THE NOTION OF *KRISIS* BETWEEN LATE ANTIQUITY AND LATE MODERNITY. TWO MODELS OF REASON AT ISSUE

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In this paper I would like to concentrate on the network holding together the various forms of κρίσις that have emerged in the very recent patristic literature.[1] Let me start by saying that I am not going to provide improbable systematizations; nor do I assume that philosophy should always claim a demiurgic role for itself. I would rather try to go through some words and concepts of this debate on the crisis, as if I were chasing the melody that they have left behind in my heart, and, in its wake, I will produce a harmonization that will not betray the spirit of our theme, while exposing it in a different light.

I have noticed that two principal meanings of the word keep confronting each other. On one end of the spectrum, I would put the notion of κρίσις denoting the certainty of a judgment, the critical apparatus of a society and the exercise of a particular kind of knowledge that divides while excluding. On the other, I would place κρίσις understood as uncertainty, as the possibility that this judgment cannot be made or formulated. If we could think of these two meanings turning the one against the other, as in a particle accelerator, perhaps something like a grammar would emerge. There is an *active attitude*, in which the act of judgment is employed as an objectifying device, and there is an *attitude* that I would like to call *deponent*, in which it is rather the subjectivity that is being manifested, i.e., the uncertainty with which the judgment is expected, feared or shunned. Late Antiquity and Late Modernity, the periods under scrutiny here, are held together by the alternation of these two attitudes.

Christianity, examined in the depth of its "philosophical life," has always posed the question of the κρίσις, and today it is back to ask philosophy, at a time when philosophy appears disoriented – that is, devoid of a guideline towards which

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[1] I will draw inspiration here from an interesting conference on "Crisis and change in Late Antiquity" (6-7 April 2016, Dipartimento di Storia Culture Civiltà – Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna) whose Proceedings were edited by Angela Maria Mazzanti and Ilaria Vigorelli, *Krisis e cambiamento in età tardoantica*, ESC, Roma 2017. The present text shows a deeply revised and extended version of the paper I gave at the Bologna Conference.

one should direct their glance – to avoid the atmosphere of prevailing relativism. In my opinion the Cappadocian Fathers remain up to now a turning point between two Antiquities in dialogue with each other, for they constitute a valuable model for those who love and practise a philosophical form of life. Before entering the tangle of questions, though, I would like to analyse the word and the concept of κρίσις in the two senses I have just sketched.

The structures of the Crisis.

Κρίσις as judgment

To begin with, ἡ κρίσις πολλαχῶς λέγεται, "crisis can be said in many ways," as is witnessed by the history of the word. The hellenist Salvatore Nicosia has reconstructed the complex veining of the word in a dense article.[2] The linguistic approach traces the course of a semantic river that is wide and complex, and which flows into the modern notions of "justice" and "crisis." Both the word, however, and the germinal sense from which other meanings are specified one after the other, refer to one ancient gesture, which can still be seen in the life of cereal-societies.[3] A Homeric locus mentions the action of "winnowing," that is, the separation of chaff from wheat, performed by digging in with the spade and then throwing the grains mixed with the chaff in the air, so that the wind (or Demeter, among the Greeks) may free them from the various impurities.[4] The Greek verb κρίνω originally meant "to separate"; the sieve, or *cribrum* in Latin, is the tool that makes the separation possible. This is the origin of all the uses accrued by κρίσις in the forms of the anthropogenetic process; and κρίσις is judgment, the act of judging. A judgment originates as separation or release from a thing or situation; it is a device that shows or actualizes a division of linguistic labour. There is a judge and there is the person

[2] Salvatore Nicosia, *Sul concetto di 'giudizio' (κρίσις) in Grecia. Un approccio linguistico*, in: Idem, *Ephemeris. Scritti efimeri*, Soveria Mannelli, 2013, pp. 215-228. For a 'polyphonic' discussion on the topic of judgment, see the *Proceedings* of the Conference held in Palermo in 1997: *Il giudizio: Filosofia, teologia, diritto, estetica*, ed. S. Nicosia, Rome, 2000. The volume includes the first version of Nicosia's text.

[3] Nicosia, "Sul concetto di 'giudizio'," p. 218, maintains that it cannot be doubted that «at the basis of the root **krei-/*kri-* of κρίνω is the act of 'separating' different materials, and that this 'separation' is the one, fundamental and primary in the cereal societies, of releasing the cereals, through a work of constant approximation, from chaff, shells and impurities, until an edible fruit is reached».

[4] Homer, *Ilias*, V. 499-501: ὡς δ' ἄνεμος ἄχνας φορέει ἱερὰς κατ' ἀλωὰς / ἀνδρῶν λικμώντων, ὅτε τε ξανθὴ Δημήτηρ / κρίνῃ ἐπειγομένων ἀνέμων καρπόν τε καὶ ἄχνας…, "as in the sacred threshing floors the wind carries the chaff | while men winnow, when blond Demeter | under the impetus of the winds *separates* the fruit from the chaff…".

who is judged; there are those who reach an absolution (those who, in the judgment, are *soluti*, i.e., freed) and those who, instead, are condemned, the *damnati*.

First of all, what is at stake in a judgment is the separation between two levels of analysis: that which is to be objectified and that which is left out. The object, i.e., the product of the act of judging, is the sentence, the *sententia* which assigns a predicate to a subject. The operation of judging first posits something as a substratum, and then it subjects that substratum to a predicate. Understood in this propositional sense, κρίσις has effects over everything that falls under the Concept term (or the predicative-ruler). Furthermore, just as the judgment assigns a property, so it can remove it and deny it. Here we might ask ourselves: who is the agent that performs the judgment? If we consider the subject of the sentence as the author of the judgment, then one should say that the assertive proposition, the *sententia* in its canonical form, does not express this subject of the proposition. On the contrary, the sentence drops the propositional dynamics and hands them over to the blind spot of the linguistic eye. To use philological terminology, we would say that the judgment, the *sententia* puts the subject in a condition of *athetesis* (i.e. elimination); by preventing any subject from claiming the content of the *sententia*, language turns a sentence into the place where a judgment becomes objective. In this way, it is only when the subject has been expunged from the sentence that it becomes possible to create sciences, laws and moral rules. It is only by separating the product from the producer, the known object from the knowing subject that something like a certain theoretical thought takes place. Judgment is exercised when the subject takes a leave of absence.

