Photography

A Middle-brow Art

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Polity Press

Contents

INTRODUCTION   1

Pierre Bourdieu

The study of photographic practice and the meaning of the photographic image is a privileged opportunity to employ an original method designed to apprehend within a total comprehension the objective regularities of behaviour and the subjective experience of that behaviour.

PART I

1   The Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences   13

Pierre Bourdieu

The explanation of photographic practice with reference to the universality of a 'need' for photographs mistakes the effect for the cause.

Photographic practice is a function of the integration of the family while also having a function of integration as a rite of solemnization

Determined by its family function, photographic practice is ordinarily associated with the high points of family life, and cannot, without contradicting its function, free itself from the occasions which determine it and thus become transformed into an autonomous practice.

Practice freed from the family function is encountered amongst the least integrated subjects and often appears as a form of the expression of deviance. It is most often defined by the refusal of the norms which, for each social class, determine the quality and intensity of the practice.

Unlike other cultural practices, photography is devalorized by being popularized to the extent where the attitudes of the different social classes towards this practice obey the logic of snobbery.

2   The Social Definition of Photography   73

Pierre Bourdieu

Only a naive realism sees the photographic representation of reality as realistic; if it appears objective, it is because the rules defining its social use conform to the social definition of objectivity.

The popular aesthetic expressed in photographic production or with regard to photographs is the opposite of a Kantian aesthetic; it always subordinates the production and use of the image and the image itself to social functions.

Many of the attitudes provoked by photography are explained by the fact that it is located half-way between vulgar and noble practices.

Along with the broad mass of users of photography who realize, in their behaviour, the social truth of photography without perceiving it as such, the common feature of the groups which will be studied here is the break that they have made with naive attachment to the social definition of photography, which is never better recalled than when one seeks to mock or to exploit it.

Robert Castel and Dominique Schnapper

While all the members of a camera club may share their desire to break with the current usages of photography, they do not all provide the same justification for their new practice.

In a society dominated by the traditional model of art (and by the groups which tend to monopolize its use), the activity of camera clubs is conceived with reference to painting. However, photographic practice is inspired less by the attempt to imitate this art than by the effort to become worthy of a certain image of its social function.

In clubs with a more working-class membership, reference to art diminishes in favour of technical justification. Although photography is no longer an end in itself, one might nevertheless wonder whether open acceptance of the camera and its operations does not recreate a lost attitude towards a culture which has been replaced by the 'mechanical arts'.

4 Mechanical Art, Natural Art: Photographic Artists   129

Jean-Claude Chamboredon

Exceptions and commonplaces   130

The proliferation of aesthetic theories and discussion reveals, through the recurrence of problems and the uniformity of responses, the awareness of opposition to the social definition of photography.

An uncertain creation and an arbitrary aesthetic   132

Because the discontinuous and selective perception of the moments of the photographic act stresses the ambiguities of the act of creation, the artistic intention, which is still in question, may seem like obedience to the definitions imposed by the machine and fidelity to the works that nature provides. It asserts itself by dictating a rigorous and arbitrary system of norms and prohibitions.

Aesthetic reminiscence and social status   141

Forced by the uncertainty of the photographic image to demand that aesthetic traditions should define a hierarchy of valorized objects, aesthetes are primarily characterized by their relationship to the groups which establish those traditions.

5 Professional Men or Men of Quality: Professional Photographers   150

Luc Boltanski and Jean-Claude Chamboredon

Photographers stress the low level of cohesion of their profession. The reason for this may be sought in the analysis of the expectations that precede entry into the photographic profession and those that survive it.

The expectation of the profession and the expectations of the professionals   150

The diversity of photographers' attitudes to their activity actually masks the diversity of objective conditions within the profession, which itself derives from the persistence of differences related to social origin.

Because success in photography is linked to the photography of
valorized objects and contact with prestigious milieux, only a
consideration of 'manners' and 'class', the social inheritance *par
excellence*, enables us to grasp the modalities of the effect of social
origin on professional situations.

Preface to the English Language Edition

Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu

Is it possible and necessary for the practice of photography and the meaning of the photographic image to provide material for sociology? Weberian thought has lent credence to the idea that the value of an object of research is dependent on the interests of the researcher. This disenchanting relativism at least allows the illusion of an element of choice in the encounter between researchers and their objects. In fact, the most rudimentary techniques of the sociology of knowledge would show that in every society, and throughout history, there exists a hierarchy of legitimate objects of study. Inheriting a tradition of political philosophy and social action, must sociology abandon the anthropological project to other sciences and, taking as its exclusive object the study of the most general and abstract conditions of experience and action, can it reject as meaningless types of behaviour whose historical importance is not immediately apparent?

But it takes more than a sociology of sociology to show that all too often, beneath grand ambitions, it conceals a massive renunciation. The same fundamental intention is probably expressed by banishing from scientific study certain objects held to be meaningless, and excluding from it, under the guise of objectivity, the experience of those who work in it and those who are its object.

Efforts to reintroduce the experience of agents into an objective account are too easily discredited by identifying this methodological requirement with the question-begging with which certain defenders of the sacred rights of subjectivity attack the social sciences, without recognizing that the most significant advances in

those sciences have been made thanks to the methodological decision to 'treat social facts as things'. They are also too easily discredited because this regulatory idea is condemned to appear an inaccessible ideal: in fact, one can never reach the infinitely receding point which might allow sociologists to encompass, within the unity of a total apprehension, the objective relationships which they can only comprehend at the cost of an abstract construction and the experience in which these relationships are rooted and from which they draw their meaning.

The subjectivist intuitionism that seeks a meaning in the immediacy of lived experience would not be worth attending to for a moment if it did not serve as an excuse for objectivism, which limits itself to establishing regular relationships and testing their statistical significance without deciphering their meaning, and which remains an abstract and formal nominalism as far as it is not seen as a necessary but only a purely temporary moment of the scientific process. If it is true that this detour via the establishment of statistical regularities and formalization is the price which must be paid if one wishes to break with naïve familiarity and the illusions of immediate understanding, it is also the case that the properly anthropological project of reappropriating reified meanings would be negated by the reification of the reappropriated meanings in the opacity of abstraction.

By its very existence, sociology presupposes the overcoming of the false opposition arbitrarily erected by subjectivists and objectivists. Sociology is possible as an objective science because of the existence of external relationships which are necessary and independent of individual wills, and, perhaps, unconscious (in the sense that they are not revealed by simple reflection), and which can only be grasped by the indirect route of observation and objective experimentation; in other words, because subjects are not in possession of the meaning of the whole of their behaviour as immediate conscious data, and because their actions always encompass more meanings than they know or wish, sociology cannot be a purely introspective science attaining absolute certainty simply by turning to subjective experience, and, by the same token, it can be an objective science of the objective (and the subjective), i.e. an experimental science, experimentation being, in the words of Claude Bernard, 'the only mediator between the

objective and the subjective'.[1] Claude Bernard continues:

> The experimenter who is faced with natural phenomena is like a
> spectator watching silent scenes. In a sense he is nature's examining
> judge; only, instead of being up against those who seek to deceive
> him with lying testimonies or false witnesses, he is dealing with
> natural phenomena which are, as far as he is concerned, characters
> whose language and customs are unknown to him, who live in
> circumstances which are unknown to him and yet whose intentions
> he wishes to know. To this end he employs all the means within his
> power. He observes their actions, their development, their man-
> ifestations, and he seeks to untangle their causes by using various
> tests, called experiments. He uses all imaginable artifices and, as is
> commonly said, often tells lies to know the truth, and attributes his
> own ideas to nature. He makes certain presuppositions about the
> causes of the actions that pass before him, and, in order to know if
> the hypothesis at the basis of his interpretation is correct, he sets
> about bringing to light certain facts which, in the logical order of
> things, may confirm or negate the idea that he has conceived.[2]

