

Michael E. Sawyer

AN AFRICANA PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPORALITY

HOMO LIMINALIS



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For Nanny and Mark

FOREWORD

But Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition stage – neither caterpillar nor butterfly.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

To be Human is to be cognizant of being situated in Time. To be situated in Time positions the subject somewhere between birth and death, part of a personal genealogy, in a coherent relationship to an historical epoch, and a member of a social collective that is an amalgam of individuals and institutions that define belonging and exclusion. To be Black and victim of a series of interlocking time-fracturing technologies like the Judeo-Christian Tradition, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Slavery, Colonialism, Empire, Commodity Capitalism, White Supremacy, Patriarchy, Gender Bias, Homophobia, Jim Crow, Police Brutality, and the Carceral State is to Be(ing) Out of Time. Because the Black Subject is Human the fracturing of a coherent relationship with Time through physical and metaphysical coercion awakens the desire of the aggrieved subject to return themselves to the coherence of Human-ness that is indicated by being properly situated in Time.

As the title of this text proposes the goal of this book is to offer an account of how the subject that is a victim of white supremacy accounts for itself as a temporal being and in so doing defines a particular type of existence. This is a multivalent existence. There are subjects who find themselves situated temporally as subaltern subjects, those who find themselves striving toward positive existence in time and those who have solved this problem. This text is interested in these states of being and primarily

in states of transition. It is the oppositional nature of Black existence under the coercive threat of white supremacy that forms the condition under examination and accounts for the radical nature of the existence of this marginalized figure that desires something quite different. Africana philosophy is understood to be an oppositional intellectual practice in that the Western philosophical tradition excludes the possibility of recognizing the existence of Black thought. That exclusion, in and of itself, is a foundational component of the marginalization of Black people. To endeavor to establish the Black Subject as having a “philosophy,” meaning a love for knowledge, is to understand the possibility of this subject having love for the self, and this book recognizes that state as conditioned on a comprehensive and positive relationship with Time.

This text endeavors to articulate something that can be characterized as Africana as well as post-colonial philosophy, and with that in mind, what may appear to be a preoccupation with Western thought might be construed as deleterious to that project. The thinking here, methodologically, is that in order to advance beyond boundaries one must necessarily be familiar with those boundaries. Additionally, the marginalized subject is effectively a victim of the causality of the Western preoccupation (philosophically) with the destruction of Black subjectivity. This necessitates a comprehensive understanding of Western thought in service of assembling effective opposition to its logic. Some of this focus may seem predictable and others may seem idiosyncratic or obtuse. Many might consider the focus on the Judeo-Christian tradition in this text paradoxical. It is employed here as a central component of the tradition this thinking opposes as well as an essential component of African American political thought particularly as it relates to the recovery of rights in the twentieth century. The challenge established with that inquiry is to understand how *Genesis* establishes a normative relationship to being Human that sets up the possibility of the sub-human. Further, it threatens the coherence of projects that employ, in the parlance of Audre Lorde, “the master’s tools” in order to dismantle “the master’s house.” The cosmology of the Judeo-Christian tradition will be revealed as establishing the parameters of temporal existence that exclude certain subjects while at the same time charting the path to recovery of identity. This limits the intellectual utility of this project beyond the parameters of the radical philosophical tradition that is formed out of and arrayed against White supremacy. There are important and complex ways with which to understand the subjective relationship to temporality that are non-Western or not formed through struggle against

White supremacy but they are beyond the scope of this text. The core of this text is the prospect of rescuing positive self-consciousness from The Catastrophe (Barrymore Anthony Bogues) of White Supremacy, and these efforts have taken a variety of forms ranging from acts of revolutionary violence to restatement of the terms and conditions of existence through artistic expression that fractures normative temporality.

This project explores the point between before and after in the parlance of time or here and there expressed spatially. Like the description of the transitional state of Queequeg from *Moby-Dick* quoted above, there are subjects who are engaged in a process of metamorphosis that linger in the place of transition in a manner or for a period of time that allows for “examination” of that phenomenon. This “lingering” can be the result of a willful halting of “progress” by the subject in question or the result of meeting resistance to movement. Examples like Ellison’s Invisible Man listening to Armstrong in the comfort of his hole exemplify the former and the state of Black America caught between the coercive violence of state-sanctioned slavery and full citizenship marked by a predictable relationship to the system of justice the latter. The philosophical tool developed in this text is designed to allow the witnessing of subjects in transition in order to account for the radical potentiality of this movement. I have named this state and the being that inhabits it *homo liminalis* and employ a variety of indicators of the apparition of this state of being in aid of testing the apparatus assembled for observation.