The job of the sentence, however, does not consist simply of hiding the subject, in "winnowing" the grain of knowledge, whether communal or collective, from the chaff. The sentence is also the place of division – διαίρεσις, as Plato understood this operation – and the μερισμός, the division of the parts into which a sentence can be articulated.[5] Here we do not need to engage in a discussion concerning the themes of predication and the form of a sentence, for there are already studies that have done this very well. Rather, I would like to stress two points. The first, of a syntactic nature, concerns the application of a judgment. What in a judgment must be articulated or separated from another thing is not the object as *Ding an sich*, provided that the proper nouns or defined descriptions should be enough to carry out this task. Within the context of a proposition (expressed by a sentence), the object represents a part only *insofar as* it is described through the predicates that are applied to it. This principle is present in the discussions of the philosophers, from Plato onwards, but it was *expressis verbis* codified first by the

[5] This is what the anglophone linguists call *parsing*, i.e., that part of linguistic analysis that is devoted to the recognition of the *partes orationis*, or μέρη τοῦ λόγου. See J. Lyons, *Semantics: 1*, Cambridge, 1977.

logician Gottlob Frege.[6] It is the predicate that makes the functioning of the sentence possible, in its being applied as a *Concept Term* to particular *Object Terms*. Frege called this predicate *Begriffswort* or *Begriffsausdruck*, that is, 'Concept Word' or 'Concept Expression'. A judgment, therefore, is a conceptual apparatus that is being applied not to objects of experience or things, but to objects known by the language and already present in it as *Bedeutungen* of particular terms. We can say many things about the planet Venus: that it shines, that it is a number *n* of light years distant, or that it is uninhabited. And we could say the same or similar things about the celestial body that we call "the evening star." We might not know, however, that Venus and the evening star are one, and only one, celestial body. Therefore, we do not assign labels to the planet Venus in absolute terms, but to the cultural object "Venus", *as this is being known in the language we speak*: it is this cultural object which by a judgment is placed in the position of an *item* that is capable of receiving predications.[7]

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[6] This is the so-called *Kontext-Prinzip* or the principle of the context. It asserts that the meaning of a term should never be investigated in isolation from the others, for the meaning is to be sought within the context of a proposition. See G. Frege, *Begriffsschrift, eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens*, Halle a. S., 1879. We find a similar sentence in ancient logic. In the *Sophist* (261d), Plato distinguishes between a kind of analysis of the terms *that abstracts* from their syntactic-semantic connection within the proposition (ἄνευ συμπλοκῆς) and another kind of analysis *that follows* from this connection (μετὰ συμπλοκῆς). A similar move can be found in Aristotle's *Organon*. This question was studied both analytically and historically by the philosopher Donald Davidson in one of his last works. See Donald Davidson, *Truth and Predication*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York 2005. On the important role played by predication within the context of Greek patristic philosophy, especially in Gregory of Nyssa, see Marcello La Matina, *God Is not the Name of God. Some Remarks on Language and Philosophy in Gregory's* Opera Dogmatica Minora, in: *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, eds. Volker Henning Drecoll and Margitta Berghaus, Leiden-Boston 2013, pp. 315-335.

[7] From a semiotic point of view, the question of the categories becomes that of the so-called perceptual judgments, whose importance was discovered by Peirce. See Charles Sanders Peirce, *Semiotica, I fondamenti della semiotica cognitiva*, ed. M. Bonfantini, Turin, 1980. A reappraisal of Peirce's categories – which Peirce characterizes as "phaneroscopic" (see Ch. S. Peirce, *On a New List of Categories*, in "Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences", 7 (1867), pp. 287-298) – is offered by Umberto Eco in his *Kant e l'ornitorinco*, Milan 1994, pp. 59-81. Here, too, Eco provides a semiotic point of view in relation to the so-called "Porphyry's tree." See Umberto Eco, "L'antiporfirio," in: *Il pensiero debole*, eds. G. Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti, Milan, 1983, pp. 52-80. (This debate is summarized in A. Cornea, "Umberto Eco's Encyclopedia vs. Porphyry's Tree", in *Laval théologique et philosophique, 65*(2), 2009, pp. 301–320). These semio-philosophical questions are very appealing for the scholar of Patristic philosophy, above all for the reason that both Eco and many of the semioticians who deal with categories and cognitive types seem to ignore the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers, who, on this matter, might have a lot

My second consideration is linked to this point. The totality of predications that are employed in the language we speak is not a random list of verbal labels, but the expression of a system of categories. It was Aristotle who first showed the systematic constitution of the ways in which we categorize and judge experience. To judge means to say *what* that particular thing is, *where* or *in what way* that thing is. One might ask, however, where these categories come from. In Aristotle's *Categories*, there is a list of ten notions: ten categories are for him ten possible predicates. Here it is worth recalling the following remark by Theodor Gomperz: "Aristotle ... imagines a man standing before him, say in the Lyceum, and, one after another, reviews the questions which may be raised about him. All the predicates which can be attached to that subject fall under one or another of the ten heads, from the supreme question: what is the object here perceived? down to subordinate questions, dealing with mere externalities, such as: what is he wearing?"[8] Here a caveat is in order: these categories – as reasonably argued by the linguist Émile Benveniste – are not independent of the linguistic system in which Aristotle thought and wrote, for Aristotle "thought that he was defining the attributes of objects, but he only posited linguistic beings: it is the language that, owing to its categories, allows us to recognize these attributes and specify them."[9]

If the categories through which we make our judgments are the categories of the Greek language, then the judgment does not affect the things in their raw nature, but the things as they are *already spoken*, or at least liable to be spoken, *wortbar*. Using the technical language of philosophers, one might say that the things which are dealt with in a judgment are not *Dinge*, but *Gegenstände*, i.e., objects which have already been placed within a language. To assume that philosophy enjoys a state of categorial "virginity" is as naive as to think that a judgment cannot do without its linguistic formulations; or, conversely, to think that a judgment can be resolved into its linguistic formulation. I will discuss this point in the next section.

Κρίσις as uncertainty

In my opinion, the triumph of judgment is the triumph of Kantianism. The distinction of judgments into analytical and synthetic, on the one hand, and into *a priori* and *a posteriori*, on the other, establishes the primacy of the judging device, which tends to the recognition of its role as κριτήριον. No uncertainty accompanies the

to say. I have explored this subject in the article "Trinitarian Semantics," in: *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Giulio Maspero and Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco, Leiden-Boston, 2010, pp. 743-748.

[8] Theodor Gomperz, as quoted by H. P. Cook, "Introduction," in Aristotle, *The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, ed. Harlod P. Cook and Hugh Tredennick, London – Cambridge, MA, 1962 [1938], p. 2.

[9] Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 1, Paris, 1966, p. 70.

philosopher who brings things under his control through his language of concepts, a sort of prehensile apparatus designed to grasp all the things he may encounter. To go back to Eco's brilliant book, no platypus will ever be able to avoid linguistic categorization, at least as long as Kant overrides Hamann and the *Critique of Judgment* prevails over the "Metacritique of the Purism of Reason"[10] or over any other philosophy that contests Kant's schematism.

As a matter of fact, much of twentieth-century philosophy has taken directions that are different from that outlined by Kant's Critiques. On the same subject, I would mention the criticisms that Willard Quine levelled at Kant's distinction of judgment into "analytic" and "synthetic," which he considered to be one of the dogmas of positivism.[11] This kind of criticism represents a turn within the 'linguistic turn' of analytical philosophy. But it is above all with French philosophy that the certainty of judgment seems to reach a bold breaking point, after the philosophical soil had been tilled by Martin Heidegger. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss this topic in all its details. A few remarks, however, will be sufficient to articulate our question and move towards a conclusion.

