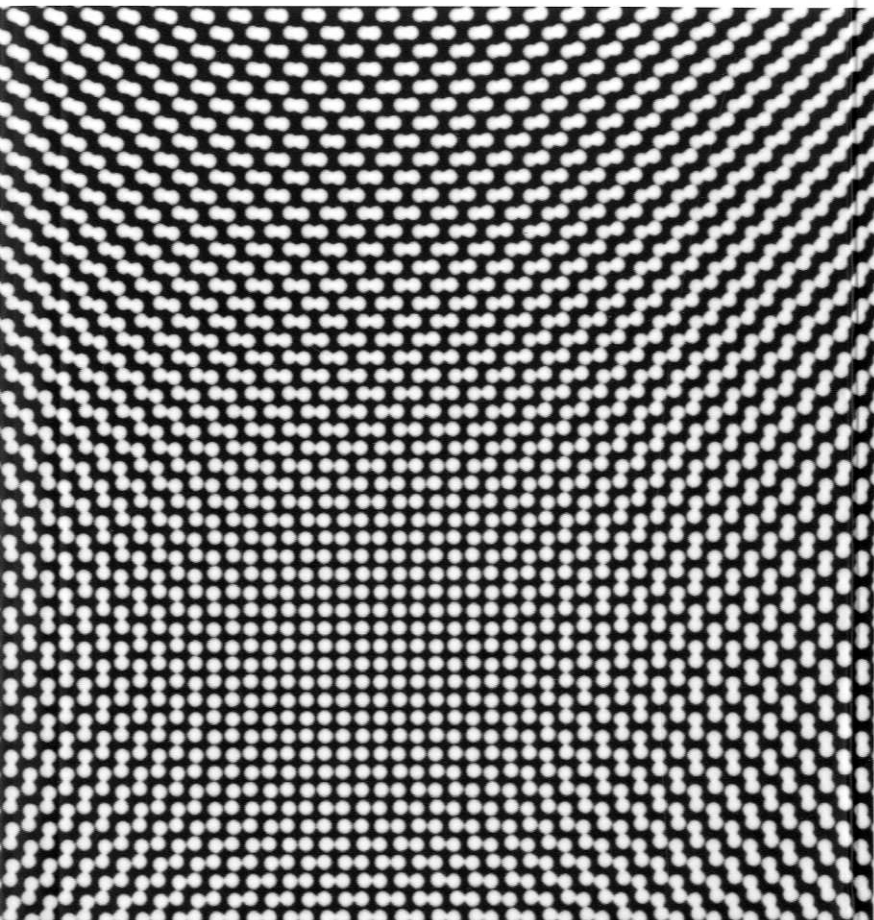




LARUELLE

The Concept of Non-Photography

BILINGUAL EDITION



Of what do these essays speak? Of photography in the flesh – but not the flesh of the photographer. Myriads of negatives tell of the world, speaking in clichés among themselves, constituting a vast conversation, filling a photosphere that is located nowhere. But one single photo is enough to express a real that all photographers aspire one day to capture, without ever quite succeeding in doing so. Even so, this real lingers on the negatives' surface, at once lived and imperceptible. Photographs are the thousand flat facets of an ungraspable identity that only shines – and at times faintly – through something else. What more is there to a photo than a curious and prurient glance? And yet it is also a fascinating secret.

The Concept of Non-Photography develops a rigorous new thinking of the photograph in its relation to science, philosophy and art, and introduces the reader to all of the key concepts of Laruelle's 'non-philosophy.'

FRANÇOIS LARUELLE, professor emeritus at the University of Paris West Nanterre La Défense, is the founder of 'non-philosophy' and the author of around twenty works, including *Une biographie de l'homme ordinaire*, *Principes de la non-philosophie*, *Le Christ futur: Une leçon d'hérésie*, and *Philosophie non-standard*. An introductory collection of his essays, *From Decision to Heresy: Introduction to Non-Philosophy*, will be published by Sequence/Urbanomic in 2011.

COVER IMAGE

Detail from *Moiré 3*, 2007, by Liz Deschenes, UV-laminated chromogenic print, 54 x 40 inches. Photo by John Berens. Courtesy of Miguel Abreu Gallery.

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FRANÇOIS LARUELLE

The Concept of Non-Photography

Translated By

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Preface

Of what do these essays speak? Of photography in the flesh – but not the flesh of the photographer. Myriads of negatives tell of the world, speaking in clichés among themselves, constituting a vast conversation, filling a photosphere that is located nowhere. But one single photo is enough to express a real that all photographers aspire one day to capture, without ever quite succeeding in doing so. Even so, this real lingers right there on the negatives' surface, at once lived and imperceptible. Photographs are the thousand flat facets of an ungraspable identity that only shines – and at times faintly – through something else. What more is there to a photo than a curious and prurient glance? And yet it is also a fascinating secret. 'Non-photography', above all, does not signify some absurd negation of photography, any more than non-euclidean geometry means that we have to do away with Euclid. On the contrary, it is a matter of limiting the claims of 'theories of photography' that interpret the

latter in terms of the world, and of bringing to the fore its human universality. These essays aim to disencumber the theory of photography of a whole set of ontological distinctions and aesthetic notions imposed on it by the Humanities, with the help of philosophy, and which celebrate photography as a double of the world, forming thus a 'Principle of sufficient photography' – so as to reveal both its modest nature and its abyssal character as 'identity-photo'.

It seemed to me unnecessary and artificial to update, in light of the current status of non-philosophy, these three essays – the first of which appeared in a 2007 collection edited by Ciro Bruni for *Germes* [*Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche des Médias Symboliques*]. Written around 1992, they contain the entirety of non-philosophy as expounded in *Théorie des identités* (Paris: PUF, 1992) and make the link with the quantum themes of *Philosophie non-standard* (Paris: Kimé, 2010). It is enough to understand that the term 'identity' – perhaps not the happiest of terms, given its logical associations – assures the passage between the One (the perennial object of our research) and that of quantum 'superposition', our key concept at present. Just a minor change of vocabulary would suffice.

FRANÇOIS LARUELLE
PARIS, MARCH 2011

What is Seen In a Photo?

THE PHILOSOPHER AS SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER

All, the All itself, would have begun with a flash, the lightning-bolt of the One not so much illuminating a World that was already there, as making it surge forth as the figure of those things that its fulguration would have forever outlined for the West. Such is the philosophical legend of the originary flash, of the birth of the World, a legend of the birth of philosophy in the spirit of photography. Philosophy announces that the Cosmos is a 'shot', and announces itself as this creative shot of the World. Heraclitus' child at play would, in the end, have been nothing but a photographer. And not just any photographer: a 'transcendental' photographer, since in photographing the world, he produces it; but a photographer with no camera, and perhaps for that very reason destined ceaselessly to take new shots of that first flash – consigned to extinction – constrained thus to comment

interminably on that first shot by taking yet more, to engage himself in a *unlimited-becoming-photographic* – so as to verify that the flash, the World, the flash of the World – that is to say, philosophy – really has taken place, and was not just a trick of the senses.

No point in trying to separate philosophy from this photographic legend that encircles it: philosophy is nothing other than that legend of the fulgurant illumination of things and of its imperceptible withdrawal, of that no-longer-photographed that founds the photographo-centric destiny of the West. Well before the invention of the corresponding technology, a veritable automatism of photographic repetition traverses western thought. Philosophy will have been that metaphor of a writing or a speech running after an already-failed light. Perhaps – what might be called a meta-photographic hypothesis on the origins of philosophy – it is nothing more than a photography realized too quickly and presumed to be total and successful; an activity of transcendental photography constituted by the absence of adequate technology, indeed on the very basis of this absence. Perhaps it is but a premature photographic conception of the World, born of a precipitate, excessive generalization of the phenomena of illuminated forms produced at the surface of things or of language – phenomena which there was, as yet, no technique to recollect, store and exploit. Philosophy is perhaps born as a photographic

catastrophe – in all senses of the word: as an irruption of the ‘empty’ essence of photography and as an intoxication of All-photography and of the photography of the All. Photography without technique, without art, without science, condemned endlessly to reflect itself and to nostalgically resurrect the Heraclitean lightning-bolt that came too soon. Philosophy is that premature thinking that will have constituted itself, not through a mirror-stage but through a *flash-stage*, a darkroom-stage, giving it a fragile being, a fragile basis, in this photographic mode, unfinished and too immediately exploited.

To continue with the hypothesis: this photographo-centric pulsion at the heart of thought, something like an *objective photographic Appearance* that it draws on, like an uncircumventable element, makes it impossible to rigorously think the essence of photography. If the latter functions as *constitutive* metaphor of philosophical decision, how could it then be thought *by* philosophy without a vicious circle resulting? Any philosophy of photography whatsoever – this is an invariant – will appeal to the World, to the perceived object, to the perceiving subject, all supposedly given, and given initially by that transcendental flash that will have made the World surge forth from the midst of being. But how could such a circular manner of thinking avoid making photography as stance, as technique and as art, an ‘empirical’ degradation or deficiency of the onto-photo-logical essence of

philosophy? If we wish simply to describe or think the essence of photography, it is from this hybrid of philosophy as transcendental photography that we must deliver ourselves, so as to think the photographic outside every vicious circle, on the basis of a thinking – and perhaps of a ‘shot’ – absolutely and right from the start divested of the spirit of photography.

Here is the first meaning of ‘non-photography’: this word does not designate some new technique, but a new description and conception of the essence of photography and of the practice that arises within it; of its relation to philosophy; of the necessity no longer to think it through philosophy and its diverse ‘positions’, but to seek an absolutely non-onto-photo-logical thinking of essence, so as to think correctly, without aporias, circles or infinite metaphors, what photography is and what it can do.

Only a rigorously non-photographic thought – that is to say a thought from the start non-philosophical in its essence or its intimate constitution – can describe photography without begging the question, as an event that is absolute rather than divided, that is to say already philosophically anticipated in an ideal essence and empirically realistic – and, at the other extreme, can open up photography itself, as art and as technique, to the experience of non-photography.

Non-photography is thus neither an extension of photography with some variation, difference or decision;

nor its negation. It is a use of photography in view of a non-photographic activity which is the true element of the photo, its meaning and its truth. By ‘photography’, on the contrary, we must now understand not only the technical act, but the philosophy-style spontaneous, more or less invisible, self-interpretations that accompany it – the ‘photographism’ that takes the place of thought for us, and whose effects are felt in the form of a forgetting of the essence of photography in favour of its philosophical – that is to say (as we have seen) onto-photo-logical – appropriation. For onto-photo-logy manifests itself in the form of a circular auto-position of photographic technique and of the elements it takes from the World (body, perception, motif, camera), this auto-position signifying a vicious self-reflection, an interpretation on the basis of elements that are perhaps already interpretations and, in any case, on the basis of western onto-photo-logical prejudices that are redoubled and fetishized in the form of philosophies-of-photography, but never really put into question or ‘reduced’.

It is therefore not enough to re-ascend to the photographic ‘metaphor’ of the origins of philosophy to think the photographic with the necessary rigour – this is what philosophers have always done, it is their way of withdrawing and taking another ‘shot’. It is more urgent to find the means to suspend or to bracket out, radically and without remainder, all of western onto-photo-graphics; to rethink

what a 'shot' is according to its essence. Supposing, as we shall suggest, that the essence of the shot is nothing photographic, that it totally excludes the onto-photological metaphor, then it is according to this originary and positive non-photographic instance that we must 'see' photography anew, rather than on the basis of photography itself and therefore circularly, without rigour. The essence of photography is not itself 'photographic' in the onto-photographic sense of the word: of this there is no doubt. But it remains to determine positively, otherwise than through a 'withdrawal', a 'reserve', a 'difference', etc., the non- of non-photography. For this purpose we shall employ the notions of *photographic stance* and *vision-force*.

More generally, a good description of photography necessitates that one treat it as an essence unto itself; not as an event either of the World or of philosophy, or as a syncretic sub-product of modern science and technology; that one recognize the existence, not just of a photographic art, but of an authentic photographic thought; the existence, beyond the components of technology and image-production, of a certain specific relation to the real, one which knows itself as such. We shall thus eliminate from our method the point of view of style, of the history of styles and techniques: this is not our concern. We shall give a description, nothing more; we shall call 'essence of photography' only that which we ourselves as vision-force can describe as to the objects, techniques and styles of

photography; that alone which is susceptible only of a pure description outside of all the objects, aims, finalities, styles, techniques, etc. ... which are its conditions of existence. The essence of the photographic stance must not be conflated with its conditions of existence in perception, in the history of styles and the evolution of techniques.

TOWARDS AN ABSTRACT OR NON-FIGURATIVE THEORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

A photo as such – what would that be, what would it manifest – not through the object it shows, but qua photo that shows it? What is its power of the phenomenalization of the real – and, above all, of which real? Where is this power itself perceptible and grasped? In the object? In the theme or the call of the World? In the technical process? In the result – the photo-object, 'shown' and looked-at ... ?

Like all the arts, photography requires perception or refers to it; supposes it, even. But from the fact that photography supposes perception, all philosophical aesthetics abusively conclude an originary continuity between one and the other; continuity is confused with 'pre-supposition'. Photographic materialism, technologism, realism, and idealism are founded upon this common conclusion, this refusal to examine the exact and limited nature of

this presupposition of perception. Photography then becomes a more or less distanced, reified, deficient mode of perception – or indeed a more or less idealized, or even differed, mode, and so on. The realist illusion proper to philosophy (even, and above all, when it is idealist) – its auto-factualization – impregnates the theory of photography with its fetishism, giving it, across apparently contradictory aesthetics, one and the same figurative (so to speak) conception. The task of a rigorous thought is rather to found – at least in principle – an abstract theory of photography – but radically abstract, absolutely non-worldly and non-perceptual. Traditional, that is to say merely philosophical, interpretations of photography are made on the basis of one of the transcendent elements inscribed in the World – the eye, the camera and its techniques, the object and the theme, the choice of object, of the scene, of the event. That is, they are made on the basis of a semiology or a phenomenology, doctrines that start out by ceding too much to the World, only to withdraw out of shot, withdraw from the essence of the shot, by interpreting it too quickly in relation to the transcendence of the World alone. They found themselves on the *faith in perception* supposedly at the basis of the photographic act. But perhaps, fundamental to the latter, there is more than a faith, there is a veritable spontaneous photographic knowledge that must be described. It is not certain that there is a 'photographer's faith' as there is a philosopher's

– the philosopher who, by profession, *believes* in the World and flashes or transcends each time – nor that he confesses this faith each time he presses the button. How exactly does the photographer, through his body, his eye, his camera, relate himself to the World? In a manner such as only a phenomenology – a phenomenology of being-photographic-in-the-World – could describe? Or rather in a manner necessary in a World that is contingent as such, which would prohibit a phenomenology or an ontology of photography? Is the photographer in the World and in History, taking an image of them, an event, working them without extracting or tearing something from them? Otherwise, if philosophy is already the photography *of* the World, and thus also of the World of photography, why would photography itself not be outside the World? In what utopic or pre-territorial place? The photographic act is a certain type of opening, but can we be so sure that every opening gives onto the World? Is this act merely a case of a *photographic decision*, of something like a technical and observational retreat in relation to things, but all the better to assure its hold (imaged or magical) on them?

To the techno-photo-worldly or figurative hypothesis which is that of philosophy, we oppose a wholly other general hypothesis – that of a radical abstraction that photography perhaps does not realize fully in itself, but in relation to which it can be situated and interpreted afresh. To the transcendent paradigm of philosophy which

remains within *onto-photo-logical Difference*, we oppose the stance of the most naive and most intrinsically realist knowledge, a stance that appears to us essential – more so than calculation and measurement – to the definition of the essence of science. In what way is the knowledge immanent to the photographer's stance, from this point of view, of the order of the scientific; or at least descended from the latter; and what is it that ultimately distinguishes it from the scientific, making of it an art rather than a science? This last question gives us to perceive the complexity of the general hypothesis that will serve as our guiding thread: to what extent is photography not an activity, for example, of a kind with Artificial Intelligence (AI) – an attempt at the technological simulation not of the World in its objective reality, in its philosophico-cultural reality, but of science and of the reality that science can describe, naively in the last instance? Like AI, photography would be a science reliant on a technology, or a technology realizing a *somewhat* scientific and naïve relation to the World – to its reality, at least insofar as science itself gives this reality only in the last instance. Not an artificial perception of the World (this would suppose the philosophical model of perception), but an artificial science or a technological simulation of science, supposing once more, one last time, the World in its transcendent reality. Photographic technology would be charged with realizing to the maximum the real photographic order as a symbolization (partially

still under the laws of the World) of science and of its stance, taken here as rule or norm. We would no longer interpret photography as a knowledge that doubles the World, but on the contrary as a technique that simulates science, a form of knowledge that represents an attempt to insert science into the conditions of existence of the World and above all of perception; a hybrid of science and perception ensured by a technology. To understand photography, we must, in any case, cease to take perception and being-in-the-World as our paradigm, and instead take the scientific experience of the World as our guide. We will then see emerge photography's variance from science, a variance that will define its sense as an artistic practice. This artistic sense should be read as the between-two of the vision-in-science and perception or being-in-the-World, and as a variance ensured by a technology ...

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC STANCE AND VISION-FORCE

Let us try first of all to describe systematically the photographic act – this description will be nuanced and rectified as we proceed – according to the new paradigm, 'abstract' or 'scientific' in spirit, that we have evoked above and which we shall go on to define more precisely.

We cannot be certain that photography is a position or the taking up of a position before the World, a decision

of position towards the object or the motif. Before the eye, the hand, the torso are implicated in it, perhaps it is from the most obscure and the most irreflexive depth of the body that the photographic act departs. Not from the organ-body or body as organ-support, from the substance-body, but from a body absolutely without organs, from a stance rather than a position. The photographer does not throw himself into the World, he replaces himself firstly in his body as in a stance, and renounces all corporeal or psychic intentionality. 'Stance' – this word means: to be rooted in oneself, to be held within one's own immanence, to be at one's station rather than in a position relative to the 'motif'. If there is a photographic thinking, it is first and foremost of the order of a test of one's naive self rather than of the decision, of auto-impression rather than of expression, of the self-inherence of the body rather than of being-in-the-World. A thinking that is rooted *in* rather than *upon* a corporeal base. What is the body as photographic base, stripped of intentionality? It is that which concentrates in itself an undivided and precisely non-intentional vision-force. What body for photography? Precisely not the phenomenological body as part of the World or as thrown-into-the-World, but an originary and transcendental arche-body that is from the outset 'vision' through and through; but an as-yet un-objectivating vision. Photographic thought, rather than being primarily relational, differential, positional, is

first of all real, in that sort of undivided experience, lived as non-positional self-vision-force, which has no need to posit itself simultaneously on the object, to divide with itself, to identify itself with the World and to reflect itself in itself. The ultimate photographic lived experience – that of the immediate self- and vision-application, the very passion or affect of vision – is too naive to be anything other than an indivisible flux of vision, of which it is not even certain whether it will be divided by the camera. This vision-force resists the World through its very passivity and its impotence to separate from itself and to objectivate itself. The existence of the photographer does not precede his essence; it is his body as force, indivisible into organs, that precedes the World.

