

## There Is Something of One (God)

### *Lacan and Political Theology*

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THE QUESTION OF THE relationship of singularity and multiplicity is originary in Western philosophy, politics, and religion. In philosophy, the question of the primacy of the “one” or the “multiple” can be traced to the opposition between Parmenides and Heraclitus; in politics, to Plato and Aristotle; and in religion, to the monotheistic break with precursor and syncretic polytheistic and animistic religions. Is reality one or many? Is the republic a differentiated unicity or a totalized multiplicity? And is God a radical principle of singularity refracted into various names, aspects, and attributes, or a signifier that encompasses, fuses, and conceals the multiple fractures in our natural and supernatural knowledge? Alain Badiou has argued that this question of the one or the many is axiomatic; finally we can and must simply decide where we stand concerning the One.

We find ourselves on the brink of a decision, a decision to break with the arcana of the one and the multiple in which philosophy is born and buried, phoenix of its own sophistic consumption. This decision can take no other form than the following: the one *is not*. It is not a question, however, of abandoning the principle Lacan assigned to the symbolic; that *there is* Oneness [il y a *de l'Un*]. Everything turns on mastering the gap between the pre-supposition (that must be rejected) of a being of the one and the thesis of its “there is.” . . . What has to be declared is that the one,

which is not, solely exists as *operation*. In other words, there is no one, only the count-as-one. (BE: 23–24 / EE: 31–32)

For Badiou, the possibility of the emergence of an event, something radically transformative, depends upon the decision that *the one is not*. If being were fundamentally unified, then events would only be modifications of what is, and the entropic forces of ontology would always revert to some original or final condition of stasis. Hence to decide that the one *is not* is to remain open to the chance of the new. Nevertheless, Badiou distinguishes between the “being” of the one and the “something of one,” which he perhaps too casually associates here with Lacan’s notion of the symbolic order. As much as the decision Badiou makes against the One is axiomatic, it does not exclude and even perhaps requires this “something of One.”

Badiou is referring to Lacan’s lengthy discussions of the phrase *Y a de l’Un* and its variations in his Seminars 19 (. . . *Ou pire*) and 20 (*Encore*). Badiou suggests that for Lacan the One is the signifier of the symbolic order with only *operational* value, as a procedure for the anchoring and articulation of a discursive system: the one is a *verb*, not a noun, an act not an ontology. For both Lacan and Badiou, Plato’s *Parmenides* is a primary locus for the question of the One. Moreover, for both Lacan and Badiou, the One ultimately takes on *political* valence, as key to the problematics of representation and the discursive conditions of collectivity. However, unlike Badiou, Lacan’s exploration of the question of One also passes through theology—through what I am calling “something of one *God*”—and I want to argue that it is only by bringing the One into explicit relationship with those monotheistic issues that we can fully understand its implications for analytic discourse and political life. Lacan’s thinking on the “something of One” takes a necessary swerve back through a theological problematic, and in the process articulates the terms of a *political theology*, an essential conjunction of political and religious understandings of sovereignty, subjectivity, and collectivity.

In this talk I am developing issues I raised in recent work, where I argued that psychoanalysis can help us retrieve and rearticulate a *political theology of the neighbor*, one that would be supplementary to the political theology of sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental gesture of political theology is the attribution of divine features to the person or function of the sovereign.<sup>2</sup>

1. See “Towards a Political Theology of the Neighbor,” in *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, by Slavoj Žižek, Eric Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

2. In the “Afterword” to Jacob Taubes’ *The Political Theology of Paul*, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, Aleida Assmann, and Jan Assmann distinguish three basic thematics that orient political theology: “representation,” where the earthly sovereign is considered

The key link between God and King in Carl Schmitt's account is that each has the ability to declare an exception to the rule of law. Just as God may suspend the laws of nature through a miracle, so the sovereign may declare a "state of emergency" which suspends the laws of the land. I suggested that this logic of the sovereign exception is also at work in Freud's extension of Darwin's notion of the Primal Horde. I argue that this Freudian mythical structure is isomorphic with the account of man in Lacan's formulas of sexuation from the 1970s:

Man	Woman	
$\exists x \quad \overline{\Phi x}$	$\overline{\exists x} \quad \overline{\Phi x}$	Existential
$\forall x \quad \Phi x$	$\overline{\forall x} \quad \Phi x$	Universal

