1.   Stasis

1.   It is generally acknowledged that a theory of civil war is completely lacking today, yet this absence does not seem to concern jurists and political scientists too much. Roman Schnur, who formulated this diagnosis as early as the 1980s, nonetheless added that the disregard of civil war went hand in hand with the advance of global civil war (Schnur 1983, 121, 156). At thirty years' distance, this observation has lost none of its topicality: while the very possibility of distinguishing a war between States and an internecine war appears today to have disappeared, specialists continue to carefully avoid any hint at a theory of civil war. It is true that in recent years, owing to the upsurge of wars impossible to define as international, publications concerning so-called 'internal wars' have multiplied (above all, in the United States); even in these instances, however, the analysis was geared not toward an interpretation of

the phenomenon, but – in accordance with a practice ever more widespread – toward the conditions under which an international intervention becomes possible. The paradigm of consensus, which today dominates both political action and theory, seems incompatible with the serious investigation of a phenomenon that is at least as old as Western democracy.

> א There 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. We have already mentioned how, according to Schnur, this absence could be related to the advance of global civil war. The concept of 'global civil war' was introduced contemporaneously in 1963 in Hannah Arendt's book *On Revolution* (in which the Second World War was defined as 'a kind of civil war raging all over the earth' [Arendt 1963, 8]) and in Carl Schmitt's *Theorie des Partisanen* (Schmitt 2007), a book dedicated to the figure that marks the end of the conception of war of the *Jus publicum Europaeum*, which was grounded on the possibility of clearly distinguishing between war and peace, soldiers and civilians, enemies and criminals. Whatever date one wishes to trace this end back to, it is certain that today the state of war in the traditional sense has virtually disappeared. Even the Gulf War, the last conflict that still had the appearance of a war between States, was fought without the warring States declaring the state of war (which for some States, such as Italy, would have been unconstitutional). The generalisation of a model of war which cannot be defined as an international conflict, yet which lacks the traditional features of civil war, has led some scholars to speak of 'uncivil wars', which, unlike civil wars, appear to be directed not toward the control and transformation of the political system, but toward the maximisation of disorder (Snow

1996). The attention which scholars dedicated to these wars in the 1990s ultimately could not lead to a theory of civil war, but only to a doctrine of management, that is, of the administration, manipulation and internationalisation of internal conflicts.

2.   One possible reason for the lack of interest in civil war was the increasing popularity of the concept of revolution (at least, up until the end of the 1960s), which was often substituted for civil war, yet without ever coinciding with it. It was Hannah Arendt who, in her book *On Revolution*, unreservedly formulated the thesis of the heterogeneity between the two phenomena. '[R]evolutions', she writes,

> are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning […] Modern revolutions have little in common with the *mutatio rerum* of Roman history or the *stasis*, the civil strife which disturbed the Greek polis. We cannot equate them with Plato's *metabolai*, the quasi-natural transformation of one form of government into another, or with Polybius's *politeiōn anakyklōsis*, the appointed recurring cycle into which human affairs are bound by reason of their always being driven to extremes. Antiquity was well acquainted with political change and the violence that went with change, but neither of them appeared to it to bring about something new. (Arendt 1963, 13–14)

Although it is likely that the difference between the two concepts is in fact purely nominal, it is certain that the concentration of attention on the concept

of revolution (which for some reason seemed more respectable than that of *stasis*, even to a scholar as unprejudiced as Arendt), has contributed to the marginalisation of studies on civil war.

3.   A theory of civil war is not among the possible objectives of this text. Instead, I will restrict myself 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. The two examples have not been selected by chance: I would like to suggest that they represent the two faces, so to speak, of a single political paradigm, which manifests itself, on the one hand, through the assertion of the necessity of civil war, and on the other, through the assertion of the necessity of its exclusion. That the paradigm is, in truth, single, means that the two opposed necessities maintain a secret solidarity between them. And it is this secret solidarity that I will seek to grasp.