This text is a minor phrase in a long conversation that spans the Black Radical Tradition and has found expression in the work of individuals like Sylvia Wynter, Fred Moten, Hortense Spillers, and Saidiya Hartman (to name but a few) whose scholarship speaks to what Cedric Robinson articulates as the necessity that “for a people to survive in a struggle it must be on its own terms...The shared past is precious, not for itself, but because it is the basis of consciousness, of knowing, of being.”¹ What Robinson understands as a “shared past” is what I propose operates as the basis for presenting temporality as the foundation of subjective consciousness and further to understand that to undertake radical reconstitution of identity under conditions of coercive threat is to reconfigure the subject’s relationship to temporality in multiple registers.

There are many ways in which this metamorphosis manifests itself and in being legible facilitates others to observe, participate in, or obstruct. Not all subjects can witness all forms of metamorphosis. The production of sound is one manifestation of this transition and the radical potentiality

of the sonic seems to reside in it being both the act of subjective alteration and the audible manifestation of that process. The preoccupation of Hartman (*Scenes of Subjection*) and Moten (*In the Break*) with the beating of Frederick Douglass' Aunt Hester exemplifies this phenomenon.

Hartman is driven to inquire into the ethics of rereading this horror and Moten hears the cry replicated in places like the raw emotion of Abbey Lincoln's "performance" on the album "Protest." The various ways this horror is experienced indicate that there is "something else happening," and I propose that the manner in which Aunt Hester haunts, and in that haunting disorients and discomfits those who encounter this echo, is to witness their involvement in a project of radical (dis)(re)formation of the subject at the level of temporal existence. This book's proposal is that the sounds or images that preoccupy our attention are the smoke of the fire of being caught, like Queequeg, between caterpillar and butterfly. We are uncomfortable with the screams of Aunt Hester and the performance of Abbey Lincoln because we are pulled into the realm of the *homo liminalis* and offered a glimpse of the possibilities and dangers that reside in that zone. This zone is both a place of the potential for recovery and one where subjects might be destroyed.

The preoccupation with spatiality as a component of an exegesis of the subject leads this book to consider the **Plantation**. Throughout this text the reader will see that the word that has found itself associated with things as benign as resort properties, farms in Ithaca, New York, and shutters, struck through in order to account for the true nature of this apparatus of coercion and to rescue it from employment that is unconscious of its analogous relationship to the Concentration Camp. "Negro" will be employed as well and allowed to stand on its own in recognition of the term's contextual relationship to the theoretical engine of this effort that leans heavily upon the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz.

The first part of the text is considered introductory and endeavors to define the manner in which "liminality" is employed here and delineates the philosophical and theoretical superstructure of the book as well as the foundational presuppositions. Chapter 2 begins with *Genesis* and employs the art of Michelangelo as the text for examining the Western/Judeo-Christian understanding of foundational and normative humanity. Chapter 3 articulates the theory of temporality employed in this text and endeavors to understand how it operates on and with the normative subjects established in the previous sections. Chapter 4 is a long meditation on *Othello* and the echoes of that text that will provide the first step in an intellectual geneal-

ogy that journeys from the Moor in Venice, to *Benito Cereno*, and ends with Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Chapter 5 focuses its attention, finally, on the **Plantation**. Here, Jefferson's forced labor camp, the **Plantation** known as Monticello, will be carefully examined as a place for the destruction of subjectivity and as the locus for a radical brand of revolutionary self-making by the enslaved woman Sally Hemings. The final chapter is a brief conclusion.

Conclusion is used carefully here in that this text ends with a comma or semi-colon with the hope that it joins an ongoing conversation and perhaps opens another method of thinking through the form and content of something like Black Radical Political Thought.

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NOTE

1. Robinson, Cedric. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. University of North Carolina Press: 2000. Author's original preface.

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There are many people and situations that are responsible in positive and negative ways for the production of this text. I will limit this to the positive.

