

*Abstract*

Iconoclasm originally implies the power inherent to images, since to argue against images often means to involve images in the argument. Hence, the negation of this inherent iconic power turns out to be itself iconic. Beginning with an interpretation of Old Testament aniconism, the text explores this paradoxical notion of the dispute over images in general.

Old Testament aniconism had a performative dimension, since it never banned images in general, but rather argued against a very few, special ones. Moreover, this dispute over visual images stipulated new images in language, making the iconic capacity of language appear equivalent to the uninterrupted iconic power that originally resides in the image. But historically speaking, this iconic power did not simply endure through the times of radical aniconism. Rather, it became evident that the negation of images always relies on other images. It is by means of the different forms of an alternative iconism in language and imagination that disputes over images have often turned out to be some of the most productive arguments in favour of iconicity in general.