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The Gender Perspectives of the Economic Crisis in Greece and the Greek-Orthodox Church's Witness in Troubled Times: Charity Meals or a Quest for Justice?

Introduction

Greece is now sunk in its seventh straight year of recession, and with social and political disintegration reaching extremes not seen since World War II, it is no longer easy to predict the results of this situation. It goes without saying that the Greek economic crisis, as part of the global financial crisis, caused many changes in Greek society. Much has been said about the negative impact of this crisis on aspects of public life, such as public education, public health care and especially democratic governance. Analysts argue that:

the unfolding of the Greek economic crisis has revealed some unappetising traits pertaining not only to the Greek economic system (whose inefficiencies were after all well known to both Greeks and the EU authorities which nonetheless continued to lend Greece unimaginable amounts of money – why really?), but to public life in general. These traits include a high degree of corruption, clientelism and chronic incompetence, and have discredited not only the two major political parties in government for the last 30 years, but the entire political system, as well as the very concept of “public good” and public services. Even worse, though politicians, state mandarins and churchmen, powerful businessmen, newspaper publishers and influential journalists have been associated with corruption, surprisingly few have been brought to account. In Greece, lifestyle and conspicuous consumption still thrive next to 27% unemployment (more than 50% among the youth), people searching the rubbish for food and malnourished children fainting in school.¹

However, little attention has been given to the gender perspectives of the economic crisis in Greece. Although 99% of the population, that is, the

¹ Gerasimos Makris / Dimitris Bekridakis, “The Greek Orthodox Church and the Economic Crisis Since 2009,” in: *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 13.2 (2013), 111-132, here 16.

multitude, has been affected by the economic crisis,² white heterosexual middle-class men might still enjoy some privileges. What I am arguing here is that the crisis does not affect everybody in the same way; the most disadvantaged, marginal, financially vulnerable and illegal groups are affected differently than those groups that still enjoy some rights, for example the right to work, education, health care and security. In this case, I will limit my focus to the gender perspectives of the current crisis, as women and men are not affected in the same way. My reason for pointing out that there are gender differences among the multitude is not because I want to argue for special interest liberation or for a special interest theology. Differences of race, sexuality and gender have been used for the benefit of the system: the patriarchal system offers men some privileges, but in this way men lose the ability to organise together with women, so that all workers may be better off in the end.³ Therefore, as a theologian, I wish to develop a broader and deeper form of solidarity among all people and as a feminist theologian, I think justice requires not a singular equality, but the pursuit of equalities around various types of relations, that is, relations of class, sexuality, race and gender.⁴ In the spirit of this pursuit, I would then hope for the Greek Orthodox Church to acknowledge various types of injustices and to promote a liberating and supportive public discourse. In the following work, I will begin by highlighting the importance of gender, among other factors, both when describing the impact of the crisis and again when attempting to define policy practices for resolving the economic problems and ensuring social justice. I will then employ a feminist liberation critique to evaluate how the Greek-Orthodox Church is responding to the economic crisis and its role in overcoming it. By testing the Greek-Orthodox Church's public action and speech against the potentially transformative, liberating and gender sensitising theological discourse, the question that will be discussed is the following: has the Greek-Orthodox Church addressed the crisis itself, social injustice and the concerns of those who suffer most, the underprivileged and the marginalised, or not?

² Cf. Joerg Rieger / Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham 2013), 1-6.

³ Cf. Rieger / Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 69.

⁴ Cf. Jon Cruddas / Jonathan Rutherford, "The Common Table," in: Rowan Williams / Larry Elliott (eds.), *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2010), 54-76, here 68.

