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**Iconicity as Spatial Notion  
A New Vision of Icons in Contemporary Art Theory**

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This paper deals with the notion of iconicity which changes the entire field of studies in iconic images. It concerns the reconsideration of icons as a spatial phenomenon which should be removed from the general category of religious pictures based on another matrix.

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This paper deals with the notion of iconicity which changes the entire field of studies in iconic images. It should be reconsidered as a spatial phenomenon and removed from the general category of religious pictures based on another matrix. A new view of the icon has been developing in recent years, it differs significantly from our customary approach.<sup>1</sup> For most people, an icon is most likely a flat representation of a religious subject matter, depicted according to convention and usually on a wooden board. A few better-informed individuals know that icons are found not only on boards but also on walls, or on fabric. In any case, an icon is a flat, schematic representation which differs essentially from realist painting.

This long established stereotype of icons is deeply unsatisfactory, at least in relation to Byzantium, considering that within this context the icon was always understood as a spatial image, or an image-mediator.<sup>2</sup> And because the ideal icon is not a flat representation, but a spatial whole, connecting earthly and heavenly realms. By no means does it differ exclusively from a religious picture constructed as a matter of principle according to different rules. It is also distinct from the later icon we are accustomed to, as a kind of conventionally depicted representation of some religious subject. There is an internal incompatibility between the flat picture, which still exists in our consciousness as the basic means of describing the world (I call this "the paradigmatic flat picture"), and the spatial image which is constructed completely differently.

**Christ Pantocrator in the cupola as a spatial icon**

Let us examine the rarely-scrutinized iconographic specificities of one particular image. The image of Christ Pantocrator in the cupola of St Sophia in Kiev, for example, - an image of the Almighty surrounded by angels, with depictions of the four evangelists in the pendentives - is without doubt a traditional icon (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> However, this is also a spatial image which depicts a certain order of the universe. This has been acknowledged in the academic literature, particularly by Thomas Mathews who wrote an article about the transfiguring symbolism of the Pantocrator in the cupola, and drew a parallel between this image and the classical Buddhist Mandala which represents the sacred image of the world.<sup>4</sup> The comparison, which at first glance seems completely paradoxical, is

in fact entirely convincing. Mathews shows that there is a singular common model, a spatial icon which relates to an Indo-European archetype. The image in the cupola of the Kievan Cathedral of St Sophia not only has a spatial element, but it was not conceptually conceived as flat.

On the one hand, we see in the Kievan St Sophia a representation which is recognisably Christ, an identification also indicated by the adjacent inscription, on the other hand, the Christ before us is older than the one we know from the Gospels. Moreover, this is not the grey-haired elder known in Byzantine iconography as the "Ancient of Days". The person depicted is thus of borderline, intermediate age, between the age of the Christ of the Gospels and the age of the Christ the eternal elder, the grey-haired Ancient of Days. This is a clear indication of the timelessness of Christ, who is shown here as the second person of the Holy Trinity, eternally in the heavens and simultaneously effecting the economy of salvation. This is the theme of the Trinity and the theme of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the rainbow which encircles Christ the Almighty also underlines His presence.

Furthering our scrutiny of the spatial icon as exemplified in St Sophia of Kiev, we shall reconstruct its original context, descending from the image of the Pantocrator in the cupola into the space of the church. In St Sophia's, as in any other Byzantine church, this image is located in the centre of the church, in the space where believers receive communion. In other words, they receive that same Christ in the form of consecrated bread and wine - Christ's Body and Blood. There is a conjunction between that which the believer receives in the space of the communion cup, and that which he sees take place in the cup of the cupola above him.