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This book came to life as my dissertation in the Department of Africana Studies at Brown University where it was originally entitled “Homo Liminalis: The Tears of the Caterpillar” which is really meaningful to me but less so to the savvy editors at Palgrave. That title exemplifies the intellectual space I was granted by Brown University and the Department of Africana Studies generally and my dissertation committee specifically. Thanks go to those scholars: Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, RA Judy, Anani Dzidzienyo, David Ferrell Krell, and most especially Barrymore Anthony Bogues. Professor Bogues and Brown University gave me an opportunity to study there and never restricted the idiosyncratic direction of my thinking. There is more of Tony’s wisdom and guidance here than I could ever repay or properly acknowledge.

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me in all ways even when I was not sure of myself. Their parenting has provided me an example of how I can provide the same support for Ashley and Ellis who we are all so proud to watch become adults.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

And you slip into the breaks and look around.
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

In short, it is becoming a matter of urgency to know whether social critique is to be made by virtue of a presupposition that is not at all social (an ontology of Being-tout-court, as it were) or by virtue of an ontology of being-in-common, that is, of the plural singular essence of Being. That is why the subject of “ontology” first of all entails the critical examination of the conditions of critique in general.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*

POINT OF DEPARTURE

Michel Foucault posits provocatively in the opening moments of his 1977–1978 lectures at the Collège de France that the transition from what he calls the “pastoral of souls” to the “political government of men”¹ poses a particularly difficult problem for thinking:

It should be understood, of course, that I will not try even to sketch the series of transformations that actually brought about the transition from this economy of souls to the government of populations...

It would be interesting to see how these series of insurrections, these revolts of conduct, spread and what effects they have had on revolutionary processes themselves, how they are controlled and taken in hand, and what was their specificity, form, and internal law of development. Well, this would be an entire field of possible research.²

This text assumes that there is indeed an “entire field of possible research” in the offing and this project endeavors to follow the exhortation from Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* employed as the epigraph here and “slip into the breaks and look around.” I intend to take Foucault seriously in two important ways: first to posit that transition between subject positions is an identifiable phenomenon and second, in contradistinction to Foucault, to take up the “series of transformations” he identifies as the central point of inquiry of this effort.

Axiomatically, I am fairly comfortable in asserting that two objects cannot occupy the same “space,” and from that point of departure it is clear that if something like a master and a slave exist (as exemplar of oppositional subjects), they cannot in substance be “the same,” so therefore there must be a “space” between them. Alain Badiou, in his text *Being and Event*, approaches this imperative by asserting:

The central principle of this type is the Leibnizian principle of indiscernibles: there cannot exist two things whose difference cannot be marked. Language assumes the role of law of being insofar as it will hold as identical whatever it cannot distinguish.³

From that assertion it is therefore important to wonder at whether the space between these subjects is empty or is itself a “type” of subjectivity or is altered by its occupation by the subject in transition, however fleeting the moment. If it is the former the analysis in many ways becomes fairly simple: a subject goes from subjectivity *a* to subjectivity *b* with no discernible or describable content of Being in the transitional space from one existence to the other. The second option would seem to be of more complex nature in that if there is “something” between these subject positions that is more of a “thing” than “nothing,” then the challenge is to determine what makes up this place of transition and what becomes of the subject during the process. This represents one set of issues but there is an additional problem to consider that is closely related to the question regarding the “durability” of the transitional figure or space. The question is whether the figure that I reference with the title of this text (*homo liminalis*) is the “third figure” in the room or whether it represents the place “between” figures that are more traditionally understood, defined, and therefore discernible. It is central to the argumentation of this project that there is another subject position between what are the extreme actors

(master and slave) that are canonically positioned as the central players in dialectical thinking; this figure, that I label as *Elemental*, proves essential in building the architecture of this argument but is definitively not the *homo liminalis*.