An analysis of the problem of civil war (or *stasis*) in classical Greece can only begin with the studies of Nicole Loraux, who dedicated a series of articles and essays to this theme, which were collected in 1997 in the volume *La Cité divisée* – the volume to which she used to refer as *mon livre par excellence*. As in

the life of artists, so too in the life of scholars there
are mysteries. Thus I was never able to successfully
explain to myself why Loraux never included in the
volume an essay written in 1986 for a lecture in Rome
entitled 'La guerre dans la famille', which is perhaps
the most important of all the studies she dedicated
to the problem of *stasis*. The circumstance is all the
more inexplicable given that she decided to publish
the essay in an issue of the journal *Clio* dedicated to
guerres civiles in the same year as the book, almost as
if she were aware – but this would be a truly singular
motivation – that the thesis defended in the essay
went decidedly further in terms of originality and
radicality than the already acute thesis advanced in the
book. I will attempt, in any case, to summarise the
essay's findings in order then to attempt to locate
what Feuerbach called the *Entwicklungsfähigkeit*, the
'capacity for development' that they contain.

4.   Other French scholars – allow me to mention
at least two classics, Gustave Glotz and Fustel de
Coulanges, and in their wake, Jean-Pierre Vernant –
had underscored the importance of *stasis* in the Greek
polis prior to Nicole Loraux. The novelty of Loraux's
approach is that 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. 'The matter', she writes, 'will be played out between three terms: the *stasis*, the city, the family' (Loraux 1997, 38). Such an identification of the place of civil war entails redrawing the traditional topography of the relations between the family and the city from scratch. What is at issue is not, as the prevailing paradigm would have it, an overcoming of the family in the city, of the private in the public and of the particular in the general, but a more ambiguous and complex relation; and it is precisely this relation which we will seek to grasp.

Loraux begins her analysis with a passage from Plato's *Menexenus*, in which the ambiguity of civil war appears on full display. Describing the *stasis* which divided the citizens of Athens in 404, Plato writes ironically:

> Our war at home [*ho oikeios hēmin polemos*] was waged in such a fashion that were fate to condemn humanity to conflict no one would wish to see their city suffer this predicament in any other way. With such joviality and familiarity did those from the Piraeus and those from the city engage with one another [*hōs asmenōs kai oike kai oikeiōs allēlois synemeixan*]! (*Menex.*, 243e–244a)

Not only does the verb that Plato employs (*symmeignymi*) mean both 'to mingle' and 'to enter the fray, to fight'; but 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*. According to the reading that Loraux gives to these passages, Plato seems to imply that 'the Athenians had waged an internecine war only in order to better reconvene in a family celebration' (Loraux 1997, 22). The family is simultaneously the origin of division and *stasis* and the paradigm of reconciliation (the Greeks, Plato will write, 'fight amongst themselves as if they were fated to be reconciled' [*Rep.*, 471a]).

5.   The ambivalence of the *stasis*, according to Loraux, is thus attributable to the ambiguity of the *oikos*, with which is it consubstantial. Civil 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' (Loraux 1997, 29). At the same time, precisely because it is what lies at the origin of the *stasis*, the family is also what contains its possible remedy. Vernant thus notes that the rift between families is often healed through

an exchange of gifts, which is to say, by virtue of a marriage between rival clans: 'In the eyes of the Greeks it was not possible to isolate the forces of discord from those of union either in the web of human relationships or in the constitution of the world' (Vernant 1988, 31).

Even tragedy bears witness to the intimate link between civil war and the family, and to the threat that the *Ares emphylios* – the god of warfare who dwells in the *oikos* – brings to bear on the city (*Eumenides*, 862–3). According to Loraux, the *Oresteia* is simultaneously the evocation of the long chain of killings in the house of the Atridi and the commemoration of its overcoming through the foundation of the court at the Areopagus, which puts an end to the family massacre. 'The civic order has integrated the family in its midst. This means that it is always virtually threatened by the discord that kinship is like a second nature, and that it has simultaneously always already overcome this threat' (Loraux 1997, 39).

Insofar 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 – this is the thesis that Loraux seems to suggest here – inherent to the city, an integral part of the political life of the Greeks.

6.   Toward the end of her essay, Loraux analyses the case of a small Greek city in Sicily, Nakōnē, where, in the third century BCE, the citizens decided to organise the reconciliation following a *stasis* in a particularly striking way. They drew the names of the citizens in lots, in order to then divide them into groups of five, who in this way became *adelphoi hairetoi*, 'brothers by election'. The natural family was neutralised, but this neutralisation was accomplished simultaneously through a symbol par excellence of kinship: fraternity. 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' (*Rep.*, 463c).

