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## **Icons as women's horizon for their becoming divine in the Eastern Orthodox Church**

### **Exploring the political dimensions of iconology and iconography**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the basis and the conditions on which Byzantine icons could function as a visual inspiration for contemporary Christian women and as a horizon for their becoming divine in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The criteria and perspective are strictly theological and by no means do I express all Eastern Orthodox women's experiences of the divine and its visual symbols. In other words, in this paper an attempt is made to develop a feminist theology of the Byzantine icons not in order to justify Byzantine iconography in relation to other iconographies or modern religious art but in order to introduce an alternative, more feminist perspective and interpretation of Byzantine iconography that is, thus, more liberating for women. The main argument that unfolds throughout this work is that by revisiting and reinterpreting Byzantine iconology, that is, by looking at Byzantine icons with new eyes, we may first realize the political dimension of iconology and Byzantine iconography and then show how Byzantine icons could be transformed by women themselves into their horizon for creating religious 'space' and for becoming divine in a patriarchal religious tradition where little room is left for female elements, vision and experience.

#### **1. The quest for a horizon for women's becoming divine**

Women's becoming divine has developed into an important issue in feminist philosophy of religion. The male-dominant agenda of traditional philosophy of religion that focuses on questions about the existence of God and on how *his* existence can best be defended or on issues of the coherence of theistic beliefs, of the way religious language operates and of the nature of religious experience, has been heavily criticized on the basis of unacknowledged assumptions and new possibilities for thinking differently are introduced by feminist philosophers of religion. For instance, in her book entitled *Becoming*

*divine: Towards a feminist philosophy of religion*, Grace Jantzen tries to open the way to a feminist symbolic of natality and flourishing, a symbolic horizon of becoming divine. As she puts it at the beginning of her work, she attempts to change the agenda of philosophy of religion by stressing the importance of becoming divine as an appropriate aim of philosophy of religion.<sup>1</sup>

Jantzen's argument starts with the observation that psychoanalysis has pointed out that subjectivity is not a simple given and that "persons are not ready-made souls inserted into bodies by God, nor minds which could be mature and whole independent of the physical history of the individual."<sup>2</sup> Rather, she argues, human personhood is achieved at considerable cost. As she explains, in order to become a unified subject, most of the desires of a human baby have to be repressed and controlled by means of specific strategies. Religion has been the source of some of the most effective strategies of control. The success of the unification of the subject depends on how well the process complies with the norms of that society which in the case of western societies are mostly masculinist and heterosexual.<sup>3</sup>

Much influenced by the philosopher Luce Irigaray, Jantzen accepts the doctrine that subjectivity can be achieved but points out that only men have the possibility of achieving their subjectivity and of their becoming divine. Following Irigaray's thought closely and employing Lacanian terminology and insights, Jantzen explains further why religion and religious symbols condition the achievement of gendered subjectivity and enable one's becoming divine. More analytically, subjectivity is achieved by repression of unacceptable desires and entry into the "symbolic." The "symbolic" includes all of (masculine) language, music, art and ritual and can be used to designate the broad conceptual patterns of civilization, like the discourses of law, science, and of course religion. Jantzen rightly points out that religion is very important in the formation of the western symbolic since the masculinist symbolic of western societies is undergirded by a concept of God as Divine Father, "a God who is also Word, and who in his eternal disembodiment, omnipotence, and omniscience is the epitome of value. Even in a relatively secular society, these traditional attributes of divinity still stand for that which is most highly valued. In other words, it is held even by atheists that if there were a God, 'he' would

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester University Press: Manchester 1998), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 9.

have to be like this.”<sup>4</sup> Now, since according to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory subjectivity is achieved by entry into the “symbolic” which is identified with the Name of the (Divine) Father, subject positions must be inherently masculine. “Little boys become men. And what of little girls?”<sup>5</sup> If achieving subjectivity means entry into language, if becoming divine presupposes having a (religious) “symbolic” and if language and the symbolic generally are always and already masculine, then a woman could achieve subjectivity, if at all, and she could become divine, if at all, only to the extent that she became masculinized.<sup>6</sup> Unless, of course, women decided to develop a subjectivity of their own and not accept the one imposed on and assumed for them by the masculinist symbolic. To do so women would have to disrupt the symbolic, displacing its masculinist structures by a new imaginary not based on the name of the (divine) Father but rather on women’s experiences. And since the masculine symbolic of the west is undergirded by a male God, then religion has to be transformed in order for women to become all they are capable of being.<sup>7</sup>

