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SEEING AND BEING SEEN: A Response to Susan Sontag's Essays on Photography

NEIL EVERNDEN

> "... a photograph can be the object of three practices (or of three emotions, or of three intentions): to do, to undergo, to look. The *Operator* is the Photographer. The *Spectator* is ourselves. ... And the person or thing photographed is the target... which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the photograph."
>
> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

PHOTOGRAPHY IS MOST commonly discussed from two of the three vantage points specified by Roland Barthes above: that of the Operator and that of the Spectator. If approached through the former, we pay attention to the skills and motivations of the photographer and to the objectives he or she entertains. If the Spectator is of primary interest, we attend to the effect of the photograph or to its social function. But neither of these approaches is likely to illuminate the experience of the third player, the target. Being that target is not a trivial event, particularly if the kind of attention paid by the photographer is, as some believe, of an aggressive and exploitative nature.

Susan Sontag's *On Photography* remains one of the most insightful contributions to our understanding of photography. She certainly pays attention to each of the points of view mentioned above. It is also the case that she portrays the activity of the Operator as essentially aggressive. Her discussion of the relationship between Operator and target is especially interesting and, I think, contentious. In what follows I shall try to question the justification for treating photography in this way, to explore the parallels between her discussion of photography and other treatments of vision in general, and to suggest that a

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pluralistic approach to the nature of photography may be more appropriate. Before making this argument, I shall briefly review Sontag's characterization of the photographic act.

I. Photography as Predatory Seeing

Sontag uses two metaphors to convey concisely her understanding of photographic seeing: predation and voyeurism.

> . . . there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed.[1]

This is not a novel suggestion, but it is one that some photographers have been defensive about. As Sontag admits, they "feel obliged to protest photography's innocence, claiming that the predatory attitude is incompatible with a good picture. . . ."[2] But while she concedes that fine photography is never purely predatory, it is evident from the sheer number of statements like, "There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera"[3] and "A camera is sold as a predatory weapon,"[4] that she believes there is something in the photographic act that can appropriately be characterized as predatory. But what does it mean to be predatory?

From the quotations cited, it would seem that being predatory entails aggressiveness and objectification. When we think of predation in the animal world, the first of these would certainly spring to mind, rightly or wrongly. The second might not, and yet Sontag is probably correct in connecting the two. There is inevitably an objectification involved in the act of predation, although it is apt to be ignored in the presence of the more visible subsequent stages, pursuit and capture. But it must be there, since the prey has to be identified as an object for pursuit before the act can unfold.[5] It has been suggested that this initial objectification is one feature with which we may all be familiar, for it is present each time we encounter the gaze of another person. Mary Midgley claims that an angry response to being looked at is consistent with the biological origins of the act.

> To stare steadily while you approach someone, or to stand still staring after he has seen you, is as direct a threat as can be made. *Why* this should be so is an interesting field for inquiry. It may well have something to do with the fact that predators naturally stare fixedly at prospective prey before jumping on it. And they are of course

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> regarding it as an object, not as a possible friend—which is just the effect a direct stare conveys to a human being.[6]

The ability of the "other" to reduce one to the status of an object has been discussed frequently. When a person perceives that he or she is being seen by another, subjectivity evaporates and the person becomes an object in the other's world. This realization is at least disquieting, and often embarrassing or threatening. A person transformed from worldly subject to worldless object has none of the rights which accrue to a subject, and is thus at the mercy of the one who stares, one who has no more moral obligation to his object than has the photographer to the contents of his viewfinder. As Sontag quotes Diane Arbus as saying, "The camera is a kind of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility toward the people photographed."[7]

Becoming an object for another is normally an occurrence to be resisted. The defense against objectification is the assertion, through speech and action, of subjectivity. Such assertion is part of what we would normally regard as interpersonal communication, and is obviously vital in the maintenance of relationships between subjects. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the situation concisely:

> The other person transforms me into an object and denies me, I transform him into an object and deny him, it is asserted. In fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect's. This is what happens, for instance, when I fall under the gaze of a stranger. But even then, the objectification of each by the other's gaze is felt as unbearable only because it takes the place of possible communication.[8]

Objectification occurs only when communication—the revelation of subjectivity—is denied in some way. In the case in point, the obstruction of reciprocity occurs through the medium of the camera, whose use effectively removes one of the players from the scene and permits him to assume the role of the stranger.

