a thing comes into existence, let's say a person is born, from Spinoza's perspective, an infinite number of extensive parts, in the case of a human body muscles, bones, veins, blood, and so on, are determined to compose a body on the basis of what Deleuze would later call a characteristic relationship or a ratio corresponding to its essence. Yet, for Spinoza, things neither come into being nor exist in a vacuum (E1p15s), as the individual is not a substance but primarily a set of relations, or put differently, individuation always involves transindividuation (Balibar, 2020).

[63] The concept of conatus means the striving or the effort for preserving existence. Spinoza's definition in *Ethics* is a rather simple one: "[e]ach thing as far as it can by its own power strives to persevere in its own being" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 498).

[64] It is important to note that, for Spinoza, modal essences do not necessarily involve existence, as finite modes always have an external cause different from themselves.

5.1.3 The Concept of *Potestas*

I defined the concept of *potentia* in terms of the intrinsic power to act and the force of existing distributed proportionally among all things in Nature. When it comes to Spinoza's use of the concept of *potestas*, things get more complicated. Not only does Spinoza not provide us with a clear-cut definition of how he deploys the concept of *potestas*, but also in his "works there is a considerable overlap between the meaning of *potestas* and […] *potentia*" and "these words may sometimes replace each other" (Terpstra, 2011, p. 294). However, there also are other instances where the contrast between the two concepts becomes much more noticeable. Indeed, ranging from positing an absolute antagonism and equating *potestas* with state power or domination as Negri does, to Matheron's formulation of the relationship between *potentia* and *potestas* as that of an alienation, or to framing *potentia* and *potestas* within Deleuze's theoretical framework of affects, commentators of Spinoza's work have consistently sought to define the concept of *potestas* and its relationship to *potentia*.

What then does the concept of *potestas* denote and how can it be distinguished from *potentia*? To start with the general use in Latin: having its roots in the ancient Roman law, *potestas* usually "refers to power arising in an institutional context from a person's (or collective body's) position in that institution" (Curley, 2016, p. 649). Spinoza's use of the concept, however, covers a rather broader meaning: *potestas* denotes power in a transitive sense, in terms of the exercise of power over someone to "have other people do what you want" or over something to produce some effect (Terpstra, 2011, p. 295). Power in terms of *potestas* involves an attempt for *colinearization of forces* through which the targeted body's power to act is modified (Lordon, 2014). In this sense, Spinoza's use of the concept

of *potestas* cannot be simply reduced to power arising in an institutional context. With *potestas*, Spinoza replaces "the traditional juridical concept of authority by an economy of power" and opens a relational dimension in which "[p]ower is not simply the unchanging capability and force of the actor", but also becomes a question of "the capacity of what he's acting on" (Terpstra, 2011, p. 296) and, as Matheron argues, it depicts a relation of forces (Matheron, 2020). Does power in terms of *potestas* solely involve a relationship of subjugation wherein the power to act is limited, as some argue so, or is there another way to think of it? To answer this question adequately, there is one last thing that needs to be discussed: the relationship between Spinoza's conceptualization of power and his theory of affects.

5.1.4 Power and Affects

Affects, for Spinoza, in Latin *affectus*, are the affections (*affectio*) or the modifications of the body and the mind, of which Spinoza rejects any kind of dualism between the two, and they express the effects of external causes.[65] Although translated into English as emotions or feelings in the earlier translations of Spinoza's work, the Spinozist conceptualization of *affectus* does not imply a passive state, but refers to "the passage from one state to another" and, more precisely, to the constant variation in our power or capacity to act depending on the nature of the encounters we have. For Spinoza, there are two main categories of affects: the active ones and the passive ones. While I will be focusing more on the second category, a quick definition of the active affects would be to frame them as the class of affects that "are born of reason" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 56). In other words, active affects are affections of

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[65] For further readings on Spinoza's distinction between the concepts *affectus* and *affectio*, see: Deleuze's Vincennes lecture on March 31, 1981 (Deleuze, 1981).

the mind without an external cause, directly flowing from adequate ideas or common notions. Although the active affects are pure expressions of the mind's power to act, few people ever attain them and their role in politics is rather limited.[66] In *Ethics*, compared to a total of forty-eight passions, Spinoza names only a few as "active": "moderation, presence of mind in danger, sobriety, courtesy and mercy" (Van Reijen, 2011, p. 283).

When it comes to the passive affects, or the passions, things are different. For Spinoza, all passions have an external cause and, subsequently, they have a lesser status compared to the active affects: they are partial and confused ideas of effects without an adequate understanding of the causes. In this sense, the passions signify the capacity of being acted upon or being affected. Deleuze, who emphasizes the affinity between power and theory of affects in his Vincennes lectures on Spinoza and his short monograph titled *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, explains this in the following way:

> Hence the capacity for being affected is manifested as a power of acting insofar as it is assumed to be filled by active affections, but as a power of being acted upon insofar as it is filled by passions. For a given individual, i.e., for a given degree of power assumed to be constant within certain limits, the capacity for being affected itself remains constant within those limits, but the power of acting and the power of being acted upon vary greatly, in inverse ratio to one another. (Deleuze, 1988, p. 27)

At first glance, for Deleuze, the ratio between the power to act and the capacity to be acted upon is inverse and it is the passions that seem to be separating us from our power of acting. But is this really a denunciation of the passions? While it is clear that Spinoza contrasts

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[66] As Miriam van Reijen writes,

Spinoza's political philosophy in the Tractatus politicus is based upon the fact that, 'as he proved to be true' in the Ethics, men are necessarily subject to their affects. Society and the state are inevitably based on the affects, especially fear and 'blind desire', which not originating from reason are passions and not actions. Philosophers might meditate about the transformation of the passions, but the politicians have to deal with them. In ruling the state they will neglect the difference between passions and active affects. (Van Reijen, 2011, p. 282)

passions with living 'according to the guidance of reason', he is also aware that the complete annulment of the role passions plays in our lives is nearly impossible. For instance, he "criticizes the Stoics and Descartes for taking the freedom of the will and its capacity to acquire power over the passions for granted" (Van Reijen, 2011, p. 282).[67] As long as an entity is located in a causal chain—for Spinoza, every finite thing is so situated—for every capacity to act, there corresponds a capacity to be acted upon. As Deleuze puts it "so long as the mode exists, the duration is made up of the lived transitions that define its affects, constant passages to greater or lesser perfections, continual variations of the existing mode's power of acting" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 101).

In fact, it would be more plausible to argue that the crucial distinction in Spinoza's theory of affects is not so much an opposition between actions and passions but lies elsewhere between two kinds of passions: the sad and the joyful ones. What differentiates sad passions from joyful ones? Spinoza's answer is simple; while sad passions are affects that accompany a decrease in the power to act, with the joyful ones it is the inverse. Why is that so? The effectuation of *potentia* or the power to act is strictly tied to the effort or striving for preserving existence, and a thing's capacity to act is always determined through the nature of the encounters (*occursus*). These encounters may be beneficial or agree to its

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[67] As Spinoza writes in the fourth part of *Ethics*:

But human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute Power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e., the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this, and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction. For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true. Hence, insofar as we understand these things rightly, the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature. (Spinoza, 1985, pp. 593-594)

nature, or be harmful to it, so that "it has to resist external causes which sometimes run contrary to it and can even destroy it when their power is stronger" (Jaquet, 2011, p. 293). Sad passions are those that involve a fixation, a reactive investment of the power to act in order to prevent or minimize the effects of a bad encounter. On the other hand, joyful passions involve a different scenario. In Deleuze's words:

> In the contrary case, when we encounter a body that agrees with our nature, one whose relation compounds with ours, we may say that its power is added to ours; the passions that affect us are those of joy, and our power of acting is increased or enhanced. This joy is still a passion, since it has an external cause; we still remain separated from our power of acting, possessing it only in a formal sense. This power of acting is nonetheless increased proportionally; we "approach" the point of conversion, the point of transmutation that will establish our dominion, that will make us worthy of action, of active joys. (Deleuze, 1988, p. 28)

When one undergoes a sad passion, one's power of acting is blocked or diminished, and, be it relative or absolute, every joyful passion involves an increase in the power to act.

