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## **Paradox: A Bridge for a Theology in a Gender Perspective**

### **I. Paradoxical thinking, bridges, and women's theology**

When theology, which is always torn between stability and change, is done by women, it runs the risk of stagnation due to the tension between both the achievements and failures and the agreements and disagreements of its leading exponents. All of this is related to the logic of complex thinking<sup>1</sup> which constitutes the framework of my presentation and refers to life, which is constantly renewed in a continuous process of feedback.

Philosophy, science and theology in a gender perspective have denounced the dichotomistic, exclusive and hierarchic dualism of Western thinking, highlighting its harmful effects for human beings and for women in particular. The problem, in my opinion, is not duality per se, but the way in which we confront and manage it. I propose that we use paradox to deal with the theological dualities which have been harmful to us as women.

Paradox is part of life and it expresses contrasts in a relationship of productive tension. It is related to chaos, since a characteristic of paradox is to cause the tension present in duality to explode in chaotic directions.<sup>2</sup> It proposes meaning rather than imposing it, and expresses the exuberance of the human person. Quite often, behind the apparent opposition of its poles, there lies a hidden, deeper meaning in which these poles are reconciled, and it is from this union that new meanings arise.<sup>3</sup> All religions express themselves, to a greater or lesser extent, by means of paradoxical language.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Edgar Morin, *Introducción al pensamiento complejo* (Introduction to complex thinking; Gedisa: Barcelona 1996); *El paradigma perdido* (The lost paradigm; Kairós: Barcelona 2005; French original 1973).

<sup>2</sup> cf. Francisco Quezada, "El caos como sistema y las paradojas de la tolerancia" (Chaos as a system and the paradoxes of tolerance) under: [http://www.ilbolero.diravel.org/kattivimaestri/AaVmundializacion\\_uca/o\\_uca.htm](http://www.ilbolero.diravel.org/kattivimaestri/AaVmundializacion_uca/o_uca.htm). 10-11.2004

<sup>3</sup> Luis Mosquero Villar (*De la Lógica a la Paradójica* – From the logical to the paradoxical – Monografías de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela; Santiago de Compostela 1979, 42)

## II. Paradox as a bridge in theology

I shall now propose seven paradoxes which, in my opinion, have constituted particularly important obstacles for Christian women in male theological discourse, and I shall then use paradox as a bridge in a theology done from the perspective of gender.

### 1. *A theology of creation and evolution. Chaotic order and ordered chaos*

The image of the Deity and of creation has been presented to us according to the principle of perfection, whose logic, linked with the idea of the one and the unique, lends coherence to monarchism as the origin and the originator of reality. A hegemonic notion of procreation undoubtedly contributed to this approach. The principle of perfection is related to ideas concerning limits, bodily experience, threatening differences and contamination. In Israel, the principle of perfection was maintained by order, and order itself led to perfection. Perfection was God, One and Unique, whose image was the human male.

Chaos, from which reality and life itself emerged (Gen 1:1), remained apart and excluded from order and perfection. It was associated with the other, that which was different and not able to be assimilated by the One and Unique, and with that which, in historical terms, was related to women, to their bodies and to their contaminating fluids. Chaos, which was feminine and located at the antipodes of perfection, was associated with adulteration and cross-breeding, with impurity, imperfection and disorder. The divine overcame chaos by means of the word, order and the law. Chaos was related to desire and order to the law. Distinction was identified with separation.

The first verses of the Book of Genesis, the introduction to the Bible, are enormously revealing, since the Ruah hovered over the original chaos, a life-giving and unpredictable Ruah, capable of stirring and ordering disorder from the order hidden within itself. The creative word of YWHW, together with its chaotic Ruah, is truly a programmatic principle. Life is born out of chaos. The Word is the privileged means, but it is a narrated word in which word and action, albeit distinguishable, cannot be separated from one another. Order does not eliminate chaos, nor does chaos eliminate or impede order; it simply relocates it. Both produce life in one and the same divine and creative generation.