But the disturbance of communication is also characteristic of the other condition that Sontag uses to help characterize photography. It is the sort of disturbance that, according to Erwin Straus, permits the emergence of the voyeur.

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> In viewing, there is a transition from the immediate I-thou encounter, i.e., mutual participation, to a unilateral intention—a transition from the I-thou relationship to the subject-object relationship proper. All looking and being looked at is a lapse from immediate communication. This is demonstrated in everyday life by our an- yan nd irritation at being observed.[9]

Sontag's claim that photography establishes a "chronic voyeuristic relationship" seems entirely justified if, as Straus claims, " 'looking at' objectifies." Photography not only permits but encourages, and some would say demands, the condition of detachment that is prerequisite to voyeurism.

If it is the case that the photographic act inevitably involves the erosion of reciprocity and the establishment of the photographer as an aggressively objectifying observer, then Sontag's two metaphors seem extremely well chosen. It is that assumption we must now examine, however. We may begin to do so by turning our attention to yet another of Sontag's descriptions, one which, while less arresting than the former two, may be more revealing. She says that photographic seeing "turns out to be mainly the practice of a kind of dissociative seeing."[10] In itself, that statement seems consistent with what has been said thus far. But the implication that photography might be regarded as a particular species of seeing—dissociative seeing—suggests that there are other ways of seeing that we might profitably explore.

II. Sight and Distance

Much of what Sontag says about "photographic seeing" would make equally good sense with the adjective removed. In fact, there are notable similarities between her fifth chapter, "The Heroism of Vision," and Hans Jonas' well-known essay, "The Nobility of Sight." But instead of suggesting that one kind of seeing, i.e., photographic seeing, predisposes us to relate to the world in a particular way, Jonas argues that there are specific visual imperatives that affect the way we understand reality. Vision, he says, gives us a world in which everything occurs simultaneously and in mutual proportion, but without any indication of causal relatedness between the various elements. And it gives us the world as something "out there," significantly removed from ourselves and arrayed for our inspection and possible manipulation. Our gain from reliance on vision is the concept of objectivity, "of the thing as it is in itself as distinct from

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the thing as it affects me."[11] Our loss, however, stems from the ignorance of interrelatedness that accompanies strict reliance on visual evidence. Through vision, a detachment can be established, and if the distance is great enough, "it can put the observed object outside the sphere of possible intercourse and of environmental relevance. In that case, perceptual distance may turn into mental distance, and the phenomenon of disinterested beholding may emerge, this essential ingredient in what we call 'objectivity.' . . ."[12]

If perceptual distance leads to objectivity, and if such distance is a consequence of vision, then the emphasis on vision that is encouraged by the camera may only serve to amplify the tendency to "disinterested beholding." In that case our way of seeing, and hence our way of believing the world to be, would be reinforced through photography. To Jonas' assertion that "the mind has gone where vision pointed,"[13] we might add "with the assistance of a technological amplifier of visual dependence." And if this is so, then what Sontag is describing is not just photographic seeing, but the intensification of our reliance on sight. Her claims that as a consequence of photography "the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles" and that photography "creates estrangement from, rather than union with, nature,"[14] might well be lamentations over the consequences of visual dependence rather than criticisms of photography per se.

