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For a Philosophy of
Aniconism in the Islam

LIT

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The time of the technical (r)evolution

The "modern time" (the time after the invention of photography) brought new problems. People believed to be captured in the photograph and to be exposed to evil power. Nowadays, such way of thinking can still be proved in Bosnia (but also for example in Algeria). The provable uncertainty among people, who want to hang some photographs of themselves in their homes, speaks also for this fact. But what does that mean? Referring to a photograph, one thinks of a depiction of a space-time period, not of an imitation in the sense of „creation of a creature" (creation of life breath) but only the „sketch" of the shadow (the light). But because, according to Qu'ran, "everything floats" (space-time continuum is in permanent motion, for example in the Qu'ran 36,40: „...and all float on in a sphere.." and also humans take part in that, which is a fact of the godly order.

Each try of interrupting it doesn't have any sense and therefore a photograph is an „incomplete excerpt" of a process, that is only perfect (namely in the fact of reality) as a in its wholeness. The photograph is a „capturing" of light and shadow, which at the same time is a positive component in the discussion concerning aniconism. If the artists had been accused for creative action before, they now don't have anything to do with this excuse, as they only capture something with the help of chemical processes.

But just this capturing (resting immobility) is a contrast to movement as the characteristic of everything alive and therefore it is an opposite to the divine order. According to this, a photographer is a person who captures something senseless as long as it doesn't help the people in their everyday life (for) acquisition of knowledge and not (for) satisfaction of pleasure. A photograph is accordingly an illusion of reality, for reality is, in contrast to a photograph, always relevant to the current situation.

The same can be ascertained with regard to video, TV and cinema. Although these recording formats are able to represent the movements of the shown, this movement takes place in the past and with this it is not relevant to the current situation and is not a part of the real space-time continuum. Of course, this object (video, film) is a part in the space-time continuum including the movement that it shows, but it is not able to move itself and therefore it is an artificial product that captures the past. A photograph is a depiction of the absent as the shown figures don't have any *ruh* – life breath. In the eyes of some Moslems and in connection with Pre-Islamic traditions, like the belief in *jinn*, there is a belief in the influence of negative power, because one (on photograph) is motionless (Because of that one believes to be in its mercy; or rather one is moving, as in case of video recordings, but he is also "captured" in the past – one cannot "defend oneself").³⁸ A similar behaviour can be noted in terms of the Internet. The virtual reality is evidently transferred in time, so the ritual ablution is not

³⁸ A tradition which can also be found in other cultures, as for example in some Indian tribes in North Amerika.

required for reading the Qu'ran on the internet.³⁹ The pictures and texts are „set down“ and „managed“ in a global network, space and time, but often, because of possible difficulties concerning the identification of Arabic script (but also other non-Latin scripts) texts are „posted“ as pictures („jpg“- or „gif“ formats). This can be explained by a „useful purpose“ (or rather acquisition of knowledge). In doing so it is stressed that through this, the believer is helped to find the „right way“ (In the course of this, the term *da`wa* is mentioned, which means as much as „appeal to the path of Allah“ or rather „equivalent call (above all mission) request“ etc..⁴⁰

How actual the question of aniconism is, shows for example the ban of „Matrix“ films in Egypt in the year 2003.⁴¹ Although with a political „touch“, too, this ban had been justified with the „unislamic“ presentation of Creation in the film. The machine world of Matrix as a creator of existence does not correspond with the Islamic doctrine and sense of life and thus, the committee („board of censors“), which consists of theologians, authors and artists, decided not to show this film. A few months later, this ban (aniconism) has been abolished without any explanation.⁴²

In Islam, tattooing is not allowed. Tattooing, as a practice from the time of *ja-hiliyya*,⁴³ is regarded as an unnecessary exaggeration of attempts of improvement,⁴⁴ as well as an „alteration of divine creation“ and among others it is forbidden in terms of medical reasons (because of possible complications or risk of infection).⁴⁵

³⁹ See Ibric, A.: Islamisches Bilderverbot., 2006.

⁴⁰ Online source (author: site operator/provider):
<http://mitglied.lycos.de/muslimonline/buecher/frau/dawa/>, 14.1.2005.

⁴¹ See also footnote 5

⁴² For details please see: Ibric, A. : Islamisches Bilderverbot.,2006.

⁴³ Tattooing is connected with Pre-Islamic religious practice and rituals. But it has to be stressed that the practice of tattooing has been usual in many parts of the Islamic world, especially among the Bedouines , until recent times.

⁴⁴ „There were tattoos in Pre-Islamic time (the »Jahiliyya« -the »time of ignorance«). The Islam prohibits them because they are harmful for the human body. Allah forbids only certain things only when they have negative effects on us. Sometimes tattoos lead to harm of our health.“, in: Institut für Islamfragen: Ist die Tätowierung im Islam erlaubt? Ein Fatwa von Marwa al-Kanadi, online quotation on:

<http://www.islaminstitut.de/index.php?templateid=artikel&id=49>,16.7.2003, there given as a further source:
<http://www.alittihad.co.ae/details.asp?M=1&A=1&ArticleID=125648&Journal=7/17/2003>, 14.1.2005.

⁴⁵ In this context an article should be pointed out, which in the sense of the Islamic ban on tattoos, can serve as a „bad example“. Namely, following the will of his father, an Australian cut out his tattoos (after he died, mind you), preserved and framed them in order to maintain a memento (see part I of the treatise: „Purpose of recollection“ of pictures) of his father. In: „Da die Haut. Tätowierungen halten ein Leben lang. Und manchmal noch länger“, FHM Magazin, publisher Attic futura, august 2003, p.22.