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calls every creative, original and instigating expression a paradox when it deviates from or opposes common sentiment and contains a real or apparent contradiction by virtue of the complex, passionate truth it tries to express, thus causing strangeness and amazement which make it seem impossible for what is said really to be as stated.

The sciences of complexity, on a different level of argument, reintroduce ordered chaos as a principle of reality. They also challenge a centuries-old, hegemonic theological tradition stimulating it to rethink its principles, including the question of the divine attributes. The principle of plenitude is related to paradox, a non-sexist way of understanding the principle of perfection. In plenitude, there are degrees and intensities, as opposed to the hierarchization characteristic of perfection. Plenitude advances by widening its own perimeters, and its point of reference is found both within and outside itself. It contains everything it needs in order to grow and to fulfill itself, but this is only possible in relation to elements outside its own perimeter which act as stimuli. The geometric shapes associated with the principle of perfection are the pyramid or the triangle and sometimes the circle. The form which best suits the principle of plenitude is the spiral which incorporates its own infinite growth just an instant before becoming a circle.

The Western theological and spiritual tradition shows that formal theology done by men is governed by the principle of perfection, whereas the theologies done and experienced by women most resemble a spiral tending towards plenitude. It is to be hoped that the theological system will be able to appropriate both traditions in a process of reorganizing chaos. Creation and evolution refer to one another in the dynamism of the spiral.

## 2. *Divine Mystery: transcendent immanence and immanent transcendence*

Transcendence has been placed in opposition to immanence, based frequently on a particular interpretation of the experience of men to the exclusion of the experience of women. Down the centuries, in all religious traditions, women have left traces of an idea and experience of the divine which provides a glimpse of the paradox of immanent transcendence present in their way of relating to and conceiving of the divine, as well as the paradox of transcendent immanence in which they have become involved by daring to challenge the norms of thought and experience dictated by the centers of orthodoxy which regulate their religions. In recent years, thanks to empowerment, women have been able to manifest the reversibility of the paradox in reference to themselves and to the divine: namely, immanent transcendence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> cf. The arguments of Trinidad León in “El Dios relacional (The relational God). El encuentro y la elusividad de un Dios comunicativo”, in: Isabel Gómez Acebo (ed.), *Así vemos a Dios* (This is how we see God; DDB: Bilbao 2001), 161-240.

We cannot reduce one extreme to the other, nor can we lose either the pole of transcendence, which points to the irreducibility of God, or the pole of immanence, which points with equal force to the practical mode of divinity. Immanent transcendence is evident in the way in which the People of Israel expresses its experience of YHWH's presence. To the collective perception, this God appears on many occasions (according to the texts) to be incomprehensible, distant, impossible to grasp. Defeat, as well as the experience of humiliation and victimization, are frequently understood as distance from the divine. Life is at times burdened with guilt which is experienced as punishment and the product of divine anger. On other occasions, this distance is perceived through an experience of Mystery where the key to the interpretation of events and experiences is missing. The experience of Transcendence is often perceived and expressed in the radicalization of its own fragility in face of immeasurable power, of death, or of panic and fear. At other times, life is lived at the opposite pole of the spectrum, in a euphoria of participation in power, or the exultation of considering oneself on the victorious side. It is true that, in biblical texts, this experience of what we call the transcendent dimension of divinity is attributed to male religious experience and to the way in which faith is lived by men, or by the People of God in its masculine dimension.

The profound experience of immanence is at the heart of these same experiences. The incomprehensible and elusive nature of the divine is often experienced in the ordinariness of daily life, in feelings and relationships, in economic transactions, in politics, or in the birth of children. The most profound divine immanence, whose depth borders on transcendence, is often experienced in humiliation, defeat and fragility, as shown in the prayers and statements of some characters, for instance in the Psalms. The euphoria of victory, of election, of having been heard, healed, blessed ... often implies traces of immanence, of the perception of a divine closeness, like a second skin, deeper than oneself, linked to normal daily existence. We often think that this is particularly true of experiences associated with women, because of the stereotypical idea that immanence is more feminine than masculine; but any reader of the Bible will realize that the perception of divine immanence is a dimension of the experience of faith which is inseparable from the perception of transcendence. And both are lived by the men and women who appear in the biblical narrations.

