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Discontent in the Gallery and/or in the Church

The paper deals with the question of how scholars and critics can reflect on contemporary art, if it displays religious content, supposing that the answer to this question is manifold. If we treat art and religion as two disparate domains, we may feel unsettled when meeting a devotional work of art in a gallery, as we may expect contemporary art using religious iconography to incorporate self-reflexivity, a sense of self-critique. Starting from this point, the paper examines different historically evolving attitudes towards images together with the different contemporary spheres and institutions, where pictures of Christian iconography appear. In the complex web of different uses and modes in the appreciation of such images, I look into what may guide or mislead the critic, when interpreting the nature of such an image. As a conclusion, I offer to return to Warburg's view on how pictures relate to tradition.