The ambivalent function of the *oikos* – and of the *stasis* that is inherent to it – is once again confirmed.

And at this point, Loraux can conclude her analysis with a twofold invitation:

> [*S*]*tasis*/family/city [...] these notions are articulated according to lines of force in which recurrence and superimposition mostly prevail over every continuous process of evolution. Hence the paradox and the ambivalence, which we have encountered many times. The historian of kinship may find here the occasion to re-examine the commonplace of an irresistible overcoming of the *oikos* by the city. As for the historian of politics, he will perhaps strengthen his conviction that ambivalence presides over the Greek reflection on the city once the *stasis* must be incorporated within it; for internal conflict must now be conceived as having actually emerged within the *phylon*, instead of having been imported from without, as a convenient solution would have it [...] We must attempt to think, together with the Greeks, the war within the family. Let us suppose that the city is a *phylon*; it follows that the *stasis* is its revealer. Let us make the city an *oikos*; on the horizon of the *oikeios polemos* thus looms a festival of reconciliation. And let us admit, finally, that between these two operations, the tension cannot be resolved. (Loraux 1997, 61–2)

7.   Let us attempt to summarise the findings of Loraux's essay in the form of theses:

1) In the first place, *stasis* calls into question the commonplace that conceives Greek politics as the definitive overcoming of the *oikos* in the *polis*.

2) In its essence, *stasis* or civil war is a 'war within the family', which comes from the *oikos* and not from outside. Precisely insofar as it is inherent to the family,

the *stasis* acts as its revealer; it attests to its irreducible presence in the *polis*.

3) The *oikos* is essentially ambivalent: on the one hand, it is a factor of division and conflict; on the other, it is the paradigm that enables the reconciliation of what it has divided.

What becomes immediately evident from this summary exposition is the fact that while the presence and function of the *oikos* and the *phylon* in the city are broadly examined and to a certain extent defined, it is precisely the function of the *stasis*, which constitutes the object of the investigation, which remains in the shadows. It is but a 'revealer' of the *oikos*. Reduced, in other words, to the element from which it originates and to whose presence in the city it can only attest, its own definition ultimately remains elusive. We will therefore attempt to examine Loraux's theses in this direction, by seeking to determine the 'capacity for development' that they contain, which will enable us to bring to light this unsaid.

8.   Regarding the first point, I believe that my recent investigations have shown beyond doubt that the relations between the *oikos* and the *polis*, and between *zōē* and *bios*, which are at the foundation of Western politics, need to be rethought from scratch. In classical Greece, *zōē*, simple natural life, was excluded from the

polis and remained confined to the sphere of the *oikos*. At the beginning of the *Politics*, Aristotle thus carefully distinguishes the *oikonomos* (the head of an enterprise) and the *despotēs* (the head of the family), who are concerned with the reproduction and conservation of life, from the statesman; and he sharply criticises those who maintain that the difference that separates them is one of quantity rather than one of kind. And when, in a passage that will become canonical in the Western political tradition, he defines the end of the *polis* as a perfect community, he does so precisely by opposing the simple fact of living (*to zēn*) to politically qualified life (*to eu zēn*).

This opposition between 'life' and the 'good life' is nonetheless at the same time an implication of the first in the second, of the family in the city and of *zōē* in political life. One of the aims of *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Agamben 1998) was precisely that of analysing the reasons for, and consequences of, this exclusion – which is at the same time an inclusion – of natural life in politics. What relations should we suppose between *zōē* and the *oikos*, on the one hand, and between the *polis* and political *bios*, on the other, if the former must be included in the latter through an exclusion? From this perspective, my investigations were perfectly consistent with Loraux's invitation to call into question the commonplace 'of an irresistible

overcoming of the *oikos* on the part of the *polis*'. What is at issue is not an overcoming, but a complicated and unresolved attempt to capture an exteriority and to expel an intimacy. But how should we understand the place and the function of civil war in this context?