Jonas' emphasis on the singular nature of vision has not, of course, gone unchallenged, any more than have similar assertions dating back at least to Aristotle.[15] And if the parallels between Sontag's treatment of photographic seeing and Jonas' treatment of vision in general are as apparent as I have suggested, then perhaps this portion of Sontag's thesis also requires some kind of challenge. If it can be shown that it is inappropriate to treat vision as a unitary phenomenon, it may be worth asking whether more than one form of seeing might also be entailed in photography. To be fair, Sontag nowhere claims that there is an absolute form of seeing, and indeed the fact that she distinguishes one kind of seeing as "photographic" implies the existence of others. However, I think it can be said that she treats this "photographic seeing" as something that is always evident in photography and as something that can be accurately characterized as objectifying and predatory. Give that, it seems appro-

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priate to treat her thesis as generically similar to Jonas' discussion of vision. The response evoked by Jonas' essay may also be applicable to Sontag's.

III. SEEING WITHOUT STARING

Don Ihde has criticized the "reductionism" inherent in discussions of vision and objectification. He refers not only to the reduction of thought to vision, but to a "second reductionist move" which "reduces vision to an *objectifying gaze.*"[16] This amounts to a rejection of the characterization sketched out above, which equates vision with objectification and detachment. In contrast, he argues that nothing is essentially given in vision until it is informed by the intentions of the subject. The use to which it is put and the world which it seems to reveal are consequences of the metaphysical stance assumed at the outset. Hence while a "Cartesian seer" might well perceive a world of free-standing, clear and distinct particles arrayed before him, a "spiritualist seer" might find instead a host of ephemeral properties. Each seer would attend to those attributes that provide evidence consistent with his belief, the first finding hard-edged objects and the latter discovering mists and moods. Other seers would presumably find still more possibilities, although apparently using the same instrument of perception. "In short," says Ihde, "what I am isolating here is an essential feature of vision: *Vision is essentially situated within some set of 'beliefs' which influence what is 'taken' as vision—we cannot find a 'presuppositionless' vision—but at the same time the polymorphy of vision always exceeds the sedimentation of those 'beliefs.'* "[17] Jonas finds vision to be objectifying because he begins with the world given him through his culture, a world of objects that can indeed be reinforced through the attributes of vision but which do not necessarily derive from it. Jonas may be correct in asserting that vision helps sustain the world view we hold, but only because it is able to help us find the evidence we seek. Perhaps it is only through vision that we *could* find the evidence we require, as he suggests, but even so it need not follow that vision can *only* disclose such evidence. And just as Jonas ignores the possibility of a polymorphy of vision, Sontag seems to discount the possibility of a polymorphy of applications of vision, a polymorphy of photographic seeing.

Ihde ends his essay by suggesting that Merleau-Ponty "points the direction away from the implicit objectification found in

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vision when he indicates that the 'look' only objectifies when it 'takes the place of possible communication.' "[18] This implies the possibility of looking without objectification, and perhaps also of a photographic seeing that is not synonymous with objectification. Given the context in which photography normally functions, it is not at all surprising that it appears "predatory." If the quality of the photographer's attention is akin to staring, then the consequence will be objectification: he will find his "prey." But if that prey is able to resist—if communication can occur—then the act may have a different resolution. To the detached stare, objects appear; to the submissive inquiry, subjects are revealed. The "guerilla" photographer[19] inevitably stares, and receives no messages. He extracts images like minerals from a neutral world of visual resources. But if there were an alternative, there would be different assumptions present from the outset. The "responsive" photographer would be one who begins with the assumption of reciprocity, and who looks in order to *provoke* a statement, an assertion of subjectivity. And he would attempt to photograph that statement rather than the simple husk of the prey/object. If this is a possible alternative for the photographer, one would expect to find some evidence of it. And in fact, as Sontag herself documents, it is well represented in statements by photographers.

The photographer Wynn Bullock observed that "to interpret an object in terms of its external surface dimensions is to see the object superficially." His search, in contrast, was for the meaningful in his subject. "When Cartier-Bresson referred to *the decisive moment* of taking a picture he meant, I feel, the mirrored moment that expresses the object so as to evoke in the mind of the viewer significant and inner qualities."[20]

Dorothea Lange also shunned the superficial, and was explicit about her search for the inner quality.