The Gender Perspectives of the Crisis

Even before the crisis, women in Greece were experiencing huge inequalities in the labour market (among the highest rates in the EU) with regard to employment, wages and unemployment. In contrast, the share of men's participation in housework, child care and elderly care was among the lowest in the EU. In autumn 2008, the female unemployment rate was 11.7%, whereas male unemployment was only at 5.3%; women accounted for 70% of part-time workers, while their average income in the private sector was 25% lower than men's.⁵ Analysing that period, Maria Karamessini asserts that:

Patriarchal concepts of male workers' better performance and greater credibility were in retreat, but still pervading an institutional infrastructure characterized by the underdevelopment of public child care and elderly care services, in combination with women's lower retirement age and early retirements. They also had a key role in discrimination against women concerning hiring, career development, compensation and access to positions of responsibility.⁶

The situation is clearly worse today. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), Greece's unemployment rate rose to 27.4% in the first trimester of 2013. The unemployment rate for women is considerably higher than for men (31% versus 24.7%).⁷ For young people aged 15 to 24 the unemployment rate is estimated at 54.9% and reaches 66.3% for females in the same age group. Two-thirds of the long-term unemployed are women.⁸ In addition, it should be kept in mind that the official unemployment rate underestimates unemployment to a greater extent in women than in men. Experts highlight that

in Greece, as well as worldwide, construction and manufacturing are male-dominated sectors affected first by the crisis. Redundancies and temporary lay-offs in major industries of those sectors attracted the greatest media attention, while dismissals of employees in small and medium sized enterprises and of workers with

⁵ See http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO01_DT_QQ_04_2008_01_F_GR.pdf, 9 October 2014.

⁶ Μαρία Καραμεσσίνη, "Κρίση, γυναίκες, ανδρική ταυτότητα," in: Κυριακάτικη Αυγή, *Ενθέματα* 29 November 2011 (<http://archive.avgi.gr/ArticleActionshow.action?articleID=648318>, 10 August 2013).

⁷ See http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO01_DT_QQ_01_2013_01_F_GR.pdf, 10 September 2013.

⁸ Cf. *Ενημέρωση* 191 (Μηνιαία έκδοση του ΙΝΕ/ΓΣΕΕ-ΑΔΕΔΥ) Φεβρουάριος 2012, 23. (http://www.inegsee.gr/sitefiles/magazine/ESOTERIKO_190.pdf, 10 August 2013).

temporary contracts – a workforce dominated by women – have easily gone unnoticed as individual cases in sectors of the economy that have no union representation.⁹

Unfortunately, the prospects do not seem to be good for women. In her discussion of “the gender perspectives of the financial crisis” during the fifty-third session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (March 2009), economist Stephanie Seguino notes that “female joblessness can be expected to rise disproportionately as public sector budget cuts are made, since women are disproportionately employed in education, health, and social services.” Moreover, according to Seguino it is highly likely that the old principle “fire women first” will be revived, since it is considered imperative to ensure jobs for men, who are traditionally perceived as the breadwinners.¹⁰ Additionally, history confirms this scenario. Historian Efi Avdela has shown that during the interwar years, when Greece was hit by recession, the government, in its effort to reduce expenses, applied the “women first” principle in staff cutbacks.¹¹

Research findings indicate that the economic crisis has a greater impact on women’s paid work than on men’s due to gender differences in aspects of life aside from work. Women, in principle, have lower income and are more dependent on social welfare measures; consequently, they are the ones affected the most by tax evasion (which is widespread in Greece). Women are generally less involved in decision-making bodies and collective processes on issues concerning their lives.¹² This is why the extent to which women are adequately represented in every aspect of public life, as well as decision and policy-making bodies, should not be ignored.

It is too soon to determine the long-term implications of the crisis on gender relations. Will women’s autonomy be restricted, and will the traditional family model be reinforced so that women can make ends meet? Is this period of crisis going to result in reinforcing rigid gender roles and the oppression of

⁹ Μαρία Καραμεσίνη, “Οικονομική κρίση και ανισότητες φύλου,” in: *Η Εποχή*, 7 March 2012 (<http://www.epohi.gr/portal/arxeio/4707>, 10 August 2013).

¹⁰ Cf. Stephanie Seguino, “The Global Economic Crisis and Its Gender Implications and Policy Responses,” 2009, 1-13 (http://www.uvm.edu/~sseguino/pdf/global_crisis.pdf, 10 August 2013). Paper prepared for *Gender Perspectives on the Financial Crisis* Panel at the Fifty-Third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations.

¹¹ Cf. Έφη Αβδελά, “Το φύλο στην (σε) κρίση ή τι συμβαίνει στις ‘γυναίκες’ σε χαλεπούς καιρούς,” in: *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* 115 (2011), 20-21.