At the beginning of my paper, I argued that a judgment makes room for itself within the space of a sentence. In order to present itself as objective, a judgment has to drop any subjective claim. The judgment poses itself as a social object by marking out as a spurious element both the judging subject and its Lifeworld, i.e. the world in its phenomenological dimension of *Lebenswelt*. To simplify, I would say that *a judgment can be exercised provided that the subject gives up its gaze*. This removal of the gaze emerges every time a subject is being constructed: in science, in philosophy and, to a certain extent, in all musical and artistic manifestos. Suffice it to mention, for instance, the logic of *Protokollsätze* in the Vienna Circle, processes of mathematization and the dodecaphonic method of Arnold Schönberg and his

[10] Referring to Kant's *Table of Categories* and, more specifically, discussing the impossibility of thinking a judgment without dealing adequately with its "impure" character resulting from the fact that any judgment is anyway always formulated in a language, Johann Georg Hamann wrote: "If then a chief question indeed still remains – how is the faculty of thought possible? The faculty to think right and left, before and without, with and beyond experience? – then no deduction is needed to demonstrate the genealogical priority of language, and its heraldry, over the seven holy functions of logical propositions and inferences. Not only is the entire faculty of thought founded on language, according to the unrecognized prophecies and slandered miracles of the very commendable Samuel Heinicke, but language is also the counterpoint of reason's misunderstandings with itself, partly because of the frequent coincidence of the greatest and the smallest concept, its vacuity and its plenitude in ideal propositions, partly because of the infinite [advantage] of rhetorical over inferential figures, and much more of the same." See Johan Georg Hamann, *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge, 2007, p. 211 (emphasis mine).

[11] Willard Van Orman Quine, *Two dogmas of Empiricism*, in Id., *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge, MA, 1953, p. 47-64.

school. These tendencies encompassed all the fields of twentieth-century culture in Europe and, after a while, they determined – almost through a chemical reaction – the "crisis of judgment," which then became an *epoché*, a suspension of judgment. According to the logic of scientific positivism, things were taken into account only insofar as they were used to formulate theoretical fields; the sounds of modern composers were the expression of an abstract and combinatorial syntax, in which the form was what counted as the pivotal aspect, while the sounding body was resolved into a mere vehicle of the signifying process. Theories of language, anthropology and semiotics increasingly became models of aseptic science. Therefore, the objects encountered by science are terms and not things. Through its propositions, a scientist judges only terms, and not things. By doing so, science reaches a level of nihilism with nominalist overtones, which is well represented by the poet's dictum: *nomina nuda tenemus*. Not by chance, this line is at the end of the most nominalist among the treatises of philosophy of language, i.e., *The Name of the Rose*, the novel by Umberto Eco. In other words, the sentence, the *sententia of the medieval logicians*, which expresses the judgment, can do without things, for no science is founded on bare things.

French philosophy has something to say about this absence of gaze. Jean Paul Sartre, for instance, draws our attention to the look of the Other: this is the gaze that, when it takes me by surprise, makes me feel as if I were being judged by it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty redraws the perceptual field by turning its terms upside down along the lines of a clearly ontological perspective: the things are looking at us. The gaze reappears as the judgment which, amazingly, the things pass onto the subject. It is however with the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan that gaze and judgment are reunited again. Lacan goes back to Sartre's words and finely observes that "the gaze that surprises me... the gaze I encounter... is not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other."[12] The image, the icon, and not the propositional judgment is the place where I enter a relationship with the things I encounter, with the *Autrui*. Indeed, as Lacan makes clear, "[t]he gaze in question is certainly the presence of others as such. But does this mean that originally it is in the relation of subject to subject, in the function of the existence of others as they are looking at me, that we apprehend what the gaze really is?"[13]

The answer is in the affirmative: when we deal with the gaze, it is not the subject that looks for an object in order to formulate a perceptual judgment on it. The subject – Lacan was wont to say – arises only when a signifier emerges; it arises as the place of the relationship between signifiers, not as a *substratum* or a subject that assigns (or is assigned) predications. The optic, 'scopic' dimension is a path that allows us to set up the theme of judgment in a new way. The call to the genuinely

[12] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, transl. Alan Sheridan, New York, 1981, p. 84.
[13] Ibid.

iconic dimension is close to finding its words. "It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that *the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied*."[14] For Lacan, the subject is born divided: there is a *split* that articulates the gaze and the form that is offered to its vision. The scopic field that is thus outlined is fulfilled in a painting more than anywhere else: seen by a subject, the painting ends up by containing the subject that is looking at it. As in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, here, too, the subject is, insofar as it is by the reference to the signifier, seen and looked at by the signifying devices in which the subject invests its own desire. In this way, the model of judgment can be found not in the act of stating propositions, but in the practice of connoisseurship directed towards the analysis of works of art, where the eye of the critic or painter lingers on the features shown by the painting, which they are supposed to judge. Hence the question: how should we judge a painting? What does it mean to formulate a judgment *that regards* an expanse of colours and lines about which not only the mind or the tongue, but even the hand of the painter hesitates?

Lacan evokes the slow brush strokes of Matisse or Cézanne, the light daubs of colour that follow each other apparently without judgment, while a cameraman captures the gestures of the painter in slow motion. Lacan interprets these movements as a process by virtue of which a subject is split, as the first act through which the subject rests his/her gaze (*acte de la déposition du regard*). Is there a theory behind those daubs? Is there a view of matter or of form or of both? And if there is such a theory, how are we supposed to assign the form of a judgment? Can a painting be beautiful, artistic or true without expressing a viewpoint on art, language or matter? And yet, those quick gestures by the painter, those unreflective brushstrokes look like automatic responses, movements directed by confidence and habit. Still, Lacan discovers in them a temporal dimension, a way of looking at things by which the hidden subjectivity is revealed through time:

> What occurs as these strokes, which go to make up the miracle of the picture, fall like rain from the painter's brush is not choice, but something else. Can we not try to formulate what this something else is? Should we not bring the question closer to what I called the rain of the brush? If a bird were to paint would it not be by letting its feathers fall, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting its leaves fall?[15]

A judgment, Lacan seems to say, is not the act of a painter, but a gesture: it is not a judgment directed to assign qualities or values to an object (whether this is matter or form). Rather, a judgment is the recognition of a signifier operating in the field of

[14] Ivi, p. 106 (emphasis mine).
[15] Ivi, p. 114.

the Other: *a subject*, Lacan writes more than once, *arises when for the first time the signifier manifests itself in the field of the Other*.

If that is the case, then the friction of the subject and the signifier becomes a judgment because it remains within the bounds of mutual respect; it becomes a judgment because it does not judge by reducing the Other to an object, colour to matter, human face to form, and so on. The human element that appears in the painting is the rain of the brush which encounters matter and tries to listen to it. The painterly judgment is not the field of the Kantian subject, which speaks through the forms of its disguised subjectivity. It is rather a place where the signifier listens to the signifier, where the *logos* of things can be summoned by the artist and thus be heard. This judgment has the mysterious forms of a relationship with the Other.

In her essay on Greek tragedy, Nicole Loraux investigates this gaze in a sort of archaeology of the voice.[16] What was the reason, asks the historian, behind such a favourable reception of Aeschylus's *Persians*, staged in Athens in 472 BC? Did perhaps the success result from the representation of the bereavements that the Athenians inflicted on the Persians a few years earlier?[17] However, if this were the case, why did that tragedy not become a model? Why did the subsequent tragedies abandon historical plots and prefer to go back to narratives based on the μῦθοι of the tradition? But is it then true, Loraux wonders, that the Athenian spectators rejoiced when watching the suffering of the Persians? In other words, was the gaze of the Greeks one of self-satisfaction? Or did it happen in that particular representation that *the recognition of oneself manifested itself in the grief of the other*? In the first case, the scene would work as a screen; in the second, as a mirror. In my interpretation, the process of recognition would be very similar to the *stade du miroir* introduced by Lacan in psychoanalytic theory. Loraux maintains that *The Persians* ushered in a form of compassion or empathy within the dialectic, which was very lively in Athens, between Athenians and foreigners, between the sense of the self and the feeling of the other. If Loraux is right, then we should mark the year 472 as a stage in the long history of the notion of κρίσις, for the feeling of compassion aroused by the scene challenged the system of categories (Greeks *vs* barbarians), suspended the cultural dialectic and promoted a redefinition of the very notion of ἄνθρωπος.