> Among the familiar, [the photographer's] behavior is that of the intimate rather than of the stranger. Rather than acknowledge, he embraces; rather than perform, he responds. Moving in a world so much composed of himself, he cannot help but express himself. Every image he sees, every photograph he takes, becomes in a sense a self-portrait. The portrait is made more meaningful by intimacy—an intimacy shared not only by the photographer with his subject but by the *audience*.[21]

The emphasis on intimacy is noteworthy, as is the suggestion that the photographer is so entwined with the subject as to make each

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photograph essentially a self-portrait. Minor White also claimed that "The photographer projects himself into everything he sees, identifying himself with everything in order to know it and to feel it better."[22] Whether or not these photographers can be judged successful in their endeavor, there could scarcely be a more forthright recipe for avoidance of the predatory stance. What they attempt is precisely the opposite of the sustained voyeuristic relationship that Sontag accepts as the photographic norm. They explicitly shun the role of the stranger, and in so doing attempt to see without staring so as to bring a different quality of attention to their work.

Sontag is well aware of the alternative outlined above. She carefully describes it in her fifth essay, but without concluding that there is any significant change in the outcome as a result of such intentions. True, some photographers speak of self-expression while others emphasize their role as facilitators, placing the "self at reality's service." Some treat photography as an intensely intellectual activity, others as an intuitive or inspirational one. Some claim to be making objective portraits, while others concentrate on "inner landscapes." Sontag recognizes these differences in goals, and that they are often antithetical. But they do not, in her view, result in different species of images. They merely reflect different, possibly oscillating, forms of motivation. What is being questioned here is whether the stated intentions of the photographer can be regarded as unimportant, or whether they indicate significantly different activities.

IV. Means and Ends

> What talented photographers do cannot of course be characterized either as simply predatory or as simply, and essentially, benevolent. Photography is the paradigm of an inherently equivocal connection between self and world—its version of the ideology of realism sometimes dictating an effacement of the self in relation to the world, sometimes authorizing an aggressive relation to the world which celebrates the self. One side or the other of the connection is always being rediscovered and championed.[23]

The above quotation from Sontag's book suggests that she recognizes some sort of dualism within photography. Here, however, she is primarily speaking of the way in which photographers *explain* their involvement with the medium, rather than of any essential features of the medium itself. Interestingly though, it would seem that her own description of photography

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would be most supportive of those photographers who stress the "aggressive relation to the world which celebrates the self." The question remains as to whether those who begin with this expectation treat their subject differently or produce different kinds of images than those who start with the alternative view.

There is certainly evidence that photographers will go to great lengths to attempt to achieve particular kinds of images rather than others. Sontag hints at the significance of such attempts when she observes that "An important result of the coexistence of these two ideals—assault on reality and submission to reality—is a recurrent ambivalence toward photography's *means*. Whatever the claims for photography as a form of personal expression on a par with painting, it remains true that its originality is inextricably linked to the powers of the machine. . . ."[24] What this implies is that the actual process of photography is modified toward certain ends. Sontag directs attention to the form this modification must take and the reasons for it, without explicitly recognizing its significance.

She observes that "as cameras get ever more sophisticated, more automated, more acute, some photographers are tempted to disarm themselves or to suggest that they are really not armed, and prefer to submit themselves to the limits imposed by a pre-modern camera technology. . . ."[25] This implies something more than an initial intention of nonaggression. There is an actual "disarming," that is, a renouncing of certain photographic means. In practical terms this means an abandonment of the status quo, the 35mm single-lens reflex camera. The "pre-modern" device to which they turn is usually one which is much less convenient to use, but which they believe may lead to a different quality of image. But the "quality" sought is not simply technical; it is also perceptual. One "sees" differently with a camera of the older design. Bear in mind that while it is a technically simpler instrument, its operation is different and more demanding. In fact the portion of the photographic act which seems most characteristic, looking through the viewfinder, is essentially absent. Without anything we would call a viewfinder, the photographer is compelled to develop the ability to conceive the potential product before committing him- or herself to the long act of realization. Indeed the entire process of nurturing an image can be so prolonged and involving that the notion of an "image gardener" seems more appropriate than that of a glass-eyed predator.