¹² Cf. Αβδελά, “Το φύλο στην (σε) κρίση,” 23.

women?¹³ Or, will young men and women adopt new alternative lifestyles and set up alternative households?¹⁴ Furthermore, what could it mean for inter-family relations that women are becoming primary earners, the ones working and supporting their households? This trend is most evident in migrant families, because, due to particular circumstances, it is the jobs performed by male migrants that are mainly affected, resulting in migrant men losing their role as breadwinner.

Moreover, it seems that some implications of this crisis on gender relationships have become obvious. According to the note on the policy of gender equality in Greece that was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality:

domestic violence has been exacerbated by the economic crisis. There has been a gender backlash manifesting itself in disproportionate job losses in the public sector and cuts to services women are more likely to require; loss of socio-economic autonomy makes them more vulnerable to male abusive behaviour and leaves them without any option but to return to abusive partners.¹⁵

Recession has started taking its toll on women's mental and physical health as well as on their reproductive rights.¹⁶

Our debate owes a great amount to economic history, to labour history from a feminist perspective and to feminist economics, which have indicated that economic gender inequality, in other words women's poverty and unemployment, is not simply rooted in the realm of biological givens or sociological imponderables, but rather in specific policy choices, specific growth models and specific household economics that affect women and men differently.¹⁷

¹³ For Adam Lent, it is a matter of well-established record that a period of extended austerity (like the mid-1950s) might assign firm gender and generational roles and might be fearful of difference in the form of sexuality, disability and race. Adam Lent, "The Knowledge Economy, Ethics and the Challenge of Diversity after the Crash," in: Rowan Williams / Larry Elliott (eds.), *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2010), 100-122, here 106-107.

¹⁴ Cf. Αβδελά, "Το φύλο στην (σε) κρίση," 24.

¹⁵ Konstantina Davaki, *The Policy of Gender Equality in Greece* (European Union: Brussels 2013), 10 (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493028/IPOL-FEMM_NT%282013%29493028_EN.pdf, 2 September 2014).

¹⁶ Cf. Davaki, *The Policy of Gender Equality in Greece*, 15.

¹⁷ Cf. Janet A. Seiz, "Φεμινιστική Οικονομική επιστήμη. Trans. Ναταλία Σερέτη, in: Warren J. Samuels/ Jeff E. Biddle / John B. Davis (eds.), *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought* (Blackwell: Oxford 2003) 454-461.

The Role of the Orthodox Church: Charity Meals or a Quest for Justice?

This is the situation within which Ieronymos assumed the leadership of the Orthodox Church of Greece in 2008. To have become accustomed to the situation would have been madness; yet, to oppose the political status quo outright would have been equally difficult, as the image of the Church of Greece had already been stained by the scandals during the time of the archbishop Christodoulos. Analysts¹⁸ argue that a more cautious approach was needed: the Orthodox Church could not stay silent while the raging crisis destroyed livelihoods, nor could it incur the wrath of the state, upon whose goodwill much of the ecclesiastical prerogatives rested.

Soon after his election, Ieronymos disbanded Solidarity [*Allilengii*], the NGO that his predecessor had patronised and which had been caught involved in a fraud scandal. In its place he established Mission [*Apostoli*], whose main areas of activity include the environment, the rehabilitation of drug addicts, care and treatment for autistic children, care for bed-ridden persons and the elderly, and the mass distribution of charity meals.¹⁹

In any case, it seems that the Greek-Orthodox Church assumes a “Christendom” mentality by forging a strong and close relationship between the Church and the state.²⁰ This mentality can be seen in the Greek Church’s commitment to the status quo. The Church is at the centre of society, aligning in a way with the interests and lives of the powerful and not of the marginalised.²¹

Ever since the onset of the current crisis, the official discourse of the Church has associated the economic crisis with a crisis of values and a lack of spirituality, disregarding any political aspect of the problem, which is central to Orthodox tradition as evidenced in the writings of St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom. The proposed answer to the problem is sought in the ascetic ideal of Christianity. In fact, the Holy Synod seems to invite those who are hit the hardest by the crisis, the people enduring deprivation and suffering,

¹⁸ Cf. Makris / Bekridakis, “The Greek Orthodox Church and the Economic Crisis since 2009,” 117.