Something very similar happens with the establishment of Christianity. Jesus before Pilate, the apostles before their judges, the martyrs before their persecutors: all these scenes of judgment are pervaded by a grammar of gazes which alternate accusation and forgiveness. In his interesting paper Gnilka opportunely reminds us that Pilate's judgment regards the concept of kingship, the truth about the notion of

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[16] Nicole Loraux, *The Mourning Voice: An Essay on Greek Tragedy*, transl. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings, Ithaca, 2002, pp. 66-80.

[17] This seems to be the conclusion, at least if we accept what Aristophanes says through the character of Dionysius in *The Frogs* (the comedy was performed in 405 BC): {ΔΙ.} Ἐχάρην γοῦν, ἡνίκ' ἐκώκυσας περὶ Δαρείου τεθνεῶτος, / ὁ χορὸς δ' εὐθὺς τὼ χεῖρ' ὠδὶ συγκρούσας εἶπεν· Ἰαυοῖ (1028-1029).

king. In the Gospel pericope two models of kingdom were pitted against each other and the concept of βασιλεύς was semanticized *again*. Gnilka then dwells on the scenes of martyrdom contained in the *Acta Martyrum* and, in a persuasive way, juxtaposes them to the model of the *passio Christi*.[18] The kind of relationship exhibited by the *acta* is a process of re-semanticization: "A particular semantic conflict emerges in the interrogations of the martyrs: Christian martyrs take up a notion used by the judge, but they give it a new meaning, which is not understood by the pagans."[19] This transfer of meanings can also be used to describe the contribution of Christianity to the philosophy of language, for Christianity has revealed to the world that *the original model of predication (that is, the attribution of a predicate to a subject) is a judiciary model*: to predicate something of someone and to accuse someone of something are expressed in Greek with the same words.[20]

During Classical Antiquity justice was administered in the presence of the ruler's icons.[21] And, as we know, the icon has the same status as the archetype it represents. The judgment occurs under the gaze of the icons, for they are, in a sense which is different from that of the ontic, the very ruler in whose name the judgment takes place. The κρίσις is the revelation of the violence inherent in the language. This violence can be perceived, for it is relegated to the level of the statement. The categories constitute the judgment, but they hide the grim gaze of the accusers. In the second homily *De pauperibus amandis*, Gregory of Nyssa reports to his audience the strong and frightening impression that he has just had by reading the Gospel pericope, where the judgment is announced (Mt 25, 31-46). Gregory is still in the grip of the gaze emanating from that scene: Ἔτι πρὸς τῷ θεάματι τῆς φοβερᾶς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιφανείας εἰμί, ἣν ὑπογράφει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον· ἔτι κατέπτηχεν ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς τὸν φόβον τῶν εἰρημένων ἐνατενίζουσα *ὡς καθορῶσα τρόπον τινὰ αὐτόν τε τὸν οὐράνιον βασιλέα*.[22] What does he mean by the words "*ὡς καθορῶσα τρόπον τινὰ*

[18] See Christian Gnilka, *Il nuovo senso delle parole: giudice e confessore negli atti dei martiri*, in Angela Maria Mazzanti, Ilaria Vigorelli, *Krisis e cambiamento in età tardoantica*, Roma 2017, pp. 215-240. For a different interpretation of the linguistic conflict between Christian martyrs and pagan judges, see Marcello La Matina, *Μάρτυς. Alcune note preliminari per una semiotica del martirio*, "Lexia. Rivista di semiotic"a, 31–32 (giugno 2018), pp. 57-80.

[19] See Christian Gnilka, *Il nuovo senso delle parole*, p. 217. My translation.

[20] See, for instance, Aristoteles, *Categ.*, 3 a 19-20: τὸν γὰρ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου λόγον κατὰ τοῦ τινὸς ἀνθρώπου κατηγορήσεις καὶ τὸν τοῦ ζῴου.

[21] Gregory of Nyssa recalls this use of the icon in a passage of his homily *De Beneficentia*, when he writes «ὥσπερ οἱ τὰς βασιλικὰς εἰκόνας κατὰ τῶν βιαζομένων αὐτοὺς προβαλλόμενοι, ἵν' ἐκ τῆς μορφῆς τοῦ κρατοῦντος τὸν καταφρονητὴν δυσωπήσωσιν»; Gregorii Nyssae, "De Beneficentia", in *Gregorii Nysseni De Pauperibus amandis orationes duo*, ed. Adrianus van Heck, Leiden 1964, p. 9, 2-4.

[22] Gregorii Nyssae, "In illud: Quatenus uni ex his fecistis mihi fecistis", in *Gregorii Nysseni De Pauperibus amandis orationes duo*, ed. Adrianus van Heck, Leiden 1964, p. 21,1-4.

αὐτόν τε τὸν οὐράνιον βασιλέα"? Is he perhaps highlighting the iconic power of writing?

Now, the phrase "turned in a way towards the celestial king himself" may perhaps mean that the representation of the Gospel *works as an icon*. The power of the icons is so strong that Gregory can only with difficulty go back to the textual dimension, as if he were detained "in the midst of the events recounted in the text," so much so that he cannot see anything else: Οὕτω δέ μοι τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὸν τῶν ἀνεγνωσμένων φόβον διατεθείσης, *ὡς πρὸς αὐτοῖς δοκεῖν εἶναι τοῖς πράγμασι καὶ τῶν παρόντων ἐπαισθάνεσθαι μηδενός*, οὐδεμίαν ὁ νοῦς ἄγει σχολὴν πρὸς ἄλλο τι βλέπειν τῶν προκειμένων εἰς ἐξέτασίν τε καὶ θεωρίαν τῷ λόγῳ.[23] The gaze of the judgment is the gaze of the text, every time this functions in an iconic way, that is, when it makes the gaze of the archetype present. The content of this gaze, however, is not ontic, but ontological: it requires that the human gaze be turned towards the others not as they are in a phenomenal sense, but as they are in the truth of the human condition established by the judgment. Therefore, Gregory says, one should avoid behaving like the Levite and the priest, who, going from Jerusalem to Jericho, left the poor wayfarer in the state in which he had been left by the robbers. They did not look at what the man *was*, but at the way in which he *appeared* to their eyes. The Gospel places before us the human condition and prescribes that we should not ignore our resemblance to the features of our common nature (τὸ μὴ ἀλλοτριοῦσθαι τῶν κοινωνούντων τῆς φύσεως)[24].

