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Anne-Maren Andersen

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# Response to my Commentator

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Paul van den Hoven questions the way I use the term *pistis*. To some extent the critique is understandable, as I only very briefly examine the classic rhetorical origins of *pistis*.

## 2. PISTIS IN THE CLASSIC RHETORICAL TRADITION

It is correct that Plato indeed did not favour *pistis* – but judging the term only on Plato's opinion does not give an adequate picture of how the term was used and conceived in antiquity. Aristotle to some extent re-establishes *pistis*:

*Pistis* is rehabilitated by Aristotle... The term attains a number of meanings, with an emphasis on the concrete (proof) and with an emphasis on the rational (evidence) and on the community in a discursive forum (trust). (Roer, 2003, p. 93)

Aristotle uses a continuum going from certain knowledge to probability, but he rejects the scientific ideal of Plato and he denounces the loyalty to and the precedence of *episteme*:

In fact, he turned much of his attention precisely to the concerns of the areas of *pistis* (belief and probability and deliberation): ethics, rhetoric, and politics. (Kinneavy, 1987, p. 38)

Even though man cannot reach or obtain *episteme*, it is important to make systematic studies of nature and reality, as can be seen by Xenofanes, Empedokles and especially Isokrates (Kinneavy, 1987, p. 35).

Isokrates exclusively uses *pistis* in a positive sense and did, with his 'ideal of education', considerably impact the rest of the classical period. The ideal was based on the double meaning of *pistis* as both product and process; *pistis* as product is "a mental conviction of some certainty, freely chosen" and *pistis* as process refers to the persuasive appeals: ethos, logos and pathos (Kinneavy, 1987, p. 25).

## 3. PISTIS IN A RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Another reason for expressing concern for the way I use *pistis* van den Hoven finds in the fact that *pistis* is a religious term.

In the pre-classic period *pistis* was associated with religion, but it is important to consider the difference between the magic-religious word and the worldly-dialogical word. The first mentioned subdues the listener just by being uttered, the latter convinces by arguments, and *pistis* is in pre-classic time closely connected to the magic-religious language. But from the 5<sup>th</sup> century and onwards *pistis* is more and more linked to the worldly-dialogical area and to rhetoric (Roer, 2003, p. 69)

As pointed out by van den Hoven *pistis* is a key term in Christianity, and it is his opinion that this disqualifies or endangers the rhetorical use I make of the term. In the book *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* Kinneavy makes the argument that the Christian notion of Faith is heavily based on exactly the antique rhetorical notion of *pistis*, and Kinneavy thoroughly reviews both the negative and positive aspects of *pistis* found in antiquity.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

That *pistis* is *also* a term used in Christianity, does not alter the basic fact that it is a core rhetorical term, by Rigotti even described as “il termine chiave di tutta la retorica classica” – the key concept for all classical rhetoric (Rigotti, 1997, p. 3).

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