There is therefore – and this is exactly the same thing – a veritable photographic transcendental reduction of the World, in the sense that the logic which makes for the coherence of the latter, which assures it and permanently renews its transcendence and the inexhaustibility of its horizons, that this logic, which also governs everyday life in the World and its 'originary faith', is as if globally inhibited, invalidated in a stroke by the photographic stance. This stance consists less in situating oneself in relation to the World, in retreating, coming back to it and surveying, overflying it, than in definitively abstracting oneself from it, in recognizing oneself from the start as distant, as the preprocessor, even; and hence, not in returning

to the World, but in taking it as a simple support, or as an occasion to focus on something else – what, we do not yet know. However, if there is a type of intentionality proper to photography, if it no longer directs itself toward the World, but is only supports itself upon it, it does so, no doubt, so as to frame a universal shot which belongs rather to objective fiction. This reduction is that of a stance, and is assured by the lived-body in the most subjective or immanent of manners. Not by a rational or bloodless subject, or indeed one reduced, for example, to an eye; but by a body as absolute, uncircumventable requisite of the photographic act. The latter is at least (but not only) this stance, that which permits delivery, in a stroke, from all the onto-photo-logical interpretations that are merely circular but which divide themselves into the idealist, the materialist, the technologist, the empiricist, etc. Photography is not a return to the things, but a return to the body as undivided vision-force. Further, this is not a return, but a departure upon that basis constituted by the greatest naivety, a naivety which, inversely, makes possible an almost absolute disenchantment, like a disinterest for the World at the moment when the photographer adjusts the lens. The photographer does not think the World according to the World, but according to his most subjective body which, precisely for this reason, is what is most 'objective', most real in any case, in the photographic act.

There is thus what we shall call a photographic finitude. It is more immediately apparent than in other arts. It is a refusal to survey and to accompany the World or History *in extenso*; a subjection to the body and, *consequently*, to the singularity and the finitude of the motif. Here, finitude does not mean the reception of an external given, but an impotency in regard to oneself, a powerlessness to leave oneself so as to go amongst things – the intrinsic finitude of a vision condemned to see according to itself and to remain in itself – but precisely without being, for all that, a rational subject 'looking down on' the World. The photographer spontaneously prohibits himself from exceeding or surpassing his stance, his vision, his camera, his motif. Such intrinsic finitude means that the 'photographic' body is not a site or a place, but a utopian body whose very reality, whose type of reality qua 'force', leaves it with no place in the World. Photography is a utopian activity: not because of its objects, but because of the way it grasps them, or even more, because of the origin, located in itself alone, of this way of looking.

UNIVERSAL PHOTOGRAPHIC FICTION

Let us continue the hypothesis. The photographer has need of a stance that is, not naive, but is *within* naivety. He immediately postulates a use of (less than a rapport

or a relation with) the World, of his body, of his camera, which renders objectivation less obvious than it might appear. Of photography as science, and perhaps for the same reason, philosophers say that it is 'objectivating', that it prioritises the object or the sign, that it supposes an ultra-objectivist 'flattening' of the World. We might ask ourselves if there is not a great misunderstanding here, a very self-interested error of perspective. Whatever correctives they apply to it, philosophers generally make use of a prism, one and the same prism, to see and to describe things: the prism of objectivation, of transcendence and exteriority, of the figuration of the World. This is a Greco-Occidental invariant: it might be varied, transformed, the objectivation may be differed, postponed, distorted by withdrawal and alterity, the horizon of objectivity or of presence may be taken to pieces or subjected to endless cavils, opened, split or punctured ... but a philosopher can be recognized very easily by the fact that he always supposes, if only to initiate or solicit it, the pre-existence – absolute like a mandatory structure or a necessary destiny – of this objectivation.

His characteristic naivety lies in not seeing that here, it is a matter, as we have said, of an auto-interpretation, an auto-position or fetishization of photography, where the latter is prematurely identified with a transcendental function, that is to say with reality. Which means that it is impossible for the philosopher, who is a naive

photographer, to think true photographic naivety and to describe it correctly.

Thus it cannot be said with any certainty at all of the photographer – and even less so of the science with which photography maintains, it is true, the closest of relations – that he installs himself 'in the midst' of the World, in the between-two of the visible and the invisible, in the phenomeno-logical distance as that which would render possible his own manifestation in tele-phenomenality. As far as flesh is concerned, he knows only that of his own body, not that of the World; he is prodigiously 'abstract' in this sense. So that, rather than imagining the basic realism of all photography as a transcendent and fetishist realism, as being rooted in perceptual 'objectivity' so as to go and seek an object still more distant than that of philosophy, in place of this raising of the stakes to which the latter automatically leads, it would suffice to invert the sense or the order of the operation: not to deduce the *reality* of photography's own object from the perceptual and worldly *objectivity* of the object, but to found its objectivity upon its reality.

We mean to say, with this formula, that photography must be delivered of its philosophical interpretations, which are one and all amphibological; from the confusion of the perceived object and the object in itself or of the real, of objectivity and of reality. The specific 'object', the *proprium* of photography, can be found in the body and in

the photo, in the process that goes from one to the other; not in the World. Perhaps there is not even – by right at least – any ontological identity, any co-proprietion, any common form, of the photographic object and the photo that supposedly ‘represents’ it.

Wittgenstein (but also any philosopher whatsoever) postulates an *a priori* form common to the two orders of reality. We on the contrary distinguish them as radically heterogeneous, the *occasional* presence of the object of the World being quite enough, what is more, to explain *what* the photo represents. But what the photo represents has nothing to do ontologically with the formal being of the photo as such or as representation.

To reprise – and radicalize – a distinction made by Husserl, we shall say that the object that is photographed or *that appears* ‘in’ the photo, an object drawn from the transcendence of the World, is wholly distinct from the *photographic apparition* or from the representation of that object. More rigorously: it is the latter that distinguishes itself from the former. There is a ‘formal’ being or a being-immanent of photographic apparition; it is, if you like, the photographic *phenomenon*, that which photography can manifest, or more exactly, the manner, the ‘how’ of its manifesting the World. This manner or this phenomenon – here is what radicalizes Husserl’s distinction – distinguishes itself *absolutely* from the photographed object because it belongs to a wholly other sphere of reality than

that of the World: to the sphere of the immanence of the stance of the body, to undivided vision-force.

What is characteristic of philosophy is always to give too much importance to the World, to believe that the photographed object exceeds its status as represented object and determines or conditions the very essence of photographic representation. It postulates precisely that the object *that appears* ‘in’ a photo and its photographic *apparition* share the common structure or form of objectivation. Whence its ultra-objectivist interpretation of photography. But this is not at all the case: what does it mean for the transcendental stance to realise itself as vision-force, if not to suspend from the outset or to immediately reduce this transcendence of the World, and all the phenomena of authority that follow from it, and to pose all the real problems of photography as a function of the immanence of vision-force? Thus, we *dualize*, that is to say, we radicalize as originary and by right – and even as unengenderable in the wake of a scission or a decision – the duality of the photographic vision and the instruments or the events that it can draw from the World. There is no photographic decision; on the other hand there is a (non-)photographic vision that is, so to speak, parallel to the World; a photographic process which has the same contents of representation as those that are in the World, but which enjoys an absolutely different transcendental status since it is by definition immanent to vision-force.

This originary and in-principle duality, which will not have been produced by scission or alteration, cutting or 'differance', is obviously the condition for the two orders of reality no longer hybridizing or mutually impeding each other, as they do in philosophy. In particular, the immanent photographic process – that which concludes in the photographic *manifestation* – no longer allows itself to be altered, inhibited or conditioned by the photographically-manifested object. It ceases to be stopped, limited, partialized – but this also means: normalized and coded – by the World and by that which constitutes its flesh – the bifurcations, ramifications, decisions, positions, all that work of auto-representation of the World that has almost nothing to do with 'simple' photographic representation. Thus, because of this duality which replaces the reflexive distance to the World – objectivity – a new space opens up from the outset, or immediately: the quasi-space of an absolute fiction wholly distinct from the World and from the object. Of photographic representation, we must say that, even more than the sun of a unique reason illuminating the diversity of its objects, it is a vision-flux forever indivisible within the unlimited space of fiction that is the finished photo. Qua finished photo, it is also, through its partaking in the immanent-being of the photo, radically distinguished from its material support. The materials and the supports are obviously fundamental, but they explain only the variety of the photo's representational contents.

There is no longer any material or formal causality that can condition the essence or the immanent-being of the photo as vision. Doubtless, on the other hand, we will say, photography is also an art and not only a vision, a science or a knowledge. But we shall interpret it at first according to this model so as better to determine, afterward, its specific difference as art.

The duality of the reproduced object and of its manifestation in the photographic mode allows us to understand what the latter grasps in principle, what it is. The photo – not in its material support, but in its being-photo *of* the object – is none other than that which, through vision-force, is given immediately as the 'in-itself' of the object. Just as we have eliminated the philosophical type of objectivity, we must, to be coherent, eliminate the 'in-itself' that corresponds to it, for example the idea of common sense (internalized and transformed by a philosophy that supposes it so as to overturn it) according to which the perceived object exists in itself. The photo, owing to its being immanent on one hand, to its reference to the perceived object on the other, *is* incontestably the in-itself of that object. But the in-itself is no longer continuous with the perceived-being, it is even separated from the latter by a philosophically-unbridgeable abyss. By in-itself, we designate what is most objective or exterior, but also what is most stable in that which is capable of being given to vision: objectivity and stability no longer as attributes

or properties of the perceived object, but as they might be given and lived in their turn on the basis of immanent vision alone. They are not given within a horizon and limited by it, nor, on the other hand, do they themselves form an horizon of presence limited by objects. In their lived-being, they are solely immanent; in their specific content, they describe a quasi-field of presence empty not only of present objects, but of all syntax, structure or articulation, of all 'philosophical decision'. As to the object itself and the technological ingredients, they remain in the World without penetrating in the slightest into the photographic process itself.

It is this that explains why the *photographic apparition* is not a subtilized double of the object, endowed with the indices of the imaginary. It is a *pure a priori image*, an ideality that is 'objective' but without the limits of (specific, generic, philosophical) idealization, that is to say without transcendent decision or position. It is ideality, we might say, before any process of idealization. Vision does not 'shoot' a pure image; more exactly, a pure image is given to it, in an immanent mode, an image which does not visualize the operation of shooting, but is what is shot, the transcendent object; and which, without touching it refers to it as mere 'signal' or 'occasion'. To immanent vision, 'in-itself' or non-thetic, non-self-positional objectivity is given in a manner itself non-objectivating; and this photographic objectivity does not simply extend

spontaneous perception. On the one hand, vision-force only makes use of the World as a support or reservoir of occasions (an 'occasionalist' conception of photography) without abstractly redoubling it. On the other, it gives itself directly and in totality, uncut, the distance of objectivity that is photographic apparition or the photographic a priori of the World, and which is given to it in itself and as a whole, without being divided and reflected in itself. The photographer fixes on the negative-support, the a priori negative or the possible, universal and non-thetic film, through whose medium, at least as much as through his camera, he looks at or sees the World without ever framing it for himself.

Thus, to the photographic as 'stance' there does not correspond a failure of objectivity, but an objectivity other than the philosophical kind: an irreflective, non-circular objectivity, a simplified objectivity, so to speak. Photography is one of the great media that have put an end to the empirico-transcendental doublet, that have separated or 'dualized' the latter in definitively non-contemporary orders, impossible to re-synthesize philosophically. Photography is the description of a real that is no longer structured in a transcendent manner by philosophy's doublets or unities-of-contraries, by the exchanges and redoublings of perception. It has never installed itself in the gap between the visible and the invisible. It is a vision-force which sterilizes the perceptual pretention proper to

the World. What is apparently the most objectivating art is in fact the one that best destroys objectivation, because it is the most realist – but this is a realism of immanence rather than of transcendence ... In dismissing faith in perception to the margins of photography, the risk is obviously that it will only be all the better exhibited in it, will return all the more into it. But this doesn't change the fact that photography has never been – in its essence, we don't speak of the spontaneous finalities conveyed by the photographer – an aid to perception (its analysis, its clarification, etc.). Photography has its own 'intention' – it is that quasi-field of pure photographic apparition, of the *universal photographic Appearance or Fiction* (that of the vision-stance). And it is philosophically sterile: photography takes place in an immanent manner, it has nothing to prove, and it doesn't even necessarily have a will – for example, to critique and to transform the World, the City, History, etc.

This in-itself of the World, we must affirm that photography gives it, that photography is in no way a double, a specular image of the World, obtained by division or decision of the latter; a copy, and a bad one, of an original. Between the perceived and phenomenal photographic perception, there is no longer – as we have said – the *decision* from the original to the copy, or from the copy to the simulacrum. The photo is not a degradation of the World, but a process which is 'parallel' to it and which

is played out elsewhere than within it – a profoundly utopian process, 'unlimited' by right rather than merely 'open'. A *parallel* process, not inscribed in the World: and certainly not one of the divergent lines of development that continue to make the World. We shall no longer say, then, that photography is a generalized simulacrum, a topology of the simulacrum, a traversing of a thousand surfaces: *A Thousand photos ... A Thousand photos*, this is still the idea that the worldly and transcendent materiality of the photo belong to the latter. Whereas if its being-immanent is rigorously maintained so as to affirm its reality, there is no longer need of a thousand photos, of an unlimited-becoming-photographic; 'a' photo, one solitary photo alone, is enough to satisfy the photographic intention and to fulfill it. To do otherwise would still be to allow immanent photo-being to be limited by the transcendence of surfaces – the immanent photo-being that is absolutely devoid of all surface and all topology, even though it is 'described' as a universal 'quasi-space', even more universal than any topology.

For such a quasi-space belongs to the photo at once as possible or universal and as in-itself of the object. In the photographic phenomenon thought according to vision-force, are reconciled the most universal possible and the in-itself or the reality of objects. This is why we are obliged to posit an identity where philosophy posits an opposition. But still this is not a unitary or philosophical

identity: photography produces, traverses and describes an absolutely unlimited 'surface' – empty of all bifurcation and decision – of fiction, an a priori quasi-field of fiction. This field is no longer transcendental, properly speaking – only the vision-stance is – it is no more than a priori. But this field of fiction is real, rigorously real by virtue of its essence in the vision-stance. Photography does not produce bad fiction or a standardized imaginary – or only when it renounces its essence and puts itself 'at the service' of the authorities of the World, of History, of the City, etc. It produces the only fiction that is real in the only mode in which it can be: not from itself and through reflection in itself or through a fetishizing auto-position, but through its essence – an essence which, yet, is in its turn absolutely distinct from it and not conditioned by it.

Photography is thus a passion of that knowledge that remains immanent to vision and that renounces faith-in-the-World. In principle the photographer does not do ontology, or theology, or topology. One could even say that he is too ascetic to 'do photography', above all if one understands the latter as a way of reflecting the World and reflecting oneself in it, of commenting on it interminably or of accompanying it. This conception of photography is to its real essence what a cliché is to rigorous thinking: a philosophical artefact, an effect of the onto-photo-logic that renders impossible a faithful description of photographic phenomenality; a supplementary negative,

a cliché produced by the philosophical 'camera' or the photographico-transcendental hybrid. An attempt to photograph photography (the philosopher as self-portrait of the photographer) rather than describing it as a thinking.

However, as we have described it, the universal photographic Fiction, that is to say the photo considered no longer in its representational content, but in its essence or its immanent-being, only 'refers us back' to that essence or to the vision-force characterized by its indivision or its status of Identity. This referring-back is not immediate: the photo represents the World – in a specular manner, and through its content; but it reflects its own essence in a non-specular manner, it reflects vision-force without ever reproducing it. We will say that it represents it 'only in the last instance' and that that which it describes in this non-philosophical mode of description is necessarily always an identity, the identity 'in-itself' of vision-force, of the subject as vision-stance. In a word, and to bring together this first analysis into a formula: in its essence all photography is 'photo-ID', identity-photography – but only in the last instance; this is why photography is a fiction that does not so much add to the World as substitute itself for the World.

A Science of Photography

THE CONTINENT OF FLAT THOUGHTS

To elucidate the essence of photography within the horizon of science rather than that of philosophy – what would that mean?

If it is not a sufficient reason but merely an occasion, that doesn't mean it is a meaningless coincidence: the invention of photography is contemporary with the definitive and massive emergence of thoughts of the automatic, blind or symbolic type, 'levelled' or 'flat thoughts' (logic and the mathematicization of logic; but also phenomenology, the science of 'pure phenomena'); and of thoughts that destroy the perceptual and reflexive basis of philosophy and of its image of the sciences: the various generalizations of scientific knowledge (axiomatization, logicization, 'non-Euclidean' mathematics, etc.). It is at least in this theoretical context – that of the invention and the definitively scientific use of blind thought – that we shall interpret it. Like the disciplines just cited or

those which, following them, relayed this invention of automatic thought – Abstraction, Information Systems and Artificial Intelligence – photography does not belong to history as one of its already-surpassed moments. In fact it is photography (and increasingly so) that becomes one of those ‘productive forces’ that drive both the production of history and its reproduction, here ‘imaged’. It is this ‘photographic cut’ that we propose to describe. If philosophy has not been able to explore the nature and extent of flat thoughts, let us change our general hypothesis and horizon: science, a new science perhaps, shall be the guiding thread that will allow us to penetrate into the heart of the photographic operation. On condition that we globally re-evaluate and reveal the ‘thinking’ at work in science.

Still, the idea of an automatic thought proper to the sciences in general is subject to the gravest misunderstandings. By the expression blind or deaf, irreflective or flat thought – a thought characterized by its radical and distanceless (remainderless or unhesitating) adequation to its immanent object – we certainly do not understand ‘psychic automatism’ nor that in which it is carried on: theories of the unconscious, the ‘thinking’ of the unconscious now as pulsional, now as logico-combinatory (even if it is perhaps closer to this latter conception of the unconscious). We do not propose this irreflective thought with reference to any regional model, any experience

drawn from a particular scientific discipline. Logic itself is perhaps no more sufficient than any other such discipline. Rather than understanding blind or deaf thoughts on the model of logic, with its formal automatism and ‘principle of identity’, we must render intelligible their practice of radical adequation through *Identity*, doubtless – but a real Identity, not a logical one. Of photography, we shall say that it is a thought that relates itself to the World in an automatic and irreflective, but real, way; that it is therefore a *transcendental automat*, far more and far less than a mirror at the edge of the World: the reflection-without-mirror of an Identity-without-World, anterior to any ‘principle’ and any ‘form’. The photographic image, which is only apparently an image of the World, is perhaps anterior by right to logic, which is, in effect, indeed an image of the World (Wittgenstein). Photography is a representation that neither reasons nor reflects – this is true in a sense, but in which sense? Is it due to an absence of reflection, as is spontaneously maintained? Or is it due to the excess of a thought that maintains an irreflexive relation to a certain real or identity that is not necessarily governed by perspective.

However it is indeed Science, the scientificity of science, such as a ‘first Science’ might reveal or manifest, that we propose to find in this discovery of flat thoughts. It is not its logicization or axiomatization that has given science, from scratch, its character as science. It is on the

contrary a clearer manifestation of its essence as science that allows it fully to integrate these processes of strict adequation into thought. Perhaps it is a definitively 'symbolic' and irreflective thinking, capable by virtue of this alone of a greater universality; perhaps it is this itself that has given its true sense of an organon to logic; that has, what is more, enabled both the 'non-Euclidean' and the 'non-Newtonian' mutations. Thus, if science – and photography – must be a thinking, it is on condition that we no longer conflate science with 'techno-science'; its essence with its technological conditions of existence – technologic and logics alike; being-in-photo with the technical reproducibility of its support of paper and symbols.

To bring photography into proximity with science, to describe it as an automatic and irreflective thought, is thus also to cease *reflecting* local (psychic, logical, informatics, technological, etc.) experiences of automatism in this *irreflective* thought; and to postulate that in general what is proper to science is to be a thought 'in good and due form', a true thought, that is to say a thought that is true, defining itself by its relation to the real itself, but of an irreflective or blind nature through and through, and thus having no need of philosophy. For philosophy, precisely, reflects the locally irreflective in the supposedly reflective-in-principle essence of thought. From this point of view, if photography is of the type of those modes of thought that are logic, axiomatics, and artificial intelligence, it is

obviously not because of its technologies or its general technique – in this it does not resemble them – but as a way of thinking, as a strict 'adequation' of the relation of knowledge to the real, and of the real defined as Identity – those things which first Science manifests in every science. Science does not serve us here as a paradigm in its results or in the knowledge it produces, but in its stance of blind or symbolic thought in its very essence, in advance of any local 'logistic' or 'informatic' interpretation of this symbolic character. Let us repeat: what is necessary is an enterprise of revealing the *science-Essence* that is the proper work of a new science.