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Eventually even the older instruments transfer the preconceived image to paper, but the actual time spent in "looking at" the subject is small in relation to the total act. In contrast, with the use of hand cameras with viewfinders the nature of the photographic experience is transformed so that "looking at" becomes the dominant phase. But it also becomes dominant for the other essential participant, the subject. Remember that the photographer with the "pre-modern" equipment is not even behind the camera when the exposure is made, nor is any part of his face concealed. Indeed, he may have been talking with the subject throughout. With a viewfinder, the photographer becomes an eye and ceases to function as a partner in the event. The distance between photographer and subject, between Operator and Spectrum, is thus firmly established. The technology alters the event, or at least facilitates a different relationship between the photographer and the photographed.

In rejecting the potential for predation in modern equipment, the photographer is attempting to avoid aggression toward the subject. Even a semi-modern variant of the hand camera, which uses a waist-level viewing screen rather than the usual eye-level viewfinder, is felt by some to give a different tone to the photographic experience. In this case, the camera is not so much an ocular extension as a portable projection box, upon whose screen compositions materialize. And perhaps most important, the photographer using such a device does not have to stare at the subject at all: in effect, he bows to it.[26]

This suggests that two of Barthes' three facets of photography are open to modification. Certainly the photographer's intention is variable, and this is expressed not only through words but through the kind of technological appendage he or she chooses to adopt. But the approach the Operator chooses affects the experience and perhaps the behavior of the subject or Spectrum. In a sense, then, what is photographed can also vary depending on the form the encounter takes. Being looked at need not be an intimidating experience, if communication has not been throttled off—if one remains a *subject*. Avoidance of the gaze of the stranger was Merleau-Ponty's recipe for avoiding objectification, and Dorothea Lange's for the production of the expressive photograph.

But while there may be a plurality of photographic intentions and a difference in the form of subject participation, we still do not know whether the third aspect is affected: do we as spec-

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tators experience a different photograph as a result of the change in the relationship of Operator and Spectrum? Sontag seems to assume that it is more or less constant—that a photographic image is a photographic image, whatever the process of its genesis. We must now ask if this assumption is justified. In other words, we must ask what the experience of the Spectator actually is.

V. Subjectivity and Aesthetics

Given the preponderance of what one might call "predatory photography," Sontag's characterization seems quite compelling. However, the fact that her description of the social use of the medium is illuminating need not imply that her description is exhaustive. Obviously, such "dissociative seeing" could be encouraged by the act of photographing, and we have been considering the possibility of this in examining the relationship of photographer and subject. I have argued that it is not inevitable that communication be abolished in the act, and therefore that objectification need not occur. But even if I am correct, that does not mean that the final product may not be, as Sontag suggests, an image torn from context. In his sympathetic review of *On Photography,* John Berger has suggested that this absence of context is one of the more important revelations of the book. However, he goes on to suggest that there may be two different uses of photography, and that the question of context differentiates them.

> There are photographs which belong to private experience and there are those (probably the majority) which are used publicly. The private photograph—the portrait of a mother, a picture of a daughter, a group photo of one's own team—is appreciated and read in a context *which is continuous with that from which the camera removed it.* It is a memento from the same life being lived. Such a photograph remains surrounded by the very meaning from which it was severed. A mechanical device, the camera, has been used as an instrument to contribute to a living memory. The photograph has crystallized a moment, bestowing a kind of personal eternity upon it. Such photographs are always of the already known.
>
> The publicly used photograph usually presents the unknown—or, at the most, that which has only become known through other photographs. It offers information of a kind: information severed from experience. It is almost pure code. *If the publicly used photograph belongs anywhere, it belongs to the memory of a total stranger.*[27]

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This distinction between "photographs of the already known" and photographs belonging "to the memory of a total stranger" restates the duality in an interesting way. It is the latter, the context-destroying use of photography, on which Sontag concentrates. But the former is an important exception. If the context can be provided by the viewer, by the Spectator, then a different experience may be had. In place of the quintessential strangeness of contextless photographs, we have as an alternative photographs which function within a life, photographs that are set in context by the perception of the viewer. At least in this limited case, it is clear that the role of the Spectator is vital, and cannot be taken for granted.