In Spinoza's theory of affects, as joy is a passion that accompanies an increase in one's power to act and the concept of *potentia* involves the expansiveness of the power to act, it is easy to understand why *potentia* is always associated with the joyful affects. As Deleuze puts it:

> joy is the realization (*effectuation*) of a power of action. I know of no powers of action that would be wicked. The typhoon is a power of action, it must delight in its soul, but… but it's not in destroying houses that it delights, it's in its being… Taking delight (*se réjouir*) is always delighting in being what one is, that is, in having reached where one is. Joy is not self-satisfaction, not some enjoyment of being pleased with oneself, not at all, not the pleasure of being happy with oneself. Rather, it's the pleasure in conquest (*conquête*), as Nietzsche said, but the conquest does not consist of enslaving people, conquest is, for example, for a painter to conquer color, yes, that's what a conquest is. (Deleuze, 1989)

When it comes to *potestas*, things get more complicated. It is clear that certain forms of the exercise of power (*potestas*) may be an obstacle in the way of the effectuation of *potentia*, especially those forms of *potestas* that aim at "preventing someone from doing that of which he/she is capable [and] someone from realizing one's power of action" (Deleuze, 1989). But is the exercise of *potestas* always bound to the sad passions? If a person or a thing could be affected in two ways, either fortifying or diminishing the power to act, why should the exercise of power be exclusively equated with the diminishment of one's power to act?

If we take a close look at the following passage from *The Political Treatise*, we get a better understanding of how Spinoza frames the exercise of power in terms of *potestas*:

> One person has another in his 'power [a] if he has him tied up, or [b] if he has taken away his arms and means of defending himself or escaping, or [c] if he has instilled fear in him, or [d] if he has so bound him to himself by a benefit that the other person would rather conduct himself according to his benefactor's wishes than according to his own, and wants to live according to his benefactor's opinion, not according to his own. Someone who has another person in his 'power in the first or second of these ways possesses only his Body, not his Mind. If he has him in his 'power in the third or fourth way, then he has made both his Mind and his Body subject to his control—but only while the fear or hope lasts. When either of these is taken away, the other person remains his own master (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 512)

Besides the different objects for the exercise of power, body and/or mind, there is another difference in how power functions in each of these four cases. The first involves a direct physical intervention or violence; the power to act of the person on whom *potestas* is exercised is reduced to its absolute minimum. The second scenario is similar to the first one; while it does not involve a direct intervention or an explicit exercise of violence, it nonetheless depicts a condition of pacification in which the power to act is considerably limited. However, the third and the fourth depict a different situation: they both involve an

alignment of the power to act, yet with a crucial distinction. One involves a certain diminishment of the power to act by invoking a sad passion, fear; the other gives us an insight into how the exercise of power could be accompanied by a passive joy, and thus accompanied by an increase—even if a relative one and still involving a separation—in the power to act.

Furthermore, the concept of *potestas* "signifies the power to cause an action, either a thought or a motion, which is inflicted on other things or persons" and "refers to dependence or subordination on the one hand, and freedom or disposition on the other" (Terpstra, 2011, p. 296). I am not denying the existence of configurations in which *potentia* and *potestas* are polarized in an antagonistic fashion. The 'moralist trinity'—the power regime running across the slave, the tyrant, and the priest—that Deleuze focuses upon, and the corrupted forms of *imperium* that Spinoza explains in *The Political Treatise*—namely, tyranny, plutocracy, and rule by the mob—are solid examples of an antagonism between *potentia* and *potestas*.[68] However, characterizing the relationship between these two concepts of power *solely* as an absolute antagonism overlooks the complexity that

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[68] As Deleuze puts it:

> And Spinoza creates a very strange portrait of the tyrant by explaining that the tyrant is someone who needs, above all, the sadness of his subjects, because there is no terror that doesn't have as its basis a kind of collective sadness. […] The priest, perhaps for completely different reasons, has need of man's sadness on his own condition. And when he laughs, it is not more reassuring because the tyrant could laugh, and the counselors, the favorites of the tyrant could also laugh. It is a bad laugh, and why is it a bad laugh? It's a bad laugh not because of its quality; Spinoza would not say that. It is precisely a laugh that has for its object only sadness and the communication of sadness. What does this mean? This is bizarre. The priest, according to Spinoza, essentially needs an action motivated by remorse, introducing remorse. This is a culture of sadness. Whatever the purposes (fins), Spinoza will say that at that moment, we don't care about the purposes. He judges only that: cultivating sadness. The tyrant for his political power needs to cultivate sadness, the priest needs to cultivate sadness as far as Spinoza can see, who has the experience of the Jewish priest, the Protestant priest, and the Catholic priest. (Deleuze, 1980)

Spinoza's formulation offers and gives an account of only one possible configuration among the many.

As Spinoza puts it, "to understand rightly how far the right and 'power [*potestas*] of the state extend, we must note that its 'power [*potestas*] is not limited to what it can compel men to do from fear, but extends to absolutely everything it can bring men to do in compliance with its commands" as "[i]t's obedience which makes the subject, not the reason for the obedience" (Spinoza, 2016b, p. 297). So, if we are to conclude that the relation between *potentia* and *potestas* is not primarily one of absolute antagonism, does this mean that the difference between these two concepts of power is insignificant?

5.2 The Double Articulation of Power and Civil War

Even if we do not locate the concepts of *potentia* and *potestas* at extreme opposite poles and interpret Spinoza's political philosophy on the basis of a constant conflict between them, the distinction he makes between these two concepts of power is still of central importance to our task of thinking power alongside civil war: how *potentia* and *potestas* are articulated is indeed the source for an inherent volatility that marks the Spinozist way of understanding politics, which in the end allows us to consider civil war as a real possibility without equating it with power and at the same time without reducing power to domination.

5.2.1 The Double Articulation of Power

So far, we have discussed the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*, first from an ontological perspective and then from the perspective of the theory of affects. Now, I want to focus more closely on its political implications. To start from power in terms of *potentia*:

based on our discussions so far, there is no doubt that Spinoza's concept of *potentia* involves the zero-degree of existence from an ontological standpoint, denoting an inherent resilience and capacity for resistance. It also functions in this way from a political perspective.[69] Taking a closer look at Spinoza's theory of right helps us understand why this is so. At the very heart of Spinoza's theory of right, there lies his association of natural right with power in terms of *potentia*:

> By the right and established practice of nature I mean nothing but the rules of the nature of each individual, according to which we conceive each thing to be naturally determined to existing and having effects in a certain way. For example, fish are determined by nature to swimming, and the large ones to eating the smaller. So it is by the supreme right of nature that fish are masters of the water, and that the large ones eat the smaller. For it's certain that nature, considered absolutely, has the supreme right to do everything it can, i.e., that the right of nature extends as far as its power does. For the power of nature is the power of God itself, and he has the supreme right over all things. […] But the universal power of the whole of nature is nothing but the power of all individuals together. From this it follows that each individual has a supreme right to do everything it can, or that the right of each thing extends as far as its determinate power does. (Spinoza, 2016b, p. 282)

Or, as he puts it in the *Tractatus Politicus*,

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[69] It is important to point out the difference between Spinoza and Agamben. The latter uses the concept of bare life as an impoverished life stripped off from every conceivable right and as a passive object of sovereign violence. As Filippo Del Lucchese writes:

> Giorgio Agamben used the notion of 'bare life' precisely in this sense, to define the most secret, hidden outcome of politics and power. Natural life is not a presupposition for sovereign power or for sovereignty itself. And sovereignty does not exercise itself in the natural world by raising artificial barriers—as it does for the contractualists—in order to erect a fence around the sphere of politics. Bare life is the result, rather, of the ultimate achievement peculiar to power that is tragically played out at particular times in history by particularly atrocious figures of modern politics, in the extermination camps, for instance. For Agamben, then, following in the wake of Foucault, the production and reproduction of bare life, far from being a failure of politics, is actually its greatest accomplishment: its hidden matrix, the very nomos of politics. But 'bare life,' in this sense, is more of a theoretical figure than a real thing. It is a radically negative concept intended to express the lowest possible degree of humanity reduced to an inert object. Now, the philosophy of […] Spinoza denies that bare life can exist at all, negating its 'ontological reality,' if you will. The philosophy of resistance and the absolute affirmation of life […] prevents us from thinking about the 'bareness' of life; and life is never submitted to the violent action of power as a purely passive object. (Del Lucchese, 2009, p. 45)

Spinoza's understanding of life, on the other hand, designates a dynamic force in action that is always growing and changing,

By the Right of nature, then, I understand the laws of nature themselves, or the rules according to which all things happen, i.e., the very power of nature. So the natural Right of the whole of nature, and as a result, of each individual, extends as far as its power does. Hence, whatever each man does according to the laws of his nature, he does with the supreme right of nature. He has as much right over nature as he has power. (Ibid., p. 508)

While at first glance there is an uncanny resemblance to the totalitarian formula of *might makes right*, Spinoza's formulation has nothing to do with what is implied there. Rather than making a normative claim that might read like 'the one who has the power can arbitrarily set the rules of law' or establishing a hierarchy depending on the power that different subjects may possess[70], what is at issue here is rather designating an unalienable and irreducible right stemming from *potentia*, or the multiple ways of existence and differentiating capacities to act. For Spinoza, this "right that is coextensive with *potentia* is essential and nontransferable" and stands as the basis of the social and political existence (Steinberg, 2018, p. 181).