This description of the procedures of experimenters faced with the
natural world as ethnologists are faced with societies whose culture
they do not know is also broadly true of sociological research.
Whether they attempt to grasp their 'intentions' (in the sense
meant by Claude Bernard, i.e. their objective intentions) via
objective indicators, or whether, telling lies to know the truth, they
attempt, using indirect questions, to attain the answers to the
questions they are asking themselves and which the subjects,
having been led to err rather than to deceive, can only answer
unawares (and then only indirectly); or even if they can decipher
the meaning included within the regularities provided by statistics
in their raw state, sociologists work to grasp an objectified
meaning, the product of the objectification of subjectivity which is
never directly given either to those who are involved in the practice
or to the outside observer.

But, unlike natural science, a total anthropology cannot keep to
a construction of objective relationships, because the experience of
meanings is part of the total meaning of experience: the sociology
least suspected of subjectivism relies on intermediate concepts and
concepts which mediate between the subjective and the objective,

such as alienation, attitude or *ethos*. The task of this sociology is to construct the system of relationships which will encompass both the objective meaning of organized actions according to measurable regularities and the particular relationships that subjects have to the objective conditions of their existence and to the objective meaning of their behaviour, the meaning which possesses them because they are dispossessed of it.

In other words, the description of objectified subjectivity refers to the description of the internalization of objectivity. The three moments of the scientific process are therefore inseparable: immediate lived experience, understood through expressions which mask objective meaning as much as they reveal it, refers to the analysis of objective meanings and the social conditions which make those meanings possible, an analysis which requires the construction of the relationship between the agents and the objective meaning of their actions.

One example will suffice to show that this is not question-begging but rather a demand for a method with a theoretical basis. Statistics can objectively establish the system of life-chances objectively attached to particular social categories, whether these are the chances of attaining permanent employment in the case of an unqualified and uneducated Algerian sub-proletarian, or the chances of entering a faculty of medicine or law in the case of a manual worker's daughter. A statistic such as this remains abstract and almost unreal unless one knows how this objective truth (never perceived directly as such) is actualized in the practice of the subjects: even when, at first glance, action and discourse appear to refute the future objectively inscribed in the objective conditions, they only reveal their entire significance if one observes that they imply a practical reference to this future. Thus, sub-proletarians may have magical and fantastic hopes which only apparently contradict the objective truth of their conditions, since they characterize the aims for the future appropriate to those without an objective future; similarly, the manual worker's or peasant's daughter, of whom statistics reveal that she has had to pay for her attainment of higher education by being relegated to the arts faculty, can carry out her studies as the fulfilment of a fully positive 'vocation', although her practices betray, especially by the mode in which they are carried out, a practical reference to the

objective truth of her condition and her future.[3] The class *habitus* is nothing but this *experience* (in its most usual sense) which immediately reveals a hope or an ambition as reasonable or unreasonable, a particular commodity as accessible or inaccessible, a particular action as suitable or unsuitable. In short, a total anthropology would have to culminate in an analysis of the process by which objectivity becomes rooted in subjective experience: it must overcome it by encompassing the moment of objectivism and base it in a theory of the externalization of interiority and the internalization of exteriority.

Everything therefore takes place as if the shadow cast by objective conditions always extended to consciousness: the infra-conscious reference to objective determinisms is one of those determinisms which influence practice and always owe some of their effectiveness to the complicity of a subjectivity that bears their stamp and is determined by the hold they exert. Thus the science of objective regularities remains abstract as long as it does not encompass the science of the process of the internalization of objectivity leading to the constitution of those systems of unconscious and durable dispositions that are the class *habitus* and the *ethos*: as long as it does not endeavour to establish how the myriad 'small perceptions' of everyday life and the convergent and repeated sanctions of the economic and social universe imperceptibly constitute, from childhood and throughout one's life, by means of constant reminders, this 'unconscious' which becomes paradoxically defined as a practical reference to objective conditions.

One might say of photography what Hegel said of philosophy: 'No other art or science is subjected to this last degree of scorn, to the supposition that we are masters of it without ado'.[4] Unlike more demanding cultural activities such as drawing, painting or playing a musical instrument, unlike even going to museums or concerts, photography presupposes neither academically communicated culture, nor the apprenticeships and the 'profession' which confer their value on the cultural consumptions and practices ordinarily held to be the most noble, by withholding them from the man in the street.[5]

Nothing is more directly opposed to the ordinary image of artistic creation than the activity of the amateur photographer,

who often demands that his camera should perform the greatest possible number of operations for him, identifying the degree of sophistication of the apparatus that he uses with its degree of automatism.[6] However, even when the production of the picture is entirely delivered over to the automatism of the camera, the taking of the picture is still a choice involving aesthetic and ethical values: if, in the abstract, the nature and development of photographic technology tend to make everything objectively 'photographable', it is still true that, from among the theoretically infinite number of photographs which are technically possible, each group chooses a finite and well-defined range of subjects, genres and compositions. In Nietzsche's words, 'The artist chooses his subjects. It is his way of praising.'[7] Because it is a 'choice that praises', because it strives to capture, that is, to solemnize and to immortalize, photography can not be delivered over to the randomness of the individual imagination and, via the mediation of the *ethos*, the internalization of objective and common regularities, the group places this practice under its collective rule, so that the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group.

In other words, the range of that which suggests itself as really photographable for a given social class (that is, the range of 'takeable' photographs or photographs 'to be taken', as opposed to the universe of realities which are objectively photographable given the technical possibilities of the camera) is defined by implicit models which may be understood via photographic practice and its product, because they objectively determine the meaning which a group confers upon the photographic act as the ontological choice of an object which is perceived as worthy of being photographed, which is captured, stored, communicated, shown and admired. The norms which organize the photographic valuation of the world in terms of the opposition between that which is photographable and that which is not are indissociable from the implicit system of values maintained by a class, profession or artistic coterie, of which the photographic aesthetic must always be one aspect even if it desperately claims autonomy. Adequately understanding a photograph, whether it is taken by a Corsican peasant, a *petit-bourgeois* from Bologna or a Parisian professional,

means not only recovering the meanings which it *proclaims*, that is, to a certain extent, the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means deciphering the surplus of meaning which it *betrays* by being a part of the symbolism of an age, a class or an artistic group.

Unlike fully consecrated artistic activities, such as painting or music, photographic practice is considered accessible to everyone, from both the technical and the economic viewpoints, and those involved in it do not feel they are being measured against an explicit and codified system defining legitimate practice in terms of its objects, its occasions and its modalities; hence the analysis of the subjective or objective meaning that subjects confer on photography as a practice or as a cultural work appears as a privileged means of apprehending, in their most authentic expression, the aesthetics (and ethics) of different groups or classes and particularly the popular 'aesthetic' which can, exceptionally, be manifested in it.