This means that the technological automatism of photography no longer interests us. The magical effect of this machinery that plays now on the long exposure, now on instantaneity, in both cases on an apparent eviction of time, does indeed exist, but is grafted onto the more profound automatism of photography's 'stance'. The ideological consequences that one has been able to draw from this supposed mechanization (generalised dumbing-down, the destruction of art and taste, nihilist levelling, uselessness of figurative painting, death of inspiration, proliferation of copies, deathly coldness, etc.) are all founded on a precipitate interpretation of the role of technology in photography; on the conflation – an essentially philosophical conflation – of the essence of photography with its technological conditions of existence.

It is between two modes of thought that have repressed or misinterpreted them – philosophy on one hand (consciousness and reflection), psychoanalysis on the other (the unconscious and pulsional automatism) – that the photographer must be situated and grasped anew by a science. The photo is then neither a mode of philosophical reflection – even if there is plenty of photography integrated into philosophy – nor a mode of unconscious representation or a return of the repressed. Neither Being nor the Other; neither Consciousness nor the Unconscious, neither the present nor the repressed: these two historically-dominant elements of thought must be put aside in favour of a third, occupied by the huge vista of thought that is science. This third element we shall therefore call the One or Identity ‘in-the-last-instance’. It alone, along with the first Science that is its representation, allows us to give the most universal and the most positive description of photography, without being constrained to reduce it to its conditions of existence, whether perceptual, optical, semiotic, technological, unconscious, aesthetic, political. All of these certainly exist, but will be demoted to the status of effective conditions of existence specifying and modelizing photographic thought, but playing no essential role, and powerless to explain the emergence of photography as a new relation to the real.

What authorities, what codes or norms do we refuse with photography? Pictorial taste, and the techniques

and norms that produce it? It is too quick to explain this emergence as an overthrowing or a revolution against painting; always the restrictive and reactive model of overthrowing, of rebellion. Against painting – and thus still *within* the pictorial order? Photography does not extend painting, even if it locally draws on it and furnishes it with new codes and new techniques. It is a mutation, an emergence of representation beyond ... a ‘step beyond’ representation, which does not exist in itself, and which is always virtually interpretable in the last resort by philosophical procedures and positions, but nevertheless well beyond that virtual point of interpretation, ‘limit’ but in principle. We can be sure that photography really produces something other than bad, mechanized or more exact painting, once we have understood that it produces something other than perception, optical technology, aesthetic codes, something other than a sub-painting or a pre-cinema, etc. – something other than is claimed by that management of all activities that is philosophy (philosophy of art, philosophy of photography, and so on). We must first of all put it globally into proximity with a science thus reevaluated, rather than with philosophy, so as to prevent it from being any longer definitively reduced to its techno-perceptual, techno-optical existence; or, inversely, sufficiently elucidated, as is believed, by mechanical, optical and chemical magic, an artisanal magic which is not without its seductions. We will take

the photo as the exemplary, paradigmatic realization, in the domain of images and of their production, of that flat and deaf thinking, strictly horizontal and without depth, that is the experience of scientific knowledge, and on the basis of which we must, for reasons of rigour and reality which cannot be philosophically debated, also describe painting and the other arts. But more than other arts, perhaps, photography introduces, not in the World, but *to* the World, to its artistic and technological reproduction, a new relation.

We shall not speak here of revolution – an overly philosophically-loaded concept of overthrowing, of return to point zero and of redeparture, and which has nothing to do with science – but of the photographic mutation or cut; of the novel emergence, under precise technological conditions, of a relation of representation to the real which, by virtue of its radical adequation, is other than that which traditional ontology and its contemporary deconstructions form and govern.

We thus treat photography *as* a discovery of a scientific nature, as a new object of theoretical thinking – suspending all problems of historical, political, technological and artistic genesis. So that photography is an indivisible process that one cannot recompose from the outside, even partially, like a machine. It is a new thought – and it is so by virtue of its mode of being or its relation to the real, not its aesthetic or technological determinations.

Understood in this way, a photo introduces an experience of Identity, and also of the Other, that is no longer analyzable within the horizon of 'Greek' ontological presuppositions and thought. Far from being a sublimated tracing of the object, of its re-folds and folds, the folds of Being, it postulates an experience of the real-as-Identity. It is thus also the response to the question: what use is perception *for* photography, from the point of view of the latter and from within its practice?

From this point of view, we maintain the following thesis: photography is the equivalent of an *ideography*, of a *Begriffsschrift* (Frege); a symbolic representation of the concept, but a representation of an image rather than of a concept – writing and representation, in technoperceptual symbols, rather than in writing or signs derived from writing. Photography broadens considerably the idea of the symbolic and of symbolic practices beyond their scriptural, language-bound or linguistic form. A photo is an Idea – an *Idea-in-image* more than a 'concept', that always focuses on 'the experiential' – and which rests on a material support, on a symbolic order, here the technologico-perceptual complex. This also means that, if one must understand photography as a practice of the symbolic figuration of ideality of or Being as image, this is not so as to content oneself with philosophical – that is to say empirico-rationalist – auto-interpretations, with the symbolic and the symbolization of 'terms' and of the

calculation that ensues; and that are imagined to be the basis of logic and of axiomatization. The very notion of symbolism as material support of the photo prohibits this empiricist reduction.

A SCIENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

We postulate that photography is a science – a 'qualitative', or, better still, purely transcendental science, and consequently one free of mathematical and logical means. But we shall also describe it in taking up, ourselves, a scientific stance – for example treating photography and its power-of-semblance (if not of resemblance) as a new theoretical object without equivalent in *philosophical* theories of the imagination and of representation, handling the latter like a mere material so as to produce a new, more universal representation of the image, of the representation of the photo. For a science of representation and of the image must make a *complete* or radical dualysis of these notions. That is to say, instead of an analysis of them, which still deals with hybrids and would lead back to philosophical amphibologies, their dualysis, the unequal and unilateral distinction of Identity, or of the real, of semblance or of the 'Imaginary', ultimately of the support or of the symbolic.

We seek the internal criteria of the photographic process. But everything depends on what we mean by 'internal'. Most of the time, in the absence of any radical analysis of philosophical requisites and positions, we make the internal with the external of philosophical or ontological transcendence, just as we make the identical with the Other, the real with the exteriority of the possible. There is no internality but Identity itself, which, as immanence, is its own criterion. It is self-identity, and the photo is thought by and for Identity.

If there is thus a certain type of 'line of demarcation' to trace, a duality to recognize as foundational, and which explains the novelty of the photographic cut, it is that of the *cause in the last instance* of photography – real-Identity – and the techno-perceptual (optical, chemical, artistic, etc.) conditions of existence of the latter. This non-philosophical, non-unitary redistribution cedes place to the 'photo' phenomenon, to the *being-in-photo* that is deployed from its cause to its conditions of existence without being confused with any of them. Photography can be reduced neither to its technological conditions of existence, nor to the experiential complex that associates old images, technical means linked to the medium, perception or aesthetic norms. It is an immanent process that traverses and animates this materiality, a *thinking* instigated by the artificial simulation of perception. There is a thinking in and of photography, it is the set of ideal

conditions or conditions of Being of the phenomenon 'in photo', which relate the techno-perceptual conditions to Identity or to the real.

The essence of a phenomenon, once it is determined by science, can no longer be confused with the object or the phenomenon itself, nor with the manner of thinking, nor again with the means (technological, for example). It is the cause-in-the-last-instance, the Identity that acts not only as an 'immanent cause' but through the radical immanence of its Identity. It is thus also distinguished by the four forms of causality described by philosophy and which are transcendent: science knows only in occasional manner formal, final, material and 'agent' cause. We 'explain' a phenomenon scientifically by inserting it into the process formed of the cause-in-the-last-instance, the occasional cause, and a priori structures of theoretical representation that fill in the interval between the two (what we shall call *being-in-photo*).

'Photographic causality' is an important problem, even if it is not really a problem (of the scientific type) so much as a question (of the philosophical type). So that, qua problem, its formula turns out to be ambiguous and confused: the true causality is that of the real, of Identity-in-the-last-instance rather than of Photography in general, a formula that postulates a unitary autoposition of the hybrid or of onto-photo-logical Difference. In addition, but secondarily, there is a properly photographic causality,

that of being-in-photo, bearing on its technico-perceptual conditions of existence, that it reduces to the status of a mere support for its unlimited ideality (and not for cutting into a flux ...) It is accompanied by an effectively inverse causality, of its conditions of existence (perception included) on the a priori photographic content which is thus specified and overdetermined by the givens of 'experience' and the constraints they exert.

Thus the photographic process remains immanent by virtue of its 'first' cause – what we also call the photographic 'stance' or *vision-force* which is not only the requisite of the reality that every photo needs in order to continue being 'received' by the photographer, but precisely its cause-in-the-last-instance, an intransitive cause, exerted only in the mode of immanence. But it becomes effective or realizes itself with the aid of its conditions of existence, which function, in the overall economy, as mere *occasional* cause: the technology of the medium, the norms of pictorial tradition, aesthetic codes, all of this, as considerable as it may be – to the point where it prevents philosophy from thinking vision-force – remains of the order of an 'occasion'.

The description here is obviously 'transcendental', but transcendental in the sense that it pertains to that which makes for the reality of the photo for the photographer rather than to that which makes for its possibility and its effectivity for the philosopher. Its 'conditions of

possibility' are not our problem. Reality is the only object of science, and reality distinguishes, by way of 'condition', its real condition or cause and, on the other hand, its conditions of existence or its effective putting-to-work (the technologico-optical complex). Science eliminates from itself the philosophical correlation between fact and principle, between the rational faktum and its possibility; it describes and manifests simultaneously the being-photo (of) the photo, *photographic identity*, such as it is deployed from its real cause to its effective conditions of existence and fills in this 'between-two'. The transcendental subject and its 'empirical' correlate are done away with in the same gesture by photographic identity. The cause (real or transcendental in its manner, which is purely immanent) no longer corresponds to the 'transcendental subject', nor do the conditions of existence correspond to an 'empirical' conditioning in the sense in which the philosopher understands it. Photography, along with symbolic modes of thought, radical phenomenologies, non-Euclidean generalizations and, in general, the spirit of 'Abstraction', has contributed to identifying the transcendental and the empirical as functions of a scientific process, and to the distinguishing of this usage from their philosophical putting-into-correlation, the 'empirico-transcendental doublet'.

WHAT CAN A PHOTO DO?: THE IDENTITY-PHOTO

Let us remark on Barthes's statement, and give it a literal sense: a photo realizes 'this impossible science of the unique being'. The science of photography is indeed a science of identity in so far as it is unique, but it is a science that is entirely possible if one subtracts the unicity from its psychological and metaphysical interpretations and if identity is ultimately understood as that which all science postulates. A science of unicity is only impossible or paradoxical for philosophy, for the latter's image of science and its image, from outside, of identity. It is real, effective even, if it is nothing but science. Again it is a matter of relieving it of its unthought philosophical residues. What should we understand in particular by 'unique being'? If unicity and identity are understood as characteristics of transcendent objects or beings, as is the case when the real object of the photo is that which is represented, the representation is then both a unique copy of its object, and universal, a copy of the unique which in principle has no copy. This form of mimesis makes of science a double specularity of the real, overseen by identification. Philosophy does not have the means to exit from this circle – 'its' photography is of the order of the semi-real semi-ideal hybrid, of the living-dead or the double. Science, however – this is what we postulate – science, at

least brought back to its ultimate conditions, is science only of the identity (of) the real-in-the-last-instance, an identity which, in order to be real, can never be given in the mode of presence and of specularity.

The power-of-semblance of the photo – its power to (re)semble – is power-of-presentation (of) Identity, but a power that lets it be as Identity, without hybridizing itself with it or degrading it in an image. Doubtless, photo-being presents, or even *is* the very presentation of the One; but qua One, a One which remains One, unaffected by this presentation or by Being. The photo presents not some 'subject', but its Identity, with the aid of or on the occasion of the 'subject'; and presents it without transforming it in what it is. The photo *as such* is the real-effect, an effect that manifests the real in letting it be, without making it return or enter into its own particular mode of presence, without producing it as photo and reducing it to a representation. Contemplating a photo, we contemplate the real itself – not the object, but an identity, at least that in it which is a trace of Identity-in-the-last-instance, without the two of them being effaced, hybridized one with the other through some reversibility, convertibility or conversion of the intentional gaze.

A photo thus does not let us see the invisible that haunts the world, its folds, hinges and furrows, its hidden face, its internal horizon, its unconscious, etc., which articulate and multiply Transcendence. Nor does it make

the repressed return. It manifests, through its global existence as being-in-photo, the Identity which is its invisible object and which, if it comes to the photo, never comes in the manner of representational objects or invariants (those that are supposedly photographed). A photo does not focus intentionally on Identity; it gives it, not in, but through its universal and ideal mode, without ever giving it in the form of an Object or an Idea, in the element of Transcendence in general. To focus on Identity, this would be once more to divide it bilaterally into object and image, to annihilate it and push back its presence to the horizon of an infinite becoming; to idealize and virtualize it, put it in a circle or specular body. Photographic presentation *represents* invariants drawn from the World, but *presents* or *manifests* Identity through its very existence as photo alone. It is not Identity that is 'in photo', but the World; but being-in-photo is, qua Being, the most direct manifestation possible of Identity, and also the least objectivating. It is like the effect that, in so far as it is only effect, manifests its cause without ever intending or representing it. The photo is the *first presentation* of Identity, a presentation that has never been affected and divided by a representation.

THE SPONTANEOUS PHILOSOPHY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Most interpretations are founded in the confusion or the amphibology that the concepts of image and of photo bring with them. For common sense, and still for the philosophical regime, an image is an image-of ..., a photo is a photo-of We attribute an intentionality to them, a transcendence towards the World supposedly constitutive of their essence. Philosophy pursues a dream of its own kind of civil status: it is the photographic form of the old founding amphibology of philosophy, which the latter has left largely intact: the confusion – convertibility or reversibility – of the ideal image and the real object; this relation of reciprocal determination being supposed to belong to the image and to define it whatever additional differentiation of the terms there might be. It is the oldest of self-evidences: the photo would draw its reality or its essence from this relation – as differed or postponed as it may be – to the object, to the data of perception (of history, of politics, etc.). Whence that philosophical *habitus*: to mediatize the image and its representational content by means of the object-form, the object being precisely that ‘common form’ through which the image or being-in-photo and the ‘objective’ data exchange their respective being. The object is the absolute *sensus communis* that founds philosophy and its local concepts of ‘common

sense’, it is the ultimate form in which it is definitively mired, even if only so as to be able to ‘differ’ it.

Whence that spontaneous philosophy of the photographer, who believes that he photographs an object or a ‘subject’. In reality it is crucial to recognize, and to say, against that idealism that is the very philosophy of the photographic act, that one does not photograph the object or the ‘subject’ that one sees – but rather, on condition of suspending (as we have said) the intentionality of photography, one photographs Identity – which one does not see – through the medium of the ‘subject’. The objective givens of perception are not – in principle, that is to say, for a science – *that which* is photographed; one in a certain sense ‘photographs’ only Identity (the Identity of objects) through the medium of those objects that enter into the photographic process for a special reason, as occasional cause of the process. Photo-ID, Identity-Photo – one could not say it better, to destroy the civil status upon its own terrain. The rigorous description of this process begins with the refusal of transcendent realism, and of the intentional framing that is part and parcel of it. Doubtless, here lies the most general paradox of science, to the eyes of philosophy. The same goes for the photo: what is known in the photographic mode – known rather than ‘photographed’ – is not exactly the represented object. One does not photograph the World, the City, History, but the identity (of) the real-in-the-last-instance

which has nothing to do with all of that; the rest is mere 'objective givens', means or materials necessary to an immanent process. If a non-philosophical distinction, by its radicality, traverses 'Photography', it is the static and unilateral duality of the 'photographed' – its object-in-the-last-instance, Identity itself – and of the photography that includes the 'photographic givens' of perception, of technology, of art, etc. It could well be that the bad photographer is, first of all, a bad thinker – victim of a transcendental, but nevertheless naive, illusion: he conflates the 'photographed' real with the photographic givens. The confusion of photographic *material* (the perceived, the event, the flesh of History, of the City, of the World) and of the *Identity* that is given to be tested on the occasion of photography, nourishes most aesthetics of photography and gives them a naive, premature and pretty soon aporetic air. Every photo is, in its cause and in its essence, if not in its data, a photo-ID, an identity-photo – this law of essence must therefore be written and thought in order to deliver us from photographic 'realism' and from the 'fictionalism' that accompanies it as its double.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MODE OF EXISTENCE

Compared to the reality of vision-force, the photographic apparition is doubtless 'irreal'. But compared to the transcendence of the World, it must be said to be 'real' in so far as a field of fiction can be. 'Fiction' is wholly real but in its own mode, without having anything to envy perception; it is not an image of perception (deficient, degraded or simply operatively produced 'by abstraction' from the object's characteristics). It enjoys an autonomy (in relation to perception) but one that is relative (in relation to the non-decisional photography-subject). Concretely, this means that its mode of existence is phenomenally *sui generis* or specific, and that it demands to be elucidated in its own right – distinguishing it, for example, from perceived existence and its philosophical extension and idealization. What does one mean to say – or what is implied, without knowing it thematically or reflectively – when one says of a thing that it is 'in a photo' or of someone that one has seen them 'in a photo'? What is the tenor in materiality and in ideality of that mode of existence of things that one says are 'in-photo'? If we arrive at elucidating, however minimally, this manner of being in its originality, we will have rediscovered the true correlate of the photographic stance, the proper object, the *quid proprium* of the photographer beyond the objects

of the World that serve him only as occasion; what he really sees, not in his camera, but as photographer; the object that he alone can 'focus on' or, more exactly, the affect of the reality that he alone feels, beyond the over-general mechanisms (psychological, neurophysiological, technological, semiological, etc.) with which one would try to grasp it and with which one ends up, rather, dissolving its reality.

The mode of existence of a thing 'in-photo', as we have said, is not the same as the thing that appears in it and whose native element is perception. Then is it the same as the mode of presence that philosophy has described under the name of ontology, in its multiple forms: the differences ground/form, being/entity, horizon/thing, world/object, signifier/signified, sign/object, etc.? Can it generally be described by means of those contrasted and matching pairs essential to the technologies of philosophy and its subsets, the Humanities? For example, by the couplet technology/artisanry; or the couplet tradition/topicality; or the couplet universal/scoop, etc.? No, not by these, either. In a photo, one can generally distinguish a form and a ground, of course; but they are a form and ground that belong to the represented object, to the object that is in the World. Whereas the representation of that object, of that ground and that form, itself not being in the space of the object or in its vicinity, knows nothing for itself, in its internal structure, of the distinction and

the correlation between a ground and a form, an horizon and an object, a sign and a thing.

We can generalize this point: Let us cease to do what philosophers, and their shadows in the Humanities, have ceaselessly done: to reflect the transcendent dualities of the World, of History, of the City, in the 'pure' representation of things or of their being. Let us cease to reflect the doublets of transcendence in being or in the essence of transcendence. The 'in-photo' is the simplification or the economy of representation, the refusal to place doublets where there no longer are any. For example the distinctions form/ground, horizon/object, being/entity, sense/object, etc., and in general the distinction between the transcendent thing and the transcendence of the thing: they are now strictly identical or indiscernible. A photo renders indiscernible ground and form, the universal and the singular, the past and the future, etc. And photography, far from being an aid or a supplement to perception, is the most radical critique of it – provided that a phenomenologist, a semiologist, and in general a philosopher, is not in a state of 'resistance' and doesn't try to re-interpret it through the medium of perception and its avatars. All the couplets of contraries with which they try to capture photographic existence from without, to divide it and to alienate it in their systems of interpretation, are now invalidated or suspended by identity, the affect of identity that a photography gives.