But is this a special case? Are family pictures the only example of the alteration of response through the expectations of a viewer? In the case of these "kin photographs," the provision of a context seems obvious and inevitable—if we recognize the subject as someone known, then we also understand how to make sense of the image. We grasp the circumstances, and the meaning of the Spectrum becomes clear. But we must ask whether such "kin photography" is limited in a literal sense to the nuclear family, or whether it is related instead to a style of understanding. I mean to suggest that the alternative tradition in photography, which Sontag ably describes but seemingly dismisses, may be an instance of kin photography. Remember, the photographers of this tradition emphasize the importance of avoiding the role of the stranger, and of participating with the subject in the creation of the photograph. They assume a common basis, a relationship, with the subject. And they could, if they wished, summon support from a considerable range of aesthetic literature to demonstrate the plausibility of their approach. Recall Dorothea Lange's contention that the photographer functions as an intimate rather than as a stranger, and having so committed himself to his subject, "every photograph he takes, becomes in a sense a self-portrait," or Wynn Bullock's advocacy of "the mirrored moment that expresses the object so as to evoke in the mind of the viewer significant and inner qualities." These seem quite consistent with philosophic insights such as that of Ortega y Gasset, who claimed that "The esthetic object is inwardness as such—it is each thing as 'I.' "[28] More recently, Louis Dupré has argued that

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> What distinguishes the aesthetic experience is that it is never a pure perception, but a perception colored by a subjective disposition. Schleiermacher regarded the aesthetic experience as an awareness of the self *with* the object, a conscious merging of subject and object, rather than a perception *of* an object. It is this subjective disposition which gives its unique character to the aesthetic perception. The merging of the self with its object is usually referred to as a *feeling*. . . .
>
> The revealing quality of feelings consists in their ability to read appearances as *expressions* of a subject. . . .[29]

The specific disavowal of a purely objective stance as a possibility in aesthetic experience is noteworthy. And the involvement of the self is vital, for "Only by a direct participation of the self can an appearance ever be viewed as the expression of another self"[30] and as a communication. Bearing in mind the earlier suggestion that the alternative to predatory photography requires attention to the subject's assertion of subjectivity rather than to the simple surface of the Spectrum, it could be argued that what Sontag excludes in her discussion is the aesthetic use of photography. For if Dupré is correct in holding that in order to provoke aesthetic feelings "Something in the 'object' must beckon me" and that "Somehow the appearances themselves must suggest the presence of a subject, inducing the perceiver to receive them as expressions rather than as mere appearances,"[31] then the "dissociative seeing" that Sontag associates with photography would virtually preclude aesthetic experience.

However, it is unnecessary to enter into a debate on aesthetics to demonstrate the essential difference in intent illustrated by Dupré and the photographers cited above. Their emphasis on expressiveness seems consistent with Barthes' contention that "with regard to the heterogeneity of 'good' photographs, all we can say is that the *object speaks,* it induces us, vaguely, to think."[32] Predatory photography vivisects a world it postulates as inanimate and meaningless, while the alternative tradition seeks expression among the subjects it encounters. And the very expectation of expression dissipates the predatory attitude and invites the engagement of the viewer with the viewed. That expectation also implies the existence of a shared context, for without that, any communication is impossible.