*Diagram 1*

Briefly, to be a man is to be subject to two **contradictory** functions, one universal and the other existential. In the **bottom left corner** of the diagram, Lacan's logical symbols can be read as "all men are subject to the phallic function"—that is, the enjoyment available to all men is strictly conditioned by castration, submission to the authority of the phallus as signifier. In the second formula, just above it, we find an **existential exception** of this law: "there is a man who is *not* subject to the phallus." This is the function of the obscene father of the Primal Horde who claims all enjoymentmen as his alone, and is thus both the agent of the man's castration and exempt from its cut. Thus in Lacan's logical reformulation of Freud, men are constituted by a universal rule (of castration, symbolic substitution) that has *one* crucial exception, the mythical Father who is imagined to transcend all limitation. Men submit to the conditions of the phallic signifier and accept the pittance of *jouissance* that it allows them only insofar as they posit a Great Father who enjoys in their stead. So like Schmitt's political theology, Lacan and Freud's account of the Father of the Primal Horde produces a "masculine" model of collectivity in which membership is a function of a topologically ambiguous point, both inside and outside the "horde" it constellates.<sup>3</sup> And

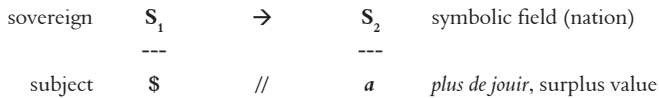
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to be acting as God's representative; "dual-sovereignty," where earthly and divine authority are understood as parallel but strictly distinguished elements; and "theocracy," where political sovereignty is presented as the direct institutional embodiment of divine sovereignty. They describe Schmitt's account of political theology as a version of the "representational" theory, insofar as it argues that political orders cannot be legitimized on the basis of any immanent categories, but must have recourse to divine categories such as God's will (138–39).

<sup>3</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller draws connections between Lacan and Schmitt in his recent

the ultimate function of this “border concept” for Schmitt is precisely to maintain or re-establish the division between inside and outside, friend and enemy, which, he argues, is the essential political opposition.

The key difference between Schmitt and Lacan begins to emerge at this point, insofar as for psychoanalysis there is necessarily another term, an excessive quantum of enjoyment first imagined as possessed by the Father of the Primal Horde. If we use the first of Lacan’s four discourses, the Discourse of the Master, we can map the relationship between these terms:



*Diagram 2*

Insofar as it includes a non-discursive element, the *objet a*, the fragment of enjoyment left over from symbolization, Lacan’s theory of political discourse is irreducible to Schmitt’s. Lacan identifies the *plus de jouir* with Marx’s notion of surplus value—and it is indeed its excessive role that makes political-economic transformation possible. But if the heterogeneity of the *objet a* allows for the possibility of discursive change, it most commonly remains enmeshed in the chains of fantasy, establishing an ideological foundation for the discourse of mastery or sovereignty. How can the *plus de jouir* revolutionize the master signifier of political theology? What are its implications for Lacan’s *retheologization* of the “something of One”? In order to make sense of this, we need to consider Lacan’s logic of feminine sexuation, and the other possibility of political theology that it suggests (see Diagram 2, right side).

In purely logical terms, men and women are almost identical: both involve an inclusive condition of membership in the world (castration), as well as an exception to that condition. For the woman, castration is articulated as a double negative: “there is no subject who is not a function of the phallus.” It is as if the consolation offered to the man for his symbolic castration in the belief that somewhere there is a man who *really* enjoys is explicitly ruled out for a woman: her existential condition is that there is *no exception* to the law of the phallus. Nevertheless, Lacan posits *an exception to that lack of*

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book, *Le Neveu de Lacan*: “If someone had the insight to perceive what of theology has passed into psychoanalysis . . . it’s Lacan. Lacan is the Carl Schmitt of psychoanalysis” (263). Miller argues that Lacan’s “psychoanalytic theology” is parallel to Schmitt’s political theology, insofar as both emphasize the constitutive function of the exception over the normative function of the rule. See Jacques-Alain Miller, “Sur Carl Schmitt,” in *Le Neveu de Lacan*, (Paris: Verdier, 2003).

*exception*, in the bottom formula of feminine sexuation: “not-all woman is subject to the phallic function.” And the function of the “not-all” opens up a radically different mode of part/whole relations and political theology: if the man is an “individual” in the sense that he is an exemplary member of the set of all men constituted in relationship to the transcendental figure of the Father, a woman is *not* determined in symmetrical fashion as a member of the set of all women—which, according to Lacan, does not exist. Each woman is a singularity, part of the open set of women which constitutes an *infinity* rather than a totality; there is no border between inside and outside in the set of all women, or the social group determined according to a feminine structure. There is no transcendental Mother that individual women are versions of and who unifies them as a closed set. The exception has taken the place of the rule, in the sense that a woman is a member of a set that has no universal characteristics or predicates.<sup>4</sup>

This fundamental incommensurability between the ways in which individual men and women relate to the larger groups of which they are a part is one explanation of what Lacan calls the non-existence of the sexual relationship: there is no common basis for an intersubjective relationship between men and women, and all we can do is to compensate for this fundamental trauma, in one mode or another of *love*. On the one hand, love can be the romantic fantasy of fusion, of two-becoming-one, which is merely to *deny* the impossibility of the sexual relationship, to fight off this unbearable trauma with the illusion of love as a dual unity. On the other hand, Lacan hints that there may be another mode of love that is not illusory, and Badiou develops this notion of a love that itself *produces* sexual difference, and difference as such—a love in which one becomes *two*.