Associated with this duality, there is the opposition between the poles of spirit and matter, in which the Spirit *par excellence* is God and matter is the human being and the world in which he/she lives. Extrapolating this to gender, the most noble part – the spirit – belongs to men while matter which is in

need of redemption corresponds to women. Nonetheless, according to both male and female scholars of the material sciences, spirit is the lightest dimension of matter, whereas matter is the densest dimension of spirit. The radicalization of each extreme expresses different degrees and dimensions of the same reality. Its paradoxical formulation guarantees the irreducibility of either extreme to the other, and the deep interweaving of both. Lightness and density evoke, at the same time, the visible and the invisible. Divine transcendence can be understood as the lightest expression of itself, present in the concrete human, mundane and historical density (subject, space and time). Immanence can be perceived in the light imprint of transcendent spirit on the density of matter. Thus, matter becomes a kind of visible presence of the lightness of the Spirit which impregnates all of reality without being lost in it.

### *3. Theological anthropology: living death and mortal life*

The paradox of death in life and life in death accompanies human beings. All life is mortal. Death contains life. Life leads to death which in turn generates life. The living world, plants and animals, space and time, and even matter and spirit, are immersed in these paradoxes of life and death.

The Bible begins with mortal chaos in whose womb, the divine Ruah, life is conceived, the verbal expression of which gradually imposes order by means of distinctions and delimitations that are subject, from that moment on, to time and thus to decay. The narratives of Genesis 2 and 3 express the most radical paradoxes of the life and death of what is human, especially in reference to the woman in her vain attempt to escape from death by conversing with the serpent. YHWH has forbidden eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning of the deadly consequences of so doing. The prohibition is partial and not reversible. If they eat of the fruit of the tree they will die and, if they do not eat, both protagonists and readers tend to think that they will not die. Paradoxically, the enigma can only be solved if they eat the fruit, that is, if a sphere of freedom is created which, in turn, can only come from the capacity to distinguish, to which the tree of good and evil refers. The enigma can only be solved by experience, but experience, paradoxically, fulfills the divine warning of mortality. When the woman eats of the fruit, she in effect solves the enigma: her eyes are opened and she perceives her own mortality which prevents her from gaining access to the tree of life without death. The solution to the enigma is none other than the discovery of the meaning of life in relation to death, and vice versa. The continuation of life will only be possible by passing through death, which will in turn make it possible for life

to continue. The woman had desired life to continue without death – immortality – which would mean being like the Deity. Transgression gives her the capacity to be like the Deity through the knowledge of being able to perpetuate life (to give it, create it, transmit it) along with death and through death.

This knowledge, inscribed in the biblical stories, has been lived out and transmitted by women who, for this reason, have suffered from the guilt projected by the male and his indirect way of contributing to life in death. All of the masculine religious epics in the Bible can be read according to the paradoxical key which women have known all along: that it is impossible to escape from death, that only in death can life continue in quantity and quality. The biblical narratives, mediated by a patriarchal ideological projection, transmit the drama of this paradox when Rachel screams to Jacob: *Give me sons, or I will die*. And, in effect, she does die while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. What this story shows is *not* that either she has sons or she will die, but rather that she dies, and can die, to the extent to which she has sons, that is, to the extent to which she transmits and generates life.

#### 4. *Christology: divine humanity and human divinity*

The paradox of creatures who become like God through their awareness of their creaturely condition has its counterpart in the case of Jesus who, by descending into the depths of his humanity (the Son of the Human), achieves a divinity ratified by God at the point where death and life have been united forever. The origins of humanity, narrated in Genesis, and the humanized divinity of Jesus reveal to human beings the extremes of a paradox which can never be resolved, and which therefore becomes a source of creativity.