One could say that women are better off without religion altogether. Yet, in her essay “Divine Women” Luce Irigaray argues that “Divinity is what we need to become free, autonomous, sovereign. No human subjectivity, no human society has ever been established without the help of the divine.”<sup>8</sup> The symbolic of religion has served as a horizon for becoming, as “the place of the absolute for us, its path, the hope of its fulfillment.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore for Irigaray human becoming, that is, human fulfilling the wholeness of what we are capable of being, is linked with the aspiration of becoming divine. As she puts it: “Every man (according to Feuerbach) and every woman who is not fated to remain a slave to the logic of the essence of man, must imagine a God, an objective-subjective place or path whereby the self could be coalesced in space and time: unity of instinct, heart, and knowledge, unity of nature and spirit, condition for the abode and for saintliness. God alone can save us, keep us safe. The feeling or experience of a positive, objective, glorious existence,

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<sup>4</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Luce Irigaray has pointed out that although this *male* God is assumed to correspond to the human race, we all know that as far as the difference of sexes is concerned the human race is not neuter. Luce Irigaray, “Divine Women,” in: *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Columbia University Press: New York 1993), 61-62.

<sup>8</sup> Luce Irigaray, “Divine Women,” 62.

<sup>9</sup> Luce Irigaray, “Divine Women,” 63.

the feeling of subjectivity, is essential for us. [...] To have a goal is essentially a religious move (according to Feuerbach's analysis). Only the religious, within and without us, is fundamental enough to allow us to discover, affirm, achieve certain ends."<sup>10</sup> In so far as "God is the mirror of man,"<sup>11</sup> then God has been created out of man. The male triune God of Christianity, that is, God who is Father, Son, Spirit, serves as a horizon only for men's becoming divine. And what of women? If in order to "become" it is essential to have a sexuate essence as horizon and since the religious symbolic of the West has been skewed by the phallus as dominant signifier, then we must develop a feminist religious symbolic, a divine horizon that will enable women's becoming divine.<sup>12</sup>

I take seriously the idea that the development of a feminist religious symbolic that focuses on the experiences of women is of paramount importance because it is in this way that we can construct the standpoint of the oppressed as the standard of humanity and as the baseline for measuring the adequacy of religious claims. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has rightly pointed out that women should not simply ask to be granted full humanity, for humanity, as I and others have argued, is male defined. Rather they must be free to name and experience themselves.<sup>13</sup> And this experience can become a resource for a transformative suggestion, that is, a resource for a change of attitude and stance. In what follows I will look into the iconic thought of Byzantine Christianity and into the sexuate icons (icons portraying sexuate bodies) of the Eastern Orthodox Church in order to discern resources for transformative suggestion and attain a horizon for women's becoming divine.

## **2. Iconic thought as a source for transformative suggestion**

Iconology was a central issue in Byzantine Christianity that flourished particularly during and right after the iconoclastic crisis. The doctrine of the incarnation underlies the edifice of iconic thought and it seems that "*whoever rejects the icon rejects the economy*, that is, Christ himself and the totality of

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<sup>10</sup> Luce Irigaray, "Divine Women," 67.

<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Harper and Row: New York 1957), 63.

<sup>12</sup> Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: the Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Beacon Press: Boston, Mass., 1984), XV.

the incarnational plan in history.”<sup>14</sup> The “economic” understanding of the icon enables us to manage the relation of the sacred and the profane, the visible and the invisible and the relation between the rigor of the law and the adaptability of the rule. Mondzain, who examines the polysemy of the term “oikonomia”, understands economic thought as a way of “thinking about prudent adaptation to circumstances.”<sup>15</sup> Thus I would say that iconography is a sort of economic representation of the *eschaton*. For Mondzain, “an economic conception of the natural image founds the artificial image.”<sup>16</sup> This is truly so, since Christ, the divine Logos, is the natural or genuine image of God and before the Incarnation, before the divine economy was initiated, “an icon of the Logos would have been outlandish and wicked.”<sup>17</sup> But as John of Damascus explains in his *Orations on the Holy Icons* and Jaroslav Pelikan summarizes, “Christ, as the eternal Logos, had in these latter days become incarnate in human flesh, and he had thereby presented humanity, for the first and only time in its entire history, with a genuine and accurate ‘similitude’ of God, one that could be seen and hence one that could be iconized.”<sup>18</sup> In the official language of the Church, Christ was “one in being with the Father according to his deity and one in being with us in his humanity.”<sup>19</sup>