Just as love makes up for the lack of a sexual relationship in two different ways, so there are *two modes of love* that underwrite the topology of political theology, one based on the logical formulas of the man, the other based on those of women. Despite their divergences on the significance and weight of divine law, Judaism and Christianity agree about the primacy of two modes of love—of God and of the neighbor. Mankind is commanded to love God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5), and this love, I argue, is essential to the legitimization of divine sovereignty, and its transference onto the political realm. If the

4. This corresponds to what Badiou calls, following the work of the mathematician Paul Cohen, a generic set. We might also suggest that if the set of all men is like that of all whole numbers, a *virtual* infinity, where hypothetically an infinite number of new men may enter into that set, each time creating a new whole, the set of all women (or, not-all women) is an *actual* infinity . . . As the set of all whole numbers ( $\omega\aleph$ ) vs. the set of all the points on a line ( $1\aleph$ ).

Schmittian political theology involves an exceptional model of sovereignty that I link with the structuration of male sexuality, and in turn the injunction to love God, we might propose that another political theology can be oriented by the other great commandment in Judaism and Christianity, to love the neighbor as yourself (and which I argue is correlative with Lacan's account of the sexuation of women.) My larger argument is that neighbor-love constitutes *the other side* of political theology, both decompleting and supplementary to the political theology of the sovereign, and that the link between it and the commandment to love God must be restored in political-theological thinking.

In his seminars of 1971–72, Lacan suggested that the non-relationship of man and woman is determined by the function of what he calls “at-least-one” (*au-moins-un*), which he contracts into *hommoinzin*, to signal its fundamental relationship with male sexuality and imaginary phallic enjoyment (see Diagram 3): an hysterical woman's non-relationship to a man cannot be organized directly by the phallus, since “it is not sure that he even has one,” hence “her whole policy will be turned towards what I call having *at least one* of them” (*SXVIII*, 5/19/1971). The impossibility of inscribing the sexual relationship is, in this formulation, a function of an imaginary One, which the man struggles to support, and which the woman both doubts and demands. This is the classical One of Greek mathematics, the principle of unit and *unity*, from which all the other numbers proceed.<sup>5</sup> In his seminar of the following year, Lacan will connect the “at least one” with the imaginary position of the primal father: *there is “au moins un,” at least one* man who is *not* subject to the phallus.<sup>6</sup> The One, then, for Lacan first signifies the Primal Father's obstruction of the relationship between the sexes, as a kind of reduction of the phallus to an even purer signifier, a single digit, or what Lacan writes in his theory of the discourses as  $S_1$ . This One constitutes the ontological support or alibi for the wholeness of the community of men, Lacan indicates, just as the hysteric props up the paternal phallus. But just as the hysteric's support of the father's desire involves holding it *open*, unfulfilled, and dependent on something external to itself, so the One not only constitutes the sovereign function that ordines the totality of men, but also reveals the contingency of that support, the ever present possibility of its withdrawal, and the social antagonism that is its symptom.

5. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, for a discussion of the history of numericity.

6. Lacan here describes the function of this One as to “command”: “the one who commands, this is what I first tried to put forward for you this year under the title of *Yad'lun*. . . . What commands is the *One*, the *One* makes Being. . . . The *One* makes being as the hysteric makes the man” (*SXIX*, 6/21/72).

If the “at least one” in this sense is the *first* signifier, the One as the *source* of all other numbers—as in Euclid’s argument that “a number is a multitude composed of *unities*”<sup>7</sup>—then the formula of the woman, “*there is no x that is not a function of the phallus,*” can be taken as the corresponding void, the zero that is the other side of the One. This is the aspect of women that faces the phallus, whereby she defines her relationship to it as one of lack:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \exists x & \overline{\Phi x} & \overline{\exists x} & \overline{\Phi x} \\ (1) & & (0) & \end{array}$$

Diagram 3

Lacan begins his discussion of the One with Frege’s theory of natural numbers, where he defines zero as the concept *being non-self-identical*, the purely conceptual origin of the actual number 1, and all other numbers. The natural numbers are derived *ex nihilo*, so to speak, in the movement from zero to one, from nothing to something. Badiou criticizes Frege’s attempt to logically derive the reality of numbers via this concept of zero as circular, and finally as an ontological argument that passes itself off as a logical one. And both Lacan and Badiou find in Cantor’s set theory a stronger attempt to define the relation of zero and one: if we regard zero as the empty set  $\{\emptyset\}$ , then we can derive the one from it, as the number of its *parts*. The one, in this sense, is the minimal inscription of the zero, the fact that the empty set, though void, is *not nothing*, but indeed is already “something of one.” Lacan returns to the *Parmenides*, which he regards as “the first foundation . . . for a properly analytic discourse” (*SXIX*, 4/19/1972), and the source of the imbrication of zero and one. In the *Parmenides*, Lacan finds traces of the Fregian idea that the One is not a fundamental ground, but something that *arises*, with plural “someness” rather than self-identical singularity.<sup>8</sup> Lacan argues