This comparison could be considered a poetic exaggeration if we hadn't knowledge of clear examples which directly reflect a similar understanding of the image. There is a precious Byzantine chalice from Constantinople (the so-called "Chalice of patriarchs") which is currently kept in the treasury of San Marco in Venice (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> This is a chalice made of sardonyx in a silver mount, with enamelwork dating from the end of the tenth to the beginning of the eleventh century, in other words from a time very close to the date of the founding of St Sophia in Kiev. The chalices used in the liturgy in eleventh century Kiev have not come down to us, but we may suppose that there were very probably similar vessels. We see in this chalice the spatial, liturgical theme when, at that moment when the believer receives communion, the image of Christ Pantocrator (depicted in cloisonné enamel in the depths of the cup) rises in the consecrated wine. The believer saw this same image above him, in the cup of the cupola. A spatial linking of the two images occurred, wonderfully illustrating the Byzantine concept of icon and iconicity in which the icon could never be conceived as a flat picture, but always as a spatial image.

The image is taken beyond the limits of ordinary perception and is presented in a special time-space continuum, in the creation of which the golden background plays an important role.

### **The spatial nature of golden backgrounds**

The golden mosaics are enormously important. Furthermore, they are of a very special quality, which no later copyists have been able to reproduce, including those of the nineteenth century, among whom those glittering Italian masters of nineteenth century mosaic who worked in considerable numbers on the territory of the Russian Empire and were considered experts in the Byzantine style. For all their mastery they were unable to reproduce the effect of Byzantine gold, the spatial dimension of the gold colour which is also achieved by sophisticated technique (fig. 3). The gold smalt was prepared in such a way that the light penetrating this transparent smalt was reflected at various angles from a golden or silver plate laid within it (fig. 4).

In addition, upon a more close examination of the mosaic's layout, one notices easily that it was laid deliberately unevenly. Thus, the famous representation of the Mother of God Orans in the apse of St Sophia in Kiev is arranged over three different levels (fig. 5). Moreover, all these little stones of golden smalt, of various colours and forms, are laid at different angles. Evidently, it was done in order to create the effect of living light. If one lingers in front of the Kievan Virgin Orans, one eventually sees that the image is surrounded by a twinkling radiance, the



1. *Christ Pantocrator* in the mosaic cupola of St Sophia in Kiev, surrounded by angels, with depictions of the four evangelists in the pendentives



2. Byzantine chalice from Constantinople (the so-called "Chalice of patriarchs"), Treasury of San Marco, Venice, late 10<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> c.



3. *Mother of God Orans* in the apse of St Sophia in Kiev, mosaic, mid-11<sup>th</sup> c.

intensity of which is constantly changing. The impression that the Mother of God is radiating this light is deliberately created. Surrounding her is a continuous aura of golden radiance, and thus it is not a flat background but an endless divine space which opens up behind her. The Byzantine mosaic craftsmen do not simply show a flat figure of the Virgin Orans against the background of this space, but create an image of the Mother of God appearing outside of this space - she enters, as it were, the space of the church. The image is produced not within the pictorial plane, but within the space between the viewer and the representation. Such is the fundamental principle of the Byzantine iconic image, which, because it conflicts with the notorious "paradigmatic flat picture" that continues to dominate our thinking, is not yet fully comprehended.

The primary natural property of a Byzantine icon is that it does not imply a border between the image and the viewer which in modern European art is always present. Also, there is no image-viewer opposition; the image is produced in the space preceding the pictorial plane. In other words, it emerges out of flatness into the sphere of communion with the observing person present in the church as a matter of principle. This is what the ideal icon should be like. However, our common conception of the icon, is that of a flat picture, painted according to convention with colours that have a particular meaning. And, unfortunately, among contemporary icon-painters there are practically no masters and artists who are able to convey the spatial nature of the icon. This is a serious problem, insomuch as contemporary artists have lost the understanding of the iconic image as spatial.