Should we read this formulation as some sort of a longing for a pre-political or a solitary existence in an idealized or romanticised nature, as it is in the case of Rousseau? No, for two reasons. First, Spinoza abstains from establishing any kind of dichotomy between natural and social life. Nature is omnipresent and univocal, and human societies are not different in this regard: they are a part of nature, and any kind of socio-political arrangement is governed by the same laws as everything else. Second, for Spinoza, there

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[70] As Spinoza puts it in *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*:

Now the supreme law of nature is that each thing strives to persevere in its state, as far as it can by its of itself. From this it follows that each individual has the supreme right to do this, i.e. (as I have said), to exist and have effects as it is naturally determined to do. Nor do we recognize here any difference between men and other individuals in nature, nor between men endowed with reason and those others who are ignorant of true reason, nor between fools and madmen, and those who are sensible and sane. For whatever each thing does according to the laws of its nature, it does with supreme right, because it acts as it has been determined to do according to nature, and cannot do otherwise. (Spinoza, 2016b, pp. 282-283)

is no such a pre-social or pre-political existence for humankind. While it is true that Spinoza argues elsewhere that nature produces individuals rather than nations, tribes, or sects[71], he also firmly believes that human beings "are social animals" who "cannot live without a society", and "are scarcely able to lead a solitary life" (Gribnau, 2011, p. 313). Furthermore, he writes: "all men fear being alone, because no one alone has the strength to defend himself, and no one alone can provide the things necessary for life", "by nature men desire a civil order", and "[i]t can't happen by nature that they'll ever completely dissolve it" (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 532). Indeed, for Spinoza, the life in common has another significant advantage beyond just providing security and basic necessities of life: when "two individuals […] are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 556); by forming societies, "they can do more together, and hence, together have more right over nature than either does alone" and "[t]he more connections they've formed in this way, the more right they'll all have together" (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 513). In other words, the life in common or the social existence involves the creation of a new composite social body, the multitude, whose power far exceeds each member's own, and it is for this reason that "[t]o man, […] there is nothing more useful than man" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 556).

While Spinoza's formulation may seem straightforward, the combination of individual powers in a composite social body is not as simple as it might sound. Although the democratic organization of the multitude, in which "everyone remains equal, as they were before, in the state of nature", is really "the most natural state, and the one which

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[71] As he writes in *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*: "[s]urely nature creates individuals, not nations, individuals who are distinguished into nations only by differences of language, laws and accepted customs" (Spinoza, 2016b, p. 317).

approached most nearly the freedom nature concedes to everyone", such a political configuration is only possible when *free* human beings, or those who are led by the dictates of reason, come together to act in a collective manner (Spinoza, 2016b, p. 289). However, for Spinoza, as long as human beings are more inclined to act following their passions rather than reason alone, or "are torn by affects which are passions, they can be contrary to one another", the multitude is a fractured whole traversed by multiple fault lines (Spinoza, 1985, p. 562). As this means a continuous oscillation between the diminishment of power to act and its enhancement, there are no guarantees that every social interaction would lead up to a greater power. Moreover, as members of a given socio-political community continually act upon others and in return are acted upon by the others, any kind of arrangement also brings *potestas* into the equation. In other words, the passage from individuality to community involves a complex articulation of power rather than a simple addition of *potentia*, it is also a matter of how *potestas* is exercised and distributed to an extent that "the use of *potestas* marks Spinoza's turn towards politics" (Terpstra, 2011, p. 296).

A key concept for understanding how *potentia* and *potestas* are related politically, and also Spinoza's perspective on the passage from individuality to community, is *imperium*. The concept of *imperium* could be translated as sovereignty, dominion, or the authority to rule, and explained from two perspectives corresponding to the distinction between *potestas* and *potentia*. From the perspective of *potestas*, unlike "[t]he right that is coextensive with *potentia* […] right as *potestas* is transferrable and can be united into a single authority", sovereignty stands as the spatio-temporal concentration of power or the sum of powers (*summa potestas*) and denotes a condition in which the right to rule, or the

power to make others act in a certain way, is dislocated from each member of a given society and concentrated in the hands of others (Steinberg, 2018, p. 181). This dislocation may take three forms depending on how this right to rule is distributed in a given society: "[i]f this responsibility is the business of a Council made up of the common multitude, then the State is called a Democracy; if the council is made up only of certain select people, it's called an Aristocracy; and finally, if the responsibility for Public Affairs, and hence sovereignty, is vested in one person, it's called a Monarchy" (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 514).

From the perspective of *potentia*, however, sovereignty stands as a right determined by the collective power (*potentia*) of the multitude.[72] In this sense, Spinoza's use of the concept is unconventional: for Spinoza, sovereignty does not denote the absolute or the uncontested power of a single person or a privileged caste over the rest of the society. This right to rule

> is nothing more than the Right of nature, determined not by the power [*potentia*] of each person, but by the power [*potentia*] of a multitude, led as if by one mind. That is, just as each person in the natural state has as much right as he has power [*potentia*], so also the body and mind of the whole state have as much right as they have power [*potentia*]. (Ibid., p. 517)

In other words, whether wielded by a king in a monarchy, a council made up of a certain group of people in an aristocracy, or a council made up of the members of the community in a democracy, sovereignty is only the right to rule derived by the collective *potentia* of the multitude. In this sense, from Spinoza's perspective, the power (*potentia*) of the sovereign or the state does not transcend the members' power in an absolute way. In the

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[72] For Spinoza,

> This right, which is defined by the power of a multitude, is usually called Sovereignty [Imperium]. Whoever, by common agreement, has responsibility for public Affairs—that is, the rights of making, interpreting, and repealing laws, fortifying cities, and making decisions about war and peace, etc.— has this right absolutely. (Ibid., p. 514)

end, the sovereign and the subject, the ruler and the ruled are all part of nature and all belong to the multitude; the substantial question being how the multitude will govern itself.

Although the exercise of power in terms of *potestas* still stems from or depends on the collective *potentia* of the multitude, this does not mean that *potestas* is a trivial concept for understanding how the multitude governs itself. While it is true that the transference that *potestas* signifies is still relative and not the qualitative change often implied in the theories that envisage a substantive passage from the natural right to civil right, this does not mean that it is merely fictional. As Negri notes,

> [i]n fact, the passage from individuality to community does not come about either through a transfer of power or through a cession of rights; rather, it comes about within a constitutive process […] The State, even though it is defined on a contractual basis, is not a fiction; it is, instead, a natural determination, a second nature, constituted by the concurrent dynamics […] It is a dislocation of power. (Negri, 1991, p. 110)

In this sense, in the passage from individuality to community, *potentia* becomes mediated through the relations of *potestas* and this indeed corresponds to a "change of relations of force internal to the sphere of natural right" (Matheron, 2020, p. 304). But where can we locate civil war in a conceptual framework like the one above? To answer this question, we need to discuss how Spinoza's perspective differs from Hobbesian political theory.

5.2.2 Spinoza contra Hobbes

Spinoza's understanding of power as a double articulation of *potentia* and *potestas*, and his political theory in general, constitutes both a critique of, and alternative to, the Hobbesian theorization of the political realm in the passage from the state of nature to the civil state. Spinoza articulates his position in this short fragment from the letter to Jelles dating 2 June 1674:

> With regard to political theory, the difference between Hobbes and myself, which is the subject of your inquiry, consists in this, that I always preserve the natural right in its entirety, and I hold that the sovereign power in a State has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject. This is always the case in a state of nature. (Spinoza, 2002, pp. 891-892)

In this letter, three interrelated issues need closer attention, the first being how Spinoza approaches the notion of the natural right. As we have discussed above, Spinoza formulates the natural right as coextensive with power in terms of *potentia*, in terms of the power to act and exist in a certain way. In this sense, the natural right, for him, can never be surrendered or lose its central role of importance. The second is the limits of sovereign power. As we also have previously discussed, for Spinoza, the sovereign's power is not limitless, indeed, only commensurate with the articulated power of the multitude. Third, the state of nature, for Spinoza, is integral to the domain of politics, whereas Hobbes sees a substantial break between the two. Not only do these three lines of difference constitute the kernel of Spinozist political philosophy, but they are especially important for us in creating a vantage point from which to rethink the relationship between civil war and power.