9.   In this light, the second and third theses in which we have summarised Loraux's research appear more problematic. According to these theses, the original place of the *stasis* is the *oikos*; civil war is a 'war within the family', an *oikeios polemos*. And an essential ambivalence inheres in the *oikos* (and in the *stasis* that is connatural to it), according to which it is simultaneously what causes the destruction of the city and the paradigm of its reunification. How can we explain this ambivalence? 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? And why does the family irreducibly entail conflict at its centre? Why would civil war be a secret of the family and of blood, yet not a political mystery? Perhaps 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.

According to its etymon, *stasis* (from *histemi*) designates the act of rising, of standing firmly upright (*stasimos* is the point in the tragedy when the chorus

stands still and speaks; *stas* is the one who swears the oath while standing). Where does the *stasis* 'stand'? What is its proper place? In order to respond to these questions, it will be necessary to reconsider some of the texts that Loraux analyses in order to test her thesis regarding the family situation of civil war and to check whether they in fact consent to a different reading.

First of all, a citation from Plato's *Laws* (869c–d):

> The brother [*adelphos*, the blood brother] who kills his brother in combat during a civil war […] will be held pure [*katharos*] as if he had killed an enemy [*polemios*]; the same will happen when a citizen has killed a citizen in the same conditions, or a stranger a stranger.

Commenting on this passage, Loraux once again perceives testimony of the intimate relation between *stasis* and the family:

> [I]n the outburst of civil hatred, it is the nearest of kin that one kills […] it is the immediate family that the *stasis* dissolves by dividing it. The real family in the city, the family as metaphor of the city. (Loraux 1997, 44)

Yet what follows from the text of the law that the Athenian of the Platonic dialogue proposes is less the connection between *stasis* and *oikos* than the fact that the civil war assimilates and makes undecidable brother and enemy, inside and outside, household and city. In the *stasis*, the killing of what is most intimate

is indistinguishable from the killing of what is most foreign. This means, however, that the *stasis* does not have its place within the household, but constitutes a threshold of indifference between the *oikos* and the *polis*, between blood kinship and citizenship.

Another passage, this time from Thucydides (which Loraux cites in a footnote), confirms this new situation of the *stasis* at the border between the household and the city. Regarding the bloody civil war that had taken place in Corcira in 425, Thucydides records that the *stasis* attained such ferocity that 'the family bond [*to syggenēs*] became more foreign than the factional bond [*tou etairikou*]' (*Hist.*, 3, 82, 6). Loraux explains that the inverse formulation – 'the factional bond became more intimate than the family bond' – would have been more natural for expressing the same idea (Loraux 1997, 35n45). In truth, what is once again decisive is the fact that the *stasis*, through a double displacement, confuses what pertains to the *oikos* with what is particular to the *polis*, what is intimate with what is foreign. The factional bond moves into the household to the same extent to which the family bond is estranged in the faction.

It is perhaps possible to interpret in the same sense the curious device contrived by the citizens of Nakōnē. Here too the effect of the *stasis* is that of rendering the *oikos* and the *polis* indiscernible: kinship

is dissolved into citizenship, while the factional bond assumes, for the 'brothers by election', the incongruous form of a kinship.

10.   We can now attempt to respond to the question: Where does the *stasis* 'stand'? What is the proper place of civil war? The *stasis* – this is our hypothesis – takes place neither in the *oikos* nor in the *polis*, neither in the family nor in the city; rather, it constitutes a zone of indifference between the unpolitical space of the family and the political space of the city. In transgressing this threshold, the *oikos* is politicised; conversely, the *polis* is 'economised', that is, it is reduced to an *oikos*. *This means that in the system of Greek politics civil war functions as a threshold of politicisation and depoliticisation, through which the house is exceeded in the city and the city is depoliticised in the family.*

   In the tradition of Greek law, there is a curious document that seems to confirm beyond any doubt the situation of civil war as a threshold of politicisation/ depoliticisation that we have just proposed. Although this document is mentioned not only by Plutarch, Aulus Gellius and Cicero, but also, and with particular precision, by Aristotle (*Ath. Const.*, 8, 5), the valuation of *stasis* that it entails has appeared so disconcerting to modern historians of politics that it has often

been ignored (even Loraux, who cites it in her book, does not mention it in the article). The document in question is Solon's law, which punishes with *atimia* – which is to say, with the loss of civil rights – the citizen who had not fought for either one of the two sides in a civil war. As Aristotle bluntly expresses it,

> whoever did not join sides [*thētai ta opla*, literally 'provide the shield'] with either party when civil strife [*stasiazousēs tēs poleōs*] prevailed was to be held in dishonour [*atimon einai*] and no longer a member of the state [*tēs poleōs mē metēchein*].