In fact, while everything would lead one to expect that this activity, which has no traditions and makes no demands, would be delivered over to the anarchy of individual improvization, it appears that there is nothing more regulated and conventional than photographic practice and amateur photographs: in the occasions which give rise to photography, such as the objects, places and people photographed or the very composition of the pictures, everything seems to obey implicit canons which are very generally imposed and which informed amateurs or aesthetes notice as such, but only to denounce them as examples of poor taste or technical clumsiness. If, in these stilted, posed, rigid, contrived photographs, taken in accordance with the rules of a social etiquette which produces photographs of family celebrations and holiday 'souvenirs', we have been unable to recognize the body of implicit or explicit rules which define these aesthetics, it is probably because we have not suspended an overly limited (and socially conditioned) definition of cultural legitimacy. The most banal tasks always include actions which owe nothing to the pure and simple quest for efficiency, and the actions most directly geared towards practical ends may elicit aesthetic judgements, inasmuch as the means of attaining the desired ends can always be the object of a specific valuation: there are beautiful ways of ploughing or trimming a hedge, just as there are beautiful mathematical solutions or beauti-

ful rugby manoeuvres. Thus, most of society can be excluded from the universe of legitimate culture without being excluded from the universe of aesthetics.

Even when they do not obey the specific logic of an autonomous aesthetic, aesthetic judgements and behaviour are organized in a way that is no less systematic but which starts out from a completely different principle, since the aesthetic is only one aspect of the system of implicit values, the *ethos*, associated with membership of a class. The feature common to all the popular arts is their subordination of artistic activity to socially regulated functions while the elaboration of 'pure' forms, generally considered the most noble, presupposes the disappearance of all functional characteristics and all reference to practical or ethical goals. Aesthetes who attempt to liberate photographic practice from the social functions to which the great majority subordinates them, namely and principally the recording and compilation of the 'souvenirs' of objects, people or events socially designated as important, are seeking to make photography undergo a transformation analogous to that which affected popular dances, the bourrée, sarabande, allemande or courante, when they were integrated into the scholarly form of the suite.[8]

Having constituted photography as an object of sociological study, we first had to establish how each group or class regulates and organizes the individual practice by conferring upon it functions attuned to its own interests; but we could not take as our direct object particular individuals and their relationship to photography as a practice or an object for consumption, without risking falling into abstraction. Only the methodological decision to make a study based primarily on 'real' groups[9] was to allow us to perceive (or prevent us from forgetting) that the meaning and function conferred upon photography are directly related to the structure of the group, to the extent of its differentiation and particularly to its position within the social structure. Thus the relationship of the peasant to photography is, in the final analysis, only one aspect of his relationship to urban life, identified with modern life, a relationship which is made apparent in the directly experienced relationship between the villager and the holiday-maker: if, in defining his attitude to photography, he calls upon all

the values which define the peasant as such, it is because this urban activity, the prerogative of the bourgeois and the city-dweller, is associated with a way of life that questions the peasant way of life, forcing him into an explicit self-definition.[10]

Apart from the interests of each class, it is the objective relationships, obscurely felt, between the class as such and other classes that are indirectly expressed through the attitudes of individuals towards photography. Just as the peasant is expressing his relationship with urban life when he rejects the practice of photography, a relationship in and through which he senses the particularity of his condition, the meaning which *petits bourgeois* confer on photographic practice conveys or betrays the relationship of the *petite bourgeoisie* to culture, that is, to the upper classes (bourgeoisie) who retain the privilege of cultural practices which are held to be superior, and to the working classes from whom they wish to distinguish themselves at all costs by manifesting, through the practices which are accessible to them, their cultural goodwill. It is in this way that members of photographic clubs seek to ennoble themselves culturally by attempting to ennoble photography, a substitute within their range and grasp for the higher arts, and to find within the disciplines of the sect that body of technical and aesthetic rules of which they deprived themselves when they rejected as vulgar the rules that govern popular practice. The relationship between individuals and photographic practice is essentially a mediate relationship, because it always includes the reference to the relationship that the members of other social classes have to photography and hence to the whole structure of relationships between the classes.

Attempting to overcome a falsely rigorous objectivism by trying to grasp the systems of relationships concealed behind preconstructed totalities is quite the opposite of succumbing to the seductions of intuitionism, which, conjuring up the blinding evidence of false familiarity, in the individual case merely transfigure everyday banalities about temporality, eroticism and death into false essentialist analyses. Because photography, apparently at least, lends itself very badly to properly sociological study, it provides the desired opportunity to prove that the sociologist, concerned with deciphering that which is only ever *common sense*,

can deal with images without becoming visionary. And to those who expect sociology to provide them with 'visions' what can one say, except, along with Max Weber, 'that they should go to the cinema'?[11]

PART I

1

The Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences

Pierre Bourdieu

In a large family, everyone knows that even good understanding cannot prevent cousins, uncles and aunts from sometimes having stormy or wearing conversations. Whenever I feel that tempers are fraying I take out our family photograph album. Everyone rushes over, everyone's amazed, they rediscover themselves, as babies and teenagers. There's nothing like it for calming them down, and everything settles down again.

Mlle B. C., Grenoble (Isère).
Elle, 14 January 1965, '*Les lectrices bavardent* (Readers chat)'

When Fêng was about to pass away [. . .] he said, 'I have myself seen the masters pass away lying or sitting but not standing. Do you know any masters who passed away standing?' The monks said, 'Yes, there is the record of such.' 'Do you then know one who passed away standing on his head?' 'No, never yet,' was the answer. Whereupon Fêng stood on his head and passed away.

D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*

How and why is the practice of photography predisposed to a diffusion so wide that there are few households, at least in towns, which do not possess a camera? Is it enough to refer to the accessibility of the instruments used in this practice, and the use of those instruments? There are cheap cameras and, unlike more demanding activities, such as the practice of playing a musical instrument, photography requires little or no training; the absence of economic and technical obstacles is an adequate explanation only if one hypothetically assumes that photographic consumption fills a need that can be satisfied within the limits of economic

means. But does this not amount to doing away with the sociological problem by providing as an explanation what sociology should be explaining?

The best argument for the psychological explanation by 'motivation' is the fact that ownership of a camera is closely related to income,[1] which seems to allow us to consider cameras as pieces of equipment comparable to cars or televisions, and to see the ownership of such a commodity as nothing but the index of a standard of living.[2] If an increase in resources has the almost automatic effect of increasing the diffusion of cameras and the number of photographers, we would be right in supposing the existence of 'natural' aspiration to photographic practice which can remain constant across different milieux and situations because, inspired by universal 'motivations', it is independent of social conditioning; according to this hypothesis, behaviour – positive or negative – is the result of only two forces, the more or less intense 'motivations' that provoke action, and the 'restraints' which prevent it.

Starting from these presuppositions, one could thus describe the 'motivations' behind photographic activity as follows:[3] the fact of taking photographs, keeping them or looking at them, may bring satisfactions in any of five areas, 'protection against time, communication with others and the expression of feelings, self-realization, social prestige, distraction or escape'. More precisely, it could be argued that photography has the function of helping one to overcome the sorrow of the passing of time, either by providing a magical substitute for what time has destroyed, or by making up for the failures of memory, acting as a mooring for the evocation of associated memories, in short, by providing a sense of the conquest of time as a destructive power; secondly, it encourages communication with others by enabling people to relive past moments together, or to show others the interest or affection that one has for them; thirdly, it gives photographers the means of 'realizing themselves', either by making them feel their own 'power' by magical appropriation or by the recreation, either glorified or caricatured, of the object represented, giving them the opportunity to 'feel their emotions more intensely' or allowing them to express an artistic intention or demonstrate their technical mastery; fourthly, it provides the satisfactions of prestige, in the form of technical

prowess or evidence of a personal achievement (a journey, an event) or of ostentatious expenditure; finally, it provides a means of escape or a simple distraction, like a game. On the other hand, 'financial restrictions, the fear of failure or ridicule and the desire to avoid complications' constitute the main obstacles to the practice.