The Hobbesian concept of the state of nature designated the pre-political condition of humankind in terms of the *bellum omnium contra omnes,* war of all against all -- a condition of unceasing civil war. This is because "[i]n the state of nature, people generally do everything they can to preserve their lives according to their own judgement, at whatever cost to their fellow humans and regardless of its conflict with traditional morality" (Field, 2020, p. 39). The state of nature stands as a spatio-temporality marked by an unrestrained freedom in which no one can overcome others by virtue of their own power alone. For Hobbes, the only possible way to overcome this despicable condition is by

forming a pact on the basis of a contract or covenant. This pact, however, can only function to the extent that the common enemy is still present. When the common enemy ceases to exist, the pact disperses, and the outcome is a slippage into the terrors of the state of nature. Moreover, for Hobbes, a pact based solely on a contract, or a covenant, is not sufficient:

> [a]nd Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore, notwithstanding the Lawes of Nature, (which everyone hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can (not) do it safely,) if there be no Power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men. (Hobbes, 2005, p. 133)

Fulfilling the conditions of a long-lasting peace is not so much of a matter of bringing individuals together or the creation of a collective organization, but it requires the authorization of a power structure that exceeds the sum of the constituents' powers. The solution Hobbes offers is a contract made by everyone with everyone in order to designate a representative, be it to a person or an assembly, materialized in the image of the Leviathan: the mortal God which expresses the supreme power of the sovereign. However, the relative peace under the shadow of the mighty Leviathan has a hefty price: it demands an unconditional obedience and the transference of all imaginable power to a supreme authority or a sovereign.

Let us consider the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* in Hobbes's analysis. At first glance, the distinction between these two concepts of power does not seem to be as explicit as it was in the case of Spinoza's use. Although Hobbes uses concepts of *potentia* and *potestas* interchangeably without attributing a meaningful distinction, Carlo Altini suggests that this 'confusion' or 'coincidence' is not accidental. Altini writes, "[t]he creation of the Hobbesian state can only be completed when *potentia* and *potestas*

coincide" (Altini, 2010, p. 235). However, this applies only to the sovereign's power, not his subjects'. The sovereign's right to rule is grounded in and originates from the contract: the sovereign exercises his power in accordance with the juridico-legal order. He is the 'legitimate' wielder of *potestas* or the power to command. On the other hand, however, the sovereign is not bound to the legal order as his subjects are. Indeed, the contract that Hobbes envisions is to be made between the subjects, not with the sovereign. The sovereign's power is absolute or transcends the juridico-political order. It is in this sense that the creation of the Leviathan-state implies the coincidence of *potentia* (absolute power) and *potestas* (ordained power) embodied in the figure of the sovereign.

However, from the perspective of the subjects, the terms of the relationship between *potentia* and *potestas* are entirely different. From Hobbes's perspective, *potentia* is also coextensive with the right of nature, albeit in terms of a capacity to dominate others. However, given that Hobbes believes that no one can overcome others by virtue of their own capacity, power in terms of *potentia* is completely ineffective in the state of nature. For him, the realization of *potentia* can only be possible within the realm of civility: "[t]he state is the highest and noblest realization of man's *potentia*, in the form of *potestas*" which goes side by side with its surrender (Ibid., p. 235).

The Hobbesian understanding of power involves the complete reduction of *potentia* to *potestas* and functions only as a mere instrument of the state, in a political system based on top-down commands of the sovereign and the subjects' obligation to obey them. "Hobbes insists that 'the people' can only speak through their sovereign representative; he denies there even is such a thing as popular power apart from its expression through the state. Outside of sovereignty, the multitude is an anamorphous mob without any ability or

authority to act" (Field, 2020, p. 10). In Hobbes's model of the Leviathan-state, any possibility for resistance and every reference to the natural right are effectively eliminated at the very start.

Although undeniably influenced by Hobbes's work, Spinoza is one of the first thinkers who dares to interrogate the viability of this model. Spinoza's position differs from Hobbes's on a number of interrelated issues. First, Spinoza raises the question of whether power in terms of *potentia* can be fully surrendered to a sovereign or a state. Given that *potentia* denotes the capacity to exist and act in a certain way, power in terms of *potentia* could never be transferred or ceded fully, and "[n]o one will ever be able to transfer to another his power [*potentia*], or consequently, his right, in such a way that he ceases to be a man" and "there will never be a supreme 'power [*potestas*] who can get everything to happen just as he wishes" (Spinoza, 2016b, p. 296). A complete transference of *potentia* is both an impossible and an unintelligible operation within Spinoza's conceptual framework. As Sandra Leonie Field puts it, such a formulation points out the weakest point of the Hobbesian position:

> In theory, subjects transfer all right and power *potentia* to establish a sovereign as *summa potestas* over them. But in practice, nobody can transfer all right and power without limit: regardless of any transfer of right or promise of obedience, each person's power *potentia* remains physically located in the person's body, and some sovereign commands simply will not be carried out. The result is devastating for Hobbes's project of overcoming war: indeed, historically Spinoza points out that sovereigns are more troubled by internal dissent than by external enemies, even when they are technically absolute in the Hobbesian sense. (Field, 2020, p. 9)

For Spinoza, what is actually transferred is the right over the exercise of *potestas*, which nonetheless corresponds to a proportional change in the relation of forces. The political community is constituted on the basis of the multitude's collective *potentia*, not on the

basis of the contract.[73] From the conceptual vantage point of *potentia*, however, even under an extreme condition, wherein power is concentrated in the hands of a tyrant, this separation is temporary; power as *potentia* continues to exist in a latent form and carries the possibility of resistance in itself. The constitution of the political realm harbors struggle or conflict, which Hobbes constantly strives to cast out; politics cannot be reduced either to the sovereign's commands or to the subjects' obedience to them.

Second, Spinoza puts Hobbes's framing of the passage from the state of nature to the political realm under scrutiny. At least at first glance, his account of the state of nature may seem similar to that of Hobbes's. As Matheron claims, Spinoza's "[s]tate of nature [...] is a despotism without a despot, anarchic and protean" (Matheron, 2020, p. 219) and he also sees a condition of permanent struggle before the foundation of the state. However, as nature is omnipresent and univocal, and human societies are a part of nature, for Spinoza, the state of nature could never be totally consumed and superseded in the emergence of the political community. As Filippo Del Lucchese points out,

> for Spinoza, the contract and the transfer of rights do not transform our nature. Conflict and discord do not disappear like magic, therefore, after a sovereign power has been instituted. Conflict will always be a part of politics, one that can never be eliminated. On the contrary, another front of conflict will be opened up in opposition to the sovereign, whose power must be actively approved at each instant by the citizens in order to be preserved (Del Lucchese, 2009, p. 79)

The peace that is brought by the political structure of state sovereignty cannot be thought of as everlasting. Just as other bodies in nature, the state is a composite body under the threat of disarticulation depending on the encounters it endures. That means that, for

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[73] As Etienne Balibar puts it, "the "soul" of the body politic is not a representation but a praxis" (Balibar, 1998, p. 71).

Spinoza, no organization of the political community—be it in the form of a monarchy, an aristocracy or a democracy—can be understood as a model of complete pacification. The political realm always harbors struggle or conflict, albeit in varying degrees, and civil war stands as a real possibility that can never be averted once and for all.

5.2.3 Thinking Civil War Through Spinoza

We will now consider how the concept of civil war manifests in Spinoza's political thought. Contrary to the Hobbesian approach, a Spinozist notion of civil war is an integral part of the realm of politics: it does not frame civil war as a return to a pre-political condition of savagery or as a complete breakdown of the socio-political order. However, at the same time, it would be a stretch to argue that civil war functions as the paradigm for explaining politics. One way to explain the status of civil war within Spinoza's conceptual framework is through a particular affect that stands as the prime cause for rebellions against a perceived injustice: indignation. In the third part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines indignation as the "hatred toward him who has done evil to another" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 507). At first glance, indignation stands as one of the 'bad passions': "it is a form of interpersonal hate, and such forms of hate encourage us to 'strive to destroy' the person we hate" (Stolze, 2019, p. 117). However, indignation does not appear to be among those passions Spinoza regards as inherently bad but could be instrumentally good. However, it has an unusual status among other passions, because of the peculiarity of the political contexts that it emerges from.