An identity, precisely, of the non-philosophical type: it cannot be a synthesis of ground and form, of horizon and object, of sign and thing, of signifier and signified. It is on the contrary non-decisional self-identity, that which gives the ground of vision-force, and which is manifested here in the photograph and its manner of making 'contraries' or 'correlates' exist in an unprecedented way. What are the effects, what is the mode of efficacy of vision-force 'on' its object, the existence 'in-photo', if no separation, distinction or scission taken from the World, from Transcendence or from the philosophical operation in general, can pass between the traditional contrary terms?

On one hand, a photo makes everything it represents exist on a strictly 'equal footing'. Form and ground, recto and verso, past and future, foreground and distance, foreground and horizon, etc. – all this now exists fully outside any ontological hierarchy. This 'flattening', this horizontality-without-horizon, is the contrary of a levelling of hierarchy and a fusion of differences: the suspension of differences proceeds here as a liberation and an exacerbation of 'singularities' and 'materialities'. Photography is a positive and irrevocable chaotizing of the Cosmos. All is lived in an ultimate manner in the affect and in the mode of that non-thetic identity: even the syntheses of the World, even the totalities, the fields and horizons of perception, even the World or whatever other encompassing 'whole'. Exposing an aspect of existence

that is entirely its own, the *in-photo* gives us to sense an absolute dispersion, a manifold of singularities or of determinations without synthesis, a materiality without materialist *thesis* since every thesis is already given in it, in its turn, as 'flat', just like any other singularity whatsoever. Far from giving back perception, history or actuality, etc., in a weakened form, photography gives for the first time a field of infinite materialities which the photographer is immediately 'plugged into'. This field remains beyond the grasp of any external (philosophical, semiological, analytic, artistic, etc.) technology. At most, the latter participate in its transcendent conditions of existence, but cannot claim to exhaust it or even to merely describe it. Philosophy, so far, has only interpreted photography, believing that it thereby transforms it; it is time to describe it so as to really transform photographic discourse.

On the other hand, and coextensively with this infinite surface of singular materialities to which the World is reduced, the photographer is really affected – that is to say in immanent manner, far removed from any philosophical artefacts – by the objectivity of these materialities. A new type of objectivity, wholly distinct from the philosophical type, since the form in general of photographic phenomena ceases, as we have said, to be divided and reflected in itself – ceases to be a doublet. In perception as thought or ideology, and in philosophy, the objectivity of the object is divided by such a doublet, it turns around

it and reflects itself in itself or doubles itself. And this because of the very fact that the distinction, which is supposedly primitive, is but an artefact of the object and of consciousness of the object, of the thing and objective distance across whose span one grasps it. In the regime of photographic immanence, on the contrary, there is now a strict identity between represented object – at least of its sense as object – and representation of the object. The photographer, in all rigour, does not think in terms of the World or of Transcendence, but approaches the latter with an immanence-of-vision that simplifies or reduces the doublet transcendent/transcendence, and which gives once and for all a transcendence (that is to say: an exteriority, a unity and a stability) that is simple, ir-reflexive, positively stripped of all reflection in itself, and beyond which there might well still be the phantasm of an object 'in-itself': but it knows nothing of it now.

This objectivity with three ingredients (exteriority, unity, stability), but simple in nature or essence, having no longer the form of a doublet or hybrid – this is what vision-force, exerting itself in the photographic mode, extracts from perception, suspending the latter's validity, and what it manifests as being the objective or formal aspect of the 'in-photo' mode of existence. The subject of photography is never someone who ceases to be affected by a photo, to put themselves in a position to survey and interpret it. On the contrary, she remains unalienated in

her lived immanence and describes in her manner what she sees: the external field, united, with the stability of a ceaseless chaos of materialities. That is what she 'makes out of' the World without ever thinking for an instant of ameliorating or critiquing it. Such teleologies are not unknown to her, but they do not *determine* her practice, which has internal or immanent criteria, whatever may be the numerous factors – traditions, technologies, political decisions, artistic sensibilities, etc. – that come to *overdetermine* it. The immanent photographic process is not of the nature of a photographic decision. It *lets things be*, or frees them from the World.

To all the *pretenders* – philosophers and shadows of philosophers – to analysts, semiologists, psychologists, art historians, who claim to capture for their own gain the immanent photographic phenomenon, to know it better than it knows itself and to draw from it a benefit and a supplement of authority for their technique, to all those photographers of the eleventh hour, we must oppose the practical process that goes from vision-force to the 'in-photo'. It finds in the World only an occasion, with the aim of freeing representation and making it shine for itself. The photographer is not the 'good neighbour' of the World, but this is because he is responsible for a really universal representation that is greater than the World. He ceases interminably to verify the *supposed identity* of things, he escapes the obsessive-compulsive interpretation

of philosophies and their sub-systems. Instead, he 'gives' to things – manifesting as it is, without producing or transforming it – their *real identity*.

THE BEING-PHOTO OF THE PHOTO

What can an image do, what is it that can be done in an image? The philosopher's role is not to manifest this to us, but to hide it from us, inscribing the photo in a prosthesis made from transcendent artefacts (the object, perception, resemblance, 'realism', etc.) that denature its truth. Truth-in-photo is detained in the photograph itself; and the latter, in the photographic stance – vision-force or 'photography'; it has deserted the transcendent and abstract interpretations that try to capture it. Understood rigorously, the photo is a 'philosophical countersense', it is inexplicable for an idealism that would reduce it to a mode of onto-photo-logical Difference, globally circular and thus unable to explain anything. The whole lot of philosophical-type beliefs as to the real, as to knowledge, as to the image and as to representation and manifestation, must and can be eliminated so that we can describe, not the *being* of the photo but the *being-photo of the photo*. What is that nuance that separates the identity of photography, henceforth our guiding thread, from its being or its ontological interpretation? And what can an image

qua image do? It is science that resolves this problem, certainly not empirically, but transcendently. Thus we renounce every ontology of the image to place ourselves once again within the general problem of science, but a science that is 'transcendental' in its cause and that is neither ontological science nor simply positive science. To the philosophical question of the *being* of the image, we oppose the theoretical response, that which gives from the very outset a new experience of visual representation, a response in the identity of image-being, that identity that does not see the ontology that divides the image and separates it from what it can do ...

For this a priori photographic content – being-in-photo – is not exactly the same as what philosophy would call the 'being' of the photo or its 'essence'. In any case, philosophy, with 'being' alone, cannot but divide the reality of the knowledge of the object whose 'being' it describes, cannot but split the identity that 'founds' all knowledge and thinking by way of a supposedly primary universal representation that divides it and alienates it in onto-photo-logical Difference. On the contrary, what we describe – not only the real but its photographic presentation – is identical through and through, and does not support the carrying out of any scission. Philosophy represses the identity of the photo, divides it or puts a blank in its place, a blank it no longer sees any more than it sees this identity. If internal (immanent) identity is the

criterion of the photographic phenomenon, of being-in-photo, then it is no longer a question of a tautology, but of that simplicity that is 'opposed' to the hybrid or to onto-photo-logical difference, having always preceded them in the real and in knowledge. A blinding of the light of logos by the really blind thought of photography. What is obscure and black in the latter does not concern technology but the very thought that animates it in an immanent manner. Darkroom or camera lucida? This is not entirely the problem: the 'opacity' resides rather in the very manner of thinking real-identity, through its photographic presentation – but first of all, the manner in which this identity itself 'thinks', through this presentation. Any philosophy whatsoever (empiricism, rationalism, semiology and even phenomenology) will try to conflate the being-photo (of) the photo with a transcendent content of representation, the ideal or the a priori with the effective, on the pretext of 'shedding light on' or rendering comprehensible – by reflection – the photographic irreflective. It simply comes down to an attempt at reification, an attempt to enclose the infinite uni-verse that every time, every single photo deploys ...

The more-than-absolute-withdrawal of the 'last instance' prohibits its presentation from being a double, its reflection from giving itself in a mirror – the mirror of philosophy – the image of the living from engendering a living-dead. The true represented (Identity)

is unique in principle. The content of presentation and its support are only partially so, but are not in reality what is photographed. Photographic presentation is only unique in-the-last-instance or in its cause; it is an Idea, a Universal empty of data but nevertheless requiring a support. Science is understood as a double of the real only if the latter ceases to be given, to be supposed absent – supposed thus still to be transcendent rather than being invisible-by-immanence as is the One. Compared to science, philosophy is in general an autoscopy – in the sense that it is *auto*-position, *auto*-reflexion, etc. – always double, divided-doubled, besieged by specular images, mythological and hallucinatory entities. It is moreover this that motivates the vain therapeutics that it applies to its own subject. An experience of alienation, of disappropriation and reappropriation, it is the wager of an auto-hetero-photography, of the mythological hybrid of a transcendental photography that cultivates its own return: as death and to its death, pursuing and forfeiting its survival once it begins to pursue itself as a double. It could not but really disappear – either die or recover – if it were to discover that it is none other than its own vanishing visage that it grasps when it onto-photographs the World. Only science can bring about this death – as an imaginary passion of doubles – or really cure it – something completely other than its auto-therapeutic – by orienting

it toward a knowledge of Identity as such and tearing it away from its hallucinatory concept of photography.

PHOTOGRAPHIC REALISM

What is generally understood by 'photographic realism' is only the transcendent form of this realism, its philosophical form and its innumerable avatars. This is why it is preferable to speak of transcendent or philosophical interpretations, including in this idealist interpretations, technologist interpretations, etc. alongside 'realist' interpretations. To the latter belong interpretations in terms of: (1) Representation, documentation, enhancement of vision, etc.; (2). Icon, emanation, manifestation of the object; (3) Expression; (4) Technological processes of image-reproduction; (5) Pictorial and manual manipulation, editing, artificial imagery; (6) Analogon, simulacrum, etc. Realisms more or less supported or moderated, nuanced, differenced – but realisms in the first instance and founded on the philosophical – not at all scientific – presupposition that the transcendence of the World is co-constitutive for thought and for knowledge.

Four or five problems traditionally distribute reflection on the photo as image:

- (1) Its function of representation, its descriptive or figurative value; that which the image *can* show of the World,

its power of resemblance or semblance; its dimension of analogon which evokes the object;

- (2) Its power of manifestation of the 'real' understood as 'object'; more than its analogical evocation, its transitivity or its direct referentiality to the thing, to the transcendent real as such, and the inverse transitivity or causality of the latter; its dimension, in some way, of being an icon and perhaps of the emanation of the real to which it is related and which it indicates almost by contingency;

- (3) Its insertion into an horizon of images, and from this its communicational value or its pragmatic dimension through which it becomes a kind of index;

- (4) Its physical (mechanical and optical) and chemical properties, its technology;

- (5) The invariance of representational content (that which is represented in photo and which could have been otherwise represented) – an invariance that converges with the most general problems of the photo.

The problem of the being-photo (of) the photo doubtless brings into play all of these dimensions, but supposes that their distribution will henceforth be governed according to a principle drawn from science as transcendental or immanent regime. This is not the case with the foregoing distinctions, with their formulation and their presuppositions, which were made within the general horizon of the object, of perception, or of transcendence of the World – the horizon of 'Representation'. Whence, for example,

the tendency to assume iconic power, so as to derive from it the power of resemblance, rather than thinking the latter as *internal* and as a property of the essence of being-in-photo. If resemblance is a resemblance to the absent but supposed perceptible (or indeed on the contrary, opposed to perception) object, this distinction still inscribes itself within the horizon of transcendence or of the World. What we, on the other hand, call the *dualysis* of being-in-photo must redistribute these phenomena otherwise, as a function of vision-force alone – of the Identity of the real – rather than of the World. It is recognized that the photo is not a copy of the real; but without discerning all the conditions, and hence only to draw the opposite conclusion, based on the same prejudice – that it is an emanation, an *eidolon* (a simulacrum) of the referent that it poses as absent or as past – a mode of absence.

Now as soon as photo-being is thought as a function of the object, albeit absent, in reference to the World, to Transcendence in general – whether it is a matter of the object, of the Idea or of the Other – it yields to divided, antinomic, and consequently amphibological, interpretations. There is a veritable antinomy of photographic judgment ('this is a photo': I am 'in a photo'); two interpretations opposed to various degrees, which exist in principle and each of which supposes the other only to deny it or simply differ from it, supplement it, etc. One interpretation in terms of the icon – the iconic manifestation going from the photo

towards the real; another in terms of the idol, the *eidolon* – the image emanating from the real and deriving from it. To iconic causality (*ratio imaginis*) is opposed real, that is to say effective causality, which inverts the icon (*ratio rei*). As soon as the photo is understood in the context of Transcendence in general, it is the object of a double causality, with one the inverse of the other.

The paradox of these interpretations whereby photography is overpowered by ignorance or by 'spontaneous philosophy', is that photography ceaselessly dissolves them, denounces them as a transcendental illusion. If there is a photographic realism, it is a realism 'in-the-last-instance'; which explains why to take a photograph is not, at least as far as science is concerned, to convert one's gaze, to alter one's consciousness, to pragmatically orientate perception or to deconstruct painting, but to produce a new presentation, emergent and novel in relation to the imagination, and in principle more universal than the latter. These interpretations on the contrary all come down to distributing the power-of-seemblance between the object and its image, and thus annulling it, so that it takes refuge in a third term, the anonymous spectator of the photo who is once again distributed, identical on one hand to the photographable object, on the other to its image. The consequence of this antinomy, albeit a 'softened' antinomy, of photographic judgment, is that there is never an actual and real photography,

but an unlimited-becoming-photographic that supposes an infinity of 'shots', and an eternal and transcendent photographer – the philosopher ...

Onto-photo-logic is the hybrid of the real and of the photo in the name of the object – a transcendental illusion that affects not the photo itself, but its average interpretation and at times its practice. The basis of these philosophical interpretations is that the image and the real are parts abstracted from or dependent on one another rather than concrete parts of an immanent or indivisible process. The photo would for example be a real moment as if apparition was a part of that which appeared, for example through an ultimate 'common form' that would be an auto-posed objectivity such as phenomenology itself still supposes. So: alongside each other in an unlimited-photographic-becoming, a becoming-world of the photo and a becoming-photo of the World – a miraculous or magical becoming of photography that is absorbed into that of philosophy.

No philosophical interpretation of the photo – or of the image – escapes this circle, this convertibility of the image and the real that is supposedly the ultimate reason of resemblance; a convertibility that is, doubtless, nuanced, differed or postponed even, in the form of a more or less radically distantiated reversibility; but which forms the most constant presupposition of onto-photo-logy. One takes refuge for example in the icon,

the better to think, so one believes, the phenomenon of the presence without presence of the object, given by its absence. The icon allows a measured realism that hybridizes the respective roles of the image and the object; it gives the presence of the object but *indirectly* and without being itself the object of adoration. It is a variation on the classical amphibology of the image and the real, one which cannot think through to the end the relation of manifestation and resemblance, of the receptacle of the real and the informational message. This iconic function is explained by semblance itself and by a remainder of the 'pregnancy' of perception.

No philosophical interpretation escapes this illusion, not even those that deconstruct this convertibility of the image and the real, that differ this transcendent *mimesis* but which do not know that *what can be* in an image does not stem from the *Other* but from the *One*. The Other radicalizes absence and exacerbates the 'symptomatic' nature of the photo that shows it without showing it, that de-monstrates its mimetic power, but without ever disintricating itself from the infinite *mimesis* that envelops it. As philosophical regime, the photo harbours a double discourse: as supplementary representative or double of that which it reproduces, its emanation and its positive substitute; but also as sign of that which it fails to be. Whence the double register necessary in order to describe

it: illusion, lack, absence, death and coldness; but also life, becoming, rebirth and metamorphosis.

The scientific description of photographic phenomenon begins by dualizing photo-being and the object-form; distinguishing unilaterally the ideal apparition and that which empirically appears by suspending this object-form itself. It dissociates: (1) the causality of the real over the image; it is no longer that of the object, it escapes from the object-form in general and thus from the four metaphysical forms of causality; it is a determination-in-the-last-instance; and (2) semblance, which no longer derives from the object and its causality, which itself has been reduced to a 'symbolic' status. Philosophy is on the contrary the confusion of the real (in its two forms) and the ideal; of causality and of semblance, or, better still, of 'appearance', in that hybrid that is 'resemblance'.

Ultimately, the scientific distinctions are as follows:

- (1) Causality ceases to be that of the object over the image – it would then be both intelligible and amphibological – to become that of Identity-in-the-last-instance over the sole being or the sole reality of the image (being-in-photo);
- (2) Semblance ceases to be understood from outside, as resemblance of the image to that which it represents. Resemblance is dissociated unequally or unilaterally between:

a. The power-of-semblance, proper to every image as such, with which it is given, being the same thing as its infinite ideality;

b. The representational content which is invariant but reduced to the state of symbolic support for the image.

Science generally dissociates 'causality' and '(re)semblance'; and within the latter, a pure power of semblance or of appearance from the representational content. From this precise point of view, it distinguishes between apparition and the transcendent thing that appears, and in the former, between semblance or appearance and the invariant representational givens.

The theoretical and methodological consequences are as follows:

- (1) Included in the effective photographic process, there are many external philosophical distinctions, for example that of the feeling of the object's quasi-magical causal presence, and of the knowledge of its content or of the location of its properties; there is even, if you like, a possible conversion of the gaze, from one and the other. But they do not belong to the identity of being-in-photo – rather, they suppose it, its internality and autonomy. Technological and artistic criteria suppose internal or transcendent criteria – those of photography as immanent process. If there is indeed a vision-enhancing effect, it remains secondary or grafted onto the process which, of itself, knows nothing of such finalities. In the latter

there is an 'objective' that derives from conditions of existence, not from the cause of the photo. Generally, on being-in-photo we find grafted the secondary operations that, in fact, it renders 'real' rather than 'possible' – recollection, imagination, the story, reverie, emotion, the intentional representation of the photographed 'subject' and the conversions of consciousness. But these are only secondary stakes.

(2) These distinctions then pass into the state of simple 'materials' of the theory that transforms them. The traditional double conception of the image as description and as iconic manifestation, applies to the photo even less than to any other type of image. This couplet of contrary functions, convertible or reversible at the limit, this *doublet* of the description and manifestation of the analogon and the icon, is broken by science; its terms transformed and otherwise distributed, once one recognizes that semblance (the power to describe, to figure or to resemble), of itself and in its proper existence, is manifestation or presentation of Identity-in-the-last-instance, but a presentation which lets it be as Identity.

PROBLEMS OF METHOD: ART AND ART THEORY. INVENTION AND DISCOVERY

Certain artists undertake to conjugate photography and fractality, and to draw new effects from this conjugation. Each of them does it with their own imagination and inventiveness, their techniques and their art of adjusting one to the other – and with their philosophy. Almost all of them proceed pragmatically, in the between-two of these techniques, as must artists who make no claims to the theory they use according to their needs. For our part we do not study these techniques of artistic interfacing for themselves – but we make another use of them, we start off elsewhere, otherwise, but aided by this inventiveness. What we ask of artists, to produce before our eyes an invention, or to deploy, as has been said, a fractal 'activity' rather than a fractal theory, we can now transform into a *discovery*, something like the manner in which one discovers a particle or a theorem. The new affinity they exploit by chance and by necessity does not deliver us – quite the contrary – from the task of explaining this new artistic phenomenon or from producing an adequate theory of its unity, of this identity perhaps, of two phenomena at first sight strangers one to the other. Two attitudes are excluded here: a 'critical' and 'aesthetic' commentary on the work and works, but also the very philosophy with

which the artists themselves always accompany this work. We consider it rather as a reflection of their practice and as belonging to the complete concept of their oeuvre. It is a question for us of seeking the theoretical effects or thought-effects that it produces, perhaps unknowingly, and in excess over what it knows. In a sense, we can never quite know how they proceed, except through already-made 'interpretative frameworks' that might just as well be applied to other oeuvres. We will treat the work, rather, as the equivalent of a *discovery*, an emergent novelty it falls to us precisely to produce the theory of, a theory which will also be something new in relation to 'art criticism' – to pose it as *our* own object and thus to make the work of the artist resonate in our way, in the corresponding theory. Corresponding not to this work but, let us repeat, to the discovery to which it will have given rise. Rather than specularly giving a 'commentary' on works, to concentrate them around a *problem* of which we as yet have no idea, but which artists have brought forth and which they have imposed on our horizon to the point of overturning it. With them and following them, we cannot nor even should any longer think photography and fractality each in their own respect, aesthetically or even geometrically, as if it was a matter of a chance encounter, of a mere convergence, hybridization or intercession. If the chance at work in artists' practice is not accessible to us, we do nevertheless receive from them, in the present

case, a necessary connection which had not been thought before, and which exceeds all knowledge; but whose necessity or essence it falls to us to make out; and which we can feel free to treat as an unprecedented *hypothesis* in the field of art but above all in the theory of art.