Foucault's Lecture 9 remains important here as it illuminates a space for thinking in this manner. He proposes that:

...the function that *philosophy* had effectively disappeared in the Middle Ages that is to say philosophy as the answer to the fundamental question of how to conduct oneself. What rules must one give to oneself in order to conduct oneself properly in daily life, in relation to others, in relation to those in authority, to the sovereign or the lord, and in order to direct one's mind as well, and to direct it in the right direction, to its salvation certainly, but also to the truth.⁴

In thinking with Foucault it is my contention that in proposing that there is a way of conducting oneself unique to various subjects (the sovereign or lord and or "others") we seem to have located the existence of a being that has decisions to make. Foucault's decision to leave unexamined the trace between subject positions imbeds a structural problematic that renders the transitional term (*homo liminalis*) absent from his interrogation though present in his thinking as well as a mediating subject between extremes. This is principally based on the notion that the exegesis of the "series of transformations" will illuminate not just points of unstable transition (*homo liminalis*) but a stable middle existence (*Elemental Being*) between extremes. We can note this in the passage quoted above that situates the sovereign as the "other" to which all must relate leaves no space for what I would insert into Foucault's list of possible ways in which to conduct oneself: that of the subaltern to the "altern" where the "altern" is the stable existence between a sub- and mega-form of Being, and the subaltern to the sovereign or lord. However, by imagining that the distance between the sovereign and the subaltern can be left unexamined, the middle term that allows for the separation between the two is "lost" as is the point of transition between the points of separation.

The opening moments of this argument necessitate an explanation of the architecture that I imagine represents the structure of Western societal order as it relates to broad typologies of subjectivity as an interlocking series of observation-based presuppositions.

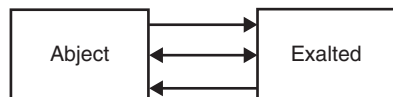
Presupposition #1 The *Abject* and the *Exalted* exist opposite one another yet elicit similar response upon their observation. In order to provide a more capacious framework: the *Exalted* will serve as the category of which the sovereign is a specific typology and the *Abject*, the category that includes the slave, as one example of a type of subaltern being.

The first question that confronts this assertion is whether the two are directly confronting one another. Stated differently, do the two “touch” one another under the terms of this oppositional relationship depicted here (Fig. 1.1)?

This account proposes that the answer to this question is “No.” This is an attempt to establish two important interpretive positions as they relate to Hegel generally and the Master/Slave dialectic(s) particularly and their relationship to this project. Hegel articulates two distinct typologies of recognition through conflict that unfortunately bear the same label: the “first” in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* and the “second” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I have emphasized the notion of ordinal numbers here in that it is obvious that the *Phenomenology* was written before the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* but the dialectic in the second piece antecedes the other logically.

Following the Hegel of the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, there is primordial conflict among man that results in a type of recognition. This recognition is based on the fact that in any given encounter across the registers of life some are more or less dominant than others. In these encounters, the notion of “winning” or “losing” takes on the character of Mastery or Servitude, thus establishing the outer boundaries of the human condition with respect to social encounters and ultimately governance. The point I’m making here is that it seems an oversimplification to imagine that all subjects happen to, at all times, be either master or slave, always either dominating or dominated. There is a place of rest that allows a subject to have space to imagine encounters that require dialectical resolution. Again, Hegel’s Lord and Bondsman are useful here as the ontological basis of the first movement in the establishment of the framework that preoccupies this effort.

Fig. 1.1 Unmediated encounter between the *Abject* and the *Exalted*



The thinking of Edmund Burke in his text of *A Philosophical Inquiry Into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* is the next step in this thinking. In detail, it is clear that Burke is preoccupied with the relationship between the sublime and the beautiful but what interests me here is that within his exposition of the sublime he frames a relationship between extreme figures that can be mapped against the Sovereign Continuum that I am developing. Burke asks us to consider first the Sovereign and then the Negro. In Section V of Burke's text entitled "Power" the philosopher tells us:

Thus we are affected by strength which is *natural power*. The power which arises from institutions in kings and commanders, has the same connection with terror. Sovereigns are frequently addressed with the title of *dread majesty*. And it may be observed that young persons little acquainted with the world, and who have not been used to approach men of power, are commonly struck with awe which takes away the free use of the faculties.⁵

Later in the same text, specifically Section XV, "Darkness Terrible in its own nature," we find the following narrative with respect to a child who has his sight restored at age 13 or 14.

Among many remarkable particulars that attended his first perceptions on visual objects ... the first time the boy saw a black object, it gave him great uneasiness and that some time after, upon accidentally seeing a negro woman, he was struck with great horror at the sight. The horror, in this case can scarcely be supposed to arise from any association...In our instance ... there is no reason to think that the ill effects of black on his imagination were more owing to the connexion with any disagreeable ideas, than that the good effects of more cheerful colours were derived from the connexion with pleasing ones. They had both, probably their effects from their natural operation.⁶

I read Burke as having established a fundamental binary by situating the Sovereign and the Negro woman as eliciting similar reactions from their contemplation by the most innocent of observers: the child. In the second case, interestingly, a child whose mind has developed independent of visual observation therefore must be understood to provide an "honest" response to visual stimulation of all sorts.