We have previously discussed how power, in terms of *potestas*, can be exercised in two ways besides physical coercion: either by enhancing or diminishing the power to act. This difference corresponds to different kinds of administration or governance inciting

joyful or sad passions, most notably hope or fear.[74] According to Spinoza, political regimes that are established on the common hope of the multitude, regardless of whether it is a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy, are far more stable and durable than those that function by inciting fear. From a Spinozist perspective, the political regimes that rely on the administration of hope are those in which citizens adhere to the rules more or less by their own volition, as they see these rules as beneficial. It is easy to understand that indignation has nothing to do with political arrangements based on hope or generally joyful passions. However, for Spinoza, indignation does not necessarily emerge from the regimes based on sad passions or more specifically those that rely on the administration of fear either.

What, then, is the cause of indignation? Spinoza's answer is that indignation emerges when political regimes based on the administration of sad passions become unbearable[75], in tyrannies, oligarchies, and rule of the mob, and especially when "even the most cunning tyrant's excesses become too great to remain hidden" and "[w]hen his subjects become aware of these misdeeds and speak out against them, indignation erupts, and will result in a radical transformation of the situation as soon as each person knows that others are indignant too" (Stolze, 2019, p. 115). For Spinoza, indignation among the multitude spreads as if it is a wildfire.

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[74] For Spinoza, "[h]ope is nothing but an inconstant Joy which has arisen from the image of a future or past thing whose outcome we doubt; Fear, on the other hand, is an inconstant Sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 505).

[75] Spinoza defines the condition from which indignation emerges in the following way:

> For it's as impossible for one who holds political authority (or those who do so) to run, drunken or naked, through the streets with prostitutes, to play the actor, to openly violate or disdain the laws he himself has made, and at the same time to preserve his authority, as it is to both be and not be at the same time. To slaughter and rob his subjects, to rape their young women, and actions of that kind, turn fear into indignation, and hence turn the civil order into a state of hostility. (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 527)

There are three possible outcomes to the eruption of indignation. First, the tyrant realizes the jeopardy of his position and makes some concessions to extinguish the dissent of the multitude; things may get settled for a while, at least until the next time the tyrant transgresses this fragile equilibrium of forces. Second, the tyrant may "remain obstinate and thus pave the way to insurrection" (Ibid., p. 115). If the tyrant manages to overcome this insurrection, he continues to rule as he intended. Third, the insurrection may well lead to a civil war, either as a stalemate between the tyrant and the multitude, or in a scenario in which the multitude manages to dethrone the tyrant but is unable to reinstate a stable political regime, so that conflict takes the form of a series of localized and indefinite violent confrontations.

While Spinoza does not seem fond of "any idea of radical change" in already existing political regimes and even less so if such a change is achieved by violent means, civil war does not denote a return to a condition of pre-political savagery (Del Lucchese, 2018, p. 27). In *Tractatus Politicus* he writes:

> Therefore, when disagreements and rebellions are stirred up in a Commonwealth— as they often are—the result is never that the citizens dissolve the Commonwealth—though this often happens in other kinds of society. Instead, if they can't settle their disagreements while preserving the form of the Commonwealth, they change its form to another. (Spinoza, 2016a, p. 532)

In fact, civil war does not have a purely negative meaning, that is to say, it "cannot be reduced to a simple pathology of the political life" (Del Lucchese, 2009, p. 62). Speaking from a Spinozist perspective, Laurent Bove notes that civil war appears as "a remedy that the collective body produces and applies to itself"; "[i]t is the very process of a self-defense and a self-management" (Bove, quoted in Stolze, 2019, p. 116). In its latent form, or as a possibility, it serves a regulative role in limiting the rulers' excesses. In its acute form,

however, civil war has a constituent role: it marks the dissolution of a corrupted political order and reveals the lines of fault within the multitude, leading to the possibility of the birth of a new order from the previous one's ashes. Rather than denoting a complete breakdown of the socio-political order and a relapse to pre-political savagery, civil war means a reconfiguration of the relations of forces that shape the political realm.

5.3 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have sought to advance a theoretical perspective on the relationship between civil war and power through a reinterpretation of Spinoza's political philosophy. What kind of an alternative vantage point does a Spinozist reading like the one above offers to us as compared to those of other theorists and philosophers whose work we have discussed so far? To answer this question, we need to start with a short summary.

I started with a discussion on how Foucault posited civil war as the matrix of relations of power and how his civil war thesis harbors a unique understanding of civil war in its relation to power, and thus politics, and stands as one of the first studies that investigate "a phenomenon that is at least as old as Western democracy" (Agamben, 2015, p. 2). More importantly, Foucault's formulation creates a potent critique of, and alternative to, the juridical framing of power, particularly to the Hobbesian conceptualization of political power antithetical to civil war.

I have also discussed why Foucault abandoned the civil war thesis and reconstructed his conceptualization of power from the ground up in his now well-known analyses of liberal governance during the late seventies and the eighties. The weakness of such a theoretical position was also what made it unique: while Foucault's civil war thesis

successfully integrates civil war into the domain of politics, it does so by depicting a situation in which a segment of society wages a war on the others. From such a theoretical vantage point, all there is to see are repressive strategies deployed by the State apparatus, an over-encompassing regime of domination, and multiple forms of resistance.

Foucault's later works, his theorizations of biopolitics and (neo)liberal governmentality, however, present a substantially different conceptualization of power by understanding it primarily as a productive network, rather than as an incessant social conflict. Power, for him, no longer denotes a warlike relationship, but is better understood as multiform techniques and procedures that aim to "orient behaviors, administer modes of life, and erect and organize productive potentialities" (Revel, 2014, p. 382). While this new formulation enables Foucault to think of power outside of what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis', the downside of this transition is not only the absence of any kind of reference to civil war, but also the decreasing role that is attributed to violence, conflict, and eventually resistance.

Such a formulation poses conceptual challenges in understanding the current political landscape. The world we live in is marked not only by intensified political violence in different forms, civil wars raging in the global South, and their overspill to the other corners of the globe, but also by the emergence of a new modality of politics that is more and more becoming indistinguishable from latent civil wars. The ascent of 'new' authoritarianisms—particularly the rise of neo-fascist movements that both fuel and feed upon deepening polarizations—as well as multiple forms of struggle and resistance, most visible in the waves of major protests and uprisings all over the globe, render civil war as

a timely thematic and requires another kind of understanding of power that is capable of giving an account of this volatility inherent to our present.

Indeed, the subsequent theorists' work that I explored in the previous chapters could be seen as responses to this changing political landscape. In an epoch marked by the 9/11 attacks and the rampant exceptionalism during the so-called 'War on Terrorism', Agamben's account could well be seen as an attempt to reintroduce civil war to the conceptual framework of biopolitics: civil war, for him, is nothing other than the fundamental threshold for (bio)politicization. Yet, as we discussed, Agamben's theoretical perspective envisages biopolitics strictly in terms of the production of bare life under sovereign exceptionalism. This not only leads to an erasure of the line of demarcation between political violence and power, but also reintroduces sovereignty in a sense stronger than before. In fact, it was no surprise that Agamben's account involves a reduction of civil war to terrorism.

When it comes to Alliez and Lazzarato's association of neoliberalism with a generalized civil war raging through the entire globe, although they offer a productive reinterpretation of Foucault's civil war thesis from a Marxian perspective, their interpretation of power is presented to us as the sum of techniques and procedures that initiates and maintains capitalist subjugation and domination, and, from such a point of view, these techniques of power are no longer distinguishable from the war itself. In other words, Agamben along with Alliez and Lazzarato return to the position Foucault held in the early seventies, without neither addressing nor offering a viable solution to the issues that led Foucault to abandon it.

Putting the concept of civil war into use as Agamben, and Alliez and Lazzarato do carries a significant risk: as Hardt and Negri note in Commonwealth, doing so could lead us to embrace what they call an "apocalyptic vision of politics". From such a point of view,

> [e]verything is explained by sovereign power and the state of exception, that is, the general suspension of rights and the emergence of a power that stands above the law. Indeed evidence of such a state of exception is easy to come by: the predominance of violence to resolve national and international conflicts not merely as last but as first resort; the widespread use of torture and even its legitimation; the indiscriminate killing of civilians in combat; the elision of international law; the suspension of domestic rights and protections; and the list goes on and on. This vision of the world resembles those medieval European renditions of hell: people burning in a river of fire, others being torn limb from limb, and in the center a great devil engorging their bodies whole. (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 3)

In other words, such a theoretical perspective makes us see nothing but relations of domination and repression wherever we gaze upon, and more crucially, it makes us overlook how the societies we live in are still traversed by regimes of production that now subsume almost all aspects of our lives: the ever-reaching mechanisms and logic of the market extending to every social sphere; the apparatuses of control and security that no longer operate only via confinement or direct intervention but also by incentivizing and modifying behaviours; and the processes of subjectification and desubjectification through subtle yet effective modalities of power. In short, the model Agamben and Alliez and Lazzarato provide us with neglects how decentralized and subtle regimes of power operate through neoliberal forms of governance.