¹⁹ Makris / Bekridakis, “The Greek Orthodox Church and the Economic Crisis since 2009,” 117.

²⁰ For the church-state relationship in Greece see Πολύκαρπος Καραμούζης, *Κράτος, Εκκλησία και εθνική ιδεολογία στη νεώτερη Ελλάδα. Η πολιτική διαμεσολάβηση της θρησκείας στη νεοελληνική κοινωνία του μεσοπολέμου* (unpublished dissertation, Athens 2004); Έφη Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος των τριών ιεραρχών: Μια γενεαλογία του “Ελληνοχριστιανικού Πολιτισμού”* (Nepheli: Athens 2004).

²¹ Cf. Rieger / Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 123.

to repent and appreciate the value of spiritual instead of material goods, consumption and comfort. Instead of being in a position of witness, the Church remains in a position of control assuming spiritual and moral authority.

In Encyclical No. 2894 entitled “A Theological Conception of the Economic Crisis” (15 March 2010), the Holy Fathers state:

we, the people, acted irresponsibly. We enjoyed our wealth, gave in to pleasures, and yielded to the temptation of easy profit through tricks and deception. We did not care about the truth. The unrealistic demands made by workers' unions and other social groups in complete disregard for social cohesion, contributed largely to our being brought to the current situation [...] The essence of the spiritual crisis is the loss of life's meaning and our egocentric urge [...] Rather than seeking the meaning of life, we clung to prosperity, well-being and economic strength. But when there is no vision in life other than consumption and economic growth, then the flaunting of wealth becomes the only way to elevate your social status, then corruption is the only path in life [...] We opted for false prosperity and as a result we have lost our freedom, and our country has lost its freedom as well. [...]

We wish to tell you that the Church has the antidote to life as consumption, and this is asceticism. And if consumerism is the end, because life has no meaning, asceticism is the way, because it leads towards a life with meaning.²²

Even in a 2011 volume published by the Archdiocese of Athens, “For an Economy with a Human Face”, which includes contributions by theologians, economists and ex-politicians, the Archbishop's critique of neo-liberalism is articulated in personalistic terms and not in political and ethical ones:

And what does neo-liberalism say? Everybody can do anything freely. We do not care what the other is. I can drink his blood, take his life, steal from him, take his money through the stock exchange. I am the centre of the earth [...] What is the cause of the crisis? [...] Our moving away from God.²³

But we cannot make people believe in the eschatological vision of the Church, that is, in the possibility of another world where there is justice and peace, without first creating a safe environment for people to experience.²⁴

The central field in which the Church's ideology assumes a practical form is charity, specifically the preparation and distribution by a great number of

²² Makris / Bekridakis, “The Greek Orthodox Church and the Economic Crisis since 2009,” 120.

²³ Makris / Bekridakis, “The Greek Orthodox Church and the Economic Crisis since 2009,” 121.

²⁴ Cf. Rieger / Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 123.

local dioceses of more than 250,000 meals daily (except Sunday), 10,000 of which in the Archdiocese of Athens. Feeding the needy has always been part of the Church of Greece's charity profile. There is no doubt that the Christian Church and its believers are trying to help tackle the consequences of the economic crisis and relieve those who suffer, and, among other organisations and institutions, the Church is obviously trying to manage these consequences by means of spiritual aid and charity,²⁵ particularly by undertaking a commitment to "cause an outburst of empathy [...] for the people in pain and suffering."²⁶ However, there is no concrete quest for change, no quest for social justice and no criticism of the economic system, its moral basis and its consequences.

The Possible Contribution of Theological Discourse to the Overcoming of the Crisis in Greece

If the role of the Greek-Orthodox Church in the current situation is limited to providing spiritual aid and charity work, this is quite a risky attitude, as the consequence might be that the Church will have nothing to offer to society once the crisis was over. Therefore, as a feminist Greek-Orthodox theologian, I think that it is worth focusing on the potential contribution of theological discourse in addressing the crisis itself as well as social injustice, something which is, in my opinion, carefully avoided by the official Church. I am interested in examining whether theological discourse may contribute to the international and national public debate on how to overcome the crisis.