The two figures, the king and the Negro, are not the "same" if only because of the extremes in which they exist with respect to questions of agency. The king has complete agency, not only over himself but over others,

and the Negro exists as a lack with respect to agency of the self and over others. The two are both read as sublime and the two will be positioned against one another as representative of the radically “Other.” What Burke does not provide is an account of the implications associated with the first of the questions posed above regarding the sublime figure interacting directly with another sublime figure. The point here is not to theorize that experience but to propose that there must be some third figure that occupies a critical distance apart from these two “Others.” In both of the instances referenced here, the critical figure is a child who is struck by the observation and whose reaction are observed by another party who, unlike the child, maintains possession/control of their faculties and is capable of relating the experience for our consumption. The point of departure is therefore the assertion that begins with situating the radically “Other.”

Presupposition #2 The *Object* and the *Exalted* do not interact directly.

I propose that if the two extreme subjects do not “touch” one another, there must be some mediating term between them. This is obvious from the account provided by Burke that serves as the point of departure for the opening of this thinking. The king and the Negro are observing neither themselves nor the other. The child in both instances is the interlocutor. The question can then be asked as to whether the king and the slave encounter one another directly under the terms of the Hegelian Lord and Bondsman dialectic after the formative encounter in the state of nature. As a product of the recognitive encounter in the state of nature, the *Elemental Subject*, in this framing, preexists the subjectivities of the *Exalted* and the *Object* and continues to serve as a mediating position between the two. The point here is that the logical trajectory from the primordial state of direct conflict to social order establishes the continuum of sovereignty from its abundance to its lack, but for the most part the notion of direct encounters is left behind and the subject trends toward the middle and mediating term of human-ness that is a state of existence that is measurably beyond the status of Bare Life in the sense that Giorgio Agamben employs the term. The proposed structure is potentially coercive and confrontational. That energy is always present and can be unleashed but it is the goal of the human to find a place of rest or shelter from the experience of the kinetic energy or power of the structure.

Understanding this we can return to the question of perspective that seems important here. It would seem that a mediating position would

exist in this architecture that facilitates the possibility of experiencing “wonder.” Burke has situated a third party as the observer that grants the reader access to this experience in terms that can be understood. Additionally, this mediating term can be taken seriously as the locus of a contemplative place for imagination. The classical formation of this notion of mediation between two figures who have radically different relationships with sovereignty is found in G.W.F. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the much-quoted master/slave dialectic that situates the thing (*das Ding*) between the Lord and Bondsman.

The servant is self-consciousness per se, relates himself negatively to the thing and sublates the thing. However at the same time the thing is for him self-sufficient, and for that reason he cannot by way of his negating activity be over and done with it all the way up to the point of having eliminated it, that is the servant merely *works on it*.⁷ (§190)

Hegel’s account seems to be at odds with the process here in that the appearance of the “Thing” is a result of the direct encounter between the Master and the Slave. Here the proposition is that the mediating observer exists external to this conflict and is not the product of a confrontation between the two but instead occupies a necessary space of mediation/observation between them. Burke’s embodied observer (the child) and the observer of that observer do not appear to be related to a dialectical experience between these extremes and therefore the necessity of mediation and the “thing” between the two actors here is what I will refer to as the *Elemental*.

Presupposition #3 The *Elemental* is the mediating term between the *Abject* and the *Exalted* (Fig. 1.2).

The subject that occupies this place of rest and observation is established as the *Elemental*; a distinct subjectivity that provides the stuff of primordial conflict and remains present after its resolution. The Human, as such, is formed from the *Elemental* subject.