Thus, in the name of a 'method' whose 'principle is to seek to explain and understand the behaviour of individuals without relying on [. . .] the reasons given by the individuals themselves', one ends up supplying nothing but a disparate enumeration of the reasons or rationalizations that any subject can invoke, by an effort of the imagination, in order to justify his activity or abstention. This 'vulgate', a discourse half-way between everyday talk and scientific statement, fulfils its function perfectly: it can give the illusion of revealing truths by referring to commonplaces and expressing them in a scientific-sounding language. But insofar as it provides at least a description of the meanings and values which photographers believe that they secrete in their activity, this psychology which, while promising an exploration of the depths, leads no further than the surface of things, is less unsettling than the psychology which, anxious to fulfil its brief, dives into the Freudian abysses of voyeurism, narcissism and exhibitionism.

In fact, it is the very intention of finding the explanation of photographic practice in motivations (that is, in final causes) that condemns the psychologist to penetrate no further than psychological functions as they are experienced, that is, to penetrate no further than 'satisfactions' and 'reasons', instead of investigating the social functions concealed by those 'reasons', and whose fulfilment moreover procures directly experienced 'satisfactions'.[4] In short, taking the effect for the cause, photographic practice, subject to social rules, invested with social functions, and therefore experienced as a 'need', is explained with reference to something that is actually its consequence, namely the psychological satisfactions that it produces.[5]

It is all too apparent that we should not be content, for example, to see the photographic practice of the working classes as the sum of a need inspired by universal motivations and the restrictions of financial obstacles, the concrete product being nothing but the algebraic addition of two abstractions. In fact, we are condemned

to the abstract universality of needs or motivations as long as we dissociate aspirations from the objective situation in which they are constituted and from which they are inseparable, a situation that is objectively defined by economic constraints and social norms.[6] In other words, aspirations and demands are determined, in both form and content, by objective conditions which exclude the possibility of desiring the impossible.

To understand what it means for manual workers to practise photography in an intermittent way, on occasions defined by tradition and according to the canons of traditional 'aesthetic', in short, thoroughly to understand the meaning and function that manual workers give to photography, is to understand their relationship to their class condition: their relationship to any kind of commodity actually includes a tacit reference to the system of objective possibilities and impossibilities which defines both this condition and the types of conduct compatible or incompatible with the objective standard against which they feel they are being measured. Consequently, in the present case, resignation to a practice that is rare and rudimentary, and the lack of enthusiasm for a more intense practice, presuppose the internalization of the limits defined by economic obstacles and also the awareness that there exists, as an abstract and impossible possibility, a different form of practice that is possible *for others*.

> This accounts for the style of the statements by manual workers interviewed about their photographic practice. The numerous presuppositions, the interrogative or conditional turn of phrase, reference to the most virtuoso practitioners whom they know, and, more generally, the often oneiric and ludic style of the statements, point to this awareness of an abstract and remote possibility: 'If I had a good camera I'd join the camera club.' 'If I had the free time . . .' 'If I took any I'd take them everywhere I went: in the mountains, at the beach, in the city.'

All this is contained in the expression used to justify abstention: 'That isn't for the likes of us', that is, we are not the people for whom this object or this activity exists as an objective possibility; as a result, this object or this activity would only exist for us as a 'reasonable' possibility if we were different, if we were placed in

different conditions of existence. Through this one may see that any relationship with a commodity, of whatever kind, always includes a veiled reference to the concrete particularity of the objective situation which immediately qualifies it as accessible or inaccessible. But to say 'that isn't for the likes of us' is to say something more than 'it's too expensive' (for us): the expression of internalized necessity, this formula is, so to speak, in the indicative-imperative (or 'is-ought') mode because it simultaneously expresses an impossibility and an interdiction.

Moreover, by the very fact that it is constituted with reference to the particularity of the situation, the awareness of impossibility and of prohibition is accompanied by the recognition of the conditional character of that impossibility and that prohibition, that is, by the awareness of the conditions that would have to be met in order to remove them. Thus, in the individual case, the attitude to photography is defined with reference to a system of demands that define a more ambitious and therefore a more expensive type of photographic activity.

> An illustration of these analyses can be seen in the words of a manual worker (45) who states: 'I mostly take pictures of my children, obviously; my mates . . . I mostly take them for souvenirs because I don't like pictures of people that much. I prefer landscapes, or photographs taken on the spur of the moment, on the move [. . .]. In that area, I'd rather take indoor shots, but you have to have the equipment, you need screens, lighting, long poses.' In short, a different practice would presuppose different equipment, but different equipment would presuppose a different attitude to photography, and hence different conditions of existence: 'No, I'm not satisfied with the pictures I take, I don't think I could take better ones with this camera; I'd need a better camera [. . .]. What you have to be able to do is sacrifice a film to get a result and I'd rather get a photograph right first time so as not to waste the money.' Therefore, feeling that a more demanding practice is impossible and prohibited, one *prohibits oneself* from developing a taste for it and avoids liking it: 'To take indoor shots you have to love photography: if I did indoor shots or close-ups I'd want to develop them myself. I don't have the time or the opportunity or the means.'

According to this logic one can understand the entire meaning of

the relationship to technical objects, of which the relationship to the camera represents a particular case. If those manual workers who are keenest on photography often stress the simplicity of their equipment with a certain pride, presenting as an informed choice something that is also the effect of economic constraints, it is because, in the refinement of technical manipulations, they find a means of reconciling their interest in the most sophisticated (and therefore the most expensive) objects and their concern to avoid the impossible purchase of those objects:

> 'Cameras are like everything else, the most expensive one isn't the best.' 'You need good material, but not complicated material.' 'Listen, I know a bit about all the different types, well, there are some that don't look very impressive but do the job very well, when you know your way around them. When you don't know much about it, certainly, you need lots of mechanical stuff. Look at these "automatics" they have now, with one of those a good photographer could never do the things he could with an "adjustable" one. He wouldn't want to have anything to do with it. It's the same with cars.'

This sort of 'do-it-yourself' attitude resists the seduction of the technical object as much as it succumbs to it. Unlike the enthusiasm for 'handiwork' or gadgets which increases the number of possible manipulations by increasing the number of manipulable objects, this ascetic handiwork compensates for the absence or excessive simplicity of the instrument with skill in inventing ingenious solutions which make it possible to attain the same result using the most universally available means. Affecting a disdain for the refinement of technical objects in the name of the refinement of the technician is the most realistic way of recognizing their inaccessibility without renouncing their sophistication.

A fictive explanation as well as an explanation of fictions, motivational psychology therefore leaves unanswered the question of how it is that photography has experienced such a wide diffusion when it satisfies neither a primary, a natural need, nor a secondary need, created and sustained by education, like going to museums and concerts.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICE AS AN INDEX AND AN INSTRUMENT OF INTEGRATION

In order completely to establish the inadequacy of a strictly psychological explanation of photographic practice and its diffusion, one must first demonstrate that the sociological explanation can completely account for this practice, and more precisely, account for its instruments, its chosen objects, its rhythms, its occasions, its implicit aesthetic and even its subjects' experience of it, the meanings that they secrete in it and the psychological satisfactions that they derive from it.