The paradox of the human condition is reflected in the answers to the questions expressed in the conversation between the woman and the serpent. In that conversation, which takes place before the mythical, polyvalent tree, the serpent reveals to the woman, who at that moment represents humanity, the deep desire not just to be godlike, but to be a god, through the cipher of immortality. Nevertheless, in the ambiguity and confusion of a tree planted in the middle of the garden, which is really two trees perceived as one, the serpent and the woman are not talking about the same thing. The serpent refers to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to which it attributes the characteristics of the tree of life (without death). The trap consists in causing the woman to perceive the tree of knowledge as if it were also the tree of life. The woman falls into the trap and seeks immortality, to turn herself into a god, by means of the knowledge of good and evil. The paradox is that the awareness which she

achieves by eating from the tree of knowledge permits her to delimit and distinguish. *She knows by distinguishing* and the first thing she distinguishes upon opening her eyes is her own condition as a creature, which means she can become like God but *not* a god.<sup>5</sup> Humanity, symbolized and condensed in the woman who has knowledge of good and evil, who is free because she has transgressed, will become more and more like the Deity as its knowledge (consciousness) of its creaturely condition grows. This is an individual matter. The likeness to YHWH is achieved by virtue of being a person who is conscious of this human condition.<sup>6</sup>

The movement in Genesis, which is from YHWH toward the human being, takes place in reverse in the Gospels, namely from the human being, the Son of the Human as Jesus calls himself, toward the deity. The person Jesus gradually reveals his divinity to the extent to which his humanity is radicalized. The human characteristics which he exhibits in his surroundings, in his specific social environment, are taken seriously. His own humanity, delimited, concrete, singular, is broadened and expanded toward the Human until it is identified with divinity. The paradox lies precisely in the fact that this identity is achieved when humanity reaches its depths, namely the very heart of death. The negative identification of human-mortal and divine-immortal is thereby broken, at the same time as the very idea of life and death are transformed. In this person, human to his very depths, proclaimed the Son of God, individuality is radicalized. The one who dies on the cross and rises again is a human being who, without denying the specificity of his time, place, race, gender, circumstances, age..., surpasses them all, enabling any other person, in any time, place, race, gender, circumstance...to share in the divine condition.

##### 5. *Christic representation: universal particularity, particular universality*

Throughout history, women have experienced the consequences of the understanding of the human and divine identity of Jesus, in his particular and his universal condition, in relation to gender. His particularities of race, place, time and age, as well as his economic, social, family and religious status –

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<sup>5</sup> For the exegetical debate cf. Ellen J. van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3. A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis, applied to the Story of the Garden of Eden* (Van Gorcum: Assen 1989) and my *Barro y aliento. Exégesis y antropología teológica de Génesis 2-3* (Clay and Breath. Exegesis and Theological Anthropology of Genesis 2-3; Ediciones Paulinas: Madrid 1993).

<sup>6</sup> I have adopted the idea from a stimulating oral presentation by my colleague and friend, Marinella Perroni, to the inter-religious seminar of the CTI at Trent, 9-11 December 2004.

expressions of singularity, and his relation with universality, have not constituted a significant problem. There is proof of this in the success of inculturation which, though not complete, has in the course of time directed individual traits toward universal channels. Art, in its spacial and temporal dimensions, reflects this process. These relationships – particularity/universality – come up against the specificity of gender, which appears to be the unique and decisive feature of the identity of Jesus, the Christ, something which has always constituted a significant problem, all the more so since we as women have become aware of the oppression of patriarchy, as we examine our condition as persons as well as the personal and universal condition of Jesus, the Christ.