Pelican follows the line of thought of John of Damascus who maintains that while it would of course be a sin to presume to make an image of the uncircumscribable divine nature of the Holy Trinity, a “new order” had been established also here, that is, since the invisible God had become human through the Incarnation of the Logos, God had in Christ also become circumscribable in an icon.<sup>20</sup> Pelican explains that “in that sense God himself had suspended

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<sup>14</sup> Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, trans. Rico Frances (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2005), 14-15. See also Leonid Ouspensky, *Η θεολογία της εικόνας στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία (Theology of the Icon in the Orthodox Church)*, vol.1, trans. S. Marinis (Armos: Athens 1993), 275 [in Greek].

<sup>15</sup> Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London 1990), 81.

<sup>18</sup> Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, 81.

<sup>19</sup> Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, 82.

<sup>20</sup> John of Damascus, *Orations on the Holy Icons* II5 PG94:1288. As he puts it: “If we made an image of the invisible God, we should in truth do wrong. For it is impossible to make a statue of one who is without body, invisible, boundless, and formless. Again, if we made statues of men, and held them to be gods, worshipping them as such, we should be most impious. But we do neither. For in making the image of God, who became incarnate and visible on earth, a

his own commandment by ‘violating’ it – or to put it not only more reverently but also more precisely, by fulfilling it – when he (sic) provided a genuine icon of himself in the history of Christ, an icon of which it was now legitimate to make an icon in turn.”<sup>21</sup> Thus divine provision, that is to say, divine economy fulfills the Law without transgressing it because economy, as Mondzain explains, lies between *akribeia* [the rigor of the law] and *parabasis* [the law’s transgression] and is not “a cynical concept that is preoccupied only with results in full disregard of the foundations of justice and the law.”<sup>22</sup>

The dogmatic basis for the existence of icons was first laid down by the Trullan Council of 691-692. The 82<sup>nd</sup> rule of the Council stresses three points: first, that the icon is connected with the truth of the Divine incarnation; second, that the meaning of historical reality depicted by icons is very important; and third, that *how* something is represented in the icons is also very important.<sup>23</sup>

The justification for portraying the divine-human Christ led not only to a similar justification of portraying the mother of God, the human Mary who, through

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man amongst men through His unspeakable goodness, taking upon Him shape and form and flesh, we are not misled. We long to see what He was like. As the divine apostle says, ‘We see now in a glass, darkly.’ (I Cor. 13.12) The image, too, is a dark glass, according to the denseness of our bodies. The mind, in much travail, cannot rid itself of bodily things. Shame upon you, wicked devil, for grudging us the sight of our Lord’s likeness and our sanctification through it. You would not have us gaze at His saving sufferings nor wonder at His condescension, neither contemplate His miracles nor praise His almighty power. You grudge the saints the honour God gives to them. You would not have us see their glory put on record, nor allow us to become imitators of their fortitude and faith.” Available at <http://www.balamand.edu.lb/theology/Joicons2.htm>, accessed 28 June 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, 82.

<sup>22</sup> Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press: Crestwood New York, 1983), 28-29. The 82<sup>nd</sup> rule says: “In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true Lamb, Christ our God. Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer grace and truth, receiving it as the fulfilment of the Law. In order therefore that that which is perfect may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in coloured expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world.” Available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm>, accessed 28 June 2010.

agreeing to give birth to Christ had been made divine, but also to a justification for iconizing the saints. Pelikan points out that for the iconodules (the defenders of the icons) “the life of Christ depicted in the icons was not merely the life he had lived on earth during the first century. The resurrected Christ lived on in the life of his Church – and in the lives of his saints.”<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the portrayal of the life of Christ has to include portrayals of all those, men and women, in whom Christ’s life had continued to make *sacred his/herstory*.