### **The pattern-book as a distortion of the Byzantine iconicity**

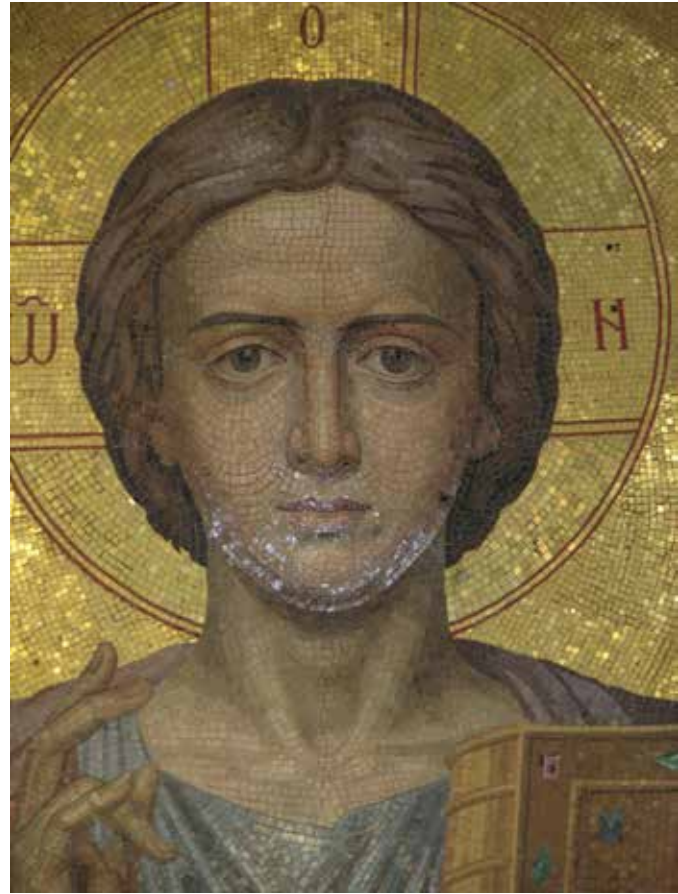
The "modern" approach is already a few centuries old. Irreversible changes in the sphere of icon painting were introduced around the fall of Byzantium in the middle of the fifteenth century, and the sixteenth century ultimately did away with "iconicity". The appearance of the icon-painter's pattern-book (*litsevoi ikonopysnyi podlinnik*) in the sixteenth century was one of the crucial factors in the development of Russian art after 1453 (fig. 6).<sup>6</sup> It dramatically altered the basic Byzantine concept of icons as spatial images mediating between the earthly and heavenly realms. Moreover, the process of creating an icon then completely changed. The icon-painter was given a certain selection of patterns: an outline that was to be transferred to the board and a design that was to be coloured in. The Byzantine technology was principally different. The icon-painter, who was inspired by several models from different periods, created his own image, sometimes keeping the patterns in mind, as we know from the Letter by the Russian monk Epiphaniy the Wise, which documented the manner of painting of Theophanes the Greek - the great Byzantine artist who worked in Moscow at the beginning of the fifteenth century: "While he delineated and painted all these things no one ever saw him looking at models as some of our painters do who, being filled with doubt, constantly bend over them casting their eyes hither and thither, and instead of painting with colors they gaze at the models as often as they need to. He, however, seemed to be painting with his hands, while his feet moved without rest, his tongue conversed with visitors, his mind dwelled on something lofty and wise, and his rational eyes contemplated that beauty which is rational"<sup>7</sup>

This unique document gives us an idea of the Byzantine technology which had radically evolved by the sixteenth century.

The common contemporary perception of icons as flat and decorative pictures charged with particular religious messages dates back to this unofficial reform, which declared the following to Byzantine models, but in practice destroyed the principles of the Eastern Christian iconicity. This is in no way the Byzantine approach to creating an image; rather, it is a distortion which arose in the sixteenth century, was consolidated in the seventeenth century and became a standard of sorts which has persisted to our day (fig. 7). And this is precisely why the absolutely spatial effect of the Byzantine icons is beyond the grasp of even the most highly professional modern masters.