Berger differentiated between two uses of photography, one of which is public and devoid of context, the other familial and rich in context. But the fact that the viewer *can* be induced to

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provide a context, and that the photographer can deliberately seek to engage his subject so as to suggest a context, implies that the familial use may be more widely applicable than Berger suggests. Sontag assumes no context, while the expressive photographer assumes a significant one, a context open to all who feel kinship to the subject. And that sense of kinship need not be restricted to members of an immediate family: it may apply equally to the *family of subjects.* Our experience with other subjects provides us with a shared understanding. We are, as Hans Jonas says, "peepholes into the inwardness of substance."[33] It is part of the role of art, according to Ortega y Gasset, to afford "the peculiar pleasure we call esthetic by making it *seem* that the inwardness of things, their executant reality, is opened to us."[34]

VI. Conclusion

What I have been trying to suggest is that the condition which Sontag treats as typical of photography is in fact a special one, hostile to expression and, in the view of many, antithetical to aesthetic experience. In effect, she has described a way of seeing which prohibits aesthetic involvement by denying the existence of subjects altogether—there is no one in a photograph to relate to, only interesting surfaces to stalk as images. I have suggested that this is not the only possibility, and that one cannot ignore the intentions of the participants. The photographer is on record as having varying intentions, including the intention of avoiding the role of stranger that Sontag assigns him. The subject or Spectrum is the silent partner in this, but a partner who can arguably be expected to behave and participate differently depending on the approach of the photographer and the experience of the event. And the third participant, the viewer or Spectator, is able to vary his or her intention by providing a context of understanding through which to view the image. If the photograph is indeed drained of subjective encounter through predatory photography, then of course the sense of strangeness may prevail and Sontag's description will be entirely appropriate. But if the photographer is able to give the viewer the sense of kinship that arises from the recognition of a fellow subject, an expressive participant in the photographic event, then the objectification that follows the stare can be dissipated. As Merleau-Ponty warns, objectification can occur if the stare is allowed to take the place of possible communication. It is this

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denial of communication that permits Sontag to draw upon the images of predation and voyeurism to describe the social use of photography, and it is precisely those features that many photographers and viewers of photography seek to transcend. Their rate of success may not be impressive, and the social forces that encourage the trend described by Sontag are no doubt part of the reason for that. Nevertheless, the fact that photography tends to function in a predatory fashion does not constitute grounds for concluding that it is essentially predatory in nature, nor for implying a uniformity of photographic effect. Like vision, the fruits of photography vary with the metaphysics of the user. That being so, the most disturbing feature of Sontag's book is the kind of metaphysic made apparent in the public use of photography. Her book is more revelatory of our society than of photography per se.

NOTES

1. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 14.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Ibid., p. 14.
5. For further discussion of the phenomenology of predation, see Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
6. Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (New York: New American Library, 1978), p. 11.
7. Sontag, p. 41.
8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 360–61.
9. Erwin Straus, *Phenomenological Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 219.
10. Sontag, p. 97.
11. Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 147.
12. Ibid., pp. 151–52.
13. Ibid., p. 152.
14. Sontag, pp. 23, 97.
15. See discussion by Don Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 82–92.
16. Ibid., p. 82; for a discussion of the significance of "the gaze" and "the glance" in painting, see Norman Bryson's important book, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). There is also an interesting but more general discussion of the glance in F. J. J. Buytendijk's *Woman: A Contemporary View* (New York: Newman Press, 1968), pp. 218–21.

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17. Ibid., p. 87.
18. Ibid., p. 91.
19. This term was coined by the Canadian artist Harry Savage.
20. Wynn Bullock, "Space and Time," *in* Nathan Lyons (ed.), *Photographers on Photography* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 37.
21. Dorothea Lange, "Photographing the Familiar," *in* Lyons, p. 71.
22. Minor White, cited in Sontag, p. 116.
23. Sontag, p. 123.
24. Ibid., pp. 123–24.
25. Ibid., p. 124.
26. I first heard this observation of "bowing" made by a professional photographer, Evan Gushal, in the late 1950s.
27. John Berger, "Photography: God of the Instant," *Seven Days* (April 7, 1978), pp. 28–30.
28. José Ortega y Gasset, *Phenomenology and Art* (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 139.
29. Louis Dupré, "Aesthetic Perception and its Relation to Ordinary Perception," *in* Erwin Straus (ed.), *Aisthesis and Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 174.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 175.
32. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 38.
33. Jonas, p. 91.
34. Ortega y Gasset, p. 139.

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