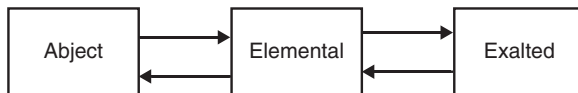


Fig. 1.2 The *Elemental* mediates the encounter of the *Abject* and the *Exalted*

What is the role of the Human in this structure? As mentioned in Presupposition #1, all beings do not find themselves at all times in the position of *Exalted* or *Abject* relative to society as a whole. Secondly, it seems clear from the presentation of Presupposition #2 that there is clearly another subject “in the room,” so to speak, as the informant for our engagement with the sublime. The *Elemental* subject provides the support that prevents the collapse of the *Exalted* and *Abject* into the primordial state of explicit, direct conflict. A way of thinking about this might be the implication for modern society when there is no discernible middle class. The middle class serves as a mediating type of subjectivity that grants shape, coherence, and longevity to the superstructure that is designed to facilitate the existence of the extremes. It is from the purchase of the *Elemental* that it is possible to observe and be effected by the experience of the *Abject* and the *Exalted*. Further, it seems clear that the observer of the effected observer operates at a remove from the initial viewing, if only because the observational perspective of the observer does not experience a loss of faculties establishing yet another layer of mediation. The position of the figure that can be categorized as *Elemental* raises several critical questions that deal directly with the interaction of the subjects presented here. Questions of the perceptions of the observer and the observed prove critical in this project and keeping track, as best we can, of the role played by each allows us to understand their interaction. Hegel’s formulation, in that it produces a product of sorts that one of the two participants works on for the benefit of the other, orders the parties through this process. The strictly observational aspect of the relationship described here pressures us to develop an alternative set of criterion to ensure that our analysis gives us an understanding of the subjects that are under consideration.

Where Hegel resurges as an important framework to consider in and around this paradigm is in the contemplation of the barriers that are posited to exist between the broad types of subjects enumerated here. As a practical matter, the fact of different types of subjects presupposes that there be barriers between them of some sort that mark out the boundaries of the possibility of discerning and describing one subject from the other. In thinking with Hegel here it is possible to read the Master/Slave dialectic as the relationship between a subject, for instance, the *Exalted*, and the threshold or barrier between this figure and *Elemental* being. The barrier/threshold itself becomes the point of conflict between the subject and this paradigmatic structure, and, in Hegelian terms, the *Thing* produced by this contact of subject and barrier is the thing that the subject then works upon in the process of transition. I will develop this thinking further later

but there is a way in which this marks the space of the *homo liminalis* as *das Ding* in Hegelian terms, and this transitional figure, opposing the barrier obstructing an alteration in subjectivity, can be mapped productively against the Master/Slave of the *Phenomenology*.

The transition between these subjectivities; the *Exalted* becoming *Elemental* and vice versa, or the *Abject* becoming *Elemental* or vice versa, is opposed by barriers that are crossed voluntarily or involuntarily. Much of the initial stages of this project will be devoted to understanding these barriers and the methods and results of crossing them (Fig. 1.3).

Presupposition #4 With respect to the “*Elemental*” that serves as the mediating term, there exists a continuum of being along this status that has as its middle term, with respect to the Human, the “Citizen.” The structure is depicted graphically (Fig. 1.4).

In some ways the nature of this structure is only prevented from collapsing in on itself by the strength of the borders between the *Exalted* and *Elemental*, and the *Abject* and *Elemental*. This effort will take up the construction, *materiél*, firmness, passability, and strength of these obstructions that also serve as the load-bearing supports of the structure. It is essential to account for the construction of these borders and understand how they are supported against collapse.

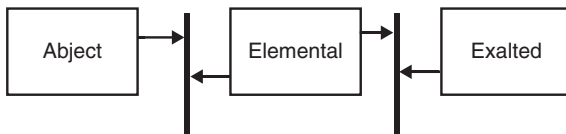


Fig. 1.3 Barriers exist between the states of Being

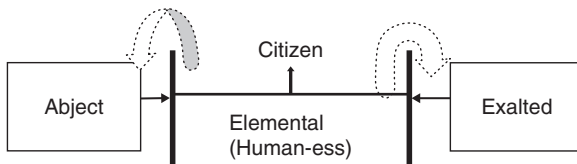


Fig. 1.4 The *Elemental* can endeavor to become the *Exalted* or be forced to become the *Abject*

The support structures are the product of the alternatively positive and negative imaginings of the subjects presented here. The practice of coherent governance or the fact of government as a legitimate, ongoing institution depends, after implementation by the sovereign, on the support of the terms of these separations by the masses or by the *Elemental*. The core nature of the threshold between the *Exalted* and the *Elemental* and the *Abject* and the *Elemental* is a coercive force that may or may not operate overtly. A second-order manifestation of this structure is “culture” that seems related to the paradigm writ large and is exemplified by laws, customs, and social convention. The desire to avoid the coercive power of the state in enforcing these separations by “staying in place” provides for the coherence and cohesiveness of state formation.