One cannot help but be struck first of all by the regular ways in which ordinary practice is organized.[7] There are few activities which are so stereotyped and less abandoned to the anarchy of individual intentions. More than two thirds of photographers are seasonal conformists who take photographs either at family festivities or social gatherings, or during the summer holidays.[8] On the other hand, if we bear in mind the fact that there is a very close correlation between the presence of children in the household and possession of a camera, and that the camera is often the common property of the family group, it becomes clear that photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its *family function* or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life, in short, of reinforcing the integration of the family group by resserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity.[9]

Because the family photograph is a ritual of the domestic cult in which the family is both subject and object, because it expresses the celebratory sense which the family group gives to itself, and which it reinforces by giving it expression, the need for photographs and the need to take photographs (the internalization of the social function of this practice) are felt all the more intensely the more integrated the group and the more the group is captured at a moment of its highest integration.[10]

It is no accident that the social function and meaning of photography are never more clearly apparent than in a rural community, strongly integrated and attached to its peasant

traditions.[11] The photographic image, that curious invention which could have served to disconcert or unsettle, was introduced very early and established itself very quickly (between 1905 and 1914) because it came to fulfil functions that existed before its appearance, namely the solemnization and immortalization of an important area of collective life. The wedding photograph was accepted so quickly and generally only because it met the social conditions of its existence: just as waste is a part of festive behaviour, the purchase of the group photograph, a conspicuous consumption which no-one can escape without loss of face, is felt to be obligatory, as a homage to the married couple.

> 'The group photograph is obligatory: anyone who didn't buy one would be seen as a miser (*picheprim*). It would be an insult to the people who invited him. It would mean not paying your dues. At the table you're in the public eye, you can't say no.'

As an object of regulated exchange, the photograph joins the circuit of gifts and counter-gifts which the wedding has set in motion. The result of this is that there is no wedding without photographs. The ceremony of the group photograph is retained even when amateur photographers are present; the latter can duplicate the function of the professional photographer, the officiant whose presence sanctions the solemnity of the rite, but they can never replace him.

> 'Sometimes there are amateurs among the guests. But in spite of that they still bring in photographers from Pau; the amateurs take pictures of the couple leaving the church [. . .]. You can tell from those photographs when it was amateurs who came out; they know that that's what you do. They even take photographs in church, when they're passing the ring.' As another index of the ritual character of photography, 'the photographer never takes pictures of the dinner or the dance'.[12] Neither can photographs by amateurs take the place of 'official' photographs taken in the studio to send to parents and friends: 'Everyone goes off to the studio, even the very poorest.'

If one accepts, with Durkheim, that the function of the festivity is to revitalize and recreate the group, one will understand why the

photograph is associated with it, since it supplies the means of solemnizing those climactic moments of social life in which the group solemnly reaffirms its unity. In the case of the wedding, the picture that captures for eternity the group that has been brought together, or rather the bringing together of two groups, is necessarily implied within a ritual whose function is to consecrate, that is, to sanction and to sanctify the union of two groups effected through the union of two individuals.

It can hardly be accidental that the order in which the photograph was introduced into the ritual of the grand ceremonies of family life corresponded to the social importance of those ceremonies. First communion photographs do not make their appearance until around 1930, and photographs of baptisms are even more recent and more rare. For several years, some peasants have made use of the arrival of photographers at agricultural shows in order to be photographed with their animals, but these remain the exception. In the case of baptisms, which are never the occasion of a big ceremony, and which only bring together close relations, photographs are rare. The first communion provides many mothers with an opportunity to have their children photographed. Once again, this reveals the fact that the meaning and the role of photography are a function of the social meaning of the feast:

> 'At a wedding you never ask the photographer to take pictures of the children. No. You see that at first communion, a children's festivity. The photographer rakes it in. At a wedding, the children aren't the centre of attention, it isn't their festivity. The kids are left out that day.'

As in the case of the wedding, the photograph takes its place within the circuit of ritually imposed exchanges. The photograph of the communicant taken in the neighbouring town the Monday after the ceremony has joined the souvenir photograph of the first communion which the children used to take to their relations and neighbours in exchange for a present.

The mother who has her children photographed can only meet with approval. In the society of former times, the child was never, as now, the centre of attention. The major feasts and ceremonies in village society were chiefly an adult affair, and it is only since 1945

that children's feasts (such as first communion) have become important; as society comes to place more importance on children, and, at the same time, to assign a larger role to the wife as mother, the custom of having them photographed is reinforced. In the collection of a small peasant from the hamlets, photographs of children make up half of the photographs taken after 1945, while they were almost entirely absent from the collection prior to 1939. Previously, photographs were taken chiefly of adults, secondarily of family groups bringing together parents and children, and only exceptionally of children on their own. Today the hierarchy is reversed.[13]

But even photographs of children are allowed to a large extent because of their social function. The sexual division of labour gives the wife the responsibility of maintaining relations with the members of the group who live a long way away, and first and foremost with her own family. Like letters, and better than letters, the photograph has its role to play in the continual updating of the exchange of family information; thus the sending of photographs after weddings generally produces an increase in the exchange of letters. It is customary to take the children (at least once, and, if possible, periodically) to the relations who live outside the village, and most importantly, when the wife comes from elsewhere, to her mother's. It is the wife who organizes these trips, and she sometimes makes them unaccompanied by her husband. The sending of photographs has the same function: by means of photographs, the new arrival is introduced to the group as a whole, which must 'recognize' the child.

Thus it is natural that photography should be the object of a reading that may be called sociological, and that it should never be considered in or for itself, in terms of its technical or aesthetic qualities. The photographer is considered to know his job and no-one else has any point of comparison. The photograph must only supply a representation that is true and precise enough to permit recognition. A methodical inspection and a prolonged observation are conducted, in terms of the very logic that dominates the knowledge of other people in everyday life: by means of a comparison of fragments of knowledge and experiences, each person is located with reference to his or her family line, and the reading of old marriage photographs often takes the form of a

course in genealogical science, in which the mother, a specialist in the subject, teaches the child about the connections which bind him or her to each of the people shown. She works out how the couples came about; she analyzes and compares the sphere of social connections of each of the two families; she remarks on absences, which indicate quarrels, and on presences, which do the family an honour. In short, the wedding photograph is a real sociogram, and it is read as such.

For each guest, the photograph is like a trophy, an index of social influence and a source of prestige. Coming from a *'petite maison'*, B. M., a peasant from the hamlets, only has three wedding photographs.[14] On the other hand, J. B., a comfortable city-dweller, married to the youngest daughter of the *'grande maison'*, keeps a large number of them, and also keeps photographs of groups of 'mates', taken on walks or outings. A detailed examination of the groups of guests reveals significant differences: B. M.'s guests are chiefly relations and neighbours, his principle of selection being traditional; at J. B.'s wedding, alongside the statutory guests, we can see the 'mates' of the groom and even those of the bride.

To be photographed is to bear witness to one's presence, the obligatory counterpart to the homage received in the invitation; it is the expression of one's honour at having been invited, and of the fact that one is taking part in order to do an honour.

> 'You were at some wedding or other and you weren't in the photograph. They noticed that. You weren't in the group, they said that M. L. wasn't in the photograph. They thought you'd sneaked off, and that doesn't make a good impression' (Young woman from the *bourg*, addressing her husband during a discussion).