The reciprocal autonomy of art and theory signifies that we are not the doubles of artists, that we also have a claim to 'creation', and that inversely, artists are not the inverted doubles of aestheticians and that they, too, without being theorists, have a claim to the power of theoretical discovery. We recognize that they have a place all the more solitary, and we receive from them the most precious gift, that we will cease to make commentaries on them and to submit them to philosophy so as finally not to 'explain' them but, on the basis of their discovery taken up as a guiding thread (or, if you like, as cause) to follow the chain of theoretical effects that it sets off in our current knowledge of art, in what is conventional and stereotypical in it, fixed in an historical or obsolete state of invention and of its spontaneous philosophy. To mark its theoretical effects in excess of all knowledge.

Fractality cannot be merely a new 'interpretative framework' or an interpretation of photography, nor can the former be a way of anticipating the latter, each

metaphorizing¹ the other. We have excluded all these modes of interaction, which are of an aesthetic or philosophical type. We shall call them 'unitary': they enclose and fence in art for the use of philosophy, for ends that are not artistic. On the other hand we shall call 'unified' a theory that delivers art from philosophical and aesthetic enclosure and which, in order to do so, proposes three operations:

- (1) To define an autonomous theoretical order, one that is not hybridised with art like aesthetics is, but which maintains itself, instead, in a scientific relation to art and treats it as an hypothesis opening a really unlimited theoretical space;
- (2) To identify, doubtless, art and theory (for example, fractal theory as scientific), but in a very particular mode of identity that we will call the *One-in-the-last-instance* – we shall come back to this, obviously – and which we oppose to every philosophical 'synthesis' precisely because it is a One that is not accompanied by any external or hybrid synthesis. We shall call it a *unified theory of the photography of fractality*. Far from being their unitary and reductive synthesis, for example in the mode of metaphor and for the greater glory of philosophy, it poses as an hypothesis to

1 Marie-Bénédicte Hautem develops an identification of her work that makes of photography 'a metaphorical reading of fractal geometry', and brings the latter together, quite rightly, with Deleuze's 'smooth surface' and 'indiscernibility'; as a repercussion of which the aesthetic purport of the latter is brought to light.

experiment, test, modify and render fruitful in knowledge, the identification-in-the-last-instance of these two things; (3) to suspend globally philosophical interpretations of photography and of fractality alike, and consequently to modify their essence, with a new theory by the name of 'generalised fractality'.

In no longer being employed as a metaphysical entity, fractality can be introduced not only into the technique of photography, but into the very essence of the latter and consequently into the order of photographic *theory*. It ceases simultaneously to give rise both to a philosophy and to 'its' own geometry, to become instead the object of a new type of theory having as its object the *fractal essence* of photography but which however always belongs to a science. We thereby cease to see both from the outside, dominating or surveying them with the intention of crossing or mongrelizing them, and instead we modify directly their concept or their respective spontaneous philosophical interpretations. Rather a paradoxical modification, undoubtedly, since it is precisely a question of using them within that new theoretical sphere and under its law (the *One-in-the-last-instance*) rather than working on their concept still in an aesthetic and/or geometric way, which claims to modify them, proposing new versions of them that remain always aesthetic or geometric. Without geometric or photographic ambitions – or philosophical ambitions, that is to say ambitions supposing the latter

two and their combination – we shall pursue only the constitution of this unified theory, with the help of photography and fractality (as mere materials). In taking as a guiding thread the idea of their intrinsic identity, with artists as indispensable indicators of the Idea, or rather of the hypothesis of this essence-of-fractality of photography, of this essence-of-photography of fractality – of this undivided bloc – we shall not propose it as a metaphysical essence or as an absolute criteria for the selection or evaluation of artists – this is not our role.

Do not expect here a new theory of photography, its semiological, physical, chemical, economic, stylistic properties – that would be philosophy. It is a question of a true *theory* of the scientific type, but bearing upon the essence of photography and identically on fractality rather than on the empirically-observed phenomena of one or the other. A unified theory must be able to do as philosophy does, that is to say, to include the problem of essence – for example that of the being-in-photo and the fractal-being of photographic objects or fractal figures – but to treat them by hypothesis, deduction and experimental testing. Other hypotheses, other theoretical effects will have been, without doubt, possible and just as contingent. But it is the privilege of Hautem and of certain others to thus force us to take account of this contingency and to recognize its necessity on the plane where it can be *known*.

ON THE PHOTO AS VISUAL ALGORITHM

In photography as elsewhere, fractality responds to a problem of dimensionality. But where, in all precision, to place this phenomenon? Not in the photo as a physical object, but in what we call being-in-photo, that is to say the state and the mode of representation of an object imposed by a photo independently of its physical, chemical, stylistic (etc.) properties. The photo, also, as representation or knowledge which relates to its objects, possesses a fractal dimension, that is to say a fractional aspect, irreducible to wholes, to 'whole' dimensions or to the classical dimensions of perception and perhaps of philosophical objects. This is an apparently new problem: being-in-photo has given rise to phenomenologies, semiologies, psychoanalyses, etc., but the problem of its fractal purport has garnered little attention, doubtless because of the extraordinary platitude, superficiality or effacement of this mode of representation, compared to a geometrical or physical object. However, as a first approximation, being-in-photo realizes the miracle of making surfaces, angles, reliefs, shadows and colours, a whole manifold of 'real' properties, exploited by different possible disciplines, hold together in a simple surface, or of projecting them onto a plane but conserving their function as representative properties, and in totally filling

the plane with this multiplicity. Nevertheless this is only a first indication, and not yet the true concept of fractality. Let us take the matter up from another angle.

Photography and fractality together bear witness to an irreducibility of 'intuition'. Mandelbrot insists, for his part, on the sensible and visual donation to the abstract equation, and notes that this geometrical intelligibility is one of the original aspects of fractality. We can generalize to photography, and generalize intuition: in the grasping of a photo just as in that of a fractal object, intuition is indistinctly sensible and intelligible, visual and theoretical, and bears witness to the theoretical autonomy of the visual order. Theoretical autonomy meaning (1) that it is subject to no causality or finality external to it, whether solely empirical or solely intelligible; that it does not serve as a mere support for something else, without its own reality or consistency, to layers of non-visual qualities or predicates; that it possesses in itself its own sense and is not absorbed even in a philosophical logos; (2) that it is freighted with an immediate theoretical import or value, that an intelligibility (law or structure) is immanent to the sensible, if not strictly identical to it; that an 'external' reading (semiological, for example) of the fractal or photographic object, whilst not useless, is certainly not necessary.

Let us move now to photography. What use do we make of a photo when, ceasing to perceive the physical

object, we 'look at' the photo instead? A use that is that of a sensible algebra or indeed a visual algorithm rather than of a schema. It has the finitude of the algorithm, in the radical form of the concentration of a finite number of representative properties that are necessary to 'retrieve' the 'real' object; and the infinite power of reproduction or engenderment of that object. A photo is a finite knowledge, but one that permits the demonstration anew of the essence of a being, of a situation, to 'bring the subject to life', as we say. From this point of view, its mode of being is very close to that of an essence: it is dead or inert like an *eidos*, in-itself and immobile – but hardly a Platonic *eidos*, since it can immediately be read, and by the sensible, what is more, without any 'participation' of the latter in the former nor any 'reflection' of the latter in the former, without external incarnation or schematization. It is that which the pure eidetic of the sensible qua sensible is capable of. If Ideas are given, in the cave, in the form of reflections or shadows, would they not, if they could be given directly to the sensible, give themselves in the form of photos? Platonism is perhaps born of the absence of a photo: from this we get the model and the copy, and their common derivative in the simulacrum. And Leibniz and Kant alike – the intelligible depth of the phenomenon as much as its trenchant distinction – find their possibility in this repression of photography.

The enigma common to photography and fractality resides in that immanence to self that necessitates the abandonment of external interpretative frameworks and the rediscovery of the internal point of identification of contrary properties or opposed predicates, an identification which the photo does not *become* but which it *is*, its photo-logical tenor. The paradox culminates with photography: the more one affirms the theoretical autonomy of the visual order, the more one must renounce the old concept, now maladapted, of intuition or intuitivity; detach it from its context of perception and representation, even that of the image (extended, dependent on a surface) and think the photographic state of things in a more 'internal' or more 'immanent' way. If Mandelbrotian fractality is geometrical, then perhaps the photo – as strict identity, for example, of appearing and the thing that appears, as non-distinction of the other couples that form a system with perception and philosophy – imposes a more 'intensive' or more 'phenomenal' conception of fractality. A photo 'looks', must be 'looked at', and the wholly internal drama at play in this operation harbours a new concept of fractality, contains it this time in the manner of an *a priori* at once concrete, material and ideal. We shall call it 'non-Mandelbrotian' or 'generalised fractality' (GF).²

² On these concepts, see my *Théorie des Identités. Fractalité généralisée et philosophie artificielle* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

ON PHOTOGRAPHY AS GENERALISED FRACTALITY

To speak of fractality is to suppose that at least three conditions are fulfilled:

(1) *Condition of irregularity*: A photo, once no longer interpreted by perception or intuition, by the 'intuitive gaze' (Husserl) and the (semiological, economic, stylistic, etc.) codes which derive from it, is a phenomenon irreducible to the 'whole' dimensions of representation. But this fractality is no longer manifested in geometric manner by a jagged profile, by points, angles, ruptures or points of interruption, by a symmetrical angularity occupying a surface *as a plane*; but by another type of excess that occupies the surface but *as depth*, in so far as this depth is not in or of space, or behind the surface, but a depth proper to an extreme flatness for which the plane is now but an adjunct phenomenon of superficiality and of its proper 'intensive' depth.

This excess is constituted by intensive 'points' that produce the strict identification of the opposed predicates proper to representation, for example that of the appearance and that which appears. And the very flatness of the photo, that which constitutes its original, non-geometric depth, is filled by an excess that interrupts perceptual normality – at an angle, if you like, but one now without symmetry, without double-sidedness, of a new type in

relation to geometrical fractality, a type that we shall call *uni-lateral* because, among other properties, it only ever has one side. The static identification, without becoming, of the parameters of perceptual representation, which philosophy likes to re-couple or re-knot in various ways without thinking their strict identity, exceeds at a stroke the traditional resources not only of geometry, but of thought and its ready-made dualities, and exceeds them in creating a dimension of non-perceptual depth, a uni-lateral depth, or depth without return, without reversibility. And above all, this excess occupies the whole photographic surface: photographic identity, its 'flatness' or its superficiality – not its plane – is full of this excess. Even in its banal perceptual interpretation, a photo testifies to this tendency by which the image 'approximates' reality, concentrates its dimensions, tends toward the cadaveric, to the excessive state where death encounters life and already threatens the certainty of classical dimensions, the theoretical space of 'whole' dimensions of representation. The effacement of intuitivity by the identity of the algorithmic and the visual belongs to these phenomena.

Thus fractality is here generalized – its concept transformed – for reasons themselves fractal or excessive in regard to its geometrical version and its philosophical interpretation, which are complementary. The photo-essence ... of the photo is detained entirely in this uni-lateralizing identification. If one assumes this experience

as a theoretical a priori, then it becomes possible to understand, or to *explain* why, for example, in Hautem's work, an animal skin is a cloud as much as a wave, and does not *become*, or *pass into* one or the other, does not metamorphose into something else but acquires from the start its *identity* or is *manifested* in itself rather than in another thing. Of course, if one is, on the contrary, content to assume the stance of faith in perception, to perceive that which is no longer anything but a *supposed photo* and to superpose on it layers of predicates of every sort as on an *object* or a *foundation*, one will grasp nothing but a weak or faint identity, half-distorted or stretched, a stricture and a relaxation in progress, and one will come back to a geometrical fractality for a Mandelbrotian 'reading' or 'interpretation' of photography as arbitrary as any other.

(2) *Condition of 'self-similarity' or identity*: It is here that the true generalization of Mandelbrotian fractality operates. In the latter, irregularity or interruption is primary, its reproduction or resemblance secondary, and we conceive that philosophies of difference find in it an example of their central concept. But in GF, it is identity that is first and which conditions the most extreme unilateral irregularity as the only other possible solution. But it cannot condition it unless it ceases to be a unity of the philosophical type, assembling, normalizing or smoothing irregularity into a curve or a surface. It is this that we shall call the One-in-the-last-instance, that is to say a cause

of strict identification of contraries, but a cause that is inalienable in its effect of identification. Generalised fractal unilaterality is a strict identification, without becoming (unless a becoming of the knowledge that we have of it, not of its essence). But it itself finds its cause – we shall return to this distinction – in the One as pure identity which is a self-immanence, rather than to a supposedly primary irregularity. It is thus far stronger than mere 'self-similarity', which we know to be an identity that is weak, variable and an effect of resemblance.

From this point of view, a photo contains a moment of infinite identical reproduction that is totally different from a specular reproduction or an abyssal reproduction. A photo is not a specular doubling of itself, still less is it the reflection of something external or a play of reflections, a simulacrum. It is an absolute reflection, without mirror, unique each time but capable of an infinite power ceaselessly to secrete multiple identities. Before reproducing a scene or a 'subject', setting it out on a surface and responding to the photographer's intention, a photo deploys its depth-of-surface in a multiplicity that is not obtained by division of itself or 'scissiparity'. It is called 'non-consistent', that is to say not closed or bounded by a transcendent resemblance, by a model or even by a simulacrum that would oblige the various representations to encroach on each other. The identity at issue here is obviously not that of the supposedly isolated

theme or subject, but that which is transmitted from the One to being-in-photo, in the mode of which the theme henceforth exists. No set-theoretic or even philosophical multiplicity applies to it, and even less can any 'mechanical reproduction' exhaust its internal force of representation. Far from closing-up the photographic multiple (and the specular, hallucinatory doubling of the photo will still be such a closing), the One-in-the-last-instance, which is no longer explained by the norms of representation nor alienates itself from them, gives it the force of that excess over the more or less smooth 'curves' of philosophy and of perception that we make use of in thought. It is important to distinguish this explanation from the interpretation, let us call it 'Deleuzian', that makes of photography a doubling, a sterile double rising to the surface, which thus Platonises and topologises, contemplating the photographic phenomenon from outside, like a god or a philosopher, rather than thinking on the basis of this strict immanence.

(3) *Conditions of regularity*: All fractality interrupts or bisects a curve, or even prevents it from being constituted, or responds rather to another type of identity. With the GF at work in photography, it is obviously the 'whole' or barely-fractional space (the invisible side of the cube that is subtracted from visibility, etc.) of perception, and even the most resolutely fractional space of philosophy (defined by difference, the between-two, becoming, even

differance), that is put out of play and destituted of all pertinence. Being-in-photo, in its identity without becoming, in its unilaterality more powerful than mere fractality, exceeds the geometrical as much as the philosophical space. The latter try to norm and smooth, very precisely to *spatialise* that which, in the *phenomenon* of photography, refuses all space and refuses the identification-in-progress or the mimetism which is the law of that space. To say it in yet another way, if philosophy finds its 'principle of principles' in originary intuition, in the *intuitive givenness* of which Husserl speaks and which gives things and ideas *in flesh and blood*, it is indeed this corporeality – the correlate of the philosophical ideal of mastery – that refuses photography or into which photography cannot enter. The characteristic circle of philosophy defines, so to speak, a superior curve, a geometrico-philosophical hybrid which continues to invest Mandelbrotian fractality, and above all the philosophy of photography that the fractalist artists develop, in adequate correspondence with their work. But it is now in opposition to this circle or curve that GF is defined as non-Mandelbrotian generalization. It is for example this *phenomeno-logical* flesh of the World that it exceeds in its proper photo-intentionality, an intentionality that no longer finds its object in the World, but in that depth-of-surface inhabited by the photo.

ON THE SPONTANEOUS PHILOSOPHY OF ARTISTS AND ITS THEORETICAL USE

As to the World – to the wave, the skin, the earth, the mud and the Cosmos, the inevitable references of 'fractal-ist' artists – it ceases to be for us what it doubtless is for these artists – the encompassing whole of their fractal and photographic practice – to be no longer anything more than the occasion or the mere material of the theory of that practice. There is no theory that does not pay with the loss of the thing, or more exactly of its immediate auto-representations, for example of the philosophy in which artistic practice reflects itself. From our point of view, what does the existence of these artists signify, if not the revelation of the very essence of photography or the manifestation of being-in-photo within the conditions of existence offered by the World, and this by virtue of fractality, which, in some way, schematises it spatially as it schematises the GF that is part and parcel of it? For these artists themselves, GF is part and parcel of it. Fractality is a *new* technique invested in the relation to the object and the renewal of our perception of the World. For us it is an aid or an occasion to reveal the essence of photography. It is thus a displacement in relation to the artists, a considerable shifting of place and above all of sense that we are carrying out. For example, with respect

to a practice of photographic multiple-exposure, superposition or stacking of visual givens that is something of a fractal technique: without being a manipulation, this technique creates an ambiguity between nature and the work produced, fractality finding its site neither in nature nor in the work, but rather oscillating from one to the other, a little like Mandelbrot himself oscillates, in defining fractality, between the natural object and the mathematical model. A typically aesthetic ambiguity, as if fractality were to function as a new synthesis of the intelligible and the sensible, beyond its own significance for mathematical intelligibility and for visual intuition, and by extension of the latter. But we cannot content ourselves with reproducing philosophically this synthesis or 'critiquing', 'differing' or 'deconstructing' it. We assume a theoretical stance that displaces in a stroke the signification of fractality and puts it in the service of a task of manifestation and knowledge of the essence of photography – a task that is heterogeneous with the practice itself. One should not think, however, that the work of artists is for us a mere occasional cause, that it is secondary. It is rather that it is the symptom or the indication of a theoretical discovery that has not yet produced all its effects in art itself and above all in its theory; that it opens to the scientists-and-philosophers that we are an unexpected but welcome task.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC STANCE AND ITS TECHNOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF INSERTION INTO THE WORLD

There now remains – as an example, since there is also the eye, the body and the motif in so far as they are in the World – the technological side of photography, of which we have said that it is inscribed in the outside of vision-force, that is to say in transcendence. In relation to the schema described above, the opening of the viewfinder and of the 'objective' lens functions rather as a closure or narrowing, to the dimensions of the World, of the radical opening represented by universal photographic fiction. But in relation to the opening proper to the World and to philosophy, it functions also – but in an entirely other sense – as closure, inhibition and 'reduction'. There is an indifference to the World in the opening/closing of the objective lens. The latter is at once a relay of perception against vision-force, and a relay of the latter against perception and its overly-restricted opening. Photographic technology is not only a restriction of everyday transcendent representation, it is the medium of a sort of abstraction, of an extraction of the universal photographic fiction on the basis of the World, the only medium to tolerate the stance of the non-representative vision-force and to give it a material, an 'object' to photograph, since

it is already cut from the World by the photographic intention. In principle, as we have seen, there is not first a World and a photographer given in its midst, pasting together a set of brief intentions and partial objects – bodies, gestures, eye, motif, camera – so as to produce an unlimited-becoming-photographic. There is rather an order associating linearly and irreversibly, by successive thresholds of non-recurrence, the body or its stance, the eye, the camera, the motif, and the photo. Moreover, all this also has a transcendent face, that allows itself to be found in the World, and functions inversely as limitation of vision-force in its universal appearance.