4. Byzantine golden mosaic technology, early 12<sup>th</sup> c.



5. Imitation of Byzantine style and golden mosaics by Italian masters of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., Church of the Royal Palace in Livadia, the Crimea



6. One of the earliest 16<sup>th</sup> c. Russian icon-painters' Pattern-Book, so called "Bolshakov podlinnik"



7. Contemporary "non-Byzantine" technology of icon-painting, two stages of traditional craft (since 16<sup>th</sup> c.)

### Chora as a key notion of iconicity

The new interpretation of the icon and iconicity which is currently evolving does not contradict the preceding commentaries or works of the Byzantine fathers on the theme of image and prototype. In essence it simply supplements them and facilitates the production of the spatial nature of the icon. In my view, the philosophical and theological understanding of the *chora* has enormous significance in this context, and in many ways is key for understanding the eastern Christian tradition as a whole.

It should be said that for me, and for those among my colleagues who work in this field, iconography was a starting point of sorts, and in fact, not so much iconography as the inscriptions on the images in the Chora Monastery of Constantinople (currently called Kariye Camii in Turkish). At the beginning of the fourteenth century this world famous monument of Byzantine art was rebuilt and decorated by mosaics at the behest of the prominent Byzantine statesman Theodore Metochites (1270-1332), a close friend of and principal advisor (*grand logothete*) to Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus. He was a talented poet, an outstanding theologian and, probably, not only commissioned but also conceived the iconographic program of his monastery. There are three images of Christ and two images of the Mother of God, all of which have inscriptions, running from west to east to the altar apse along the central axis of the church. The image which one encounters upon entering the church, above the entrance to the narthex, is inscribed "ΙΣ ΧΣ Η ΧΩΡΑ ΤΟΝ ΖΩΝΤΟΝ (*IC XC Chora ton zonton*)", which may be translated as "Jesus Christ, the space of the living" (fig. 8). This same inscription is repeated alongside the two other images of Christ, at the entrance from the narthex to the naos, and on the wall to the left of the sanctuary.

Along the same axis, two images of the Mother of God emerge, inscribed "ΜΡ ΘΥ ΧΩΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΧΩΡΕΤΟΥ (*Meter Theou, Chora tou achoritou*)", which may be translated from the Greek as "Mother of God, the dwelling place of the Uncontainable" or, more accurately in my opinion, as "the space of that which is beyond space" (fig. 9).<sup>8</sup> Both images, displayed as mosaic icons opposite the entrance to the narthex and to the right of the sanctuary, created pairs with the images of Christ, also named "Chora". Through this inscription related to the images of the Virgin and Child, the miracle of the Incarnation is depicted and conveyed - an earthly woman contains in her womb the God who has neither boundaries nor image, and who is greater than any space. Until recently, researchers paid no attention to what appeared to be a rather clear "message", a "declaration" of sorts embodied in the inscriptions of the main image of Christ and the Mother of God, both unambiguously deemed *chora*. Following the positivist tradition, researchers interpreted the name of the monastery accordingly: the monastery is located in the suburbs, and since "*chora*" usually refers to a village, suburb, or outskirts in modern Greek, the name of the monastery has been explained as "of the suburbs".<sup>9</sup>

In this regard it is notable that the concept of *chora* is itself one of the most profound and important in Ancient Greek philosophy, and one which, for centuries, western philosophy simply didn't understand: philosophers only began addressing this question in the twentieth century. Martin Heidegger, the great philosopher of the last century, noted that in failing to understand what *chora* is, we fail to understand the whole of Greek philosophy.<sup>10</sup> More recently, philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva have written rather speculatively on the theme of *chora*, attempting to explain what is, in some sense, inexplicable - that which cannot be transposed into the language of rational philosophy and, ultimately, into the language of the medieval scholastics from whom this rational philosophy developed.<sup>11</sup>

So what, then, is this *chora*? The concept comes to us from Plato, who talks about it in the dialogue *Timaeus*. He identifies *chora* as one of three categories which constitute the world.<sup>12</sup> For the sake of accuracy, I shall cite Plato directly: "Thus have I concisely given the result of my thoughts; and my verdict is that being and space (*chora*) and generation, these three existed in their three ways before the heaven."<sup>13</sup>

*Chora* is also considered by both Plato and his subsequent interpreters as a sort of state which precedes the birth of any form. This concept was developed by Neo-Platonists through whom it entered Christian philosophy.<sup>14</sup> *Chora* can be identified with the space of the icon and be used to refute the iconoclasts as well as explain

the fundamental difference between icons and idols. From the point of view of traditional, rational concepts, this difference is fairly difficult to detect, despite all the theological texts that persistently maintain that an idol and an icon are different things. Iconoclasts also built their objections to the holy image upon this very complex issue: they perceived idolatry in icons and figurative representations.