How could people's dispositions and attitudes not be marked by solemnity? No-one would think of disobeying the photographer's instructions, of talking to their neighbours, or looking in the other direction. That would be a lapse in good manners and more especially an insult to the whole group, especially those 'who are being honoured that day', the couple's families.

Photographs of major ceremonies are possible because – and only because – they capture behaviour that is socially approved

and socially regulated, that is, behaviour that has already been solemnized. Nothing *may* be photographed apart from that which *must* be photographed. The ceremony may be photographed because it is outside of the daily routine, and must be photographed because it realizes the image that the group seeks to give of itself as a group. What is photographed and what is perceived by the reader of the photograph is not, properly speaking, individuals in their capacity as individuals, but social roles, the husband, first communicant, soldier, or social relationships, the American uncle or the aunt from Sauvagnon.[15]

> For example, B. M.'s collection includes a photograph which is a perfect illustration of the former type: it shows B. M.'s brother-in-law in his town postman's uniform: the cap on his head, the white shirt with the stiff collar and a checkered tie, the wide-collared coat with no lapels, a card on his chest bearing the number 471, the high waistcoat with its gold buttons, his right hand placed on an Oriental-style saddle. The photograph sent by the daughter who has moved away is not the picture of her husband, but rather the symbol of her social success. The illustration of the second type, a photograph taken during a stay by B. M.'s brother-in-law in Lesquire, solemnizes the meeting of the two families by bringing together uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews: as if seeking to demonstrate that the real object of photography is not individuals but the relationships between individuals, the parents of one family carry the children of the other in their arms.[16]

In most peasant households, photographs are 'locked away' in a box, apart from wedding photographs and certain portraits. It is considered indecent or ostentatious to show pictures of members of the family to just anyone. The large communal room, the kitchen, has an impersonal decoration that is the same in all cases, with a calendar from the Post Office or the Fire Brigade and postcards brought back from a journey to Lourdes or bought in Pau. Ceremonial photographs are too solemn or too intimate to be shown in the space wheres everyday life goes on; they can only be displayed in the dining room, the drawing room or, in the case of more personal pictures, such as photographs of deceased parents, in the bedroom, along with the religious pictures, the crucifix and the *buis bénit* (wood blessed on Palm Sunday). The amateur

photographs are locked away in drawers. In contrast, among the *petits bourgeois* of the village, they take on a decorative or sentimental value: enlarged and framed, they adorn the walls of the communal room, along with the holiday souvenirs. They even invade that shrine of family values, the drawing-room mantelpiece, replacing the medals, the honorific distinctions and academic certificates which were previously seen there, and which the young village wife has discreetly relegated, on the grounds that they are slightly ridiculous, to the darkest corner behind the door, so as not to offend 'the old people'.

While it is true that they may generally accept the practice of photography, unlike peasants, who reject the urban values that it represents and which amount to the denial of their own values, a great majority of city-dwellers continue to confer the same meaning and the same function upon the photographic image. Thus, while they are themselves capable of taking the photographs that the peasants entrust to professionals, they still show no intrinsic interest in photographic activity for its own sake, continuing to place the emphasis on the picture produced rather than on the means of producing it. As the need to take photographs is usually only a need for photographs, it is understandable that all the factors which determine an intensification of domestic life and a reinforcement of family ties should encourage the appearance and intensification of photographic practice: the practice decreases with age because of a decline in involvement in social life and particularly in the life of a scattered family, which does away with the reasons for taking photographs; the discrepancy between the number of photographs owned by bachelors and those owned by married couples increases with age, because the long-term bachelor has an increasingly low level of integration within the community; holidays are one of the high points of photographic activity, to some extent at least because they are especially high points of family life (particularly the Christmas holidays), during which ties are remade with distant relatives and intensified, by the exchange of visits and gifts, with close relatives.[17] Among the upper classes the increased proportion of landscape photographs to the detriment of traditional holiday snaps can be partially explained by the relaxation of the ties (which are habitually reformed during holidays) between the nuclear family and the extended family.[18]

In fact, photographic practice is more closely linked to the presence of children in the household (and more so the younger they are), because the arrival of the child reinforces the integration of the group, and at the same time reinforces its inclination to capture the image of this integration, an image which, in turn, serves to reinforce the integration.[19]

> The need to sacrifice to the family function is felt as an imperative: 'The photographs of the kid – I've got the hang of it now, and I now have them printed in threes; I need them for the grandparents and the godmother.' Because photographs are privileged instruments of intra-familial sociability, the need to keep relatives supplied with them is felt most acutely, and any omission in this respect is interpreted as rudeness or an act of rupture. 'Family photographs? You have to take them, it's more polite, isn't it? We send them to everybody, it's really stupid, and it's expensive, but some of them would get angry otherwise.'

The list of authorized recipients may vary according to the degree of integration of the family group, according to the intensity of the ties maintained with ancestors and collaterals but, where photographs of the children are concerned, the grandparents, the collaterals (particularly maternal collaterals) and the godmother always seem to be included. The geographic dispersal of relatives demands, more than ever, the periodical reinvigoration of family ties, carried out more effectively by means of photographs than by a simple exchange of letters.

The photograph itself is usually nothing but the group's image of its own integration. Of the photographs showing people, almost three-quarters show groups and more than half show children, either on their own or with adults; photographs showing adults and children together owe their frequency and solemnity (which is usually made apparent by the conventional rigidity of the poses) to the fact that they capture and symbolize the image of the family line.[20]

Because it can be the object of collective and quasi-ceremonial contemplation, photography, and colour photography in particular, prolongs the festivity of which it is a part and whose importance it signals. The festive use of photography of festivities

is, as it were, secreted within it, and is the inspiration behind it;[21] because it is predisposed to serve as a festive technology or, rather, a *technology for the reiteration of the party*, it is used to capture the most euphoric and intoxicating moments, the mother-in-law's waltz or the priceless tomfooleries of the 'life and soul'. Exceptional in itself, it captures exceptional objects, the 'good moments' which it transforms into 'good memories'. Ritually associated with festivities, family ceremonies or social gatherings, it accentuates the sense of the festivity as an exceptional moment by making this exceptional sacrifice to it. It is experienced as it will later be looked at, and the good moment will look even better for being revealed to itself as a 'good memory' by the photograph. It will be looked at as it was experienced, accompanied by all the laughter and jokes from the party.[22] And it is most frequently reduced to a pure sign, intelligible only to someone who holds the key to it, because a party is something that one makes for oneself, which one creates from nothing or with nothing, from the simple decision to 'live it up' (*faire la fête*). The photograph captures the memory of this: more often than not it cannot tell what people were laughing at or why they were laughing; but it does show that they had a *good* laugh.[23]

As an instrument of solemnization, the photograph can give a mocking sacralization to a symbolic sacrilege: thus, the act of photographing a friend's wife in a ridiculous or even an improper posture can make people laugh all the louder because it amounts to an act of solemnization against the grain, against all the rules of good taste, an infringement of the rules of good taste which expresses and, by expressing it, reinforces, the controlled lack of control. So acts of tomfoolery for the photographer, or photographs of tomfoolery, deliberate barbarisms which derive their comic power from their character as ritual sacrileges, should not be seen as having the effect of desacralizing photography. As a technology of solemnization or a festive technology, and always a technology for the solemnization of the festivity, photography becomes all the more necessary when, with the fragmentation of the grand solemnities, with the disappearance of the public signs of festivity which were formerly able to lend the sense of celebration the appearance of an objective foundation, the festivity (whether a birthday or a saint's day) is more clearly than ever shown up as

being voluntary (*décisoire*) and arbitrary because the family group is condemned to live as an autarky. Consequently, the enterprise of solemnization served by photography can only be a success if it is made the responsibility of a member of the group, anxious, like everyone else, to forget and to conceal the fact that a party takes place only if one 'lives it up', and because one decides to 'live it up'. From the moment that participation in a party presupposes this complicity, which can only come from participation in the family group, the outsider can only be an unwanted guest.