On the one hand, technology here serves as an experimental production of objective idealities or irrealities; it thus still supposes the perceptual ground and the World. So that photography is not a practical or technical science of perception but a quasi-scientific art of perception.

On the other hand, photographic speed and precipitation – the impossible coincidence with time that still reigns in the ‘coverage of the event’ – prohibit the completion of exchanges, narrowly selecting that which, of the World, will be authorized to ‘pass’. Photography is thus a system of double anguish that is knotted in the camera: the anguish of the photographer who must urgently pass through the defile to accede to times always too actual and spaces always too withdrawn; and the anguish of the World which can never be sure of passing the test of

the objective lens as ‘narrow gateway’. From this point of view, photography takes from the World a minimum of reality, an image that is not only non-thetic, but also always on the way to idealization, and which represses or bars common sense and originary faith in perception. Technology in general, and photography in particular – precisely because of its technological schema of opening/closing – is the site of a necessary compromise that permits the putting-into-relation – despite everything – of the two sides of the duality: the a-cosmic or abstract stance of the photographer, devoid of being-in-the-world, and the World. It is this that permits the insertion of the pure photographic paradigm – as previously described – in its empirico-worldly conditions of existence or effectiveness, to which the technological schema of photography belongs and which it symbolizes and, so to speak, reflects. This insertion assures it a precise effectiveness, distinct from that of painting (which also, in essence at least, is a matter of an immanent stance rather than of perception).

Here technology is not directly in the service of scientific representation as is the case in science ‘itself’. However it is in the service of the World and of transcendence, even while symbolizing, on the other hand, by the play of opening/closing, that which, in vision-force, is capable of abstracting or extracting itself from the World. In its schema of opening/closing, it directly symbolizes this double relation, these two sides of the duality and all

the negotiation that is in play between universal photographic Fiction and the opening-of-the-World. What is remarkable here, perhaps, is that technology, far from being a simple medium of science, is *also* and *instead* in the service of perception and of the World. Far from being a procedure of experimentation and transformation internal to the objective givens which science analyses, it is that which negotiates the re-entry of the World, the return of transcendence into the abstract photographic stance. If it still has a function as a stimulus to experiment, it is within perception and under its law, not under that of calculation and scientific experimentation. So that, grasped concretely, in all its dimensions – that of vision-force as well as that of the World's claim to impose itself on the photographer – photography is the site of a special synthesis between the two sides of the duality. This synthesis – where the claim of the World over abstract vision-force is at once satisfied and postponed, where its resistance is admitted and displaced – is perhaps nothing other than art.

Photography is thus, despite everything, a concession made to the World.

Although they are not wholly unrelated, the opening/closing of the shutter is not of the order of the *wink* of a rogue, a sceptic, or a nihilist, a wink that is typical rather of onto-photo-logic alone. It is perhaps photography's role to resolve this problem: to accede, no longer to perception,

but to the minimum still tolerable to perception; to continue to open to the World, but to that minimum of World that technology and above all 'modern' science can handle. It represents the extinction point – rather than the suppression or destruction pure and simple – of philosophy as ontology or World-thought, an extinction that is effectuated through the infra-photographic 'objective lens' of the scientific stance in regard to the real. It testifies just as much to the manifestation as such (the explicit manifestation) of science and to its refusal of the World, as to the resistance of the latter and of the old thought – philosophy – of which it is the element. In it, *as it*, the old and the new in thought are delivered, not to a last combat – there will have been plenty of others to which photography was not witness, there will be others to which it will not be, and there are other forms of art that will have borne witness – but a particularly *close* combat ...

**BEING-IN-PHOTO AND THE AUTOMATICITY OF
THOUGHT: THE ESSENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC
MANIFESTATION**

Technological automatism explains nothing about the photo. However it does have a symbolic relation with a

more profound automatism, one of 'stance' or of being, one that necessitates all representation of Identity as such.

Take some of the 'indices' of this automatism: As image, the photo appears to belong to a particularly visual and primary thinking; as sign or symbolic factor, it is particularly inert and manipulable. It combines the least seductive traits of representation: flatness, levelling, naivety, the absence of reflective distance, the automatism of production and of reproduction. Even 'in colour', it has something definitively grey and deadly about it. These phenomena are accompanied by an exclusion of discourse and of the intellect, of philosophical and 'phenomenological' culture (man as seeing and speaking being). So much so that the politics of photography is rarely positive or affirmative. It appears above all to realize an extreme form of objectivity, through a sort of passage to the limit; a sur-objectivity or an objectivism such that 'carnal', living and variable perceptual distance, is as such put out of play – not annulled, but rather spread out and made flat, crushed 'onto' or 'into' the photo. As if the lived and more or less invisible condition of perception had fulfilled its role so well that it itself became entirely visible, externalized or alienated from itself, projected to the very surface. A visible devoid of invisible, because even the invisible that acts and animates perception is here completely exposed, so that this representation is

lived, in each of its points, as strict identity of visibility and invisibility.

Here is a wholly original trait: the distance that conditions the emergence of representation is itself given through and through 'objectively' but all at once, without being in its turn objectivated – auto-objectivated – since all objectivity is laid out in the photo. A levelling of the object and of the acts of objectivation in an objectivity without thickness or referent, with neither fold nor refolding, and where even the flesh is disincarnated.

The 'phenomenological distance' that contrives perception and all vision, even ontological, even the vision of Being or its phenomenon, here becomes, immediately and through and through, a phenomenon visible in each of its points. This radical transgression of perception by the photo is enigmatic and theoretically perturbing in every way. Philosophy is ill-prepared to interpret such phenomena; it is condemned to reaction, to refusal, to suspicion; to the attempt at negative explanation, denigratory in every case, precisely in terms of the 'passage to the limit' or 'catastrophe'. It is constrained to receive them in terms of classical paradoxes. Photography excludes technology, its hesitations and its bricolage, but through an excess of technological magic, and ultimately to give the impression of producing an inert and absolutely exhibited artefact; it excludes the order of symbolic necessity, of speech and language, through an excess of symbolic automatism,

but only to present the image as a sign and the sign as an image; and vision through a blindingly excessive precision of the gaze, but only for us to put ourselves before these photographic beings or objects which give themselves to us as blind and as incapable of seeing us. The photo feels like one of those flat, a-reflexive, ultra-objective thoughts that are a discovery of scientific modernity. But is this automatism still that of a perception that annuls itself in its object by way of a passage to the limit?

Here, therefore, is what must be explained: this objectivity so radical that it is perhaps no longer an alienation; so horizontal that it loses all intentionality; this thought so blind that it sees perfectly clearly in itself; this semblance so extended that it is no longer an imitation, a tracing, an emanation, a 'representation' of what is photographed. Such an objectivity, of a type so new, an objective photographic field but without photographed objects, doubtless has internal criteria close *in type* to those of scientific thought.

Let us begin again with the well-known phenomenal characteristics of the photo. The medium is endowed with a transparency such that it appears to give the object itself, the in-itself, but without distance, that is to say, with the immediacy of a phenomenon. The photo realizes a wager in relation to the hesitations, the depths, the refoldings of perception: the paradoxical synthesis of the in-itself and of the phenomenon given in undivided manner.

The condition of its 'automaticity' of thought is to be found in this undivided givenness of the apparition and that which appears, on condition of no longer understanding by the latter the object that appears, as we may still suppose in other circumstances. We must distinguish, within the general sphere of that which appears, the object that appears (all that appears in so far as it could have the object-form in general or could be the result of an objectivation), and the *absolutely immanent that-which-appears*, the manifold of representation (which by the way plays the role of symbolic support) qua identical to the appearing and stripped of this general object-form, even of sense and of noema: the immanent chaos. Photographic appearing is itself the immanent *that-which-appears*. The givenness is the thing itself *in-its-image*, rather than the image-of-the-thing. There is thus an adequation of thought or of representation to its object, except that the latter no longer has the object-form at all: it is the 'phenomenon-manifold', the phenomenal chaos of every image qua image.

Phenomenology also is a partly blind and automatic description of phenomena. But photography, from this point of view, is a hyperphenomenology of the real. There are only pure 'phenomena', with no in-itself hidden behind them (and the object-form is one of these philosophical in-itselfs). Phenomena are the only in-itself possible – here is an implicit thesis of the photographic

operation, which gives it a purport whose anti-Husserlian radicality is immediately evident. There is a 'phenomenological' automatism or blinding that culminates in the photographic eviction of the logos – of philosophy itself – in favour of a pure irreflective manifestation of the phenomenon-without-logos. And if one says that it is still a matter of the logos, of representation, the response will be that it is a purely phenomenal logos, or a logos without-logos, without auto-position. Stripped of 'faith in perception', photography is from the start more faithful or more adequate than perception, which is always inadequate and traversed by the invisible. But many other *distinctions* structure perception and ultimately all of philosophy: form/ground, object/horizon, matter/form, particular/universal, etc., are retracted and their terms given in strictly undivided manner in the photographic medium.

These phenomenal characteristics can always receive a double interpretation. The first exits the phenomena – and consequently falsifies it or breaks its phenomenal identity – to find for it a foundation or cause in a transcendent *object*: not necessarily in a real or 'in-itself' object *beyond* the phenomenon, but in a more subtle mode in the object-form, for example in an intentionality of the appearing *towards* or *to* that which appears as sense or noema. Philosophy and its 'avatars' (phenomenology, semiology, pragmatics, psychoanalysis, aesthetics) generally proceed

thus, aided by that prosthesis the object-form to explain, despite everything – to *re-divide* according to the outside – the undivided essence of the photo; to explain through representation the identity-essence of representation.

The other interpretation remains faithful to the force of the photo, which is, like that of the image but more than any other image, to give adequately the real or the in-itself, the presence in flesh and blood, but to give it at the same time in a way that is thoroughly phenomenal or that belongs to 'presentation': In some way the phenomenon (of) the in-itself or the in-itself (of) the phenomenon, like an Identity that refuses to be dismembered. Now such an Identity as such, and thus undivided, has no cause or explanation in the sphere of transcendence in general, where the phenomenon and the in-itself are united only in the object-form, which divides them again one last time. This is why, if photographic realism is the only rigorous doctrine, it is on condition of understanding it, in its foundation rather than in its effects, as a realism *only in-the-last-instance*. Far from being reduced to the effects of resemblance with the object and of being explained by them, of being a realism by redoubling or auto-position, it is a power-of-semblance which is without object since it finds its cause-in-the-last-instance in the One.

Such an interpretation strictly respects this indivision proper to immanent phenomenal givens, whatever might be their (qualitative, quantitative, specific, generic, etc.)

distinctions from the point of view of the World or of that which appears to be represented. It does not explain them from the outside, by reference to their equivalents in the World, to their economy and their claims, but seeks the absolutely internal cause of this very special phenomenality. And rather than make the medium efface itself in the object, it suspends the claims of the latter – no longer of this or that object, but of the object-form itself – and, without effacing it symmetrically in the medium via an inversion that changes nothing, it distinguishes these two regions of reality as in principle unequal and without common measure of Being. The region of the image owes its cause, the cause of its image-power, to an identity that is 'in it' only in-the-last-instance, but which suffices to identify radically all the oppositions of perception and to make of the photo this adequate or scientific knowledge. It is this that gives the photo its being as blind image, without objective intentionality, without ecstasis-to-World, image-without-refolding, objective-without-object; its power-of-semblance which does not found itself on any resemblance.

In relation to the economy of perception and of being-towards-the-world, it seems that everything has lost its function, that all the correlations have been annulled or suspended. All is identical, but not intentionally so, not identical to ..., and therefore without an ideal form, a form taken up again into an All. In immanence, one no

longer distinguishes between the One and the Multiple, there is no longer anything but $n=1$, and the Multiple-without-All. No manifold watched over by a horizon, in flight or in progress: everywhere a true chaos of floating or inconsistent determinations. Photographic chaos is the chaos of representational content once the latter is grasped on the order of the pure image. The photo is not an horizon of polysemy or the dissemination of this horizon. An atomic, perhaps more-than-atomic, multiplicity inhabits any photo whatsoever; it is strict Identity, but effectuated in an ideal or transcendent mode. The photo lets chaos be as chaos, without claiming to grasp it again as sense, as becoming, as truth – an auto-positional or transcendent reference. But it is equally – indivisibly – the pure identity (of) a multiplicity without difference, at least without worldly difference, a sterilization of the World. A photo is an Idea blind to the World but which knows itself as such, not 'for itself' but 'in the last instance'.

Between Identity and Multiplicity, no synthesis by a third term – the philosopher looking at the photo and looking at himself looking at the photo. No inhibition any longer, they do not impede each other: the internal chaos of determinations grasped in the formal being of the 'in-photo' is a radical atomicity that has no sense outside the One. Inversely, tear up a photo 'into a thousand pieces' and even into one thousand -1 or one thousand $+1$, and it will remain independent of its extension in paper – which

is all you will have torn up: it will remain a thousand =1. Only philosophical presuppositions that are a stranger to the thing itself can make us believe that to its essence belongs its necessary correlation to a worldly extension. Its only 'extension' is internal, intelligible and indivisible. This is why these photos that you 'look at' are no longer the remainder of a unique photography torn up by some evil demon, the residue of an onto-photo-logical disaster, or the debris of a deconstruction. The most concentrated, focussed sensibility is otherwise speculative than is speculation, and knows that each of these photos burns with an obscure glare, distinct every time.

The other characteristics arise from the same essential phenomenon of indivision: neutrality in relation to the values and hierarchies that make up the fabric of history, politics, and philosophy; disinterestedness as well. A photo manifests a distance of an infinite order or inequality to the World, from the very fact of its purely internal organization, the immanent distribution it proposes of the data of representation (including their transcendent organization). The photo 'arranges itself' to precede things on whose basis, nevertheless, it has been produced. Far from any empiricism, it is not already amongst things, things are already rendered inert and sterile as soon as it appears. These are the things that are for all eternity in the photo and nowhere else, at least in so far as they are 'in-photo'.

This region of being – where Identity reigns in-the-last-instance in the mode of pure ideality, delivered from the object-form and from the distinctions that go along with it – is what the photographer sees when he believes he focuses on an object. It is advisable to distinguish that which the eye focuses on, aided by the camera, and that which the photographer, as blind to the World, really focuses on, which is that undivided, if not unlimited, photographic extension. Once he is grasped by science, the photographer sees 'in' himself, in the immanence of his vision-force, an infinite intelligible photo indifferently peopled – in the state of chaos – by all the objects of the World of which, nevertheless, it is not a tracing. To photograph is doubtless also to select a sample of those objects by technological and aesthetic means; but it is above all to effectuate that universal intelligible photo 'on the occasion' of these objects; objects of which it is not the generalization, generalizing vision only through their *medium*, treating them as particular cases or possible 'models' of this photography that is universal from the outset. This is why the photo-being (of) the photo, independent of all the presuppositions of the transcendent realism of perception and consequently of philosophy, is described not in 'tautologies', but in enunciations-of-identity, distributions of language that themselves participate in this type of being – the following, well-known type: photography allows one to see what a thing

that is photographed resembles; the photo is only ever the photo *of* that of which it *appears* to be the photo, etc. In it one can rediscover pretty much everything that can be delivered by natural vision, and even a part of its unconscious and of the effects of the Other that haunt it. But what changes everything entirely, is that everything passes from the All to the Identical. Every thing here loses its function and its sense of reciprocity. The intimate work of the photo is a de-functionalization of thought and a *parousia* of Being, but one freed from limits, folds, from the horizons that it owes to its hybridization with the entity. The dissolution of ontological Difference is the great work of photographic *thought* – for photography, when we think it, also thinks; and this is why it does not think like philosophy.

As power-of-semblance, it does indeed form a region of objectivity, but one devoid of objects (they have passed to the formal state of chaos on one hand, to that of symbolic support on the other) and of objectivation – empty in general of phenomenological structures of perception: horizon, field of consciousness, fringe and margin, pregnant form (Gestalt), flux, etc. If there is a unicity to this region, it is no longer that of a field or of an horizon, of a project, etc. In all regards the photo is closer in its being to the artificial image than to the visual image. It is stripped of those transcendent forms of organization that one finds transposed and adapted in iconicity for

example, and in general it has no originary continuity with the structure of the visual field. From this phenomenal point of view or from that which is simply *given* in it, it is structured by three a priori each of which expresses Identity (as fractalizing,³ not as totalizing).

- (1) It gives itself not as a field but as non-consistent chaos of identities, irreducible chaos, or chaos that remains such whatever may be its posterior 'organization';
- (2) It gives itself as a pure exteriority, as a simple Other, intrinsically completed (alterity is not divided/redoubled, but manifests itself each time in its turn in the form of an undivided identity);
- (3) It gives itself as a stability or a plane of immanence, but also without fold or refolding; not as one photo, but as a thousand photo-one(s).

Take the case of the second a priori. Being indeed manifests itself as Other, but as Other qua Other, without being conflated with the 'defile' the 'shock', the 'aura', the 'rupture', which are still philosophical forms of the Other. A photo manifests in-the-last-instance the Other on the mode of the One rather than on that of the Other. Far from dividing the Other in its turn, refolding it as Other-of-the-Other – which is always, in the final analysis, the Other of the unconscious – it reveals the most simple Other, without-reserve, without-restraint, the Stranger in

3 See *Théorie des Identités*, Part 2, Chapter III: the concept of 'generalized fractality'.

flesh and blood. There may be a stranger 'in' the photo, but all that matters is the originary strangeness of the photo itself, which has never taken the shape of an object. The photo itself is the Stranger that does not have its place in the World, and it is a rather quick interpretation that would see in the photo the means to appropriate the World. In the same way, if the transcendent structures are rejected at the same time as are effaced all the other forms of rational economy, this is not to give way to an affect of 'aura' in which the photo-effect would exhaust itself. The photo is the Other, no doubt, but finally contemplated qua Other in the vision-in-One, rather than received beyond all already-transcendent contemplation. And contemplated qua identical-in-the-last-instance, but of a specific identity precisely of the Other, of the multiple and of the heterogeneous. In a sense, no doubt, the Other retains something of the 'cut' or 'scission', except that here the cut is no longer one of two terms, of a dyad, a cut overseen by an Identity that would be at once immanent and transcendent to it: this would be to rediscover the diagram of philosophical decision. The 'cut' is grasped as identity and in the mode of identity: the Other is contemplated as 'in-One' without this 'in-One' cramming it into Being, guaranteeing it, instead, its status as Other, but as Other-without-alterity. If philosophy, at best, thinks the Other as alterity, dividing/doubling it with itself, installing itself in the hybrid of the Other

and Alterity, at once blunting it and overactivating it, science thinks the Other more originally qua Other rather than qua alterity. It passes from the-Other-as-Alterity to the-Other-as-Identity.

Unlike what takes place in perception, and then in Being itself, a photo harbours nothing invisible. What it shows simply by enlarging is not something invisible in principle or attached to the essence of the photo, it is the effect of a simple technological treatment that is conflated with a properly photographic trait, the photo becoming in a stroke just another indistinct object of the World and losing its being. In it, all is completed, definitive, adequate: its being as photo is not modified circularly by its 'magnification', as is always supposed, with various nuances or delays, by a philosophical interpretation. The structures of ecstasis, horizon, and project have no place here. The Idea here is strictly adequate (to) the real as pure or non-consistent multiplicity, of determinations. If there is a 'fractality' of the photo, if it only ever yields completed identity, it is not mathematical or empirical. Nor does it concern *that which* is represented – which here plays another role. It is an internal or transcendental fractality that affects the very being of the photo.

Whether the photographic image is exhaustible or not is perhaps a false problem, at least in the form in which it has been posed: technologically (reduction/enlargement). Because in its very being as 'in-photo', it is at once strictly

finite, but intrinsically finite as is Identity-by-immanence: one only ever finds in it identity – no difference, scission or abyssal dyage; and an identity that is strictly multiple or ‘more-than-atomic’ like a ‘chaos’. The couples form/content, unity/manifold, the mechanisms of connection, association, continuation, neighbourhoods, etc., have no place here, or only concern its symbolic support, the representational invariants, somehow the photographic information.