Given that there is an ongoing discussion about the role of religion in overcoming this crisis, and that many theologians have argued for the liberating and transforming role of Christian theology,²⁷ I would expect the Greek-Orthodox theological discourse to have made a contribution in these troubled times by addressing the crisis itself, social injustice, and the gender perspectives of the economic crisis.

²⁵ See also Αρχιεπίσκοπος Αθηνών και Πάσης Ελλάδος κ. Ιερώνυμος Β' κ.α., *Για μια Οικονομία με ανθρώπινο πρόσωπο* (εκδ. Ιερά Αρχιεπισκοπή Αθηνών: Αθήνα 2011) and Μανώλης Γ. Δρεττάκης, "Οι Χριστιανοί μπροστά στην οικονομική κρίση," in: *Σύναξη* 114 (2010), 51-56.

²⁶ Χρ. Σταμούλης, *Η γυναίκα του Αώτ και η σύγχρονη θεολογία* (Ινδικτος: Αθήνα 2008), 19-20.

²⁷ Cf. Rowan Williams / Larry Elliott (eds.), *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2010); Rieger / Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 31-55.

I would therefore like to briefly mention certain distinctive features present in theological thought and theological discourse which could be helpful in the public discussion about how to address the crisis. Theological discourse is not in competition with other sorts of discourse (it would be a methodological mistake if it were), as its epistemological presuppositions differ. It can be said that theological approaches to the crisis are not disproved by the fact that one may also accept other economic, psychological and philosophical interpretations.²⁸ Thus, in analysing the raging global economic crisis, Christian thought focuses on the underlying causes and highlights the relation between the economic crisis and the crisis of certain values. What first comes to mind when reflecting on the causes of the crisis is the flaw of *greed* (or *rapacity*), as pointed out by the Archbishop of Athens. However, greed is linked to pride, which is evident in “my illusion that I can shape the world according to my will”, a pride that is manifest in the reluctance to let go of systems and projects that promise more and more secure control, as the Anglican Archbishop, in his turn, explains.²⁹ Theology is inviting us to realise that we are delivered or converted (regarding economic issues also) not simply by resolving – in a social vacuum – to be less greedy, but by understanding what it is to live as an organism which grows and changes and thus is involved in risk. We change by understanding our limits. This said, I also agree with Slavoj Žižek’s idea that the problem is not just personal greed but the way that the system works.³⁰ I would say that the system promotes a culture based on greed.

Theological thought suggests that our ethic is essentially about how we negotiate our limits, that is, our vulnerabilities, and what relationship with power we wish to establish.³¹ The seriousness of Christian ethics is tested by how we behave towards those whose goodwill or influence is of no “use” to us, opposed to the usefulness of maintaining good relations with people who possess power and money. Hence, the moral depth of a society can be assessed by how it treats its vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, the sick, etc. Within the framework of theological thinking, in which the createdness of the world

²⁸ Rowan Williams, “Knowing Our Limits,” in: Rowan Williams / Larry Elliott (eds.), *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2010), 19-34, here 33.

²⁹ Cf. Rowan Williams, “Ηθική, οικονομική θεωρία και παγκόσμια δικαιοσύνη”. Trans. Απόστολος Αποστολίδης, in: *Σύναξη* 114 (2010), 23-49, here 25.

³⁰ Cf. Rieger / Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 45.

³¹ See also Williams, “Ηθική, οικονομική θεωρία και παγκόσμια δικαιοσύνη,” 26.

is recognised, men and women ought to be aware of human frailty, material and mental, in others and in oneself. For Rowan Williams, theological thought and Christian ethic suggest that “the duty of care for the neighbour as for oneself is bound up with the injunction to forgive as one hopes to be forgiven; basic to this whole perspective is the recognition both that I may fail or be wounded and that I may be guilty of error and damage to another.”³² Behind this recognition, though, lies the idea of the intentional subject taking responsibility for this world, in this world. At this point, theological thought puts the responsibility that people have (and specific people as a matter of fact) for the present crisis in the spotlight of public debate. The notion promoted by the media that “international markets require this or that, and moreover they are forced to impose it” is unthinkable for theology. In the Christian context, nothing is caused by impersonal forces, nor is anything compulsory and inevitable since the world operates entirely independently as a result of men’s and women’s free actions, and as the people made in the image of God participate in God’s freedom. Thereby, not only does theological discourse recognise the concept of “personal responsibility”, it also indicates responsibility as central in the current crisis, entailing a substantial political aspect.