Hardt and Negri manage to abstain from depicting a condition of all-encompassing domination and repression and articulate a more complex account. Written against the backdrop of the alter-globalization movements and the new era of global war, their coauthored work, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, offers a

formulation of civil war as an incessant conflict between Empire and the multitude. As well as being a theorization of a new global model of sovereignty in the service of capital, the story Hardt and Negri tell us is one of resistance and the possibility for liberation. Hardt and Negri do so by devising a model consisting of two modalities of power diametrically opposed to each other. Based on Negri's previous work on Spinoza, they locate a global civil war in relation to the absolute antagonism between the constituent and productive power of the multitude and the Empire's constituted power of capitalist command and appropriation. Where such a formulation falls short, however, is in the dichotomous logic it harbors. Situating civil war this way risks a Manichaean understanding of politics wherein sides are clearly marked and attributes too much certainty to a condition that is essentially uncertain and ambiguous.

Let us now return to my interpretation of Spinoza's formulation of civil war. Should it be seen as providing us with some sort of a general theory of civil war, of power, or of both? By no means; the reading I suggest in this chapter neither attempts a theorization of all the civil wars raging around the globe, nor pretends to answer the question of how power operates in each and every context. This would not only exceed the scope and aims of this dissertation but would also create a methodologically undesirable outcome: doing so would essentially mean imposing theory on the material world in order to explain it, instead of focusing on how modalities of civil war and power function in the localized, historical, and contingent settings. What is this reinterpretation of Spinoza good for, then? I contend that my reading of Spinoza provides us with a handy conceptual toolset and a theoretical vantage point to make sense of our present for two interrelated reasons.

First, Spinoza provides us with a productive way to analyze power. If not altogether resolving the tension between the productive and repressive dimensions of the exercise of power, his conceptualization at least enables us to think of power without being constrained by a dichotomous logic—a persistent problem among the philosophers and theorists discussed in the previous chapters. Spinoza does so by way of articulating power in a pair of concepts, *potentia* and *potestas*, which function in a complementary yet at the same time distinct way. In a fashion similar to Negri's interpretation, I also take the concept of *potentia* as the horizontal, immanent, constituent power, which is productive and affirmative, and more importantly as the power to act and exist in a certain way. However, when it comes to *potestas*, my interpretation substantially differs from the one Negri suggests. Rather than associating it with the hierarchical and transcendental constituted power of command, I reinterpret *potestas* as a relational and transitive type of power, or as the power exercised over others. This enables us to raise a theoretical perspective through which the exercise of power in terms of *potestas* depicts a spectrum in which power can function in multiple ways, ranging from coercion by physical violence to a voluntary commitment to power.

However, perhaps the most crucial aspect of my reinterpretation of Spinoza's formulation of power is the way volatility imbues politics. Stemming from and depending on the collective power of the multitude, power in terms of *potestas* cannot be exercised without limits. In other words, from such a perspective, conflict plays a central role; it is not a problem that waits to be solved or an obstacle that needs to be overcome, but an integral aspect to how relations of power operate. Indeed, even under an extreme condition in which all possible power is centrally concentrated, or in fact, in the opposite case

wherein the exercise of power becomes extremely subtle and diffused, this Spinozist perspective demonstrates how any regime of power is always constituted via volatile relations between forces, and thus on highly fragile grounds.

Moreover, even if only implicitly, Spinoza provides us with a unique way to understand civil war in its relation to politics. Rather than positing civil war as a pre-political condition of savagery or a complete breakdown of the socio-political order, such a perspective enables us to think of it as an integral part of the political life. However, unlike the other theorists discussed, particularly Alliez and Lazzarato alongside Foucault, Spinoza does not equate power with civil war or keep the distinction between them intact. From such a point of view, civil war manifests as a violent and abrupt reconfiguration of the relations of forces that shape the political realm following a condition wherein existing forms of *potestas* became unbearable. This approach enables us to raise a theoretical perspective that not only avoids establishing a mutual exclusivity between political power and civil war—without framing them within an either/or logic, thus giving rise to an unresolvable dichotomy—but at the same time proceeds without reducing relations of power solely to a warlike confrontation and all-encompassing domination. Moreover, unlike Agamben, a Spinozist understanding of civil war does not harbor a negative meaning and it cannot be reduced to a process of constituent political violence that lays the grounds for sovereign exceptionalism. On the contrary, civil war appears as the reconfiguration of forces in the body politic and can be "a remedy that the collective body produces and applies to itself", thus signifies a birth of a new socio-political order from the previous one's ashes (Bove, quoted in Stolze, 2019, p. 116). Finally, unlike Hardt and Negri, civil war cannot be seen solely as a conflict between the multitude and Empire, or

between *potentia* and *potestas*; it also involves an internecine war within the multitude: rather than being waged against/by a transcendent political entity, a Spinozist notion of civil war denotes a process immanent to the domain created by the collective social body.

I contend that such a reading provides us with a theoretical vantage point that could assist us in understanding the volatility of our socio-political contexts. In the last decade, we have been witnessing a gradual transformation that is radically altering the fabric of the societies that we live in. The years that passed within the context of rampant neoliberalism did not bring about the "universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" and a multiculturalism expected to be rising from the sphere of the market that would render old social divisions obsolete as some proponents of neoliberal ideologies envisioned (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4). However, this failure of neoliberalism did not follow the exact course that the more optimistic critiques of the capitalist globalization have envisaged, either. Although we saw the emergence of new and widespread forms of resistance, these have not so far resulted in the invention of new lines of alliances that could create alternative futures to counter the ever-deepening exploitation, the looming climate catastrophe, and the racial injustices that capitalist globalization brings about.

On the contrary, we are witnessing the formation of a radically different political terrain, facing, on the one hand, the rise of the far-right movements that seek to reverse the hard-won rights of minoritarian political movements, and on the other, the emergence of new forms of hybrid authoritarian government models led by the controversial figures such as Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and alike whose power depends on their tremendous successes to deepen the already existing divisions in today's societies, mobilize their followers into taking political actions that would previously be deemed

unimaginable—the storming of the Capitol Building on January 6th, 2021 is a perfect example—increasing polarizations arising even from relatively 'neutral' issues such as mask-wearing or vaccinations that is marked by an unprecedented escalation of political violence.[76]

Yet at the same time, we did not exactly leave the regimes of power that operates through the circuits of neoliberal governmental models behind. Political calculations and procedures that run on the premise of the existence of rational agents, the figure of *homo economicus*, who are expected to invest in their human capitals and compete with others in the pursuit of maximizing their interest as self entrepreneurs, economic systems that strive to achieve maximum growth and profit persist in a world where the vital resources are becoming more and more scarce, the subtle techniques that aim to maintain control and security mechanisms have never run as deep as they do today. What we are experiencing can be seen as a strange hybridity in which authoritarian tendencies, neo-fascist desires, widespread violence, diffused and subtle techniques of power, and market-driven politics are tightly intertwined.

This particular reading of Spinoza's political philosophy that I suggest throughout this chapter neither gives a definitive theoretical explanation of all these developments, nor magically resolves all these issues and problems that may arise from thinking the relationship between civil war and power. As I have demonstrated, thinking power with

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[76] As Wendy Brown writes,

> From the viewpoint of the first neoliberals, the galaxy that includes Trump, Brexit, Orbán, the Nazis, or the German Parliament, the fascists in the Italian Parliament, is turning the neoliberal dream into a nightmare. Hayek, the ordoliberals, or even the Chicago school would repudiate the current form of neoliberalism and especially its most recent guise (Brown, quoted in Lazzarato, 2021, p. 8; Brown, 2019).

civil war is indeed an arduous task riddled with several pitfalls, but it nonetheless provides us with a way for generating an understanding of civil war in its uncertain relationship to politics. More precisely, this alternative Spinozist approach allows us to rethink the relationship between civil war and power without being constrained by a dichotomy between repressive and productive sides of power, and at the same time, without a ratification of domination and sovereignty. To borrow from Deleuze and Guattari, such an interpretation provides us with conceptual tools that would be handy for mapping the relationship between civil war and power at a *molecular level*: while not fully explicating the entire dynamics of contemporary politics, it nonetheless gives us a theoretical vantage point for identifying the limits of the exercise of power and thus the potential fault lines in the societies we live in. I argue that such a trajectory renders itself valuable, especially in the face of this strange overlap between the culmination of diffused forms of political violence, deepening polarizations, and the subtle and diffused techniques of exercise of power characterizing our epoch.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this project has been to build up a theoretical inquiry that explores the relationship between civil war and power. I have focused on the work of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, and Baruch Spinoza to map out a lineage of thought through which civil war was posited as an immanent aspect to politics, rather than a pre-political condition of savagery or a complete breakdown of the socio-political order. Although the theorists and philosophers whose work I have discussed so far seem to share this fundamental axiom, when it comes to the question of how power should be thought of in relation to civil war, their answers, at times radically, diverged from each other. While exploring the volatile and uncertain conceptual relationship between civil war and power, one of the main themes emerging from this dissertation is the unresolved tension between the productive and repressive sides of power within the theoretical framework of civil war. I traced this tension back to Foucault's formulations of civil war during the early 1970s and analyzed how subsequent theorists position themselves in relation to this aporia. Out of this analysis, I then considered the success and failure of their attempts to resolve such a tension. Finally, I offered an alternative reading of Spinoza with the intention of formulating a conceptual passage that avoids the dichotomous logic—a persistent problem among the philosophers and theorists that we have discussed in the previous chapters—and ratification of domination and sovereignty. Before saying a few words on why this theoretical investigation matters, especially today, and pointing out the potential research agendas it may open, I would like to summarize what I have discussed so far.