To sum up, in opposition to a mainly patriarchal tradition in which many Fathers of the Church spoke of women in a very derogatory way and in which the liturgical customs excluded the female element, the sexuate Byzantine icons can be interpreted as not discriminating against women. Rather icons can be seen as displaying the totality of the incarnational plan in *his/herstory*. It is by stressing, or better stated, by *choosing* to point out the icons’ inclusivity and their emphasis on the historical reality, on the uniqueness of all beings, male and female and on the exceptional story of each person/saint and by considering the iconographers’ fixation with a particular type of drawing, that icons can become a source of transformative suggestion. In the following I will briefly explain on what grounds, in what sense and to what extent Byzantine icons can become a source of transformative suggestion.

### **3. Icons as women’s horizon for creating their “space” and for becoming divine**

Icons can become a source of transformative suggestion on the grounds of a feminist theological, that is, a politico-theological interpretation of icon-painting. There are three main elements of icon-painting that could make us see icons as a possible horizon for women’s becoming divine. The first element is that in iconography the human sexuate body, be it that of Christ or that of those who by his Grace will become like him in the Kingdom of Heaven, must be represented historically. Although corporeality is freed from the limitations of created space and time and beings are presented as eternal and incorruptible, bodies are not immaterial.<sup>25</sup> The iconographer, father Stamatis Skliris, explains that the body “must be represented historically, because in the case of Christ, as of every human being, the eschatological body is not different from the historical. Indeed, in his eschatological form, every person

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<sup>24</sup> Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Stamatis Skliris, *In the Mirror: A Collection of Iconographic Essays and Illustrations* (Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church: California 2007), 29, 94, 95.

will possess those characteristics that constitute the identity bestowed on him or her by the community within which he or she developed the temporal relationships (of love, unity, sacrifice for others and so on) which are necessary in order to attain to the eschatological mode of existence. This unique identity must, therefore, be represented through the body.”<sup>26</sup> To represent the historical body of a female saint with the features in accordance with which the ecclesial community has bestowed upon her, her eternal and eschatological identity through her relationships with Christ and her fellow human beings, means that women are not excluded from iconography. Rather icons of female saints enrich the religious imaginary and since icons of female saints are given to be imitated, the soteriological role of women is also recognized intentionally or unintentionally by the Christian community.

Moreover, although after the 5<sup>th</sup> century there was a tendency to formalize the style of drawing icons, they neither essentialize womanhood nor depict a particular type of feminine identity. Rather, iconography encourages women’s personal achievement since icons portray the uniqueness of a saint’s face and depict various types of female saints who have achieved their subjectivity in various ways, or realized their potentialities and eventually have created the horizon for becoming divine. Admittedly the question that remains unanswered is what counts as saintliness and in whose symbolic order are female persons recognized as saints. In a patriarchal tradition, is it not, at the end of the day, the male gaze that defines who counts as saint? Certainly, it is so. However, female agency does not always comply with the accepted mainstream “rules” about saintliness. Some Christian women, like the martyr Maria Skobtsova who was glorified by the Church of Constantinople in 2004, dislocated themselves from familiar spaces and places, realized their potential, achieved their subjectivity and felt the need to experiment with new modes of thinking and of being, thus opening new direction in Eastern Orthodox political and ethical discourse. When one sees the icons of Maria Skobtsova, who socialized with marginalized people, fought for social justice supporting and respecting her fellow human beings before she sacrificed herself for one of them in a concentration camp during the Second World War, one makes real her choices and then experiences her unique story.

The second element of icon-painting that can make icons a horizon for women’s becoming is the ontological attribute of light and its role in

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<sup>26</sup> Skliris, *In the Mirror*, 95.