While the peasant rejects an activity that contradicts his system of values, and entrusts a specialist from outside the group with the task of carrying out a rite that involves the entire community, the urban family, withdrawn into itself, naturally entrusts a member of the family, usually the head of the family, with the task of carrying out this domestic cult ritual.[24] The only primary group which can maintain its unity and its continuity in urban society, the nuclear family, progressively dispossessed of most of its traditional functions, economic as well as social, asserts itself by accumulating the signs of its affective unity, its intimacy. 'Formerly,' says Durkheim, 'domestic society was not just a number of individuals united by bonds of mutual affection, but the group itself, in its abstract and impersonal unity. It was the hereditary name, together with all the memories it recalled, the family house, the ancestral field, the traditional situation and reputation, etc. All this is tending to disappear. A society momentarily dissolving, only to reform elsewhere but under wholly new conditions and with quite new elements, has not sufficient continuity to acquire a personal aspect, a history of its own, to which its members may feel attachment.'[25] Is it not natural that the photograph should, in the absence of other supports, be given the function of compiling the family heritage?

If the accumulation of consumer durables, the refrigerator, washing-machine or television, contributes to the reinforcement of the family unit, the acquisition of these standard products cannot satisfy the sense of intimacy as completely as the practice of photography, the domestic manufacture of domestic emblems. In fact, within the very narrow range of family products, more than gardening or cake-making, imaginary concessions to a longing for autarky, more than home improvement or collecting, which isolate

from the group anyone who makes them his 'hobby-horse', photography affirms the continuity and integration of the domestic group, and reaffirms it by giving it expression.

The distinction between those subjects which are the responsibility of the professional photographer and those which are a matter for family production is not made at random.[26] Thus, in a village in southern Corsica where the practice of photography has become generalized with the invasion of urban values, the inhabitants still rely on the professional to capture the most solemn events (marriage and first communion), and the most solemn moments of those events, as well as for portraits of the children – all cases where it is the social person that is to be captured: for example, family photographs of children, which preserve the stages of an individual childhood, are opposed to conventional photographs of first communicants taken in the studio.[27] In short, the arrival of the domestic practice of photography coincides with a more precise differentiation between what belongs to the public and what to the private sphere. For example, many people have abandoned the large portraits which, in the previous generation, were seen on display in every house in Corsica, on the walls of the stateroom or in the living-room, and which, in most households, have been replaced by amateur photographs, discreetly placed on a piece of furniture. As soon as the photograph is required to capture not only the public image of the person, individualized to such a low degree that it does not need to be recorded with any great frequency, and so strongly defined by social norms that it is made as if to be shown, but also to preserve the fleeting appearances and the individual gestures of a member of the family, one is forced to distinguish between the pictures reserved for family contemplation and those which could be shown to 'outsiders'. This distinction is never more marked than in the case of subjects who have spent many years away from Corsica; in fact, emigration removes the nuclear family from the collective frameworks of community life and turns each individual history into a series of particular events, escaping the stereotyping of behaviour produced by a communal rhythm of life. Participation in these various calendars leads subjects to distinguish the solemnities which deserve to be shared with the group from those which appear private, personal or intimate because they have no place in the calendar of the primary

community and are as diverse as the groups to which the emigrants have for some time belonged. The desire to assert and strengthen one's membership of the family group through the exchange of photographs is therefore one of the occasions when one discovers that public and domestic life have ceased to obey one sole and single body of rules, as they did in the village community.

As a private technique, photography manufactures private images of private life. With the photographic image, industrial technology has given the most dispossessed people the opportunity of owning portraits which are not images of the great men of this world or the figures of the next. The Portrait Gallery has been democratized and each family has, in the person of the head of the family, its appointed portraitist. To take photographs of one's children is to become the historiographer of their childhoods and to prepare as an heirloom for them the image of what they used to be. Thus it is via the family group that the primary function of photography becomes the responsibility of the photographer, who is asked to solemnize important events and to record the family chronicle in pictures: 'you *must* have a souvenir of the children'; promises to give or take photographs are extracted and, as they say, 'it's the least the photographer can do' to respond to this collective command. Apart from a tiny minority of aesthetes, photographers see the recording of family life as the primary function of photography, continuing to conform to the strained, posed and sterotyped photography of the family album, however harsh their judgment upon it may be, because they see it as being just as inevitable as the social ceremonies that it solemnizes.

> 'Family photographs? I take them too, you have to please everybody. It's a different thing, isn't it!' (Technician, 38, Paris)

> 'I take everything really, but of course I have to take pictures of the children; in fact I use up more film on that than on anything else.' (Clerical worker, 32, Paris)

The family album expresses the essence of social memory. There is nothing more unlike the introspective 'search for lost time' than those displays of family photographs with their commentaries, the ritual of integration that the family makes its new members undergo. The images of the past arranged in chronological order,

the logical order of social memory, evoke and communicate the memory of events which deserve to be preserved because the group sees a factor of unification in the monuments of its past unity or – which amounts to the same thing – because it draws confirmation of its present unity from its past: this is why there is nothing more decent, reassuring and edifying than a family album; all the unique experiences that give the individual memory the particularity of a secret are banished from it, and the common past, or, perhaps, the highest common denominator of the past, has all the clarity of a faithfully visited gravestone. Because, while seeming to evoke the past, photography actually exorcizes it by recalling it as such, it fulfils the normalizing function that society confers on funeral rites, namely at once recalling the memory of the departed and the memory of their passing, recalling that they lived, that they are dead and buried and that they continue on in the living. Like *churinga*, those objects of decorated wood or stone that represent the physical body of a particular ancestor which, amongst the Aranda, each generation solemnly presents to the living person held to be the reincarnation of that ancestor, and which are periodically brought out for inspection and reverence, family photographs which are handed down from generation to generation constitute the generally accessible substitute for this capital of precious goods, family archives, family jewels and family portraits, which owe their sacred character to the fact that by physically attesting to the great age and continuity of the line they consecrate its social identity, always inseparable from permanence over time.[28]

OCCASIONS FOR THE PRACTICE AND OCCASIONAL PRACTICE

Thus, the most widespread photographic practice is as it is and only thus because of the social function vested in it; in fact, whether in its rhythms, its instruments or its aesthetic, the social function that allows it to exist also defines the limits of its existence, and means that it cannot be superseded by another more intense and demanding type of practice: it is dependent upon the rhythms of the group and, being limited to a few occasions and a few objects, it can only be intermittent and relatively rare;

similarly, and for the same reason, it can adapt to any sort of instrument, however rudimentary or old, as long as it is capable of carrying out the function assigned to it, namely that of supplying pictures which permit recognition; finally, and again for the same reason, unable to free itself from the functions to which it owes its existence, it cannot create its own goals and fulfil the specific intentions of an autonomous aesthetic.