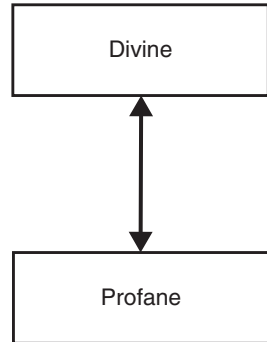
For example, the *Exalted* defends vigorously their position as distinct from that of the *Elemental*. The *Abject* finds their desire for a return to elementality and perhaps humanity fiercely opposed by the *Elemental* as a proxy for the sovereign in the most extreme cases. As a practical matter, the closer the subject draws to the limits of their current position within the paradigm, the more latent the power of the border becomes. As the *Exalted* is pulled toward the border between itself and the *Elemental*, the crossing is opposed by the power of the subject being dragged across the threshold. The coup is one type of illustration of this while the abdication of a ruler represents another.

At the opposite extreme, as the *Elemental* draws toward the threshold between itself and the *Abject* the transformation must be opposed. On the other side of the border, the *Abject's* strivings to be *Elemental* can be resisted in several ways: The *Elemental* can oppose this crossing as a deputy of the state or can fight it to prevent a type of inversion as when the *Abject* replaces the *Elemental* as the structure of this societal order remains intact while the roles alter. Much of this paradigm of the state and the rigidity of the boundaries depend on their relationship to the divine.

Presupposition #5 The entirety of this paradigm will operate in this project as the prototypical structure of the modern, Western State.

This structure is the secularization of the cosmological structure of the Judeo-Christian tradition that is most easily imagined as being a vertical arrangement. This understanding is situated as the source of the legitimacy of a State in that in order to be deemed “legitimate,” it has as its imprimatur mythological association with the will of a divine being and in this understanding imitates the divine economy.

Fig. 1.5 The unmediated hierarchical relationship between the Divine and the Profane



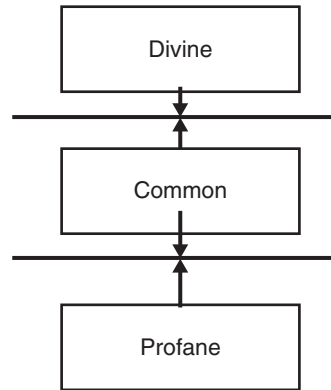
Presupposition #6 The Divine and the Profane are posed in opposition to one another (Fig. 1.5).

As with the *Exalted* and the *Abject*, this dialectical relationship is only indirectly confrontational and between the two is what I call the *Common*. The “State” is built upon the foundation of this relationship. The State, as described here, is a simulacrum of the classical cosmological notion of the separation between the divine and the secular. As with the relationship between the Sovereign and the Slave, there exists a middle term. This relation is also legible by thinking it along with further development of Foucault’s engagement with the relationship between governance and the divine, again from Lecture 9. In employing Saint Thomas on the question of sovereignty, he proposes that:

Insofar as he governs, the sovereign does nothing other than reproduce a model [that] is quite simply that of God’s government on Earth. Saint Thomas explains: In what does the excellence of art consist? To what extent is an art excellent? An art will be excellent insofar as it imitates nature. Now nature is ruled by God, for God created nature and continues to govern it all the time. The king’s art will be excellent insofar as it imitates nature, that is to say insofar as it operates like God.⁸

This requires that this project depart from the “beginning” of the logic of the divine relationship to man in order to trace the notion of the existence of right sovereignty as a mortal/secular pantomime of an idealized God.

Fig. 1.6 The Commons mediates between the Divine and the Profane



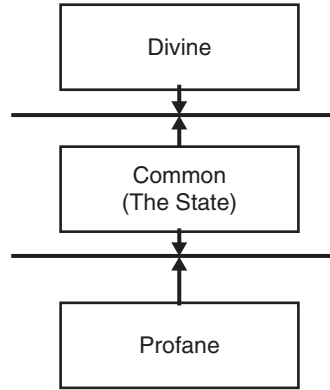
Presupposition #7 The Divine and the Profane do not “touch” one another and are mediated by the “Common” (Fig. 1.6).