I shall now turn to my own interpretation of the concept, attempting to develop a theory of the icon which originates in the ideas of Byzantine theologians. In order to explain what *chora* as space is, and what type of space we are talking about, it is necessary to simplify, in an attempt to introduce in traditional, rational concepts what, in fact, could not be described by such concepts. Let us recall Plato's famous thesis on the correlation of object and *eidos*, where *eidos* is understood as an image-idea (usually rendered as "form" in English) and heavenly prototype. According to Plato, a table exists as an absolutely concrete thing, and there exists an ideal image, the idea of that table, its *eidos*, which resides in the heavens. In this context, *chora* may be understood as the space which unites, in one whole, the absolutely concrete nature of the table and its ideal heavenly image-idea. And if we ponder this further, then the icon is also *chora*. On the one hand, it is absolutely concrete, even sensibly concrete. We can touch it, kiss it, physically damage and even destroy it, nevertheless, on the other hand, it is an absolutely ideal image, a heavenly prototype that not only exists beyond this icon as a sort of abstraction, but is also an integral part of the iconic whole. The icon is considered capable of working miracles precisely because of this characteristic. In other words, by being linked with a heavenly prototype it simultaneously possesses material concreteness and divine ideality. Together this is the one, rationally indivisible space which is also *chora*.

And as the iconographic scheme of the Chora monastery testifies, Christ Himself is also *chora*: He is completely concrete in the reality of his earthly life; every believer may receive Him in the sacrament of the Eucharist in the form of bread and wine, and simultaneously He eternally abides in the heavens as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. *Chora* is also that which unifies these paradoxically different phenomena, which brings together what might seem categorically impossible to unify. *Chora* is, therefore, the essence and meaning of every Byzantine church, the ideal aim of which is to create the image of "Christ the *Chora*", repeating the words on the mosaic icons of Kariye-Camii - the space "of He who is greater than any space".

*Chora* is a significantly wider and more universal concept than icon. At the same time, however, icon is also *chora*. *Chora* is a space which unites within itself extremes which cannot be reduced to a common denominator, and which is impossible to dissect with the help of western philosophical tools, by means of strict notions of codification. In sum, the concept of *chora* as a whole, the idea of *chora*, is a challenge to the entire existing rationalist tradition, and that is precisely why it has been so rarely studied within this tradition. It seems to me that the fundamental concept of *chora*, the basic category of ancient Greek philosophy which was introduced into Christian patristics and Christian theology via Neo-Platonism, has not yet been adequately studied. Moreover, *chora* is a vitally important category for understanding the icon as a spatial image rather than a flat picture. *Chora* gives certain theological and philosophical grounds for such an interpretation of the image, in which there is both absolute concreteness and absolute ideality, and the spatiality which embraces both of these extremes.

This new interpretation of the Byzantine vision of icons and iconicity also leads to the rejection of certain prejudices. In Orthodox theology, for example, chiefly scholarly theology, one often encounters invective against superstitious individuals who venerate icons immoderately, kiss them passionately, scrape the paint from an icon to use it for cures and so on. A whole series of learned Orthodox theologians denounce these practices, considering them to be manifestations of pagan superstition and deep ignorance. From the point of view of the original model, however, it isn't quite the case. A fleck of paint which is mixed into water in an effort to cure the sick is part of the whole - it belongs to the *chora*. The meaning of the icon also lies in this linkage and, if you like, in this dialectic between the absolutely concrete and the ideal, in their unbroken connection. When we attempt to separate the icon from its ordinary environment, which seems to us somehow lower, we embark on the path of Protestantism and ultimately move towards a rejection of the icon. Genuine believers do not generally ponder

iconicity - they sense it through a living religious feeling as an aspect of practice, as a sort of revelation. Nowadays, with great difficulty, we attempt to translate all that which relates to the sphere of iconicity into conceptual language. From this point of view, the meaning of hierotopy as the approach lies in moving towards a greater historical accuracy in our perception of the icon.<sup>15</sup>