THE POWER-OF-SEMBLANCE AND THE EFFECT OF RESEMBLANCE

A constant argument of ‘photographic realism’ in its traditional form is the so-called ‘evocative’ power of the photo, a resemblance that would cease to be formal to go all the way to the instigation – resurrection, even ... – of existence, and which would argue for the causality of the (worldly) object, at least as effect or appearance. Far from being the reflection of an objective inherence connected to the properties of the object alone, it would give the quasi-presence of the latter. This trait belongs to the phenomenon described, certainly, but the problem is to describe it itself in an immanent manner, without exiting it to clothe it in transcendent interpretations. ‘Photographic realism’ is a profound doctrine, but one

that is impossible in so far as it has not found an adequate concept of ‘reality’. It is founded on the undeniable phenomenon of the image as presence-image in person, but it concludes mistakenly that the foundation of this phenomenon-of-semblance is the relation of resemblance of the image to the transcendent object. Whence, to explain this inconceivable relation, it vacillates, from the ‘trace’ to the ‘icon’, from the ‘relic’ to the ‘imprint’, or again to the Husserlian theory of the conversion of the intentional gaze.

Realism ceases to be an aporia to become a problem if one distinguishes that which is ordinarily conflated by philosophy itself: the semblance as analogical power such that it appears to reside in an aiming at the object, and semblance as real-presentation, that is to say Identity-presentation. This power of semblance does not owe to the invariance of its support, of its content of representation, to the identity of objects and qualities that are grafted onto it. It is either more or less than the infinite continuity of images, the identity of one photo alone that suffices to exhaust the experience of the universal. Doubtless it rests upon a support that is given firstly in the form of an image less universal than it (perception); but this universality is not obtained by comparison with that of perception.

What is more, the objectivity of the photo, integral and depthless, without mystery, is also in the same stroke absolutely unlimited, in the sense that a photo is a semblance

that resembles nothing, that is not limited and closed by any object – it is an unlimited flux or an *Idea* that eventually stands for an infinity of ‘real’ corresponding objects. A photo is more than a window or an opening, it is an infinite open, an unlimited universe from vision to the pure state, with neither mirror nor window.

What must be described is this non-auto-positional objectivity, without reference in the World, this semblance that does not resemble, and does not play on the two tables of perception (or memory) and of photography. Thus one can avoid the vicious circle or the theoretical roundabout of those ‘theoreticians’ of the photo who, already knowing photography from elsewhere, naturally find the photo very resemblant, very true to life ... On the basis of a causality of the object – a causality that is transcendent and in fact unintelligible – one puts forward the supposedly *decisive* argument – as in a ‘crucial experiment’: one would always prefer a photo ... of Shakespeare to a photo of some random person. Difficult to deny it, and yet we might ask what those who advance such a theoretical debility and such a vicious circle are thinking of – or failing to think of: for the supposed ‘evocative value’ of the photo of Shakespeare now owes not to the photo, but to Shakespeare himself, within the horizon of historical and literary knowledge that one already possessed beforehand, externally to photography, and which has strictly no photographic status. When the photo is

reduced to itself, a photo of Shakespeare is no more valuable than any other, and one cannot compare one photo with another, or with the real of which it is the image.

The theoretical weakness of the argument comes, as always, from having given oneself everything at once, the image and its object, as two autoposited entities; from playing on two tables, converting from one to the other, comparing them unrestrainedly and disorderly, assuring oneself a wholly philosophical position of oversight or mastery, and ultimately believing that in looking at the photo of a ‘knowledge’ one carries out something more than an operation of ‘recognition’. Photographic thought is a science, it excludes artefacts and the complacencies of recognition. To produce knowledge is not just to ‘get to know’....

The scientific description of photography is our guiding thread, and from this point of view any photo whatsoever manifests a photographic universe already there, that is to say exactly given rather than produced. In the sense that in every way the real-One is necessarily the given that precedes its universal manifestation, a manifestation in the mode of a Universe rather than of a World (of a History, a City, an Art, etc.). Photography is first of all an instance or an order that is not effective – neither ideal nor artificial nor factual – but real, and which awaits the description of its phenomenality. It must be treated as a discovery of the scientific type and this

independently of its physico-chemical technology, as a form of real-knowledge which, as science in its manner, installs itself from the outset within the order of Identity, that Identity which precedes the onto-photo-logical horizon of philosophy.

A photo is thus a miraculous and novel emergence, a response-without-question far more than a shock, a symptom or a catastrophe. It is the emergence of an image (of) the One rather than of the Other (which supposes always the same). The identity-photo manifests that which has always refused to manifest itself within the horizon of the logos, and within any horizon whatsoever that might come to enclose and to situate it. There is a utopic and acosmic ground of the photo. It is so universal that it dissolves the order of the World and strips it of its pertinence. Photography does not fabricate the real (in two senses of this word: Identity, the World or 'effectivity'); it deploys, traversing it instantaneously, an infinite Idea of the World – the Universe.

The essence, properly speaking, of the image and very particularly of the photo, is to be found in that power of appearance that cannot be explained by the representational content. The latter explains nothing, unless circularly, already postulating the reality of the semblance. A photo does not resemble an object of the World but, if anything, another photo – what is more, World and photo have the same representational invariants. One single

photo contains all possible (re)semblance, 'resembles' in principle all other photos; an apparition is unique but nevertheless infinite, it is a phenomenon that contains all possible phenomenality. The ground of 'resemblance' is a semblance that is inexplicable by the *appearing* object, but which is confused with the appearing or, more exactly, with the appearance. If there is a cause of resemblance, it is Identity, and it is so in-the-last-instance, and thus inalienable in all 'resemblance'. The photo has no cause in the World or in that which appears in it, in the supposed 'photographed thing' which is only an occasional medium of photography and of that which it manifests of the real. On the other hand this power of appearance indicates in its own way the real-Identity, but without destroying it or affecting it; it is the ideality of representation but in the absolutely pure state and it retains on the other hand no representational content other than its immanent image, a manifold or a chaos of determinations.

Let it not be said that this element of being-in-photo – Being itself and its scientific concept – is 'imaginary', in the manner of philosophers who measure it against the real with which they hybridize it and who consequently must decree that it is nothing but a fiction or an extenuated reality. It is neither the One nor effective Being, but only Being independent of all relation or 'difference' with them. One of the greatest 'historical' effects of the photo is to purge the arts and thought of 'fiction' and above all

of the 'imaginary' and of 'imagination', in the aesthetic and philosophical sense of these words: thought as transcendental imagination and art as concrete mediation of the universal and the singular. In the anti-speculative enterprise of reducing philosophical representation and imagination in general to functions of a simple symbolic support, photography will have played a very real role, albeit one inapparent in comparison to that of the sciences. The power-of-semblance is emergent, novel by definition, it is the Other, the photo-as-Other-than-the-World. In the photo, we contemplate not so much the 'subject', the 'scene' the 'event', as Being qua the Being that it is and that is given us as pure Transcendence, without hybridization with the World.

This theory of semblance allows us to give the complete sense of the theory that would have it that the descriptive function of the photo depends on that of manifestation: on condition of no longer imagining semblance, which is of transcendental or immanent origin, with a power of *analysis* that always supposes a constitutive reference to exteriority. The semiotic and pragmatic reduction of the *analogon* is insufficient: semblance is absolute and 'in-itself', this is no 'analogy', an ultimate *ana-logos*, which supposes always the circulation of the image and of the object. Pre-analogical (or as one says 'prepredicative') semblance derives neither from iconic manifestation nor from pragmatics or the norms that make of the photo a

visual index, but from the photo's non-specular manifestation of Identity.

That semblance should be a specific region of 'reality', a sphere of being distinct just as much from the real as from worldly givens – the proof of this is its internal economy. The principle of the latter is Identity, and the a prioris that derive from it in-the-last-instance. Being-in-photo is neither a natural-visual phenomena (a type of perspective, of optical concentration and description) nor a conventional and coded phenomenon like pictorial perspective. There is, doubtless, a procedure of physiological and technical concentration of luminous rays that is grafted onto 'natural' vision, but this forms part of the conditions of existence of the photo, not of its 'formal' being which responds to a different distribution of the manifold of objects and of light. Being-in-photo exceeds from the outset the sum-total perception+technology+objects of the World, which does not exhaust it, since this being is distributed according to a priori rules that are all founded on Identity and the representational manifold. The photo is identifying: not in the sense of totalizing, but in the sense of fractalizing.

The function of semblance is internal, 'horizontal', and does not address itself naturally to the World: it 'drifts' towards it only when captured by this latter, which from its point of view, spontaneously conceives of pure or a priori semblance as an 'empirical' resemblance.

Whence the fact that philosophies, which are victims of this transcendental appearance, reduce it to the status of analogy or univocity, to iconic or even magical relations, etc. This is to give oneself *all* in one stroke, to suppose the problem resolved simply by positing it; it is to give a vicious explanation to suppose an originary continuity between the World and photography. It is also to reduce semblance, that power that 'founds' all representation, to the invariance of representational contents, an invariance that, meanwhile, supposes the autonomy of semblance. There is no originary continuity, no common root or common sense between perception, now supposed 'real' or 'in-itself', and photography; but as soon as one posits perception as 'in-itself' rather than as symbolic support one posits this continuity of *genesis*. From the photo, one has made an *analogon*, on condition precisely of supposing perception as an absolute or real ground – a philosophical presupposition that excludes science by definition – and of reducing photography to the technology that extends this perception. The distinction between the 'coded' image (painting), the 'objective' or absolutely true image, and the 'normed' image that would be their midpoint (the photo) supposes all of these presuppositions united together.

It is rather the automatism of all presentation of Identity that creates the absolute, ineradicable, transcendental illusion that the object is there 'in flesh and blood', that it has had to act and to imprint itself. Technological

automatism creates the illusion of the causality of the object on the photo, doubtless, but the production of this illusion is yet more profound. It is the congenital automatism of the photo itself, of semblance, that creates the impression of an 'objective' resemblance and subsequently of a magical causality of the object over its representation that 'emanates' from it. The content of the description and that of the manifestation of the object tend to cover over each other, the photo at the same time manifesting and describing its object. But the precision of the mechanism is not enough to explain this covering; (re)semblance must already be given and be at work, and it comes from further afield than operational magic. It is already there as that which the photograph contemplates 'in itself', needing only to be effectuated under precise conditions of perception and of technology. Man is the *cause* of the photo only in-the-last-instance, a cause that *lets it be*.

Perhaps we should incriminate the word 'image' in general – not by doing away with it, but instead by ratifying the concept. An image is supposed by philosophy to have a double reference. To the object supposed given, now 'in-itself', now as intentional or even immanent object (in either case, it is a question of the object form); and to the subject – whether it is a matter of the transcendental or indeed the speculative imagination; or again of that which remains when the subject 'behind' the image is

suppressed in favour of a 'play of forces' whose conspiracies produce the image (in either case, it is a matter of the subject-form). The image is spontaneously enframed in a philosophical prosthesis charged with dividing it, with rendering it specular or reversible, with producing the real-as-image and the image-as-real. It is the system of this double form, that of objectivation in general, that one supposes identical to reality, the identity of objectivity and reality. To wish to liquidate the image completely is obviously a philosophical myth: a thought without image does not exist. However, a thought whose image would no longer be the cause or a co-constituent element, or an image whose objectivation, whose object-form, would no longer be the essence but a mere occasional given – this does exist, in the form of science-thought. The photo is an image, but it is not a *specular* image of the real, it does not have a form as does the object, precisely that 'object-form'. It is an experience of thought in the pure ideal mode, an Idea that we see in us without ever going outside of ourselves.

In short, it is a matter of breaking a priori the correlation, the amphibological hybrid, the last avatar of their convertibility, of the phenomenon as apparition and phenomenon as that-which-appears – of ceasing to consider them as reversible, as the relational terms of a dyad. Semblance is indeed a relation, but precisely a simple relation, one that owes its relational power to

Identity in the last instance rather than to a transcendent Unity founding it as correlation. However this is not a relation empty of content, or a pure form, but a veritable photographic intuition, since the most pure appearing contains in an immanent manner the manifold of 'photographed objects', but under the sole form possible: that of a chaos of determinations.

A PRIORI PHOTOGRAPHIC INTUITION

What really happens in the framing of a shot? The photo does not come forth *ex nihilo* on the basis of visual images and their optical manipulation. There is an *a priori photographic intuition* that gives not such and such a determinate image, but the very dimension or the sphere as such of the image in its excess or its transcendence in principle over its technical ingredients. The photographer 'images' from the outset beyond perception, albeit with the index and the support of perception – he intuits from the very beginning an ultra-perceptual image, irreducible to perception's powers of analysis and resolution, and of synthesis. It is this a priori photographic intuition that rests on the perceived and on perception, that guides the technologico-optical (and chemical) experimentation carried out by the photographer.

Just as a computer creates nothing, but transforms information into other, more universal information, produces information without ever producing anything other with it, and does so without reflection, so a photographic apparatus does not transform one into the other the real and the image, but produces images from other images. In immediate realism, one forgets that the photographer does not go from the perceived real to its image, or even from the perception of the real *to* its photo, but from that which is already an aimed-at image as an emergent novelty, an image already other than perceptual, to another image of the same type, and it seeks to render this new image adequate to that which it aims at and which serves it as hypothesis in its wholly experimental work on perception. For the photographer, there are only ever photographic images, an unlimited flux of photos certain of which are virtual, framed without being shot, and others that are technologically effectuated or produced and that now have explicitly as their support the representations of perception, etc.

The order of being-in-photo is relatively autonomous: in relation to the perceived object in any case, even if it is less so in relation to its cause: Identity of the vision-in-One and vision-force, one could say that, for an object, from the photographic point of view, to be is to be photographed and only photographed; and not: half-real, half-photographed; half-real, half imaginary; half living,

half dead, etc. However this order is consistent in itself or internally, and completely different from a coherent dream, a structured imaginary or a system of simulacra, which are, despite everything, hybrids of the real and its supposed contrary. There is no transfer of reality of the perceived World to the image-photo, in the form of simulacra, effigies, traces, indirect causal effect, magical presence, etc. which would have been captured, transmitted or activated by photographic technology. That would be a conservative realism. In reality, photography, far from analyzing the World (something it also does, but only as a secondary effect) to draw out an image from it, or synthesizing images – always on the basis of the World – with forces or with computers – replaces itself from the start in this hyper-perceptual and hyper-imaginary dimension that it effectuates or actualizes with the aid of the representational support – including its technological conditions of existence. The photo is neither an analysis nor a synthesis of perception, nor even an artificial 'image of synthesis', since technological artificiality belongs to its conditions of existence rather than to its being. On the other hand, through the latter it contributes, alongside images of synthesis, to communicating to man the affect and the experience of 'flat thought'.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPERIMENTATION
AND AXIOMATIZATION

The 'categorical' content of photography, the a priori photographic content, serves in a certain way as an *hypothesis* (that must not be imagined, in empiricist manner, to be a simple fiction or supposition) of the experimental *work* carried out by the photographer who tries to adjust the techno-perceptual complex, with its image content, to that a priori but still undetermined imaging dimension. This is why we shall maintain that the photo is an emergent, novel representation, a discovery, and that it precedes photography, that it is given before the operation that manifests it in relation to experience.

We have said that photography is a process that excludes the object-form, in favour of the function of the 'materials' of the objective givens of perception; in favour of the function of 'cause-in-the-last-instance' which is that of Identity. The first of these functions, that of natural representation and of perception, must be elucidated.

From perception to the photo, the representational content is invariant and identifiable. It fulfills the role of symbolic support, of symbol-support of photos. Inside the photographic process, perception ceases to be identical to the support, to be confused with it, and to play the role of an absolute reference; it becomes an image that

serves to produce others and which has the same support as them, a support that detaches itself in a certain sense from it. But at the starting point of the process, perception, with its opacity, its originary faith, its function as ground, plays a more fundamental role than it does at the end. So that the representational invariants that serve as a symbolic support to photographic thought, have a double function, a double use:

- (1) They are firstly conflated with a privileged image, that given by perception – and this is the spontaneous philosophical thesis of supposedly real, immediate or pre-photographic perceptual life. Even so they are more than mere supports: necessary materials from which photography extracts a more universal a priori representation by a process that resembles induction. More exactly, photographic intuition is specified by a work of photographic induction, a production of universal image that proceeds on the basis of or with the material of experience supposed still absolute. But it is a 'transcendental' induction in some way, at least in its cause in the vision-force itself, in that 'internal' experience wholly other than the transcendent experience of perception. It is the moment of photographic experimentation, of photography as experimental activity of production of a universal image.
- (2) They are then distinct from the produced photo itself and are consequently reduced to the state of simple supports or symbolic invariants. The second moment

of photography is more immanent still than the first, it consists according to the One of no longer regarding the photo as being amongst things and extracted, so to speak, from them, but in regarding it according to itself: *qua photo*, without privileged reference in perception, but as a moment in a process where, in a sense, there is no longer anything but images, or pure presentations: 'perception' being already a photo that does not know itself as such and which reveals its entry into the more universal order of the (other) photo. At the same stroke perception passes, also, into the state of a 'model' or 'particular case' that interprets the absolutely universal photo. To the experimentation that produces an image with the help of things, there succeeds a veritable axiomatization of images, producing from the absolutely universal image on the basis of primary images, and sending the latter and their materials back to the state of 'models', that is to say, particular 'interpretations'.

The photographic process gives us to understand that the real of perception is only a real-effect produced by the free play of images. If photography liberates painting, it does not do so by occupying the most dismal real, abandoning the imaginary to painting; on the contrary, it does so by showing painting that what it believes it paints is a false real, and in dissolving the prestige of perception on which painting believes it nourishes itself. In freeing itself from the real, photography frees the other arts.

'Perception' passes into the state of a symbolic support, it is the object of a procedure of symbolization necessary to the freeing-up and the functioning of every blind or irreflective thought. Like language – the signifier included – in the logical axiomatization of the sciences, perception ceases to be supposedly given, it loses its pretension to co-constitute the being of scientific and photographic representation, and it undergoes this *symbolic reduction* that the new world of images imposes upon it.

Photography is that activity which, before being an art, produces in parallel an intelligible photographic universe, a realm of non-photographic vision; and a derealization of the World reduced to a support of this realm, which rests on it ever so lightly. There is no becoming-photographic of the World, but a becoming-photographic of the photo and a becoming-symbolic of the World as mere reserve of 'occasions'. The oldest prejudice – that of philosophy – imagines the reversibility of the World and of the image, of the real and of the ideal, of territory and map. This becoming sur-real is the imaginary effect of the imaginary. In reality, if the World is indeed de-realised, it is not to become the sur-photo or line of flight of a photographic continuum, it is to become a system of neutral, purely symbolic signs, which no longer speak, but which are the terms or marks necessary to photographic automatism and to that a priori dimension that makes it a thinking rather than a mere web of technological events.

A Philosophy of Creation

THE GRAIN OF THE WALLS

Prisons or ramparts, those where graffiti covers every surface or those where it is prohibited, walls are the stakes, not just of freedom, but of writing and of thought. From the first royal legislations to contemporary tags, by way of prisoners of all eras, walls have been the great support of political writing. Tables or columns, bark or papyrus, Rosetta Stone or New York concrete, temples, artists' studios or urban walls, these are the conditions of empirical existence: of thought and literature, of their multiple birth. One of the discoveries of the twentieth century – a theoretical discovery – is that literature is not written necessarily *extra-* or *intra-muros* but *apud muros* – on an infinite wall, even, at once angular and straight; a wall that is fractalized, and not only in the topological sense. Every artist, fractalist or not, is something of a proto-legislator and last creator, who intends to leave a testament. To the most well-known fractal objects – the sea,

its waves, its storms, its turbulence, its 'Brittany coasts', we must now add walls: in their ruined, cracked, shabby, angular aspect – new mural and lapidary possibilities, a 'genetic' grain. Here also thought can be written, 'fractal' thought, and not only that of painting; phonemes, and not only pictemes. There is not only a becoming-graffiti or a becoming-tag of walls, nor even a becoming-wall or -tag of writing, but a fractal experience of thought as a function of the grain of the support.