Finally, theological discourse is able to contribute the vision of change, because its faith can support the idea of a better world. The vision of change is theologically grounded in the belief that the world was created by the love of God the Father, and not by necessity. In this context of understanding creation as a gift, the world is free and thus able to change.

For the world to change, nonetheless, it is necessary to believe in the idea of a different world. Theological discourse has the concept of “faith” to offer. Here, the term “faith” does not mean accepting convictions such as “God exists”. It means, rather, “I have faith in you”, “I trust in us”, and thus my hope is certain. Christian faith is, for the most part, performative rather than propositional, claims Terry Eagleton,³³ and is connected to what I would call “loving commitment”. If we wanted to see how faith (which remains a guilt-free concept in theological discourse) may contribute to overcoming the crisis, including its gender perspectives, the following could be said: if what urges people to have faith in the possibility of a non-racist society (where all people, regardless of sex and race, will enjoy equal rights) is a set of commitments to

³² Williams, “Ηθική, οικονομική θεωρία και παγκόσμια δικαιοσύνη,” 27.

³³ Cf. Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (Yale University Press: New Haven 2009), 151.

certain values, then theological discourse restores the debate over specific values. It can bring political theory back to the public sphere through the discussion of ethics and values.

After all, if we, who claim to be people of God, fail to notice that there are people who cannot find a job, who are being fired or whose poverty is not visible because of their gender, it is due to our lack of dedication to a sense of justice. We have to believe in a better world in order to be able to discern its problems, as well as how gender is involved, and thereby urge decisions and new policies for changing the world and promoting equality. I consider theological discourse to express the faith in the value of ensuring liberty and autonomy for all without exception, to the extent that it maintains its eschatological perspective and judges the world based on the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God (or, as described in secular language, the vision of a just society of people loving one another and caring for nature and the whole world), instead of degenerating into national, state or any other kind of ideology. This is the commitment that distinguishes theology from other scientific fields and sorts of discourse, and this is the commitment it has to offer.

In conclusion, I would argue that although the Christian tradition and modern theological thought have many liberating aspects that could be employed by the official Greek-Orthodox discourse in order to address effectively the forces of oppression, the Greek-Orthodox Church has so far avoided addressing the crisis itself, social injustice and the concerns of those who suffer most, the underprivileged and the marginalised; but failing to bring in the concerns of those who suffer, who are silenced, underrepresented and often invisible is inconsistent with the teachings of the Greek-Orthodox Church. If the Church is to proclaim that God's grace is inclusive and open to all, the Church cannot discriminate because of skin colour, sexual orientation or immigrant status, nor is the Church allowed to practice hate speech. For the Church to be genuine and congruent, it would need to address the forces of oppression that encourage discrimination, injustice and inequality at various levels of human and social functioning. As I said earlier we cannot ask people to believe in the possibility of the Kingdom of God and have faith in us (as people of God) without making at least an effort to construct a real alternative to the oppressive status quo that the multitude experiences.

Grecia sigue hundida en su séptimo año consecutivo de recesión, y no resulta fácil predecir los resultados de esta situación en nuestra vida. No hace falta decir que la crisis económica griega como parte de la crisis financiera mundial causó muchos

cambios en la sociedad griega. Mucho se ha dicho sobre el impacto negativo de la crisis en muchos aspectos de la vida pública, como la educación pública, la atención de la salud pública y la gobernabilidad democrática en especial. Sin embargo, se presta poca atención a la perspectiva de género de la crisis económica en Grecia. En medio de la furiosa crisis socio-económica que ha afectado a Grecia desde el año 2008 la Iglesia Ortodoxa de Grecia, bajo el arzobispo Ieronymos II, ha desarrollado admirablemente su red de comidas de trabajo y caridad filantrópicas. Abierto tanto a griegos como inmigrantes, este proyecto pretende sensibilizar en la caridad y deber cívico del cristianismo ortodoxo. Sin embargo, la Iglesia Ortodoxa no puede hacer frente a las causas estructurales de la crisis de una manera política relevante y sensible a la visión de género y sigue siendo discursivamente distante de la crítica teológica y política a un sistema neoliberal voraz que está eficazmente comprometida con la justicia y la igualdad de género.