7. Quoted by Badiou in *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity) 216.

8. Moreover, Lacan argues that the key concept Plato develops from Parmenides is that what links all theories of fundamental reality or atoms, whether water, fire, air, or earth, is that the elemental oneness they assume is *sayable*, a function of linguistic articulation. It is because Parmenides himself was primarily a “poet” rather than physicist, mathematician, or philosopher that he is able to understand the paradoxes of the one, in both its realist and nominalist functions. In the last lines of his fragments, Parmenides writes, “Thus, according to men’s opinions, did things come into being, and thus they are now. In time (they think) they will grow up and pass away. To each of these things men have assigned a fixed name” (*XIX*).

If, as Lacan suggests, Parmenides is the poet of the One, where the One is what allows something to emerge into existence, then Plato is his disciple, advancing on the path set out by Parmenides by showing that the linguistic articulation of reality brings

that a notion of the One that can be traced to the *Parmenides* already anticipates the transformations in logic that will be necessary for psychoanalysis. For Aristotle, Lacan's formulas of sexuation would be simply incoherent: to say that "all x are y" and "there is an x which is not y" is a contradiction, period. Aristotle's logic of the excluded middle is meant to describe a reality that takes for granted the individuality of the objects that constitute it and the subordination of parts to the whole, and much of mathematics develops with what we could call a "realist" notion of the numerical entity, just as psychology develops in modernity as the science of the human individual. But, according to Lacan, with the innovations of Dedekind and Cantor, among others, the notion of the One shifts from the sign that counts the singularity of an element of reality (one man, one woman, one apple, one God) to the One as *real*, as the other side of the void, rather than the plenitude of its antithesis, as was already claimed in the *Parmenides*.

We can understand this as the move from the "classical" political theology described by the man's formula of sexuation, where the existential quantifier "there is" points to the singularity of a primal father-God, to another political theology, based on the "not all" of the woman—which suggests another mode of the One.<sup>9</sup> In *Ou Pire* Lacan says, "If between the individual and what is involved in what I will call the *real One* . . . is it not tangible to you . . . that I speak about the *One* as a Real, of a Real that moreover may have nothing to do with any reality? I am calling reality what is reality, namely, for example, your own existence, your mode of sustaining, which is assuredly material, and first of all because it is corporal. But it is a matter of knowing what you are speaking about when you say: *Yad'lun*" (*SXIX*, 4/19/72). The primal father exists for a man as "something of one" that ties him to the totality of men; this is the fantasmatic reality in which participation in a community of similar subjects is based on the existence of a singular exception that *proves* the rule. The community of men is merely potentially infinite; like the set of natural whole numbers, there is always room for another man, each one in turn subordinated to the fantasy of the primal father. But with the emergence of theories of *actual*—or we might

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with it a problem, a *gap* between the word and the thing. Lacan argues that Plato's theory of the Forms was his attempt to *get beyond* that disjunction, to resuture symbol and real, precisely at the point of mathematics. But Plato's *Parmenides* will be the main focus of Lacan's philosophical approach to the "something of One," and there the question of the Forms will be seriously threatened by the developing line of reasoning. See Mladen Dolar's superb essay on this topic, "In Parmenidem Parvi Comentarium."

9. See François Regnault's book *Dieu est inconscient* (Paris: Navarin 1985) for a powerful account of the function of God in Lacan's thinking. Regnault argues that Lacan's formulas of sexuation of man and woman imply Pascal's "two Gods"—the God of the philosophers (man) and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (woman).



say *real*—infinity and the development of set theory, everything changes. Now, the “something of One” begins with the void, the empty set, and in Lacan’s thinking it is now located on the side of the woman, in the not-all. The not-all is the sign of *actual infinity* for Lacan: rather than positing the existence of an element that would escape the universal law of castration, the not-all *decompletes the closure* assumed by the universal quantifier, without recourse to a fantasy supported by an exception. The not-all, we might say, is the *void* in the universal set of women, which acts as the something-of-one without the assumption of individuality. The “something of One” understood in set theoretical terms, then, includes the void, and, in Lacanian terms, is attached to the real. It is not a notion of self-identity, but one of difference as such. And Lacan insists that this is the point of Plato’s *Parmenides*: “This is why . . . it is inadequate in the Platonic dialogue to make participation of anything whatsoever existent in the order of the similar (*semblable*). Without the breakthrough by which the *One* is first constituted, the notion of the similar could not appear in any way” (SXIX, 4/19/72). Lacan’s argument is that rather than understanding the relationship of the realm of mimetic reality (or “similarity”) as itself *similar* to and “participating in” the realm of forms, *eidōs*, absolute truth and goodness of being, as a kind of continuum of decreasing reality, as the Neo-Platonic philosophers saw it, the *Parmenides* suggests a *discontinuity* between the realm of the forms and that of mimesis. The similar, the world of representations, of “reality,” *depends upon the singularity of the One*, which is not to say that it “emanates” from it. The One is the originary *cut* that allows for relationships of similarity and difference, participation or non-participation in the forms, but does not itself generate those similarities.