Women, throughout history, have not experienced serious problems with respect to gender when identifying with Jesus. This can be understood in a positive sense, as the ability of women to perceive in Jesus the human person and not just the male, and in a negative sense, as just another concession to patriarchy, inasmuch as the dictate to *become like a man* has remained in the collective unconscious as an elevation of the human condition of women. These two understandings both fit into the rich and complex Christian experience of women, but I would like to focus on the negative one which has an impact on the confrontational and hierarchizing manner of confronting duality.

The human identity of Jesus, the Christ, has, in effect, been based excessively on a pyramidal and patriarchal perception of his masculinity, in dualistic opposition to femininity. Nonetheless, as art demonstrates, in the collective unconscious, and in spite of all past attempts at manipulation and utilization, the masculinity of Jesus has been represented in very feminine, and even openly effeminate, ways. He has not been a *macho* hero, a prototype of Western, or Mediterranean, or Oriental masculinity, either for men or for women. In the perception of his figure, through the Gospels and other narrative reconstructions, Jesus the Christ has been more of a human archetype in which opposites are, paradoxically, united.<sup>7</sup> His masculinity cannot be denied, but to affirm it does not do justice to the totality of his person. To affirm his femininity, on the other hand, is interpreted as an affront to his human specificity, but justice is only done if it is affirmed. How can one, then, understand that he is femininely masculine and masculinely feminine? This is only possible to

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<sup>7</sup> cf. Isabel Gómez Acebo in Minutes of Salamanca on being changed into a male person; ead., “El entorno socio-religioso del siglo I” (The socio-religious context of the 1st century), in: ead. (ed.), *La mujer en los orígenes del cristianismo* (The woman at the origins of Christianity; DDB: Bilbao 2005), 21-64.



the extent that he is perceived as a full and universal person. The projective effect of women has been manifested, paradoxically, in the visibility of his masculinity, and the projective effect of men has, unintentionally and paradoxically, highlighted his femininity. But the fact is that the two cannot be separated, nor can they be understood as a mere juxtaposition or combination. The union of opposites creates a new reality which, though simultaneously composed of the two cultural genders, is neither of them, because the figure of Jesus the Christ is a human innovation in which all of us – of different races and cultures, times and ages, as well as different genders, orientations, and sexual options – can recognize ourselves. It is no mere coincidence that, at the time when Jesus lived and when the Gospels were written, the presence of the androgyne was particularly strong: an ancient figure which at the same time calls attention to, and evokes, a certain kind of linkage which was broken by the social and cultural system of patriarchy. I am certainly not attempting to reestablish the androgyne, nor the *unisex*, but only to affirm that the figure of Jesus is neither the one nor the other, and for that reason it is a paradox.

#### 6. *Charity: decentered centering and centered decentering*

As women, we have experienced in our flesh the enormous difficulty of living the paradox of Christian love called *charitable love*. I do not need to repeat what the *genderization* of that love, most often understood as service (also *genderized*), has meant, nor the fact that this has been contrary to everything that might be understood as personal affirmation. It is, therefore, necessary to recover the paradoxical nature of the core of Christianity.

Jesus is presented in the Gospels as an affirmed and confirmed person. His individual self-affirmation, which has its origin in a relationship, at first unilateral and vertical on the part of God in baptism, is revealed little by little throughout all the episodes of the different narratives. The paradox consists in the maintenance of the tension between self-affirmation, or confirmation of his individual worth, and his affirmation of others and of their worth as persons, developed by means of his actions and relationships. His affirmation of others confirms his self-affirmation, which in turn guarantees the authenticity of his affirmation of others. That is why Jesus appears as a human subject centered in decentering and centered in a decentered way.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> cf. My study “Amor de sí y género según Mc 12,28-34” (Self-love and gender according to Mk 12,28-34), in: Virginia R. Azcuy (coord.), *En la encrucijada del género* (At the cross-roads of gender). *Conversaciones entre teología y disciplinas* (CESBA: Buenos Aires 2004), 133-156.