The gaze should grasp not the phenomenon, but the truth, which, in spite of the phenomenon, preserves itself in an ontological sense. This ontological content is also in the type of gaze that Gregory asks his listeners to direct towards the poor whom they have before their eyes every day. "You don't consider" – he tells his listener – who the person is in this condition? Everyone is made in the image of God," – including all that follows from it – οὐ λογίζῃ τίς ὁ ἐν τούτοις ὤν; ὅτι ἄνθρωπος, ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ γεγονώς, ὁ κυριεύειν τῆς γῆς τεταγμένος, ὁ ὑποχείριον τὴν τῶν ἀλόγων ὑπηρεσίαν ἔχων.[25] Precisely because he is disfigured, this man appears to you as a phenomenal datum of difficult interpretation (οὗτος εἰς τοῦτο συμφορᾶς καὶ μεταβολῆς προῆλθεν, ὥστε ἀμφίβολον τὸ φαινόμενον εἶναι)[26]. On the one hand, you cannot count him among the members of human society; on the other, you cannot consider his physical features as belonging to a given species of living being different from men. Gregory's Greek language uses plenty of terms related to the semantic sphere of seeing, portraying and depicting: ἐὰν πρὸς ἄνθρωπον εἰκάσῃς,

[23] Gregorii Nyssae, *In illud: Quatenus uni ex his fecistis mihi fecistis*, p. 22, 8-12.
[24]Ivi, p. 24, 4-5.
[25] Ivi, p. 26, 8-11.
[26] Ivi p. 26, 12.

ἀρνεῖται τὴν ἀμορφίαν ὁ χαρακτὴρ ὁ ἀνθρώπινος· ἐὰν πρὸς τὰ ἄλογα τρέψῃς τὴν εἰκασίαν, οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα τὴν ὁμοιότητα τοῦ φαινομένου προσίεται.[27]

By their living under the gaze of the Lord the wretched are indeed the ones who can determine either our condemnation or our salvation, not by accusing us, but by indicating a 'deponent' mode of judging: «οὗτοι καὶ κατήγοροι σφοδροὶ καὶ συνήγοροι ἀγαθοί· συνηγοροῦσι δὲ καὶ κατηγοροῦσιν, οὐ λέγοντες, ἀλλ' ὁρώμενοι παρὰ τοῦ κριτοῦ. τὸ γὰρ περὶ αὐτοὺς γενόμενον ἔργον παρὰ τῷ καρδιογνώστῃ βοᾷ παντὸς κήρυκος εὐσημότερον».[28] Insofar as ὁρώμενοι παρὰ τοῦ κριτοῦ, the wretched work as icons where the πρόσωπον, the gaze of the Lord can be truly deposed.

Krisis as "the time that remains"

Late Antiquity and Late Modernity

In recent human studies it has become usual to term the contemporary time as Late Modernity. In this use the expressed notion of time has not only a syntagmatic value. It does not serve only to link the present age with the previous one—namely, Modernity *tout court*. The expression 'Late Modernity' has a paradigmatic value, for its intended meaning introduces a relation *per distans* between the present age and the age designated by historians as Late Antiquity. Therefore, Late Modernity should be viewed not only as the time that comes after Modernity, because this would risk evidencing the mere "after" of a contingent temporal succession. On the contrary, the paradigmatic relation involves also the content of time that can be related, *in absentia*, to the Late Antiquity sense of time. Both ages are forms of *being-late*, still better of χρονίζειν. Late Antiquity and Late Modernity can be considered as parallel expressions, referring perhaps to comparable modes of *being-late*. The former is subsequent to the end of paganism and marks the beginning of the Early Christian age. The latter results from the unravelling of the Middle Ages' view of western Christianity as the restoration of the Roman Empire. Both are recognized by their contemporaries as well as by modern writers as ages of crisis, though of course in different senses. In what follows I would like to evaluate the deep significance of the former age of crisis and its visible reflexes upon late modern anxiety and crisis.

An inescapable starting point is the following. As Christians, we exist in the time that goes from the ἀνάληψις to the παρουσία of the Lord. Had the promises of Christ been realized in the Apostolic Age, no one nowadays would be asking questions like these. Nevertheless, the promises have not yet been fulfilled, and thanks to this gap many theologians theorize the Christian God as being late. The Messiah, the Bridegroom, the Lord is late. If we were now to bring this hypothesis back to our present concern, we might say—according to some contemporary

[27]Ivi, p. 26, 14-17.
[28] Gregorii Nyssae, *De Beneficentia*, p. 9, 7-11.

theologians—that our entire existence is due to Christ's being-late, or better that we all exist *inside* the χρονίζειν of Christ, of the Messiah. Late Modernity is not the time of God's absence, but only that of its delay. He is late, but in a mysterious way, he is in a relationship to our condition as humans. He is ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the one who is coming. In the second homily *De pauperibus amandis* the Cappadocian writer Gregory of Nyssa pointed out to his listeners how significant the question of the παρουσία /ἀπουσία of Christ is:

[H]owever, these matters are not insignificant nor unworthy of our examination, that is, to know him who exists eternally. "Behold, I am with you always" (*Mt* 28.20). If we believe that [Christ] is with us now, how will he come since he is proclaimed as not being present? If "in him we live and move and have our being" (*Acts* 17.28), as the Apostle [Paul] says, our efforts within the limitations of time can neither grasp nor embrace him who contains everything. This applies to the present as well as to the future. I see that any being near or surrounding the throne surpasses whatever belongs to the present age.[29] (tr. Roger Pearse)

Let us ask ourselves now: "Is Late Modernity the time of χρονίζειν in a way comparable to the χρονίζειν of Late Antiquity?" or "Do we exist in the mystery of the Bridegroom, as men of Late Antiquity also did?" Of course, our attitude toward the *deferment* of promises is maybe less nagging and sincere than in the past. However, they are anything but unimportant questions for late-modern people. In order to explain this *being-late*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben used the notion of 'operative time'[30]—elaborated by the linguist G. Guillaume to elucidate the architectonics of verbs—though applying it to the problem of defining Messianic *time*.

Messianic time is *the time that time takes to come to an end*, or, more precisely, the time we take to bring to an end, to achieve our representation of time. This is not the line of chronological time (which was representable but unthinkable), nor the instant of its end (which was just as unthinkable); nor is it a segment cut from chronological time; rather, it is operational time pressing within the chronological

[29] Gregorii Nyssae, *In illud: Quatenus*: in *Gregorii Nysseni De pauperibus amandis orationes duo*, ed. Adrianus van Heck, Leiden Brill, 1964, p. 22, 12-21.

[30] Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that remains. A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, English translation by Patricia Dailey, Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, Ca, 2005. p. 65-67. His reference is to the category of G. Guillaume's "operational time". See Guillaume, *Temps et Verbe. Théorie des Aspects, des modes et des temps dans les langues classiques*, Champion, Paris 1970). Operational time has perhaps some connection with the so-called time of mental rotation, discovered *via* experiments by the scholars Roger N. Shepard, Jacqueline Metzler, *Mental Rotation of Three-Dimensional Objects*, "Science" (1971) Feb 19, 171(3972), pp. 701-3.

time, working and transforming it from within; *it is the time we need to make time end*: *the time that is left us*.[31]

The critical findings of the philosopher oblige us to pay attention to the structures involved in Messianic time, if considered as the time of judgment. Messianic time is not an additional time (it is not a χρόνος), but a quality, or an aspect, concealed in particular times as their καιρός. In Agamben's words, it is *the time that remains to us*—as well as to every man in every time—and that is disclosed for us as a delay. In Walter Benjamin's words, it is "the gate" through which the Messiah could enter our room.