### **The icon of light in Hagia Sophia**

Let us turn to an impressive example which embodies this concept of iconic space: Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (fig. 10). The church was built by Emperor Justinian in the first half of the sixth century and is rightly considered a masterpiece of universal significance. The absence of figurative representations in the Justinian-era church is one of the striking features of Hagia Sophia which has long preoccupied researchers and ignites endless arguments. Initially, there were only gold mosaics with depictions of crosses and ornamentation. Figurative images on the walls, traditional icons, appeared only after the iconoclasm and the triumph of icon veneration, when the new religio-political situation determined the appearance of "holy images" in the church.

Several diverse theories compete in explaining the absence of figurative depictions. Among them, one suggests that Justinian was influenced by monophysites, who preached against icons. However in other Justinian churches, such as San Vitale in Ravenna or the Basilica of the Monastery at Mount Sinai, we see these same icon compositions. In all probability, the meaning behind this absence of figurative representations lies in the fact that Justinian, as the creator of the design, and likewise his master architects Anthemios of Tralles and Isidoros of Miletus, the leading optical engineers of their day, consciously wanted to create a church which would not propose any flat images, but instead where the basic medium of expression was light, displayed in the most complicated dramaturgy.

Thus, the most complicated system of natural light was here envisioned, one which aroused even the imagination of contemporary optical engineers (fig. 11). A living, changing and unbelievably rich environment of light was created within the church through a system of mirror reflections. Anthemios of Tralles and Isidoros of Miletus developed a system of reflections for the first cupola of Hagia Sophia, which was notably flatter than the cupola we see today. They used the mosaic window sills in the drum as reflectors, which reflected light into the cupola and, more importantly, also lit up the cupola at night. When there was no sunlight they reflected the light of the stars and the moon in such a way as to create the effect of a continuously illuminated cupola in nocturnal Hagia Sophia. In other words, a cloud of light hovered continuously in the cupola, visibly representing the famous biblical symbol, the so-called *Kabot* in Hebrew or *Doxa* in Greek (literally meaning "Glory"), when God reveals himself to the people in the form of a luminous cloud - an original proto-icon which did not break the Second Commandment.

There was also a complicated system of artificial light which is now being reconfigured with the help of various archaeological and written sources.<sup>16</sup> Here, a refined environment of light, of total reflection by means of marble inlays, gold mosaics, silver vessels, was intended. If we summarise the results of the most recent research, then in this huge church, a masterpiece not only of medieval but also of late antique architecture, a spatial icon was, as it were, inscribed by light. Moreover this was a fundamentally performative icon - that is, it existed in continuous fluidity, dynamic, never consolidating.<sup>17</sup> In addition, this ideal iconic image was not flat but fundamentally spatial.

And this presents the next challenge for the modern mind. When we analyse a phenomenon, it has to be flat and static. These conditions are essential in order to conduct various academic investigations. But what should an ideal icon look like in the Byzantine imagination? In essence it must not be flat but spatial, and dynamic. This medium, this iconic image, was continually changing and fundamentally performative.





8. Mosaic icon with Christ inscribed "ΙΣ ΧΣ Η ΧΩΡΑ ΤΟΝ ΖΩΝΤΟΝ" (Jesus Christ, the space of the living'), Chora monastery (Kariye Camii), Constantinople, early 14<sup>th</sup> c.



9. Mosaic icon with the Mother of God, inscribed "ΜΡ ΘΥ Η ΧΩΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΧΩΡΙΤΟΥ" (Mother of God, the dwelling place of the Uncontainable), Chora monastery, early 14<sup>th</sup> c.