What is a fractal experience of a wall? The fractalized wall carries no signification. Despite the statements, slogans or, as is the case here, aphoristic maxims or injunctions that it registers, it says nothing, does not retain or conserve any message. What an artist or even a philosopher believes he says is of little importance: all that matters here are the effects of an abyssal irregularity. What seems at one instant to belong to the aphorism or the maxim of a sage is immediately broken or 'irregularized' and serves only as the relay of another logic. Writing 'of' the wall, thinking 'of' the wall neither signifies nor functions, it suffices to *change qualitative scale* to perceive this; to cease to see these texts as hermeneuts do – for example as aphorisms, through the moral monocle or the 'metaphysical prism' – in order to produce another 'vision', or to hallucinate them, one might say, as a play of diverging and converging lines. In this sense we might 'formalize' the work of Edward Berko. For this fractal

artist demands – it is even the unique imperative that in point of fact governs all of his texts – that his viewer or reader is fractalized in turn; that the great force of irregularity traverses him as he traverses it; that he ceases to 'read' to set himself to producing fractality in his turn. You yourself are also a wall for writing, not only a surface or a becoming of thought, but a self-similar grain of writing ...

ETHIC OF THE AMERICAN CREATOR AS FRACTAL ARTIST

Berko proposes an *ethics of the creator*, of the American creator, which communicates with the *fractal credo*. Maxims at once personal and universal – he addresses himself, classically, to himself as to a confidante, to the universal type of the creator – they contain injunctions very close to being performative.⁴ This wisdom of the creator presents many principles. The first is the primacy of doing, of producing, of working over commenting, of experimenting over interpreting: the creative obsession will always have as its unique enemy the noisy commentary of priests and professors, rather than the silence of the page or of the blank canvas. The second bears upon what must be

⁴ See E. Berko, *Sur les murs* (Paris: Éditions de La Différence, 1994).

done: make your life, your work, your clearing, your family, etc. – all that we already know. What is less known, is 'make your own frontier', 'make your own wall', and finally the injunction that sums up all the others: 'do your own thing'. And here, the *thing* that defines the creator, his obsession and his blind spot, his technique also, is fractality. The third principle, no less American and universal than the others, is that of the risk of finitude: the risk of making a local clearing, of the production of one's own clearing and of one's own frontier. Not a distant, 'metaphysical', misty frontier but a work that accepts to territorialize itself on a procedure or a 'thing', on a finite and identifiable *oeuvre* – that accepts producing 'something identifiable'. But meanwhile this American Heraclitean can also say: the infinite inhabits your clearing, God is also present in your frontier, the Unknown and the New are also at the basis of your 'angle' ... Finally, the fourth principle is perhaps the foundation of the other three: the creator is but the support or the vector of a *force of creation* here called 'force of irregularity'. Force, that which 'insists', is the true subject of the injunctions, it is hidden but works, it surpasses everyday man even whilst working within the everyday; in philosophical terms one could say it is a *transcendental* force. It is exerted as a straight but non-linear line, with the straightness of fractal irregularity. It is the metaphysical element that conjoins fractal creation and the advance of the pioneer. Far from

being a simple surpassing or 'transcending' forward or upward, it presses itself into place, according to a line of infinity locatable and localizable in the finite. A broken, angular metaphysics. We will come back, necessarily, to this force of creation.

THE FRACTAL SELF AND ITS SIGNATURE: A NEW ALCHEMICAL SYNTHESIS

What might be the significance of the constant reference to the two poles of all creation: man and God? A rather classical axis, again. But it is the force of fractality to yield a veritable 'fractal vision of the world' and to renew old philosophical themes. Other such themes circulate throughout Berko's whole text – The Self and God, the Self and the World, the Self and its Image, the Self-microcosm and the Macrocosm – with the (equally classical) logic that goes along with them, that of *expression*. Expression permits the creator never to leave his Self (his clearing, his frontier, his locality and his locale – his subjective earth) but to extend or diffuse it to the limits of the Universe and all the way to God. God is immanent to man and the latter can manifest him: it suffices to exteriorize oneself – this is art.

Nevertheless, beneath the traditional nature of these themes courses another logic: fractality re-explicates them

in other ways, breaking them away from the metaphysical and theological *continuity* that subtends them, for example in the interpretations that the Renaissance gave of the relations between Macrocosm and Microcosm. For fractality gives us the assurance, from man to God, via the studio, via the 'local' and 'finite' determinations of the artist and through the World, of a veritable and completely new *alchemical synthesis of the real*, where discontinuity and irregularity only break a superficial continuity and recreate a continuity of echoes, of resonances, of vibrations between the different levels of reality, between man and himself or his image. The form of the real is conserved: it is immanence, and a fractal artist can want nothing other than immanence, even when he speaks of God, of his God immanent to his 'thing'. But it no longer has the form of a closed identity as near as can be to itself: it is separated from itself, with each break or irregularity, by an infinity. Between every point and every other point there is an infinity and perhaps God, together with the Self, lodges himself in their angularity. Thus the Self of the creator seems to expand to infinity, but this is no longer a narcissism – or else, narcissism itself is fractalized. Fractal immanence is immanence-to-self rather than to a 'psychological' *ego*. If there is an ego it forms through a work in progress, 'like a fractal system'. Whence the identification of Self and its image, a specularly that is more than merely broken. We should not conflate a *fractalized*

mirror with a broken mirror (Wittgenstein). 'How do you sign a fractal system?' is more or less the question that Berko poses. Where to localize the signature, in which of the angles of the canvas or points of writing? Doubtless the writing of the signature lends itself to ruptures, simplifications and complexifications of lines without signification which make it a true intuitive fractal object (certain canvases are, inversely, such signatures). But the most classically formed and normed signature, which signifies most explicitly an intact Self? Here again we are called upon to change scale or style of vision and, at the limit, to hallucinate fractally such objects: fractality is not only in the World, it is just as much in your head and your eye.

THE CONCEPT OF 'IRREGULARITY-FORCE'

A fractal aesthetic must be able to respond to the question: how to simultaneously produce chance (produce it systematically, not just receive it) and control it? How to engender chaos and master it in the same gesture? This problem is that of every creator. To resolve it demands a philosophy, or an artistic practice sufficiently 'broad' to be the equivalent of a philosophy. It is thus not surprising that Berko ceases to consider fractality as a simple geometrical concept and even as a procedure or a technique,

to pose the question of its ultimate universal pertinence, of its generalization to what philosophers call the real or Being. The solution consists in making of fractality a dynamic process. Against its geometrical and static conception, he associates it with various proximate notions: intensity (an intensive and implosive fractality, as if 'gathered up' or compressed in its own immanence); to speed (self-similar changes are endowed with increasing speed); the struggle for existence (the fractal process must 'insist' to impose itself and trace its path in the real); and finally force and pulsion (there is a force of irregularity, but there is above all – we shall be discuss this further – an 'irregularity-force' that is the key to the creative process).

This philosophical and artistic appropriation of fractality leads Berko into the environs of Foucault (who he frequently cites) and even more so, of Deleuze (who he does not). He draws from it consequences that are social, aesthetic and philosophical (problems of the Same and the Other, of Identity and Difference, of ante-discursive order, etc.); consequences important for the work of the artist (for example: there is a non-metaphysical identity of each 'pigment' which itself determines its field and mode of fractal application in painting; or again there is an immediate sensibility or perception of fractal identity which defines the artist). Finally the recourse to fractality responds to two objectives: (1) to broaden the 'dimensionality' of painting beyond works, forms and materials of

whole dimensions; beyond simple forms and Abstraction as absence of forms; (2) to conceive it as a vitalist-style creative dynamic that links the pigment to the limits of the Universe. This extension of fractality makes of it what one might call a 'transcendental *thing*' – not only a geometrical style or even a tool of analysis, but a genuine tool of genesis.

But it obviously is not without problems of a strictly philosophical order. They are so important that Berko cannot avoid evoking them in his own manner by a sort of very sure philosophical instinct: (a) there is fractality; there is fractality not only now but there has perhaps always been: it is thus an *a priori* and this *a priori* is given as a *fact*; (b) what *right* is there to apply it or extend it to the whole of reality (to man, to God, to the World, to thought as much as reality)?

Thus self-similarity and the irregularity of chaos linked to tiny changes in the initial input pose a paradox to man. Man seeks to understand and throws himself against the fixity of the human senses. The measures and the givens received can only suggest, but not affirm, such an indistinct reality. The knowledge accumulated by man is in itself a fractal condition and it is, to an unknown degree, subjective like 'absolute knowledge'.⁵

5 Berko, 111.

This problem is resolved, it seems – in implicit, non-thematic manner – by the introduction of the new concept of *irregularity-force* as *force of creation*. In Berko it is hardly a concept, but we can give to this very fruitful 'intuition' the form of a concept, that is to say, define the conditions to which its theoretical presence responds. What is it about? On one hand it is a question of posing the problem, itself of fractal origin but taken up again here and raised philosophically, of the reality of fractality, of its ontological tenor. On the other hand, of explaining how creation can be possible, how there can be always and in principle an excess of creation over the created, of production over the product: that is to say over the circle that they form together and which could only end by annihilating itself in itself, if there were not this ever-unknown and ever-new force to renew it. Whence that surprising formula which outlines the idea of an excessive force of fractalization:

Our speed increases to the extent that we see grow and grow again the gap between our historical being and our contemporary being, only for it to close up again. Caught in this circular scrambling, we postulate that nothing is original. Let us pose the question: will our condition be that of infinite repetition? Of infinite self-similarity?⁶

6 E. Berko, *De la nature de la fractalisation* – unpublished manuscript, 1990.

Fractality and fractalized objects and works risk closing one over the other, of annulling all potential and of falling into a 'circular scrambling' (albeit one endowed with infinite speed, like the Nietzschean eternal return or Deleuzian chaos) if it were not for a certain irregularity-force, a veritable *fractal genius* withdrawn from Nature, from Man and from God himself, and of which the creator is but the empirical vector or support in the World.

It is obvious that Berko here abandons that profound suggestion, and stops where necessarily all philosophers, in so far as they are philosophers, must stop, limiting himself to stipulating that this force of creation is transcendent to the World, that it is a matter, as he himself says, of an alterity with regard to objects, materials and phenomena. But from our point of view. And so it is no longer wholly a matter of Berko's work but of what philosophy can do in general – this determination of irregularity-force or of the self-similarity of broken symmetry is insufficient because it contents itself with pushing the latter into the indetermination of transcendence. Because if transcendence and its principal inhabitant, God, are themselves fractalized, it is obvious that the circle will close in on itself and exhaust itself in its nothingness; that not only will fractality be self-referential but its philosophy will be equally so, and that thus the very idea of creation will be destroyed and nihilism consummated.

To maintain creation not simply as an 'empty' and 'ideal' exigency, but as *real* exigency and real force, it is necessary to conceive it as coming from further afield and even from before any transcendence or alterity. From further afield? Perhaps not: from an instance other than that of the Other. Only the 'One', *qua the real as radical immanence*, can 'come' before the Other and the Same, before God and the World, and prevent fractality as alterity from falling into irreality and the indetermination of the World.

A new formulation: 'irregularity-force' might signify this shift in ontological parameters. (1) If there is a force, it is not a property or an effect that belongs to an already-made and already-given (geometrically or otherwise) irregularity, but it itself irregularizes the given immediately; its being is as one with that very breaking of all symmetry, rather than lurking behind it like a back-world. (2) It does not float in an irreal and indeterminate transcendence, but adds itself to the real-One of which it is the only possible mode of action, the only causality on the World and on God themselves. For its part it is real in so far as the One is its immanent cause. So that irregularity-force needs the One with which it identifies, whereas the latter, because of its radical self-immanence, cannot be confused with it, does not disappear into it. Thus creation-force, without being a theological entity or some relation of metaphysical entities, is prevented from being buried and alienated in its works and materials and

exceeds them in principle. How is a fractal creation possible? On condition that fractality is put at the immediate disposal of a fractalization-force and that the latter finds its cause not in 'Being' or in transcendence, which is the element of philosophy, but in a type of reality that the latter hardly even suspects. It is thus possible to respond to the question posed initially and to respond to it a little differently than philosophy does: the process of creation supposes that the production of chance and its control in a work should not be simultaneous or circular even if they have the 'same' origin. As a function of real-One and of its causality by which it is not alienated in its effect, a causality we call 'determination-in-the-last-instance', we respond: the production of the fractal and its artistic control are only identical in-the-last-instance and thus do not form a circle wherein all hope of creation would be annulled.

THE FRACTAL PLAY OF THE WORLD.

SYNTHESIS OF MODERN AND POSTMODERN

Many distinctions are necessary. There is a possible aesthetic of 'geometrical' and intuitive-visual fractality, an aesthetic itself abiding classically by the philosophical concept and its logics. The latter are hardly very 'fractal' and correspond rather to the model of simple geometrical

bodies of whole dimensions. There is, inversely, a fractalized aesthetic that passes through the fractal treatment – even, one might imagine, via a deconstruction using the fractality of the body of philosophy as a whole and of its aesthetic subset (including, firstly, the case of figure). And then there is the generalized aesthetic that instigates and makes use of fractality such as it is utilized in science, technique, nature, and not only in art. It is a strange power, one that Berko uses to diffuse such aesthetic effects into all the fields of the real where it is put to work. In many regards it responds to the ‘judgment of taste’, proceeding by resonances, echoes or vibrations in the manner of a *purposiveness-without-purpose* and as a sort of *free play* (Kant) *of the real with itself*. A judgment of taste exercised not so much by a ‘subject’ as by the World itself, the true agent of a universal fractal play. From this point of view of its ‘alchemical’ power of synthesis, fractality proceeds to a conversion or a metamorphosis one into the other of modern aesthetics (‘into the unknown to find the New’ – Baudelaire), and of the postmodern aesthetic of the fragment and the partial and of their accumulation; of the great immanence and fragmentation, of the permanent creative surpassing and of the hesitant invention of new rules as a function of local givens, studio and materials, or the conditions of finitude of creation. Now science, now art itself, on occasion philosophy also, invent the technical means and the new vision of the real

that allows the surmounting or the integration into a new curve – for example a fractal curve – of the antinomies left at the shores of history by a fatigued thought. For example, fractality accomplishes Abstraction in the most concrete mode that can be. If the ontological destination of Abstraction were the void as ether of Being, fractality realizes the synthesis of the most undifferentiated void and of the most differentiated concreteness. It is abstract in so far as it delivers art from the clutter of objects and of the figurative, but it is the figurative or the intuitive itself, in the pure state, that it raises to the power of Abstraction, complementarily raising the Abstract to the power of the detail and of the pure Multiple, without object. Neither the empirical and transcendent content, nor the purified void, the purism of the abstract, but a synthesis that reconciles the opposites without summarily hybridising them. This manner of proceeding – it is obviously at work in Berko’s painting – roughly sketches out the most fruitful way, that of a figurative Abstraction or (identically) of an abstract Figuration.

There is finally, as a function of the concept of irregularity-force, a fourth stage or use of the fractal. This cannot be the doing of the *isolated* geometer, of the artist or philosopher, but of whoever undertakes to realize a *unified theory* of the fractal and of the philosophical in the form of a *generalized* or *non-Mandelbrotian fractality*. This theory would not be a mere theory in the classical

sense of the word, but in its own way a true integration of the fractal and of the philosophical: a fractal practice of philosophy at the same time as a 'de-intuitivation' of the fractal itself; and an ontological or real use of the fractal extended beyond physical or geometrical intuitivity at the same time as a refusal of the metaphorical use to which a 'fractal vision of the World' inevitably leads. The goal is no longer to establish an aesthetic of the fractal with a complementary fractalization of the philosophical, but to posit the non-hierarchical identity of the fractal and of philosophical (or aesthetic) objects and to determine it in knowledge-statements with the aid of the materials furnished by both of them.

The fractal emerges from this operation generalized, that is to say delivered from that ultimate enclosure that is immanence specified by the Self, the World or God: irregularity remains that which it is, irreducible, but without ever being compensated by a fragment of curve. Generalised fractality responds to the problem: how to universalize the very form of fractal irregularity so that it can be worthy of the most real real, and no longer only of the Self or the God which are still secondary instances or transcendent forms of the real that is not the real? The condition consists, as appropriate to irregularity-force, in reprising the concept of self-similarity and of conceiving it, as we have said, as a radical identity, as an immanence that is no longer specified by a form, for example by a

supposedly given 'self', but which is self-immanence, immanence through and through. What we get from this operation of non-Mandelbrotian generalization, is a fractality as transcendental creative force, disencumbered of its natural metaphysics and heralding unprecedented aesthetic possibilities. It remains now, in view of this new experience of fractality, to reread Berko's texts as if they were unknown, so as to 'rediscover' it there.

TOWARDS A NON-PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS

Certain more general prospective aesthetics can be sketched out on the basis of this description.

The rigorous, non-circular, non-onto-photo-logical description of the essence of photography has obliged us to bracket out the set of possible philosophical decisions and positions, of transcendent interpretations of photographic phenomenality, that is to say, of that by which and of that as which it appears itself to the vision-force that is engaged in the photographic process. Rather than in relation to philosophy, photography finds its place between science and art – between what we call an absolute or transcendental science which explores and describes vision-force as ultimate structure of the subject without borrowing in constitutive manner any of philosophy's means; and an art that still supposes

the transcendence of the World and thus of philosophy, and their authority. In photography we have identified a 'mixed' phenomenon, but one with a special nature: not hybridised as the World itself is, or as is any philosophical decision that always combines identity and scission, immanence and transcendence, etc.; but 'mixed' in so far as it associates a thought or an experience of immanence that is this time radical (the stance of vision-force that is not of the World or hybridised), along with, once again, the experience of the hybrid of the World.

What is specific to art, when it is not thought circularly as it is in philosophical 'aesthetics', but on the basis of what we call science – whose subjective or lived stance of vision-force is the radical 'subject', or the 'subject' without 'object' – resides in the fact that the structures of this scientific experience of the real are maintained (perhaps even the transcendental reduction of the transcendence of the World or of perception) and that at the same time – and this is the aspect of the *constraint to synthesis* that art represents – this transcendence returns, manifesting itself as such, and must be taken into account. Photography has affinities with science – at least such as we understand and describe the latter – but it will not, strictly speaking, go all the way with science. In particular, it is not a science of perception, it is a half-science of perception, where the latter is no longer definitively reduced to science's state of inert factual givens or 'object' state, but imposes

itself once more, in its naivety and in its dimension of 'faith in perception'. Art is a half-science rather than a half-philosophy – something which, in the former case, does not mean to say, as in the second, that it is poorer than science: perhaps, on the contrary, it is more complex.

Art seems to present itself as a forced synthesis, one that forces thought to seek a new 'principle' explaining the reality and the possibility of this synthesis, in the manner in which Kant, in the name of 'reflective judgment', elaborated a principle that agreed with his posing of the problem – a philosophical posing of it that we can no longer hold to – of the essence of art. Such as we can describe it, art is what we call a 'vision-in-One' (of which vision-force is only a modality), but a 'vision-in-One' applied to the transcendence of perception and which does not maintain to the very end the 'scientific' rigour of the reduction of the latter. It is the non-scientific use of science, that is to say a use outside the totality of its conditions of validity or knowledge-relation. It is science applied to the World outside the reduction that founds the scientific relation to the World. This is to say that in it, science is no longer simply determinant, nor even perhaps 'determinant in the last instance'. The new synthesis can no longer be made under the sole law of the non-worldly essence of science, no more than under that of the World, of perception and of philosophy, the law of the 'hybrid'. It must require another principle. It remains to seek this principle.