To start, Foucault's "civil war thesis" served as a point of departure for this theoretical project. The second chapter, "From Civil War to Governmentality", was devoted to a close reading of Foucault's conceptualization of civil war as the matrix of relations of power and his decision to abandon such a position in the following years. In Foucault's works dating to the early 70s, most notably the Collège de France lectures between 1972 and 1973, the notion of power denotes a warlike relationship; civil war stands as the model explicating both the exercise of and resistance to power, delineating a dynamic in which conflict operates as the driving force. The civil war thesis was a product of Foucault's insistence on going beyond what he calls juridical theories of power and confines of the state form. Power in these formulations no longer appears as a phenomenon originating from or depending on the political structure of sovereignty; rather, it is intelligible through an analysis of the tactics and mechanisms of domination and of various forms of resistance to them. Understanding how power operates then becomes a question of analyzing "material operations, forms of subjugation, and the connections among and the uses made of the local systems of subjugation" (Foucault, 2003, p. 34). Foucault's civil war thesis entails the replacement of the juridical understanding of power with that of a model based on the series "civil war-repression-domination".

Nonetheless, Foucault's civil war thesis was short-lived: he reaches an impasse soon after becoming aware of the risk that an equation of power with domination may give rise to a radical denunciation of power, and thus neglects the way power can also function as a productive network. Foucault abandons the civil war thesis and reconstructs his conceptualization of power almost from the ground up. I locate two turning points in Foucault's subsequent work that detaches power from a formulation of warlike

relationship: first, within the theoretical framework of biopolitics that emerges in the first volume of *History of Sexuality* and throughout the 75-76 Collège de France lectures, and, second, within his analyses of governmentality starting from the second half of the 1970s. Whereas Foucault's biopolitical framework offers a new way to understand power in terms of regimes of power "that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 137), his concept of governmentality situates power in terms of multiform techniques that aim to "orient behaviors, administer modes of life, and erect and organize productive potentialities" (Revel, 2014, p. 382).

Such a transformation enables Foucault to overcome the risk of reducing power to domination, offering a way to think of power outside of what he calls "the repressive hypothesis". From a certain perspective, he overcomes the inherent problems of the civil war thesis. The tension between the repressive and productive dimensions of power seems to be resolved, much in favor of the latter. However, in doing so, any kind of reference to civil war vanishes. This is an unfortunate outcome, as Foucault's emphasis on the affinity between civil war and power provides a potent critique of and alternative to the way this issue is handled in the Hobbesian political theory. However, I also showed that there was another outcome: as well as civil war, this new understanding of power casts questions of struggle, domination, and political violence out of the analytical frame. This change becomes more noticeable in Foucault's conceptualization of (neo)liberalism. While his formulations stand as one of the earliest analyses of neoliberalism in the wake of its historical emergence and provide us with an extremely rich perspective for rethinking how power functions in such regimes, it at the same time risks overlooking the repressive

dimension of neoliberalism: the violence that neoliberalism is both founded upon and carries within itself is seemingly absent in Foucault's formulations. This issue is stressed by a number of Foucault's commentators and critics who are keen to reinvigorate, the concept of civil war in their own works.

The third chapter, "Civil War as the Paradigm of (Bio)politics", was devoted to an analysis of Agamben's theoretical assessments of civil war that arises from his 2001 seminar at Princeton University. I discussed how Agamben posits civil war as the paradigm of politics and considered whether his account makes space for rethinking civil war in the framework of biopolitics. At the core of Agamben's theorization lies his insistence on positing civil war as the paradigm of politics. For him, civil war "marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Agamben, 2015, p. 22). Although this treatment of civil war approximates Foucault's earlier conceptualization to a certain extent, there is a crucial difference between these two thinkers. For Agamben, civil war does not denote a dynamic field of relations of power outside the sphere of sovereignty—delineating an alternative model to that of sovereignty is not among Agamben's goals. Rather, he insists on how sovereignty and civil war are tightly interwoven: civil war, for him, is nothing other than the originary political violence that both initiates and shapes the juridico-political structure of sovereignty. Rather than advancing a model of civil war as an incessant struggle and resistance to power, Agamben's emphasis is on the intensified degree of political violence it entails.

This is the point from which Agamben establishes a conceptual connection between civil war and biopolitics, in which civil war marks the threshold of politicization. According to Agamben, politics has always been biopolitics, precisely in terms of life's

exposure to death and the production of bare life through the sovereign ban. For this reason, the concepts of civil war and biopolitics conflate and become almost indistinguishable from each other. Although Agamben seems to have established a link between biopolitics and civil war, this is only possible due to his understanding of biopolitics purely in terms of thanatopolitics. Agamben completely strips off the productive dimension that we can locate in the Foucauldian conceptualization of biopolitics, and, in his formulation, it is no longer possible or even meaningful to discuss any kind of tension between the productive and repressive dimensions inherent to the concept.

Following this analysis, I then interrogate the close affinity Agamben establishes between the notions of civil war and terrorism. Agamben argues for "the passage into the dimension of global civil war" in the wake of an epoch marked by the 9/11 attacks and the rampant exceptionalism of the so-called 'War on Terrorism' (Agamben, 2015, p. xi). It is not surprising that Agamben resorts to the idea of terrorism as the fundamental paradigm for understanding our contemporary world; terrorism perfectly fits his conceptual framework for delineating a zone of indifference where the production of bare life, intensified political violence, and the sovereign exception become intertwined. However, such a theoretical perspective, besides attributing a purely negative connotation to civil war, is highly restrictive as it neglects the reciprocal character of civil war. Agamben's civil war is not a play between various forces with an uncertain outcome—it has a predetermined role: grounding politics through an originary violence. In this way, Agamben proposes more of an overstretched conceptualization of terrorism rather than one that of civil war.

When it comes to the question how power relates to Agamben's understanding of civil war, his formulations erase the line of demarcation between political violence and power; thus, it gives rise to a quite restricted understanding of the latter purely in a negative sense or in terms of domination. For Agamben, power is equated with domination or coercion, without any kind of meaningful distinction, and reduced to "a capacity to give orders" that aims to create nothing but obedience (Diken, 2021, p. 48). Rather than overcoming the problematic aspects of the civil war thesis, which eventually led Foucault to abandon it, Agamben deepens them.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Agamben's attempt is a completely unsuccessful way to rethink civil war; his theoretical perspective is thought-provoking and opens productive discussions for our contemporary political contexts. His focus on the notion of the state of exception sheds light on political regimes that rely upon an unprecedented degree of polarization and use of intensified political violence. Moreover, one particular aspect of Agamben's formulation, alas underdeveloped, was his insight into thinking about civil war as an erasure of the line of demarcation between economy and politics—a locus where governmental and juridico-political rationalities merge. Such a reading offers a particularly potent means for examining the relationship between civil war and contemporary modes of capitalism.

In the fourth chapter, "Civil War and Capitalism", I discussed how both Alliez and Lazzarato, and Hardt and Negri push such a line of thinking to its limits when they locate civil war within the circuits of global capitalism. To start with Hardt and Negri, their coauthored 2004 book *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* depicts a vision of our contemporary world in which "[w]ar is becoming a general phenomenon,

global and interminable" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 3) and indistinguishable from that of civil war. Their formulation delineates a polarization between Empire, the tendency for the emergence of a global system of control and machine of command in the service of capital, and the multitude, a democratic project in becoming that could bring the post-capitalist future through collective struggle. Hardt and Negri marshal the notion of civil war to describe the incessant conflict between these two forces that shape our contemporary world both on global and local levels.