Byzantine painting. Stamatis Skliris distinguishes between the naturalistic light of painting and the hypostasizing light of Byzantine iconography. The former follows the laws of optics and the physiology of vision and the aesthetic effects it produces are bound to deterministic natural laws. Thus, the ontology conveyed by this light is a deterministic one. Moreover, by virtue of the optic laws the figures are not fully identified, or at least the identity they gain is not permanent or invariable. For instance, figures that exist are not necessarily depicted in the picture, that is, they are not necessarily seen by the spectator. Moreover, under some lighting conditions the contour may not be clear and thus one figure may merge into the one next to or behind it. This means that the figures appear in the picture within a space that already exists.<sup>27</sup> But this space is culturally defined and thus temporary. The visibility of the figures depends upon the painter. The painter as a kind of stage director brings to life, hypostasizes the figures by highlighting some or by placing others further from the centre and further away from the natural source of light. But in this way, as Skliris puts it, “in the same space where object A now is, object B might later be placed. That is, figures not only lack a permanent identity but neither do they possess permanent surroundings, “that is a permanent space of their own.”<sup>28</sup>

On the contrary, in Byzantine iconography it is a hypostasizing light that is cast on every part and that is why all the depicted figures are lighted and no figure merges into another. The figures, male and female, are placed next to one another, are identified clearly and permanently and they always bear the same permanent and clear contour that distinguishes them boldly from their surroundings. From a psychological point of view, the light of the icons, even when there is not much, creates the feeling that figures are under a permanent light, a light that gives being to a creature and that is why this light is called hypostasizing light. Any creature that freely chooses to partake in this light (and I repeat that this is by no means the natural light) in which the deterministic natural laws of optics do not apply, is then developed into full being, is distinguished from other creatures and is never covered by them. What is more, in iconography light is what creates space by creating lighted beings.<sup>29</sup> So space is not pre-existing, culturally or male defined, or subject to the will

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<sup>27</sup> Skliris, *In the Mirror*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Skliris, *In the Mirror*, 20, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Skliris, *In the Mirror*, 24.

of the painter. Space is created through personal, existential and free being, so without any being there can be no space.

Consequently, if in iconography it is being that creates space then religious icons certainly provide space for women to be who they are and to invoke their life experiences.<sup>30</sup> In iconography the depiction of female individuals (female saints) means that every time a female figure is presented/ painted, a “woman space” could be created, for, as I have said, figures are not placed in pre-existing and male defined space. Icons could allow for women’s particularity and could provide women with a source of positive identification. Through icon painting, that is, through the human capacity for creating art in the form of pictures, a potential space for alternative identities is created. And it is in this sense that I argue for the political dimension in iconography and I consider icons as a potential source of alternative feminine identities and as women’s horizon for creating their “space” and for becoming divine.

Finally, frontality is another political element that renders iconography into what Julia Kristeva would call “revolutionary poesis,” that is, a form of expression in which altered and unconventional states of consciousness and altered forms of narrative and ritual may challenge rationalistic and objectifying patriarchal systems like the Christian Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément explains the significance of this “frontality.” For him, the icon is not a portrait...The icon shows the person fully realized and open... This is why one of the fundamental rules of iconographic representation is frontality. An icon represents somebody face on....the icon introduces itself by pointing to me; it calls out to me, says “you” to me, without itself being a me who is a subject.<sup>31</sup> So the icon offers us the truth of the face and for Mondzain “it is this face that opens the path to an impossible face-to-face encounter.”<sup>32</sup>

Icons with their frontality may challenge any kind of objectification that turns women into objects by denying their agency or their achievement of subjectivity. In addressing our prayer to *Theotokos* or to a female saint, we must do it face to face, we must converse with them while maintaining our own subjectivity and

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<sup>30</sup> For the importance of creating a woman space see Elaine Graham, “From Space to Woman-Space,” in: *Words Made Flesh: Writings in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (SCM Press: London 2009), 27-44.

<sup>31</sup> Olivier Clément, *Le visage intérieure* (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris 1978) cited in Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 218.

<sup>32</sup> Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, 216.

while resisting objectification (by refusing both to be objectified and to objectify). Both the female figure represented and the female viewer maintain their unique being and neither is subject to the natural light or the culturally defined and male dominated public space. During this face to face encounter a new space is created, this time it is a personal space with a soteriological goal for everyone and not just men, a space that is liberating for the oppressed, a space that could open up new horizons for women's becoming divine.