Krisis *and the Digital Swarm*

This is the reason why we consider it necessary to construct a parallel reflection between Antiquity and Modernity. On the preceding pages we investigated the twofold sense of κρίσις that is shown by this juxtaposition. On the one hand, we find κρίσις as a judgment and, on the other, κρίσις as a possibility that this judgment will not come. Now, the moment has come for seeing whether the crisis of our time is, or is not, the expectation of a judgment that is not yet manifested. By studying the Fathers with an eye open to contemporary philosophy, one might observe the friction between historical and philosophical knowledge. In fact, what sometimes makes historians "shudder" is often, contrariwise, what appears to be the very "salt" in a philosophical discourse: hypotheses. A friction might exist not only between the two senses of the word *krisis*, but also when different methods approaching such a *krisis* are compared.

At the beginning of the new millennium both the existential and the ontological notions of crisis began to make their appearance. They deeply affect the definition of human beings, philosophical anthropology or, as it is sometimes referred to, the becoming-human of man as *animal rationale*. Joining this debate, the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han talked about the crisis in a concise book called *In the Swarm, Digital Prospects*.[32] The object of his reflection is the so-called virtual world, namely the world of augmented reality. He considers the digital world as a condition capable of determining important changes in the human way of life, dismantling—as he writes—the real and *totalizing the imaginary*.[33] Our vision and our gaze are questioned by the network. In particular, Han argues that digital people are living in a real "poverty of gaze": «Digital communication is visually poor communication. [...] Camera optics alone are not responsible for the fact that we are

[31] Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that remains*, 67-68; Agamben's italics.
[32] Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm, Digital Prospects*, English translation by Erik Butler, MIT, Cambridge (Ma) - London, 2017.
[33] See B.-C- Han, *In the Swarm*, p. 22.

staring past each other. Rather, it points to a fundamentally missing *gaze* – that is, to the missing *other*. The digital medium is taking us farther and farther away from the *other*».[34] The digital condition, as the network exemplifies it, has erased the semiotic distinction between proximal and distal. In this way, it has given up, both for subjects and objects, the possibility of adaptation—where adaptation is the opportunity for reciprocity:

> Tapping around on the touchscreen has consequences in regard to the other. Such motion eliminates the distance that constitutes the other in its otherness. One can swipe or tape the image – touch it directly – because it has already lost its gaze, its countenance. *Pinching* the touchscreen places the other at my disposal. We tap, swipe, or flick the other away so that our own mirror image will appear instead.[35]

Han disagrees with the enthusiasm some humanists have shown relative to the improvements of the Internet. He is also critical of the optimism of some Churches as to the possibility of using the network to optimize the life of the ecclesial communities as such. One of the most convinced proponents of the network is the philosopher Vílem Flusser[36], against whom the arrows of the Korean philosopher are directed:

> Over and over, Flusser exalts networked communication into the religious sphere. Here, the telematic ethos of networking is supposed to correspond to "Judeo Christianity with its commandment, 'Love Thy neighbour'". For Flusser, digital communication harbours a messianic potential; [...] Following this logic, digital communication has inaugurated a kind of *Pentecostal communion*. It frees the individual human being from isolation within the self by summoning forth *spirit*, a *resonance chamber*[37].

In this debate on the *krisis* springing from the "digital" condition of late modern mankind, the religious element too also unexpectedly emerges. On the one hand, Flusser introduces both the Pentecostal community and the Messianic prospect into the universe of discourse as the very end of the crisis. Both the late modern crisis

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[34] See B Byung-chul Han, *In the Swarm*, pp. 23-4.

[35] Byung-chul Han, *In the Swarm, Digital Prospects,* pp. 24-5; the Italian version of the text contains in addition the following words: «Dispongo dell'Altro come se lo tenessi tra pollice e indice». These words summarizing the entire paragraph are missing in the English edition we are quoting from.

[36] Han refers to Vílem Flusser, *Kommunikologie weiter denken. Die Bochumer Vorlesungen*, Fisher-Taschenbuch, Frankfurt/Main, 2009.

[37] Byung-chul Han, *In the Swarm, Digital Prospects,* p. 47.

and the Internet's promised redemption should have played, in his opinion, the role of the battlefield, where a sort of restoration of true communication should take place. On the other hand, Byung-Chul Han dismantled Flusser's project as inconsistent. According to the Korean philosopher, departing from the crisis entails the acknowledgement that *no Digital Messianism did—or shall—take place*. The public space of reason is marked by egotism and narcissism: so, the digital network does not work as a dialogic *medium* for realizing human *projects*, but rather as a *projectile*—as he writes—a bullet that the subject fires against him- or herself.

Of course, Han's notion of *delay in keeping promises* is not comparable to the patristic notion of the being-late of the Lord. Nonetheless, what is striking is that in both cases the temporal dimension is concerned as the very place for the proper understanding of the question of human salvation. In one case, a salvation from nature is concerned, whilst, in the other, the flying away from the solipsism of the digital swarm is under discussion. At any rate, something expected did not occur. Apart from any detailed remarks, the image of a missed completion of time is nonetheless a powerful stimulus for encompassing the field of our inquiry. The reference to the messianic perspective of the notion of *krisis* seems to support Agamben's analysis of present times as manifesting the operational aspect of time. This provisory conclusion seems to drive us to acknowledge the *being-late* of time as the remnant dimension of the salvation time (the καιρός or τὸ ἔσχατον).

Krisis as the servomechanism of a digital ideology

In the Sixties the sociologist Marshall McLuhan persuasively argued that the subject interacting with computers and similar devices becomes a sort of servomechanism for them. He or she cannot remain as the agent of actions, for he/she is not capable of a true agency. Rather, he/she seems to be the subject (ὑποκείμενος) overridden by 'manipulative' agents and instruments. He or she can, of course, subjugate others to the network, but he/she cannot avoid submitting him-herself to the network. The user of the network is a watching subject: he/she is there, above all, to observe. He/she is watching everything others write and whatever way others live. Then, from time to time, he or she ratifies some images with a "Like".

If we assume that taking-place in communication mostly means being able to promote changes, then we must exclude that the Internet surfer described above could dislocate him- or herself in this sense: taking place in a judgment means above all to take (*vs* to abandon) a position among other actors relative to a disputed matter. This sense is expressed prevalently in the judgment, whose vehicles are in most cases propositions. The propositional form is the form by which the subject assumes a role *with respect to* a state of affairs or a person. The relevant question then emerges: "To what extent does the digital condition allow the linked subjects to take a position, or to formulate judgments?"

Of course, if we treat the Internet *Like*'s as judgments, there is no doubt that the network leaves a lot of space for acts of *krisis*. But what a real judgment expresses is not a passing sensitivity or a provisional attitude towards something or someone. Judgment sentences work in societies rather as arguments-for (or evidence-against) something or someone. So, let me wonder: "Does the network allow judgment in this sense?" Answering this question implies moving our focus onto the actors of the judgment. In fact, in the judgment these relationships are what the judgment itself is about. In the judgment the grammatical *personae* ('I', 'you', 'it') are moved—this is why pronouns and other indexes are also called *shifters*. One thing that is often overlooked is the role of such words in the context of a sentence. The *personae* of grammar, *i.e.* the shifters, do not work in the network the same way they do in face-to-face utterances or in written communication sentences. They are indicators of proximity, expressions of distance, or, in a word, *indexes*: their use presupposes a *Person-Deixis* context.