This relationship is the foundation upon which the notion of the “state” is built. The state as described here is a simulacrum of the classical cosmological notion of the separation between the divine and the secular.

The *Common* in this formulation exists as the buttress against the collapse of the *Divine* and the *Profane* into one another and allows the space for the existence of secular governance that is related to a grounding in the *Divine* and a place of resistance to the ever-present danger of descent into the profane. The space clearly exposes itself by the fact that all beings who are not Divine are not situated as absolutely Profane in the way I am using the term here nor are all subjects who cannot be described as Profane necessarily Divine; this is perhaps a better way to approach this assertion. As mentioned above, this divine structure is mimicked by the simulacrum of the modern state. There is a threshold between these structures, the negotiation of which is the linchpin in the establishment of the legitimate nature of the state, which finds itself subsumed into the structure of the Common. That relationship is depicted here (Fig. 1.7).

The tethering of a state to the legitimacy of Divine Will is accomplished through one or several events that relate directly to question of the divine. Episodes of prophecy, ordination, consecration, desecration, and/or myth making are what I have in mind here. The Secular Sovereign is positioned

Fig. 1.7 The Commons includes the State



as the earthly embodiment of the Godhead and the slave as the absolutely profane. The Human is neither divine nor profane.

Presupposition #8 The State legitimates itself through a distinct relationship to the Divine.

The relationship of the individual to the structure proposed here that separates the Divine from the Profane is through the relationship of the individual to the state and that state's existence within the conceptualization of the Common that finds its legitimacy through its relationship to divine providence. The state here can be read as analogic or coterminous with institutions (some religious but not strictly) that provide the structure for the individual accomplishment of two goals: a relationship to the Divine and membership in a state that has a positive relationship to the same.

Presupposition #9 The *Exalted* is the secular embodiment of the Godhead and the *Abject* of the profane.

It is through these relationships to the Divine and the Profane on the part of the secular actors that the form and content of the divine architecture are replicated in the secular state. Two questions present themselves here: the first being that of the legitimacy of the State or, perhaps more appropriately, the legitimacy of the claims of the State of its relationship to divine providence and secondly the implication of the divine architecture being represented vertically and the Secular State horizontally.

The question of legitimacy that inhabits Proposition #8 is the driver of the imperative of a mythology on the part of the Sovereign that can be linked, ontologically, to the notion of the Divine that then allows the secular ruler to pronounce subjects as profane. Without this relationship, neither secular actor “enjoys” legitimacy in their status.

Presupposition #10 The State, in its entirety, is the secular equivalent of the Common.

Equivalence may not be the correct term though there is an important notion of similitude that exists here. The “State,” as theorized here, is embedded within the divine architecture’s Common and as such occupies some, if not all, of its space. This notion of spatial utilization needs to be considered temporally with respect to how, at any given time, the space is occupied or evacuated by the array of actors represented here.

First it is necessary to address the notion of *Elemental* being along this continuum that ranges from *Abject* to *Exalted* being. The term “continuum” should be marked here and it should be asserted that it bears a great deal of the weight of the structure of this analysis as well as the argument in that “Time” will be employed as the central line through this effort and the *Exalted*, *Abject*, and *Elemental* form a continuum of sovereign being in their relationship to control, or lack of control, of their own time.

Before turning to the complexity of thinking about and with Time, first it is important to begin to mark the subject that occupies this place of rest and observation: the *Elemental*. There is a distinct subjectivity that provides the stuff of primordial conflict and remains present after its resolution. The Human, as such, is formed from the *Elemental* subject.

There are several reasons for the intuition that leads me to devote the time to identifying and defining this transitional subject and the third party. It seems that Western political philosophy implicitly requires a third position. One example of this might be the notion of the General Will in the thinking of Rousseau. It does not seem satisfying to posit that the subject that is not the sovereign or the exceptional figure, the lawgiver, is necessarily the slave. The figure that is neither sovereign nor the lawgiver is certainly “below” these subjects but does not necessitate the designation of “slave” in the absence of mastery. Rousseau accounts for this in his thinking in that the non-sovereign subject that does not occupy the unique position of exception that is the lawgiver and chooses not to follow the law becomes an enemy and is subject to death as the penalty for this transgres-