Die Frage des "Göttlichwerdens" von Frauen hat sich zu einer bedeutenden Frage in der feministischen Religionsphilosophie entwickelt. Die eigene Subjektivität zu erlangen bedeutet in psychoanalytischem Denken in die Sprache einzutreten. Wenn allerdings Sprache und Symbolik allgemein immer bereits männlich geprägt sind, dann können Frauen – wenn überhaupt – ihre Subjektivität nur erlangen und "göttlich" werden, wenn sie selbst männlich werden, falls sie sich nicht entscheiden, eine eigene Subjektivität zu entdecken und zu entwickeln. Um dies zu tun, müssten Frauen allerdings die herrschende Symbolik stören und deren maskuline Strukturen durch eine neue Bildwelt ersetzen, die nicht auf den Namen des (göttlichen) Vaters gründet, sondern eher auf den Erfahrungen von Frauen basiert. Die Autorin geht davon aus, dass die Entwicklung einer feministischen religiösen Symbolik, die sich auf Erfahrungen von Frauen fokussiert, von größter Bedeutung ist. Dabei untersucht sie das ikonische Denken des byzantinischen Christentums sowie die geschlechtsspezifischen Ikonen der orthodoxen Tradition, um Quellen der Transformation von Frauen in der orthodoxen Kirche zu entdecken und eine Sicht für ihr Göttlichwerden zu erlangen. Ihr Argument ist, dass gerade eine politisch-theologische Interpretation der Ikonenmalerei nahelegt, in Ikonen eine Quelle der Transformation zu sehen. Folgende drei Hauptelemente der Ikonenmalerei lassen sie dabei Ikonen als einen Horizont für das Göttlichwerden von Frauen verstehen: Das erste Element ist, dass in der Ikonographie der menschliche geschlechtliche Körper historisch dargestellt werden muss. Das zweite Element ist das ontologische Attribut des Lichtes und seine Rolle in der byzantinischen Malerei. Das letzte Element ist die Frontalität; damit könnte Ikonographie in das übergehen, was Julia Kristeva "revolutionäre Poesie" nennen würde, das heißt in eine Ausdrucksform, in der veränderliche und unkonventionelle Bewusstseinszustände sowie veränderliche Erzählformen und Ritualformen die rationalistischen und objektivierenden patriarchalischen Systeme herausfordern könnten.

El hecho de que "las mujeres lleguen al estado divino," ha pasado a ser una cuestión importante en la filosofía feminista de la religión. En términos del pensamiento psicoanalítico, llegar a la subjetividad representa la entrada al lenguaje. No obstante, ya que el lenguaje y lo simbólico por lo general son siempre masculinos, las mujeres podrían, si pudiesen, llegar a la subjetividad, y al estado divino, solamente

a condición de que se masculinizasen, o que -decidiesen desarrollar su propia subjetividad. Para realizar ésta, las mujeres tendrían que perturbar lo simbólico, sustituyendo sus estructuras masculinistas por una nueva imaginaria que no esté basada en el nombre del Padre (divino), sino más bien en sus propias experiencias. Este artículo plantea seriamente la idea de que el desarrollo de un simbolismo feminista religioso -enfocado en las experiencias de las mujeres, tiene gran importancia e indaga en el pensamiento icónico del Cristianismo Bizantino y en los iconos sexuales de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Oriental, con el fin de poder distinguir medios para sugerencias transformacionales y conseguir un horizonte que permita a las mujeres llegar al estado divino dentro de la Iglesia Ortodoxa. El principal argumento es que por una interpretación teológico-política de la pintura de iconos, éstos pueden convertirse en una fuente de sugerencias transformacionales. En este artículo se analizan los tres elementos principales de la pintura de iconos, que nos pueden hacer considerar un posible horizonte que permite a las mujeres llegar al estado divino. El primer elemento es que en la iconografía el cuerpo sexuado humano debe estar históricamente representado. El segundo elemento es la cualidad ontológica de la luz y su papel en la pintura bizantina. El último elemento es la frontalidad que puede convertir la iconografía en lo que Julia Kristeva llamaría “poesis revolucionaria” o sea, una forma de expresión en la que los estados alterados y no convencionales de conciencia y formas alteradas de la narración, y -el ritual pueden desafiar los patriarcales sistemas racionales que objetivizan.

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