Let's provide an example. Suppose a biblical text is published on a site. Any Internet surfer can assume the role of reader, positioning him- or herself as the 'you' of that text or of its author's. However, the pronouns in that text will remain configured according to the author's/network-master's intended meaning. No user or surfer of the network could really "wear" any personal pronoun; nor can he or she wear any *persona* other than him-or herself. He/she cannot make a text his/her own. What he or she can do is just spell and visualize a text. Rigorously speaking, we cannot classify such acts as acts of reading capable of changing the truth conditions or the reference of texts. Suppose a surfer reads the passage where the prophet Isaiah says, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me." The pronoun 'me', uttered in a synagogue proclamation works as an index for the subject of enunciation: in our example it refers to Isaiah and not to the reader. Contrariwise, on any computer screen, it works as just a rigid designator, a term that will necessarily refer to a given entity. Of course, the Internet user, if he or she wants to, can post a comment on Isaiah to a friend, can share that piece with other surfers, can highlight the text or a part of it. But he/she will never be able to make the personal pronoun refer to individuals other than the one intended by the author. The position of the ego remains with Isaiah.

This happens, in my opinion, because shifting persons (or, more simply, casting the grammatical *personae* into one another) is the same as permitting the sentence to become *open* – in the logical sense of any 'open sentence'. Amazingly, this casting of persons into one another *does not happen in the network verbal communication*, for any text (or part of a text) appearing on the Internet is to be taken as it was formed by the quoted sentence. This being so, any *indexical expressions behave as if they were in invisible quotation marks*; so they cannot be disquoted. Texts or sentences uploaded on the Internet are by default *closed*. They are blocked, even when they are modifiable or modified. These invisible quotation marks cannot be removed. The same applies to images and pictures or movies when uploaded to the network and shared with other surfers on the Internet.

Vice versa, in the oral-written and face-to-face communication, it is possible for the reader to take-position by casting his or her *persona* into another:[38] he/she can "move" and locate him-herself through his/her choices relative to prosody or melody or any other features characterizing any act of vocal reading accomplished before other creatures. What prevents pronouns from casting into one another *within* or *throughout* the network is the absence of 'ratified participants. Anyone who reads a text on the web either remains a passive reader or becomes a new author (he/she can write and post comments, and so on); but nobody who reads a text on the Internet is in the position of becoming *Animator* of that text.[39]

Becoming a text *Animator* would be the same as performing a text in the position typical of the homilist.[40] This is precisely what happens to Jesus—according to the narrative of the Gospels—when he proclaims that passage of Isaiah: «The Spirit of the Lord is upon me». By uttering Isaiah's sentence—enclosing its first person indexical 'me'—Jesus is not quoting the *ego* of the prophet/author. Rather, he is casting his own person in the *persona* of the enunciation, by referring Isaiah's statement to himself. This is possible for he performs before a living community of given listeners. Jesus reads the other's text; however, he is not quoting: how so? We are sure he does not quote, because he changes the truth conditions of the text with his reading. And he changes them because he is in a position to do so because he acts as a speaker and not as an interpreter, as a dialogue or as a reading servomechanism. The expression "casting grammar *personae* into one another" is used here as meaning the shifting process taking place in the practice of "absorbing" the Other's *persona* while reading or uttering a text. Emphasis is on the non-psychological meaning of this process. Examples of such a casting of grammar *personae* are

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[38] As to the "casting" in the Old and New Testament's patristic interpretation see M. La Matina M. La Matina, *Seeing God Through Language. Quotation and Deixis in Gregory of Nyssa's 'Against Eunomius', Book III*, in "Studia Patristica", *LXVII* (2013), Leuven, Peeters, pp. 77 – 90.

[39] The sociologist Ervin Goffman introduced this term. *Animator* is the person who reads or performs a text before the audience. His or her role should be distinguished from that of the *Author*, who is responsible for the mere linguistic formulation of a text. By these terms Goffman aims at replacing the fuzzy notion of *Speaker*. In addition, instead of the usual term *Hearer*, Goffman tends to introduce the pair *Ratified participants*, the intended addressee, and *Overhearers*, every unintended or undesired participant in the act of communication. This terminology is established in: E. Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1981.

[40] Homelists (from the old Greek word ὁμιλία 'talk') were—and are even now—the readers, or the holy ministers, in charge of commenting on the proclaimed passages of the Holy Scripture in the weekly holy service. They appeared first in the Synagogue-assembly, where the talk was called *derashà*, and then in the Christian *ekklesia*, where it was termed *homilia*. The semantic and pragmatic role of their performances into the rituals received new light through the studies of Maurice Sachot. See M. Sachot, *L'invention du Christ. Genèse d'une religion*, Odile Jacob, Paris 1998.

usually given in plays, in concerts as well as in many other types of text performance; a special interpretive casting—with ontological consequences—is shown in the Christian late antique homiletics.[41]

The verb χρονίζειν refers to the time of the Other's appearance, for—as Levinas argued—there is no time where there is not the other.[42] The coming of the other is his παρουσία, it is his making himself present as other. Since the first three decades of the 20th century philosophers such as Martin Heidegger had investigated the sense of such a παρουσία in a new ontological perspective. According to his line of thought, παρουσία is not to be intended as *mere presence*, or *Anwesenheit*. Heidegger connected the inquiry on Being with the notion of Time, refusing the traditional view of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Through this move, he also renounced the Cartesian *cogito* as the ground for any philosophical investigation. The Being-in-the-World of the *Dasein* is neither intended by Heidegger as Descartes or Kant's παρουσία; nor as the co-occurrence of *Dasein* and the beings—as they were a Subject/Object pair *redivivus*. Rather, it emerges from the disclosure of beings coming from somewhere *over* the passing of time.[43] The dimension of time enters vehemently into the study of Being. The assertive proposition (the Aristotelian ἀπόφανσις) is not yet the place for the truth of human judgment. Truth is operative in the *ek-static* time of the *Dasein*, whose existence cannot coincide with the mere presence of a collection of things. It is a notable question whether such an ἔκστασις could be read by a language-oriented philosophy as having to do with the utterance indicators called *shifters*. I do not deal here with this question, but refer the reader to my previous paper.[44]

At the end, the curious reader could wonder: "What can the Fathers of the Church teach contemporary man about *krisis*?" The very recent literature on this topic (see the papers collected in Vigorelli and Mazzanti 2018) does not just offer data, but attempts answers. If I were to provide my own response, I would stress that the late antique Fathers could offer an excellent antidote for late modern societies. To us, who always live under the power of rules, of images, and under the persistent gaze of others, late antique Patristics can indicate an escape route. This way out is

[41] The semantics of the 4th century Greek homiletics—especially the Cappadocian's—was the main topic of the paper by M. La Matina, *Does Homily work as a Theory of Truth? A possible bridge for Patristics and Philosophy of Language*, in "Scrinium. Journal of Patrology and Critical Hagiography", 11, 2, 2015, pp. 261-280.

[42] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, PUF, Paris 2005.