(By translating it with *capite sanxit*, Cicero – *Att.*, 10, 1, 2 – correctly evokes the *capitis diminutio*, which corresponds to the Greek *atimia*.)

Not taking part in the civil war amounts to being expelled from the *polis* and confined to the *oikos*, to losing citizenship by being reduced to the unpolitical condition of a private person. Obviously this does not mean that the Greeks considered civil war to be a public good, but rather that the *stasis* functions as a reactant which reveals the political element in the extreme instance as a threshold of politicisation that determines for itself the political or unpolitical character of a certain being.

11.   Christian Meier has shown how a transformation in constitutional conceptuality took place in

fifth-century BCE Greece, which was accomplished through what he calls a 'politicisation' (*Politisierung*) of the citizenry. Where social belonging had previously been defined primarily by conditions and statuses of various kinds (nobles and members of religious communities, farmers and artisans, heads of families and relatives, inhabitants of the city and of the countryside, masters and retainers), and only secondarily by citizenship with the rights and duties that the latter implied, now citizenship as such became the political criterion of social identity. 'In this way', he writes,

> a specifically Greek identity arose – the political identity of citizenship. The citizens were expected to act 'as citizens' [*bürgherlich*], that is, 'politically' (in the Greek sense of the word), and this expectation was now given an institutional form. Political identity was not exposed to any significant competition from group loyalties based on religion, common economic interests, the individual's place in the work space, or the like […] In devoting themselves to political life broad sections of the citizenry in the Greek democracies saw themselves primarily as participants in the government of the *polis*. The *polis* rested essentially on their interests in order and justice, which formed the basis of their solidarity […] In this sense, *polis* and *politai* could continue to interact […] Hence, for a fairly large number of citizens, politics became a consuming interest that made up much of the content of their lives [*Lebensinhalt*] […] There was a strict separation between the *polis*, the area in which they acted jointly as citizens, and the

house, between politics and the 'realm of necessity' (*anankaia*).
(Meier 1979/1990, 204/165–6)

According to Meier, this process of politicisation of the citizenry is specifically Greek, and was bequeathed by Greece, with alterations and discontinuities of various kinds, to Western politics. From the perspective that interests us here, it is necessary to specify that the politicisation of which Meier speaks is situated in the field of tensions between *oikos* and *polis*, which are defined by the polar opposed processes of politicisation and depoliticisation. In this field of tensions, *stasis* constitutes a threshold through which domestic belonging is politicised into citizenship and, conversely, citizenship is depoliticised into family solidarity. Because these tensions are, as we have seen, contemporaneous, what becomes decisive is the threshold in which they are transformed and inverted, conjoined and disjoined.

ℵ Meier broadly accepts the Schmittian definition of the political as 'the degree of intensity of an association and a disassociation'. As he suggests, however, this definition concerns less the essence of the political than political unity. In this sense, as Schmitt specifies,

political unity […] describes the most intensive degree of unity, from which, therefore, the most intensive differentiation, grouping into friend and enemy, is decided. Political unity is the supreme unity […] because it decides and can, within itself, prevent all other opposed groupings

from disassociating to the point of extreme hostility (i.e. to the point of civil war). (Schmitt 2000, 307)

In truth, if an opposed pair of concepts defines a particular field, neither of the two can be excluded entirely without compromising its reality. As the extreme degree of disassociation, civil war is, even from the Schmittian perspective, an ineliminable part of the political system of the West.

