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***The Problem of the Icon in an Apparently Iconic Era,
but Very Close to the Ancient Iconoclasm***

The icon dispute is ultimately about the value of the images and highlights an issue of extreme importance to understanding the current anthropological context. Going back to the motives that have opposed iconophiles and iconoclasts means recognizing the deep dynamics that affect contemporary art and man's life. To address this context, it seems necessary to return to the icon dispute, which concerns the characteristic passage from the visible to the invisible that takes place in the icon, that is the particular way that the icon becomes both visible and invisible media. Today we talk about the postmodern man's inability to represent the unportrayable. This inability shows a strong analogy with iconoclasm. We are already on the way to the arbitrariness of the representation in modern art, as "almost everything", writes N. Goodman, "can stand for almost anything", and "almost every image can represent almost anything". What presence is this, with nothingness as reference? An undefinable presence, an 'other' presence from any possible definition, unnamable alterity that coincides with 'total immanence' and only art, with its unique and privileged cognitive power, can restore a certain transimmanence of the world.