The principle of similarity that is generated in the Master’s Discourse by the radical singularity of the “something of One” of the Primal Father-God—the similarity that defines the group of “all men”—is politically problematic, according to Lacan; ultimately the solidarity of the group it produces is based on *racism*. In the final words of Seminar 19, . . . *Ou pire*, Lacan raises the spectre of the band of brothers constituted by such a political theology:

What is it that binds us to the one who, with us, embarks in the position that is called that of the patient? Does it not seem to you, if we marry to this locus the term brother which is on every wall, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, I ask you, at the cultural point that we are at, of whom are we brothers? Whom are we brothers of in every discourse except the analytic discourse? Is the boss the brother of the proleterian? . . . We are brothers of our patients insofar as, like him, we are the sons of discourse. . . . our *brother transfigured*,

this is what is born from analytic incantation and this is what binds us to the one that we wrongly call our patient. . . . I did not speak to you . . . about the father because I think that enough has been said to you already about him . . . to show you that it is around the one who unites, the one who says no! that there can be founded . . . everything universal. And when we return to the root of the body, if we revalorize the word brother, he is going to enter under full sail at the level of good feelings. Since I must not all the same allow you to look at the future through rose colored glasses, you should know that what is arising, what one has not yet seen to its final consequences, and which for its part is rooted in the body, in the fraternity of the body, is racism, about which you have yet to hear the last word.

In these final words of his seminar of 1971–1972, Lacan warns us against too quickly assuming that the motto of the revolution and the principle of “brotherhood” can free us from the regime of the father. If the Primal Father is the *père* who enslaves his sons and makes their lives bitter, enjoying all the surplus fruits of their labor, the band of brothers that rise up against him in the name of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” is *le pire*, as in the title Lacan gave this seminar: the *worse*, the mob that operates as an amalgam of bodies, with no point of external ordination, no principle of sovereignty. In order to avoid the violence, the racism and terror that this “fraternity of the body” would unleash, it is not enough to depose the father, the brother too must be “transfigured,” and this requires a radical discursive shift, and a supplementary political theology of the *neighbor*.

In his seminar of the next year, *Encore*, Lacan elaborates the meaning of the impossibility of the sexual relationship and the nature of feminine sexuality, establishing key elements for such a political theology. These are complicated issues, and there has of course been a great deal of discussion of them, which I will not try to rehearse for you today. But I do want to make a few points about Lacan’s argument here that are most germane for the question of the role of the One in political theology. My claim is that in Seminar 20 Lacan needed to return to the *religious* account of the One, as a supplement to the Parmenidean and Platonic accounts, in order to explain its role in sexuation and the possibility of shifting discourses. Lacan’s account of sexuation in *Encore* requires something that is not available in mathematics: a logic of universal and particular that is not founded on the classical rule of the excluded middle, hence that can tolerate the conjunction of an absolute rule *and* its singular exception (as is the case in what is called Intuitionist logic), but does not bracket or even deny the actuality of infinity, as Intuitionist logic is forced to do. Alain Badiou has argued that

Lacan fails to bring these elements together, and only posits an “inaccessible infinity,” one that exists from the perspective of the finite as a function, an idea, a point, with no real existence. It has often been remarked that it is no accident that Cantor uses the Hebrew letter aleph ( $\aleph$ ) to signify the modalities of infinity, since it is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet as well as of the Kabbalistic notion of *ain sof*, literally, “without end,” which signifies the material infinity of God prior to creation. Cantor understood his concept of the transfinite numbers as “inspired,” a divine revelation which would contribute to the philosophical development of Christianity—perhaps, we might suggest, by bringing to it the Jewish notion of infinity.<sup>10</sup> Cantor’s project can be understood thus as the attempt to *de-secularize infinity*, that is, neither to theologize a secular concept nor to secularize a theological one, but to show the precise overlap of mathematics and theology at the point of real infinity, a conjunction that can only be perceived by abandoning the historicist assumption that knowledge requires progressive secularization.<sup>11</sup> Like Cantor, Lacan returns to theology in order to find there an instance of *real infinity*, as a supplement to the only limited or hypothetical infinity that is all that Intuitionist logic offers.