12.   Another Greek institution – which Loraux does not mention in the article, but to which she dedicates an important chapter (the sixth) of *La Cité divisée* – confirms this essential connection between *stasis* and politics: amnesty. In 403, following the civil war in Athens which concluded with the defeat of the oligarchy of the Thirty, the victorious democrats, led by Archinus, solemnly pledged 'not in any instance to remember the past events [*ton de parelēlythotōn mēdeni pros mēdena mnēsikakein*]' (*Ath. Const.*, 39, 6), that is, not to prosecute crimes committed during the civil war. Commenting on this decision, which coincides with the invention of amnesty, Aristotle (*Ath. Const.*, 40, 2) writes that in this way the democrats 'behaved towards the past disasters in the most […] statesmanlike manner [*politikōtata* (…) *chrēsasthai*]'. Amnesty with respect to civil war is thus the comportment most appropriate to politics. From the juridical point of view, *stasis* thus seems to be defined by two prohibitions, which

perfectly cohere with one another: on the one hand, not participating in it is politically culpable; on the other, forgetting it once it has finished is a political duty.

The *mē mnēsikakein* formula of the amnestic oath is usually translated with 'do not remember' or even 'do not be resentful, do not have bad memories' (Loraux translates it as *je ne rappellerai pas les malheures*, 'I will not recall the misfortunes' [Loraux 1997/2001, 147/149]). The adjective *mnēsikakos* thus means 'rancorous, resentful' and refers to someone who harbours bad memories. It is doubtful, however, that the same applies for the verb *mnēsikakein*. In the cryptotype that rules the formation of compound verbs of this type in Greek, the active one is generally the second term. *Mnēsikakein* means less 'to have bad memories' than 'to do harm with memory, to make bad use of memories'. In this case, it is a legal term, which refers to the fact of prosecuting someone for crimes committed during the *stasis*. The Athenian *amnēstia* is not simply a forgetting or a repression of the past; it is an exhortation not to make bad use of memory. Insofar as it constitutes a political paradigm inherent to the city, which marks the becoming-political of the unpolitical (the *oikos*) and the becoming-unpolitical of the political (the *polis*), the *stasis* is not something that can ever be forgotten or repressed; it is the unforgettable which must remain always possible in the city, yet which nonetheless must

not be remembered through trials and resentments. Just the opposite, that is to say, of what civil war seems to be for the moderns: namely, something that one must seek to render impossible at every cost, yet that must always be remembered through trials and legal persecutions.

13.   Let us attempt to draw some provisory conclusions from our analyses:

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':

$$\text{politicisation} \leftrightarrows \text{depoliticisation}$$
$$\text{oikos} \text{———} |\text{stasis}| \text{———} \text{polis}$$
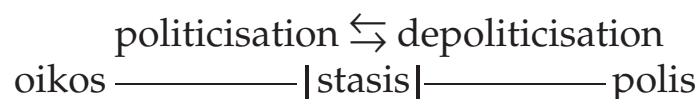
This means that in classical Greece, as today, there is no such thing as a political 'substance': politics is a field incessantly traversed by the tensional currents of politicisation and depoliticisation, the family and the city. Between these opposed polarities, disjoined and yet intimately bound together, the tension – to paraphrase Loraux's diagnosis – is irresolvable. When the tension toward the *oikos* prevails and the city seems to want to transform itself into a family (albeit of a particular kind), then civil war functions as a threshold in which family relationships are repoliticised; when it is instead the tension toward the *polis* that prevails and the family bond appears to weaken, then the *stasis* intervenes to recodify the family relationships in political terms.

Classical Greece is perhaps the place in which this tension found for a moment an uncertain, precarious equilibrium. In the course of the subsequent political history of the West, the tendency to depoliticise the city by transforming it into a house or a family, ruled by blood relations or by merely economic operations, will alternate together with other, symmetrically opposed phases in which everything that is unpolitical must be mobilised and politicised. In accordance with the prevailing of one or the other tendency, the function, situation and form of civil war will also change. But so long as the words 'family' and 'city', 'private' and 'public', 'economy' and 'politics' maintain

an albeit tenuous meaning, it is unlikely that it can ever be eliminated from the political scene of the West.

> א The form that civil war has acquired today in world history is terrorism. If the Foucauldian diagnosis of modern politics as biopolitics is correct, and if the genealogy that traces it back to an oikonomical-theological paradigm is equally correct, then global 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. Terrorism is the 'global civil war' which time and again invests this or that zone of planetary space. It is no coincidence that the 'terror' should coincide with the moment in which life as such – the nation (which is to say, birth) – became the principle of sovereignty. The sole form in which life as such can be politicised is its unconditioned exposure to death – that is, bare life.