Hardt and Negri's formulations rethink the relationship between civil war and power without running into the same pitfalls that Foucault encountered with his civil war thesis. Hardt and Negri do so by devising a significantly different way to understand power in two opposing directions: the polarity they attribute to the relationship between Empire and the multitude is grounded upon the antagonism they locate between two modalities of power, *potentia* and *potestas*, a conceptual framing derived from Negri's previous work on Spinoza. While the former concept implies the horizontal, immanent, affirmative power which is productive and constituent, the latter designates the hierarchical, transcendental, constituted power of command and appropriation. In positioning civil war at the caesura between the constituent and productive power of the multitude and the Empire's constituted power of capitalist command, Hardt and Negri manage to abstain from painting an over-encompassing picture of domination and repression. And unlike Agamben, "Hardt and Negri argue that we need to displace our obsession with sovereignty, fascism, and states of exception" (Harcourt, 2020, p. 396). As well as theorizing the intensified degree of subjugation and subsumption in global capitalism, the story Hardt and Negri tell us is one that emphasizes resistance and subversive politics.

Where Hardt and Negri's account falls short is also in its antagonistic articulation of power. The absolute antagonism Hardt and Negri locate between the repressive forces of a global structure of sovereignty, Empire, and the productive and subversive networks of constituent power, the multitude, carries the risk of giving rise to an almost Manichean narrative that describes the world we live in as the conflict between good and evil. Hardt and Negri's conceptualization attributes too much certainty to a condition which is essentially uncertain and ambiguous: it is questionable whether it is possible to fit every kind of conflict or civil war into an antagonistic model where the opposing sides are defined so clearly.

When it comes to Alliez and Lazzarato, I have primarily focused on their formulations arising from their coauthored 2016 book *Wars and Capital* (Alliez & Lazzarato, 2016). Written in the aftermath of political upheaval that began with alter-globalization—accelerating with the occupation movements and popular uprisings of the early 2010s, and the rise of neofascist movements—Alliez and Lazzarato also stress the close link between civil war and capitalism. Emerging as a response to Hardt and Negri's formulations, in their writings, Alliez and Lazzarato hold a significantly less optimistic point of view. They depict a generalized civil war raging through the entire globe: having its roots in colonial warfare; what is at issue for them are "interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on "minorities," wars on women, wars of subjectivity" primarily waged by financialized capitalism, targeting entire populations on a global scale (Ibid., p. 27).

Alliez and Lazzarato's theorization could be seen as a return to Foucault's earlier position in the early 1970s. Introducing Karl Marx's conceptualization of primitive

accumulation into the conceptual assemblage, they extend the scope of the civil war thesis in a way that now tends to neoliberal modes of governance. In fact, for Alliez and Lazzarato, neoliberal "governmentality does not replace war", but rather "organizes, governs, and controls the reversibility of wars and power", and, in this sense, "is the governmentality of wars" (Ibid., p. 282). Alliez and Lazzarato's account offers us a rich theoretical perspective and has the capacity for germinating discussions on the basis of a Marxian reinterpretation of Foucault's civil war thesis. But this does not change the fact that the story Alliez and Lazzarato tell us is a one of a unilateral system of domination; power is presented to us more or less as the sum of techniques and procedures that initiates and maintains capitalist subjugation. I have pointed out two problematic outcomes: first, Alliez and Lazzarato's account risks failing to understand how power functions in multiple ways due their embracing of a radical denunciation of power. It especially neglects to explain how regimes of power at work in late capitalist societies function as multiform processes of subjectification and desubjectification diffused through the circuits of capital and market relations. Second, such a formulation overlooks the difference between war and power, flattening any meaningful distinction between power, violence, and domination. In other words, Alliez and Lazzarato return to Foucault's initial position without offering a viable solution to redirect from the strong emphasis on repression inherent to the civil war thesis.

The fifth and final chapter, "Rethinking Civil War and Power from a Spinozist Perspective", is devoted to a thorough analysis of Spinoza's political philosophy in relation to civil war, focusing on his articulation of power in terms of *potentia* and *potestas* and how his approach differs from Hobbesian understanding of the political in the passage from

the state of nature to state sovereignty. Negri's seminal work on Spinoza served as a point of departure for my discussions on the distinction between the two concepts Spinoza uses for denoting power. In a similar fashion to Negri's interpretation, I also take Spinoza's conceptualization of *potentia* as the power to act and exist in a certain way and, more importantly, as the productive, immanent, and affirmative constituent power—both as a source for resistance and as the grounds for any kind of political arrangement or organization. However, when it comes to *potestas*, my interpretation of the concept substantially differs from the one that Negri suggests. Rather than associating it with the transcendental, hierarchical, and constituted power of command, I reinterpret *potestas* as a relational and mediated type of power through which coercion or domination is one of the possible ways in which power may be exercised. I have discussed how *potentia* and *potestas* are irreducible to each other, yet still function in a complementary way, rather than denoting purely a relationship of antagonism. The way in which I interpret Spinoza's work, if not resolving the tension between the productive and repressive sides of power, at least enables us to conceptualize power without being constrained by a dichotomy which limits many philosophers and theorists keen on integrating civil war in their formulations of power.

After a thorough discussion on the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*, I emphasize the extent of the difference between Spinoza's and Hobbes's political philosophies. I focused on Spinoza's alternative to the Hobbesian framing of the passage from the state of nature to the civil state and the reduction of *potentia* to *potestas* embedded in his formulation that asks for *unconditional obedience in favor of security*. I have discussed how, for Spinoza, the state of nature can never be completely consumed and

superseded by the emergence of the political community, and conflict plays an essential role in politics rather than denoting a pathology of the political life. Coupled with the primacy he attributes to *potentia*, I showed how civil war, in contradistinction to the Hobbesian formulation, serves an integral function in politics as a reconfiguration of the relations of forces that shapes the political realm, rather than denoting a pre-political savagery or a complete breakdown of the socio-political order. As conclusion, I demonstrate how a Spinozist theoretical perspective might enable us to rethink the relationship between civil war and power without conflating them—as we have seen in previous discussions, doing so could easily end up with advancing an all-encompassing notion of domination—yet still in an immanent way.

Now, why does a study like this matter and what kind of potential research trajectories this dissertation may open up? This dissertation offers a vantage point to the largely uncharted theoretical continent of political thought that harbors those thinkers' work in which civil war is posited integral to the domain of politics. For any future researcher interested in understanding civil war outside the domain created by the canonical Western political tradition, which locates civil war in the outer margins of the political, this dissertation may function as a map of various strategies and approaches employed by several theorists and philosophers. While this dissertation does not magically resolve all the issues and problems emerging from these thinkers—nor does it give a definitive theorization of the relationship between civil war and power in each and every context—I believe the discussions arising from this dissertation nonetheless provide the reader with a conceptual framework that would come in handy for rethinking civil war in its relation to political power.

This dissertation also provides the reader with a theoretical vantage point to tend to our contemporary political environment, one riddled by a modality of politics that is becoming indistinguishable from latent civil wars, whether it is the ascent of the far right, the ever-deepening polarizations, or seemingly irreconcilable conflicts and multiple forms of resistance. However, this study differentiates from the mainstream appropriation of the notion of civil war exemplified in recently published books such as Stephen Marche's *The Next Civil War: Dispatches from the American Future* or Barbara F. Walter's *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them*. Rather than presenting civil war as a disastrous political constellation yet to come, or as a consequence of the erosion of democratic institutions, it strives to advance a perspective from which civil war could be rethought of as an integral aspect to politics (Marche, 2022; Walter, 2022). Moreover, this dissertation also highlights how a presentation of civil war as the sole paradigm for politics or as the matrix of the relations of power risks a framing that reduces power to relations of domination wherever it gazes, thus overlooking the ever-reaching mechanisms of the market, the apparatuses of control and security, and the processes of subjectification through subtle techniques of power operating in neoliberal forms of governance.

In the end, this dissertation delineates a theoretical perspective for rethinking contemporary politics at the nexus between civil war and power. Stressing the relationship between civil war and power offers a generative trajectory for future studies, especially in a context such as ours marked by the convergence between, on the one hand, widespread and intensified forms of political violence, deepening polarizations, irreconcilable conflicts, and, on the other hand, the ever-reaching mechanisms of the market, the processes of subjectification and desubjectification through subtle yet effective techniques

and procedures of power at work in neoliberal forms of governance that characterize our

epoch.

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