En este trabajo, empiezo con la explicación de cómo las mujeres son más vulnerables que los hombres a las perturbaciones económicas en Grecia. A continuación, examino el papel que desempeña la Iglesia Ortodoxa en la superación de la crisis y valoro cómo la Iglesia no puede hacer frente a las causas de la crisis de una manera política relevante y sensible a la visión de género. Por último, hago algunas sugerencias en cuanto a la relevancia del discurso teológico en tiempos difíciles.

Greece is now sunk in its seventh straight year of recession, and it is no longer easy to predict the results of this situation in our life. It goes without saying that the Greek economic crisis as part of the global financial crisis caused many changes in Greek society. Much has been said about the negative impact of this crisis on many aspects of public life, such as public education, public health care and especially democratic governance. However, little attention is given to the gender perspectives of the economic crisis in Greece.

In the midst of the raging socio-economic crisis that has hit Greece since 2008 the Orthodox Church of Greece, under Archbishop Ieronymos II, has admirably developed its network of philanthropic work and charity meals. Open to both Greeks and immigrants, this project tries to realise Eastern Orthodox Christianity's sense of caritas and civic duty. However, the Orthodox Church fails to tackle the structural causes of the crisis in a politically relevant and gender sensitive manner and remains discursively distant from theological and political criticism of a greedy neoliberal system and from effective engagement with justice and gender equality.

In this paper, I begin with explaining in what sense women are more vulnerable than men to the economic shocks in Greece. Then, I examine the role that the Orthodox Church plays in the overcoming of the crisis and I argue that the Church fails to deal with the causes of the crisis in a politically relevant and gender-sensitive manner. Finally, I make some suggestions regarding the relevance of theological discourse in troubled times.

Griechenland ist jetzt im siebten Jahr der Rezession und die Folgen dieser Situation auf unser Leben lassen sich nicht mehr einfach vorher sagen. Selbstverständlich verursachte die griechische Wirtschaftskrise als Teil der globalen Finanzkrise viele Veränderungen in der griechischen Gesellschaft. Viel ist über die negativen Folgen dieser Krise für viele Bereiche des öffentlichen Lebens, wie Erziehung, Gesundheitssystem und vor allem demokratische Regierung, gesagt worden. Den Gender-Perspektiven der Wirtschaftskrise in Griechenland wurde jedoch bisher wenig Beachtung geschenkt.

Mitten in der rasenden sozio-ökonomischen Krise hat die griechisch-orthodoxe Kirche unter Erzbischof Hieronymus II. ihr Netzwerk philanthropischer Werke und Suppenküchen bewundernswert entwickelt. Offen für Griech/innen und Migrant/innen versucht dieses Projekt die Werte von Caritas und Bürgerpflicht der östlichen Orthodoxie zu realisieren. Die orthodoxe Kirche nimmt sich jedoch nicht der strukturellen Ursachen der Krise in einer politisch relevanten und gendersensiblen Art an und bleibt diskursiv auf Distanz von der theologischen und politischen Kritik eines gierigen neoliberalen Systems und von einem wirksamen Engagement mit Gerechtigkeit und Gender-Gleichheit.

Ich beginne diesen Artikel damit, zu erklären, in welcher Hinsicht Frauen den wirtschaftlichen Schocks in Griechenland mehr ausgesetzt sind als Männer. Dann untersuche ich die Rolle, die die orthodoxe Kirche in der Überwindung der Krise spielt, und argumentiere, dass die Kirche darin versagt, sich mit den Ursachen der Krise in einer politisch relevanten und gendersensiblen Art auseinander zu setzen. Am Schluss mache ich einige Vorschläge bezüglich der Relevanz theologischer Diskurse in Zeiten der Krise.

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