Jesus is not the only character in the Gospels who demonstrates this capacity. The woman who anoints him in Bethany shows the same thing in her gesture, which is to some extent replicated by Jesus' gesture during the Last Supper (Mk 14:3-9 and Jn 12:1-8). The woman names herself in her gesture and in the object which becomes a symbol, and this gesture confirms her as a prophetess at the same time as it is received by Jesus. It is a free and independent gesture, calculated in an uncalculating way, which, since it is destined for another, affects her in the first instance (the perfume) and spreads itself generously. The woman shows the strength of her power by empowering Jesus who is assumed to possess enormous power. She who is centered can decenter herself, and this decentering centers her once again. The power she transmits generates a chain reaction, at first negative but in the end surprisingly positive, on the part of the empowered subject, who not only confirms her power but expands it in space and time. The same could be said of the generosity of her gesture, since it displays its richness to the extent to which she gives it, and she can only give it to the extent that it is her richness.<sup>9</sup>

The dichotomy between love of self, on the one hand, and love for others/love of God, on the other, does not make Christian charity possible, but rather makes it impossible. Women have learned socially to feel guilty about their acts of self-love, thereby developing numerous unnecessary conflicts which have generated too much suffering and kept them in a position of immaturity and subordination. It is time to relearn the evangelical paradox of love, its centering and decentering.

### *7. Easter theology of the cross: intelligent sensuality, sensual intelligence*

The Easter experience, which is the core of the Christian identity, first passed through the filter of women. Thus, Easter theology has been impregnated with elements which originate with women, its first witnesses, something which has only recently begun to be recognized and not without difficulty. One of the paradoxes, which gives creative content to the paradox of Easter itself, relates to the relationship between intellectual comprehension and sensory understanding. We can no longer perceive ourselves in the oppositional and dichotomic division between the rational mind and the senses. In the Christian Mystery of Easter, women enter into a religious experience of life and

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<sup>9</sup> cf. Mercedes Navarro, *Ungido para la vida* (Anointed for life). *Exégesis narrativa de Mc 14,3-9 y Jn 12,1-8* (EVD: Estella 1999).

death, or pleasure and pain, which can only be perceived through the paradoxes and symbols which accompany them. I would like to highlight the paradox which closely relates intelligence and sensuality and is manifested both in suffering and in delight and pleasure. Easter gives back to human beings those thresholds in which they perceive themselves as alive and, on the threshold of life/death, human beings are driven to question both the one and the other. This questioning cannot take place solely from a position of pain or of pleasure but from both at the same time, provided they are able to encounter each other in a paradoxical relationship. In order to avoid sado-masochistic implications which are not pertinent to my exposition, I prefer to formulate this paradox from the standpoint of the two spheres which challenge life and death: the mind and the senses.

### **III. The political dimension of a paradoxical theology done by women**

A *deconstructive connotation*, present in its constructive intention, is characteristic of the paradoxical theology done by women. Paradox deconstructs the oppressive way of interpreting the dualities of the real world and of the human person, dualities which are created and, above all, sustained and perpetuated by a patriarchal Christianity. In this sense, it is a critical theology and it aims at a change of the second order. The following are some of its features.

#### *1. A theology which instigates constructive chaos*

A certain kind of theology has been and continues to be a true instigator of creative chaos, just as Jesus, according to the Gospels, revealed the disorder and injustice supported by the supposed and superficial, social and religious order. In the same way, feminist theology has gradually dismantled the order which has sustained, and continues to sustain, a system which is unjust and oppressive of women. This instigating feature can be perceived in the defensive reactions against it and in the emotive and nervous tone which characterizes them. Paradoxical feminist theology provokes a disorder which contains within itself, in an *autopoietic* way, another order which is not derived strictly from the factors that produce it, because it is something new and different and has, therefore, evolved.