[43] As the main reference for these remarks see Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Niemyer, Tübingen 1927. An interesting reading of Heidegger's perspective from a Christian point of view is to be found in Χρήστος Γιανναράς, *Τὸ Πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ Ἔρως*, Δόμος, Ἀθῆναι, 4. ἐκδοση, 2006.

[44] See Marcello La Matina, 'As for God, so for Sound. Engaging with Yannaras' Philosophy of Language', in Sotiris Mitralexis (ed.), *Engaging with Yannaras' Thought. Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Life*, with Preface by John Milbank, Clarke & Co., Cambridge 2018, pp. 133-150.

the way of the icon as a person-style mode of knowledge. Unlike conceptual knowledge that aims at representing the essence of beings, the icon represents the person. It presupposes the personal dimension and, where this is lacking, it institutes it. This aspect is currently the focus for an interesting debate among contemporary scholars. Sometimes, in our studies, the West has been opposed to the East as to the modes of knowledge each one has developed. We often hear that the West has developed a form of conceptuality resulting in hard rationalism, whereas the East has only elaborated a mystical or poetic path to knowledge. Both these judgments should sooner or later be corrected. One of the protagonists of the debate is the philosopher Χρήστος Γιανναράς, from whom I quote the following lines :

> The Greek East understood the image as a means for expressing the truth of persons and things, and spoke an iconic language that signified the disclosure of the person of God and the person of humankind. Image is the signifier of personal relation, the "logical" disclosure of personal energy as invitation to communion and relation. […] It does not represent a static signified thing or substance, or substitute a reality or fact simply by an example, but discloses a personal energy invitatory to communion and relation, and preserves the character of knowledge as a fact of dynamic relation[45].

We are always under the eye of some image, but contemporary images—like the icons of the Emperor's power—are blocked, are conceptually conceived. The Internet works as a powerful dispositive subjugating to its images the lives of every sentient being. It expresses a logical cloture and has no personal energy. It does not disclose, but substitutes the reality of beings by means of simple avatars. Internet does not invite communion but rather connection. Its judgments are static *formulae*, not opening sentences to the participants of the *Person-Deixis* dimension. Things happen as in the novel *Flatland*, written by Abbott: a two-dimensional world is the theatre of a cloture that forestalls any event. Salvation could be flying away into three-dimensional geometric space. But neither saviours nor gods exist there.

Concluding Remarks

I hope I have been able to demonstrate that the connection between Late Antique and Late Modern ideologies of the 'Krisis' / 'crisis' could enlighten our grasp of the anxiety typical of contemporary human beings. To corroborate my point further, I

[45] Χρήστος Γιανναράς, *Τὸ Πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ Ἔρως*, Δόμος, Ἀθῆναι, 4. ἐκδοση, 2006. (English edition—which we quote from—translated by Norman Russell, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Ma, 2007, p. 184).

would like to share with you a few suggestions so that we can think over together the crisis of the gaze caused by the end of an active, positive view of judgment. The act of judgment is connected to processes of conceptualization and to the exercise of a discriminating faculty. Its original model is, on the one hand, that of the hunter gatherer civilizations, which were based on the ability to sort the nutritive elements and keep them pure from any disturbance and contamination. In the image of "winnowing" we can detect a typical trait that characterizes the development of the oral civilizations, that is, structural amnesia. These civilizations select memories and constantly separate them from everything that might alter the balance with the environment and the cohesion among the members of a given community. In this stage of anthropogenesis, the act of judgment is therefore a concrete device, whose value is subject to mechanisms of social endorsement that are linked to food, nourishment and the cycle of wheat. Later on, with the gradual adoption of writing technologies, the act of judgment establishes itself within the most powerful product of writing: the sentence. This is what allows the speaker to distil the semantic content that needs to be preserved while releasing it from the contingency of its bearer, i.e., the speaker uttering this or that sentence. In this way, the sentence fulfils the judgment, discarding the level of the statement (that is, the level of subjectivity), as if this were chaff. The judgment thus becomes objectifying.

Already in the Greek tradition, however, this active form of judgment underwent a contrary reaction of equal, if not stronger power. Especially in the theatrical culture of the Greeks, a 'deponent' conception of judgment emerges: the self is mirrored in the other, the Greek in the barbarian. A deponent view of judgment arises as a device for ruling differences. Consequently, the Greek theatre – always a source of compassion capable of channelling fear and pity – becomes the means by which humanity replaces citizenship, community supersedes society. When Christianity establishes itself, it announces something that is certainly new, but that is also able to pervade the minds as a result of the 'empathetic' sensibility known in the Hellenized world and from there radiating throughout the *oikoumene*. This is the picture that I have here sketched out to understand the world of Late Antiquity. Today, the presence of social media and technologies that convert the gaze into a logic of distancing leads to a model of judgment that aims to debase the other, to assimilate it following modalities that are not altruistic, but of a vampire-like nature. The twentieth century has left the question of the judgment open, splitting it into two segments: on the one hand, science, with its almost automating protocols; on the other, that particular system of phenomena that John Rawls facetiously defined as 'comprehensive doctrines': religions, beliefs, mythologies and even continental philosophy could enrich this domain.

John Rawls,[46] however, proved to be lacking in foresight; which is a limit in a scholar who saw himself as knowledgeable about social sciences. What he failed to anticipate was the vigorous emergence of the question of judgment on a distinctively religious level. Together with many followers of liberalism and relativistic positivism, Rawls believed that the foundation of public reason would free modern societies from the grip of comprehensive doctrines. By contrast, what in fact happened is that the global village took a different direction. We do not know what the result of this trend will be. Today a clear opposition between the advocates of active judgment and those supporting a 'deponent' understanding of judgment is taking shape. The former are the heirs of a confident and self-sufficient model of rationality, largely centred on the role of verbal language (taken by semioticians as the crucial symbolic system). The latter are, by exclusion, all those who have been looking for alternative models. In this second group, I would include the proponents of the crisis of judgment as a possible way out of the dehumanization of the humanities; indeed, I would go so far as to say that the model of reason that emerges from their efforts is, thanks to the contribution of the Christian civilization of Late Antiquity, a model that in the icon finds the best alternative to the barren nature of the concept.

Iconicity, as I have been arguing in the first part, shapes a path that is not entirely visible in the recent history of Europe, but has strong roots in Eastern Christianity and, through Byzantium, has been handed down to peoples that are linguistically and ethnically diversified: no language could have been more communicable than an iconic language. In this respect, the iconic nature of Christianity recovers in a virtuous way the iconic character of the ancient civilizations of theatre, without falling, however, into the fiction caused by the illusion of the stage. Judgment can be a central category for the globalized and digitalised late-modern world. And in this journey, the path indicated by the Fathers of the Church, by the Cappadocians and not by them alone, could turn out to be a precious antidote against the frustrations of reason and against the myths it fuelled, when it is idolized, namely the mythologies of a digital salvation of mankind. If we manage to stop looking at (dividing and divisive) the analytical model of reason as our golden calf and accept that we must seek for a more "liturgical" form of reasonable life, then the "iconophile" account of language offered by the Nicene fathers has helped us avoid the danger of idolizing—even without us being aware of it—the thirstiest among the gods: human reason.

[46] Reference is made here to the germinal work by J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap, 1971.