In *Encore*, Lacan argues that the impossibility of the sexual relationship can be understood in terms of the *love of God* that stands between men

10. Cantor writes in a letter to a Dominican priest, “*From me, Christian philosophy will be offered for the first time the true theory of the infinite.*” Cited by Bruce A. Hedman in “Cantor’s Concept of Infinity: Implications of Infinity for Contingence,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (1993) 8–16, <http://www.asa3.org/asa/PSCF/1993/PSCF3-93Hedman.html>. Hedman cites as his source a letter dated February 15, 1896, from Cantor to Esser. In Herbert Meschkowski, “Aus den Briefbüchern Georg Cantors,” *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 2 (1965) 503–19.

11. In his essay “Sujet et Infini,” Alain Badiou points out that Lacan’s thinking on feminine *jouissance* in the seminars around *Encore* seems to oscillate between the contradictory assumptions of an actual infinity (in line with the claims of Set Theory) and its denial (as asserted by Intuitionist logic). It is only by means of Intuitionist, non-classical logic that Lacan can understand the not-all as neither contained in the phallic function nor as its negation; this leads Badiou to argue that the infinite for Lacan is merely posited as *inaccessible*, and is no more than a modality of the finite: “The infinite does not authorize the determination of an existence by negation. The infinite is only a function of inaccessibility. . . . Lacan does not need for his purposes the *existence* of an infinite set. It is enough for him that there is an inaccessible point *for the finite*. . . . This explains well enough why feminine *jouissance* ultimately has the structure of a fiction: the fiction of inaccessibility. From there comes the organic link between that *jouissance* and God” (*Conditions* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992] 295). Finally, for Badiou, Lacan’s logic of sexuation remains classical, pre-Cantorian, without an account of the actual infinite, and this *failure*, Badiou suggests, is what forces Lacan to have recourse to a theological language in which the infinity is merely claimed. For Badiou, of course, the axiom of infinity is crucial, and Cantor’s contribution is precisely to “laicize the infinite” from its religious meanings (302).

and women, blocking their intersubjective conjunction. Apparently it was Althusser who first suggested to Lacan that his account of the impediment to the sexual relationship looked a lot like God:

Well-intentioned people—who are far worse than ill-intentioned ones—were surprised when they heard that I situated a certain Other between man and woman that certainly seemed like the good old God of time immemorial. . . . Materialism believes that it is obliged to be on guard against this God, who as I said, dominated the whole debate regarding love in philosophy. . . . It seems clear to me that the Other—put forward at the time of “The Instance of the Letter” as the locus of speech—was a way, I can’t say of laicizing, but of exorcising the good old God. After all, there were even people who complimented me for having been able to posit in one of my last seminars that God doesn’t exist. Obviously they hear—they hear, but alas, they understand, and what they understand is a bit precipitate. So today, I am instead going to show you in what sense the good old God exists. . . . This Other—assuming there is *but one* all alone—must have some relationship with what appears of the other sex. (SXX, 68–69)

Why does Lacan have recourse to the God of monotheism in this seminar? In what sense is a notion of “something of one God” a necessary supplement to the mathematical and philosophical accounts of the One that had dominated his previous year’s seminar? First of all, monotheism is crucial for Lacan’s understanding of the impossibility of the sexual relationship in its largest, cosmological terms. The polytheistic world was based on the assumption of a sexual relationship between heavens and earth; there is an intrinsic harmony and reciprocity between the worlds of God and humans, the one is a specular projection of the other; together they form an ideal couple. Moreover, the Neo-Platonic influences on Christianity restored some of these aspects, in the notion of the “emanations” that linked the divine and earthly realms. According to Lacan, the radical break with this imaginary cosmology was introduced by the single stroke of Judaism: the Jewish God is *not like* the human beings he created, even if they are made in his image, he is fundamentally a point of *incomparability*. And if there is *no continuity* between God and human beings, no ontological or epistemological common ground for relationship, only love can make up for the lack of a relationship:

Aristotle’s whole concern was . . . to conceive of being as that by which beings with less being participate in the highest of beings.