10. Spatial icon of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, 6<sup>th</sup> c.



11. The light and movement of forms in Hagia Sophia of Constantinople

### Iconic consciousness and modern culture

It should be evident from the examples above that we are talking here about a certain way of seeing and a certain approach to understanding the icon and iconicity. The Byzantines and Russians were not only in full command of this approach, they also considered it of exceptional importance. As a rule, the modern person does not see manifestations of this way of perceiving the world, or more accurately, of seeing the world. One may brush this aside, declaring that it is too complicated, too distant from us, too vague or insubstantial. However, this simply is unacceptable, since there is much in archaeology, art history and literary texts that cannot be explained without this approach, which has also determined very concrete distinctive features.

In connection with this, let us here add a few words regarding "iconic consciousness". It is my opinion that the most important element of Russian, and more widely, of Byzantine-Slavic identity, is connected with what I term iconic consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Iconicity is not associated with the icon as an object, and not even with the epoch of icons, the medieval period. Iconicity is preserved in cultural memory. When we ponder how Tolstoy and Dostoevsky saw the world differently from Balzac and Dickens, then the iconic consciousness of these Russian writers occurs as an explanation. They describe the world not as a definitive reality, but as the image of some sort of other world.<sup>19</sup> If we consider the later Russian tradition, then we can see attempts toward this approach by Mikhail Bulgakov, for example, and of course in films by Andrei Tarkovsky for whom, in our opinion, an iconic way of seeing the world is. Moreover, even in those films of his which are not directly connected with icons - in "Mirror", for example - the principle of iconicity remains key to understanding the figurative language (fig. 12). Even upon considering what appears to be an ordinary scene, such as that of the spilt milk, the director discovers multiple ways for conjuring the sense that there is another reality beyond what we see, and the film continuously reminds us of this other reality, returning to it again and again. The image is not important in and of itself, not as an artefact, a declaration or illustration of something, but precisely as a mediator which connects the earthly and the heavenly. In Tarkovsky's films this quality convey a special holiness to the world, which may be interpreted as a product of the Byzantine iconic tradition unconsciously present in Russian culture, and in many ways determining our perception of reality.

We were never taught iconicity, and iconicity in its entirety is not a specifically Russian or Byzantine phenomenon. Iconicity also exists in the Japanese and Hindu traditions, as well as in many others. An excellent example of iconicity in contemporary architecture can be found in the new Jewish museum in Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind. It is a contemporary sacred space, where the architecture proceeds not from capacity and not from the intended function of the accommodation, but from an image of space. But where does an image of space arise from, where do spatial icons originate, where should we seek the sources of iconicity? The sources of iconicity are in our consciousness and imagination, and in these lie the essence of the act of creation. We first create the image of space, and afterward, it is embodied in endless realia: from architectural forms to the organisation of scents, rituals and the media of light.



12. Iconic presentation of human face, a frame from Andrei Tarkovsky's "The Mirror", 1975

Art, as it is well known, originated in sacred practice and over the course of centuries - and in some traditions even to this day - has existed in indivisible unity with it, fulfilling the most important role of mediator between the earthly and the heavenly. In this regard, I aim to argue that the interpretation of icons and iconicity put forward in this article not only has academic significance for the history of art and culture, but also endeavours to discover a way out of the impasse and spiritual crisis that we are all - to varying degrees - conscious of. This is an invitation to reflect and to exercise diverse critical judgements which may not adhere to the briefly formulated and sometimes sharply polemical ideas in this article. However, the pursuit of the investigation itself, and the initiation of the discussion seem vitally important.