#### *2. A complex and "complexing" theology*

Paradoxical feminist theology restores to theological discourse its holistic condition, which makes it less controllable. The perception of creative chaos to which feminist theology is leading impedes the controlling manipulation which

facilitates dualistic discourses of exclusion and opposition. This theology reintroduces complexity into the world of knowledge and, paradoxically, makes religious experience reasonable. It aims, in this way, to form a new order, lively and closer to life, complex and resistant to classification and mere control.

### 3. *An innovative theology*

This theology is not only new but also produces innovation, and it is open and exposed to the impact of reality. Its paradoxical nature keeps it permanently open and in this sense it exists at the limits and is reticular, because the opening up of poles or paradoxical dualities is in a continuous relationship between identity and innovation, due to the feedback flowing from its edges. These conditions lend it an unstable stability, which the rigidities of the environment, of thought and of practices come up against. It is an anti-patriarchal theology which tends toward the attainment of interpersonal justice and equality.

## Conclusions

In the first place, as it aims to be and is a bridge, paradoxical theology from a gender perspective confronts dualisms by introducing into theological discourse a new dimension in all that refers to the divine and the human, creation and evolution, the old and the new, space and time, the beginning and the end, the personal and the impersonal, the conscious and the unconscious, the individual and the other, natural and unnatural ... For this reason, we can conclude that it is a *theology in a third dimension*.

Secondly, it serves by nature as a bridge between what has been achieved and what will be achieved, between the given and inherited (tradition) and what is still to be done and created, while introducing imagination in rationality and rationality in imagination, the suggestive in the systematic and the systematic in the suggestive. In this sense, we can say that it is a *stable yet fluid theology*.

And finally, as a theology exposed to continuous influences and feedback, it must develop itself with sufficient rigor so as to regulate itself while maintaining its free (reticular) interdependence, which permits it to reorganize itself without impositions. It is a tolerant theology, capable on its own of establishing the limits of the intolerable and combating the intolerable<sup>10</sup>. For this reason, we can conclude that paradoxical theology in a gender perspective is *obediently autonomous* (faithful to itself, faithful to the Deity) and establishes

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<sup>10</sup> cf. Antonio Vázquez Fernández, *Tolerancia: ¿Debilidad o fortaleza?* (Tolerance: weakness or strength?), Témpera, Madrid 2003.

bridges over life, toward life and with life: bridges from known reality toward the unknown with its capacity for knowledge and its infinite and indomitable curiosity.

L'article discute des potentialités que l'image littéraire et conceptuelle du paradoxe présente pour la réflexion théologique, en particulier pour la théologie féministe et la théologie faite par les femmes. Ces potentialités sont envisagées sous l'angle d'une passerelle entre les expériences religieuses et spirituelles de nombreuses femmes, et l'héritage théologique de la tradition, dans le cadre général des sciences et de la pensée complexe. Cependant, si l'article présuppose un certain nombre de thèses théoriques et méthodologiques, ce n'est pas le thème principal, et il traite directement de sept exemples liés à la création, au Mystère divin, à l'anthropologie théologique, à la christologie, à la représentation christique, à la charité et à Pâques.

Der Artikel diskutiert die Möglichkeiten, die die literarische und konzeptuelle Figur des Paradoxen für die theologische Reflexion und insbesondere für feministische Theologie und Theologie von Frauen eröffnet. Diese Potentiale werden als eine Brücke betrachtet, die die religiösen und spirituellen Erfahrungen vieler Frauen mit dem theologischen Erbe der Tradition verbindet – und dies im umfassenden Rahmen der Naturwissenschaften und des komplexen Denkens. Doch beschränkt sich der Artikel nicht auf theoretische und methodologische Prämissen, die er in einem bestimmten Ausmaß voraussetzt, sondern stellt sogleich sieben Beispiele vor, die auf die Themen Schöpfung, das göttliche Mysterium, theologische Anthropologie, Christologie, die Repräsentation Christi, Nächstenliebe und Barmherzigkeit sowie Ostern bezogen sind.

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