And Saint Thomas succeeded in reintroducing that into the Christian tradition. . . . But do people realize that everything in the Jewish tradition goes against that? The dividing line there does not run from the most perfect to the least perfect. The least perfect there is quite simply what it is, namely radically imperfect. (SXX, 99)

The singularity of God, and the commandment above all to *love* God, is what separates man and woman, or any subjects who choose to enter into those positions, preventing any imaginary account of their intersubjective or “mystical” union. Lacan locates the God of monotheism at the place of the signifier of the lack in the Other, on the woman’s side of the formulas of sexuation:  $S(\mathcal{A})$ —the place of woman’s supplementary *jouissance*. Lacan writes, “Why not interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as based on feminine *jouissance*? . . . And as that is also where the father function is inscribed, insofar as castration is related to the father function, we see that that doesn’t make two Gods, but that it doesn’t make just one either” (SXX, 77). Lacan suggests that the supplementary *jouissance* of a woman instantiates a supplementary function of the Other: this is something additional to or subtracted from the function of the Father of the Primal Horde, the unbarred Other whose singularity suspended the community of men in his thrall. This is the Other now as decompleted, no longer simply One in quite the same way, and by no means Two—but perhaps *something of One*, some element of oneness: not the signifier of primal repression, but *the signifier that holds open the lack in the Other*, the signifier of the hysteric, pointing out the master’s *inability* to transgress his own law—pointing not at the obscenity but the impotence of the father.

Lacan writes in *Encore*, “The aim of my teaching . . . is to dissociate *a* and *A* by reducing the first to what is related to the imaginary and the other to what is related to the symbolic. It is indubitable that the symbolic is the basis of what was made into God. It is certain that the imaginary is based on the reflection of one semblable in another. And yet, *a* has lent itself to be confused with  $S(\mathcal{A})$ . . . . It is here that a scission or detachment remains to be effectuated” (SXX, 83). This confusion of the *objet a* and the signifier of the lack in the Other involves the holophrasis of the Other, the *filling up* or masking of the lack in the Other that the woman would insist upon. This is to grant fantasmatic reality to the Other, to remain in the thrall of the God who would hold up the promise that someday our desires will be fulfilled, our impossible *jouissance* realized, the God who as exception to the rule of castration still holds open the promise of wholeness. To allow the *objet a* to fall from its position in this fantasy requires a fundamental *shift in discourse*,

a traversal of fantasy: we can no longer see ourselves in specular relationship to our brothers, our imaginary doubles; we need to take the risk, following the direction of the woman's *jouissance*, of *separating* from our imaginary and symbolic supports in the Master's Discourse. Lacan writes,

Marx and Lenin, Freud and Lacan are not coupled in being. It is via the letter they found in the Other that, as beings of knowledge, they proceed two by two, in a supposed Other. What is new about their knowledge is that it doesn't presume the Other knows anything about it. . . . One can no longer hate God if he himself knows nothing. . . . When one could hate him, one could believe he loved us, since he didn't hate us in return. . . . The misfortune of Christ is explained to us by the idea of saving men. I find, rather, that the idea was to save God by giving a little presence and actuality back to that hatred of God. . . . That is why I say that the imputation of the unconscious is an incredible act of charity. (SXX, 97–98)<sup>12</sup>

The God who is unconscious, signified by the woman's *jouissance* of an Other that is incomplete, is the first step towards a new political theological orientation. The God whom Jesus supports is *lacking something*; indeed, he is the very embodiment of the tension in the something of One God.

The political theology implicit in Lacan's discourses already goes beyond that of Schmitt, insofar as it not only accounts for the topology of exception, which in Lacan's terms is articulated on the symbolic level as the function of S<sub>1</sub>, but also indicates the correlative function of enjoyment, the *plus de jouir* or surplus value. The Lacanian political theology of the sovereign, thus, is constellated around two primary terms: the signifier of the primal father, the exception to the rule he ordains, and the surplus enjoyment that is the product of his rule, and which organizes the fantasy of the male subject, captivates him in the spectacle of the Other's *jouissance*:

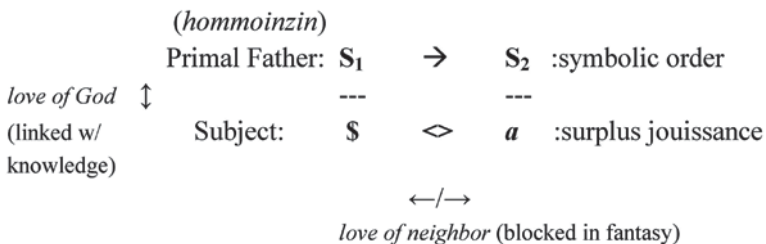
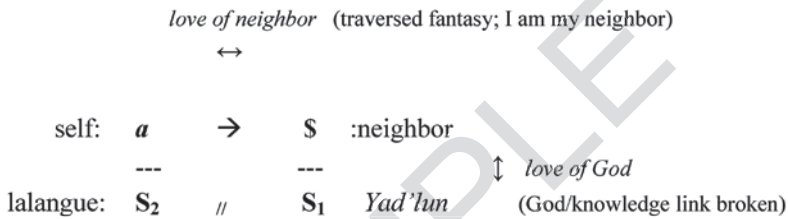


Diagram 4: Political Theology of the Sovereign

12. On this passage cf. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2004) 132.

The political theology of the sovereign, in its Lacanian articulation onto the Master's Discourse, is based on the primacy of the master signifier, and its support in the treasury of signifiers of the symbolic order (of knowledge, faith, the Church, the State, etc.). The rule of this signifier is propped up by the unconscious fantasy of an object of enjoyment; this is the level at which the love of the neighbor lies dormant, as the blocked fantasmatic relationship of a subject and an object.