- 1 This article is based on a lecture delivered at the conference of Rijeka University in 2015. For the Russian version, which differs considerably from the present text, see: A. LIDOV, "Ikona i ikonicheskoe soznanie. Obraz prostranstva i obrazy v prostranstve" [The Icon and the Iconic Consciousness. Image of Space and Images in Space], in: A. LIDOV, *Ikona: Mir svyatykh obrazov v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi* [The Icon. The World of the Holy Images in Byzantium and Medieval Russia], Moscow, Theoria, 2013, pp. 9-38.
- 2 The theoretical basis of such an approach may be found in A. LIDOV, *Ierotopiia. Prostranstvennyye ikony i obrazy-paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul'ture* [Hierotopy: Spatial icons and image-paradigms in Byzantine culture], Moscow, Theoria, 2009. See this and other materials at web-site: [www.hierotopy.ru](http://www.hierotopy.ru).
- 3 For a new description, see: *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva* [A History of Russian Art], 22 vols, Moscow, Severnyi Palomnik, 2007, I: *Isskusstvo Kievskoi Rusi IX-pervaia chetvert' XII veka* [The Art of Kievan Rus from the ninth to the first quarter of the twelfth century], pp. 200-203.
- 4 T. MATTHEWS, "The transformation symbolism in Byzantine architecture and the meaning of the Pantocrator in the dome", in: *Church and People in Byzantium, Twentieth Spring symposium of Byzantine studies*, Manchester, 1986, R. MORRIS (ed.), Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 1990, pp. 191-214.
- 5 *Il Tesoro di San Marco*, Milano, Olivetti, 1986, pp. 167-173, n. 16.
- 6 For the English edition of such a book, see: *An Iconographer's Patternbook: Stroganov's Tradition*, F.C. KELLY (ed.), Torrance, Oakwood publications, 1997. On the phenomenon of Pattern-books see: R. CORMACK, "Painter's Guides, Model-Books, Pattern-Books and Craftsmen: or memory and the Artist?", in: *L'artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, M. BACCI (ed.), Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2007, pp. 11-30.
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- 8 R. OUSTERHOUT, "The Virgin of the Chora: the Image and its Contexts", in: *The Sacred Image. East and West*, R. OUSTERHOUT-L. BRUBAKER (eds.), Urbana-Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 91-109; N. ISAR, "The Vision and its 'Exceedingly Blessed Beholder': Of Desire and Participation in the Icon", in: *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 38, 2000, pp. 56-73.
- 9 Robert Ousterhout recently interpreted these topographic connotations in a theological way: R. OUSTERHOUT, *The Art of Kariye Camii*, London, Scala publications, 2002, pp. 104-106.
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**Ikoničnost kao prostorni koncept  
Nova vizija ikone u suvremenoj teoriji umjetnosti**

Članak se bavi konceptom ikoničnosti koji mijenja cijelo polje ikonografskih studija. Riječ je o preispitivanju ikona kao prostornog fenomena i njihovom pomicanju iz opće kategorije vjerskih slika temeljenom na drugačijem predlošku. Novi pogled na ikonu, koji se razvija posljednjih godina, uvelike se razlikuje od uobičajenog pristupa. Za većinu ljudi, ikona najčešće predstavlja dvodimenzionalni prikaz religijske teme, izrađen prema strogim pravilima, obično na drvenoj podlozi. Za njih je ikona plošni, shematizirani prikaz koji se suštinski razlikuje od realistične slike. U ovom članku autor upućuje na to da je takav duboko ukorijenjen stereotip viđenja ikone nezadovoljavajuć, barem u odnosu na Bizant, uzimajući u obzir da je unutar tog konteksta ikona uvijek doživljavana kao prostorni prikaz ili kao medijatorska slika. Zbog toga prava ikona nije plošna slika, već prostorna cjelina koja povezuje zemaljsko i nebesko kraljevstvo. Ona se ni po čemu posebno ne razlikuje od vjerskih slika načinjenih prema drugačijim načelima i pravilima. Ona je vidljivo različita od kasnijih ikona kakve smo navikli viđati, na kojima su pojedine religijske teme prikazane u skladu s uobičajenim pravilima. U tome je unutarnja nepodudarnost između plošne slike, koja još postoji u našoj svijesti kao jednostavni način prikazivanja svijeta, i prostorne slike koja je građena na potpuno drugačiji način.

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