For Lacan, however, there is *another* One, beyond the "existential one" of the primal father incarnated in the Master's Discourse, and the goal of analysis is to *shift discourses*, hence to *shift political theologies*, from one based on the Master and the masculine formulas of sexuation (and correlative with love of God) to one based on the Analyst and the feminine formulas of sexuation (productive of love of the neighbor):



*Diagram 5: Political Theology of the Neighbor*

The political theology of the neighbor does not eliminate the relationship to a transcendental, divine signifier, but transforms it. Now, a new master signifier, a new something of One, is the *product* rather than the agent of the discourse. This *Yad'lun* could also be represented by the signifier of the lack in the Other [S(A)], but what is key is that it is no longer that which sutures the subject into the symbolic order—now S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> are disconnected; now the "subject" of the love of God is not the self, but *the neighbor*.<sup>13</sup> The love of

13. This shift from the Master's discourse, and the political theology of the sovereign, to the Analytic discourse, and the political theology of the neighbor, involves a transformation of the very notion of *the world* constituted by a discourse: "For quite some time it seemed natural for a world to be constituted whose correlate, beyond it, was being itself, being taken as eternal. This world conceived as the whole (*tout*), with what this word implies by way of limitation, regardless of the openness we grant it, remains a conception—a serendipitous word here—a view, gaze, or imaginary hold. And from that results the following, which remains strange, that someone—a part of this world—is at the outset assumed to be able to take cognizance of it. This One finds itself therein in a state that we can call existence, for how could it be the basis of the 'taking cognizance' if it did not exist? Therein has always lain the impasse, the vacillation resulting from the cosmology that consists in the belief in a world. On the contrary, isn't there something in analytic discourse that can introduce us to the following: that every subsistence or persistence of the world as such must be abandoned?" (*Encore*, E: 43/ F: 43).

God that functions here as the structure of sovereignty is the result of love of the neighbor, not its guarantor. And most importantly, the subject has traversed the fantasy of neighbor love: now the subject has come into the position of the *plus de jouir*, now the subject is its neighbor. The traversed fantasy, moreover, is no longer below the bar, repressed and unconscious, but is now explicit, open, enacted. And the truth of the discourse? Now it is not a symbolic order constructed around a stabilizing primary signifier, but signifiers freed from ordination and subordination—*insubordinate* signifiers, we might say, or what Lacan calls “lalangue.” Another model, however, might lie in one Jewish understanding of the status of the law after the Messiah comes: just as Jesus said, it won’t be abolished nor sublated, but left present in all its signifyingness, but no longer binding. Or to follow Benjamin and Kafka, the law, and sovereignty itself will remain just as it was—except for a “slight adjustment” . . .

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The world constituted between the Master’s and University discourses is conceived as a “whole,” as unified, eternal, and closed. Here, the One (♦) is fully sutured to the All (©), and the fullness of being is guaranteed by its reciprocal relation with the imagined totality of meaning, or knowledge. To “believe in a world” then implies the assumption of a “sexual relationship” between being and meaning, matter and spirit, humanity and God. This reciprocity of meaning and being in the Master’s discourse derives from the conventional functioning of philosophical language: “Language—the language forged by philosophical discourse—is such that, as you can see, I cannot but constantly slip back into this world, into this presupposition of a substance that is permeated with the function of being” (44). The shift into the Analytic discourse, or the political theology of the neighbor, requires the “abandonment” of such a notion of the world, and the “breaking up” or “shattering” of the petrified linkage of ♦ and © in philosophy for the sake of the release of language as *lalangue*: “Our recourse, in *lalangue*, is to that which shatters it. Hence nothing seems to better constitute the horizon of analytic discourse than the use made of the letter by mathematics.” The variables or “mathemes” that constitute the basic elements of mathematics are pure signifiers, absolutely empty; conventionally, however, they are put into the service of both being and meaning. If the subject of the Master’s discourse is granted being by language, the subject of the Analytic discourse finds its “para-being” in *lalangue*: “Isn’t it thus true that language imposes being upon us, and obliges us, as such, to admit that we never have anything by way of being? What we must get used to is substituting the ‘para-being’ (*par-être*)—the being ‘para,’ being beside—for the being that would take flight” (44). If the discourse of the Master establishes the being/meaning relationship that creates the world as *whole*, the discourse of the Analyst involves a truth that is not-all, and a being that is *para-being*, or being *besides itself*, being *besides* or *next to* rather than being *there*.