While a practice devoted only to the family function tends to define its own limits, it is nevertheless the case that not all variations in the intensity and quality of the practice may be imputed solely to the intensity of the 'need' for photographs (linked to the structure and the degree of integration of the family circle). Thus, for example, inasmuch as one can satisfy the need for photographs without taking one's own, even inasmuch as taking one's own photographs can be seen as a luxury since, in the final analysis, domestic production more often supplements than replaces studio photography, it is natural that camera-owners should become increasingly numerous as income increases. It is also obvious that, even within the restricted field of socially consecrated objects and occasions, there is room for variation in the intensity of the practice permitted by a higher income.

Many seasonal conformists own a quality camera and a large number of accessories which they continue to place at the service of the traditional functions of photography. In fact one should guard against seeing the rise in the proportion of owners of sophisticated cameras according to income level as an index of an increase in their requirements with regard to the quality of the practice: the intensification of the practice that a higher income encourages by allowing increased expenditure on films and on expensive (colour) films and increasing the number of occasions when photographs may be taken cannot on its own enable one to go beyond ordinary practice and start a practice that is qualitatively different. If subjects decide to buy a small-format camera, it is not generally because they have explicitly taken into account the technical possibilities which it provides.

> Many owners of small-format cameras do not have a precise knowledge of the resources they provide. Similarly, those who say they are inclined to buy an advanced camera have no more expert

knowledge of its qualities than subjects who are indifferent or hostile to such a purchase. The study of a sample of amateur photographers reveals that the owners of the most sophisticated cameras (including a built-in battery and telemeter or Reflex viewer) have, within the whole set, a lower level of technical knowledge than owners of less complicated cameras. On the other hand, owners of sophisticated cameras are divided into two separate categories, namely those who are aware of the possibilities that their cameras offer and who have extensive technical knowledge, and those who admit that they are out of their depth with regard to the possibilities that their cameras offer and who do not have access to a large amount of technical information.

One can thus seek to own a quality camera without being concerned about the qualities of that camera. The purchase of expensive equipment seems to be determined more often by consumer habits leading to the purchase of only quality products than by a qualitative transformation of the photographic intention. In short, the sophistication of the available means comes to photography from outside; rather than resulting from the appearance of new requirements produced by the practice of photography itself, it expresses a concern to conform to the broad group norm.[29] The aesthetic quality, not to mention the technique, of the picture produced and the modality of the practice, cannot be deduced from the qualities of the camera, its possibilities or limitations, and the routine and stereotyped work produced by most photographers cannot be explained by the limitations imposed on them by an unsophisticated camera or their own technical incompetence; instead, it is the photographic intention itself which, by remaining subordinate to traditional functions, excludes the very idea of fully exploiting all the camera's possibilities, and which defines its own limits within the field of technical possibilities.

The intensification of the practice is also, in most cases, the result of extrinsic conditions such as a certain income and the accompanying life-style, and not of an autonomous transformation of the practice. In fact, if the family function of photography can be fulfilled more or less completely and at different levels according to the income available, it is only ever accomplished in an occasional practice, which is generally lacking in intensity and

indifferent to aesthetic ambition. Given that the social norm defines both what must and what may be photographed, the field of the photographable cannot extend indefinitely, and the practice cannot survive the disappearance of the occasions for taking photographs. However, one cannot photograph the photographable for ever, and, apart from the photographable there is, as they say, 'nothing to photograph'.

Thus, for the peasants of Lesquire, the objects of their everyday environment, apart from the children – and the children only for a few years – are not considered worth photographing: one does not photograph something that one sees every day.

> 'If you go abroad, it's worth taking photographs. But as for us, what are we going to photograph? The main street? Or play "I'll take a picture of you and you take one of me?" No, it's not worth it!' 'Who do you think's going to be interested in taking photographs? We've seen each other too many times already! Always the same faces all day. We knew each other down to the last detail. One hundred and fifty people wandering about with no means of communication [. . .]. It's mostly outsiders who send postcards. The locals might send cards with "Souvenir of Lesquire" and a picture of a drunk, or maybe "There's good wine in Lesquire". But never pretty views of the village.'

The extreme narrowness and homogeneity of the space of life, which means that one's adult life is spent in the same environment as one's childhood, excludes alienation, that attenuated disorientation that leads to the act of looking. The tourist or outsider can cause astonishment by photographing everyday objects or local people at their habitual occupations. 'You're taking a photograph of that gate! My goodness! I can tell you we never pay it any attention! Oh, yes! It's very pretty!' The familiar environment is that which one has always seen but never looked at because it is 'taken for granted'. At a pinch one might take a picture of one's own house or have it photographed after tidying and decorating it (on a feast day, for example), that is, dressing it up in its Sunday best as one would dress oneself up to pose for a picture.

> If the house was nicer, and prettier inside, if the fields were full of lovely crops and trees, fine animals. That's not how it is at the moment: the fields are dry and the cows are thin.

While almost all photographers do their share of family photography, many photographers confer upon it other functions which are, in fact, only variants of its archetypal function. The intensification of photographic practice is very closely linked to holidays and tourism, but we should not conclude from this that all photographs taken on holidays or outings can escape being explained by the family function, or that the simple fact of an increase in the number of occasions which may be photographed is enough to determine the appearance of a practice vested with new functions.[30] If the proportion of practitioners is higher among those who have had summer holidays than among those who have not, this is probably partly due to the fact that photographic practice, like the opportunity of taking holidays, is related to income, but also and particularly because of the fact that the holiday is one of the high points of family life.

In fact, the variations in the objective occasions for taking photographs which are linked, for example, to the length or the location of those holidays do not bring about any noticeable modification in the intensity of the modal practice, because this depends less on incentives such as the beauty of the landscapes or the variety of places visited than on socially defined occasions.[31] Inasmuch as holidays are the occasion of more intense family relations (for example, for people who go to stay with their families) and more frequent social gatherings, it is natural that they should encourage the intensification of a photographic practice that has always had the express function of immortalizing the major events and high points of family life, so that holiday photographs generally remain photographs of the family on holiday.[32]

Moreover, holidays determine the broadening of the range of the photographable and produce a disposition to take photographs which, far from being of a different nature from the traditional disposition, is simply an extension of it: in fact, a practice that is so strongly associated with extraordinary occasions that it could be seen as a festive technique is naturally reinforced in a period which marks a break with the everyday environment and the routines of normal life. The adoption of what we might call the touristic attitude means escaping one's inattentive familiarity with the everyday world, an undifferentiated background against which the forms momentarily separated from everyday preoccupations stand

out. From that moment on, everything becomes a source of astonishment, and the travel-guide is a constant call to admiration, a manual of armed and directed perception.[33]

Photography is what one does on holiday, and also what makes a holiday: 'Yes, that's my wife walking in the street; of course we were on holiday, otherwise I wouldn't have taken the picture' (Clerical worker, Paris, 28, showing his family album). By capturing the image of the most insignificant places and moments, one transforms them into monuments to leisure, as the photograph is there to certify, for ever, that one has had leisure and the leisure to photograph it. The photograph that substitutes the definitive certainty of an objective image for the fleeting uncertainty of subjective impressions is predisposed to serve as a trophy.

While the everyday environment never gives rise to photographs, landscapes and monuments appear in holiday snaps as decorations or signs; this is because popular photography is trying to consecrate the unique encounter (although it can be experienced by thousands of others in identical circumstances) between a person and a consecrated place, between an exceptional moment in one's life and a place that is exceptional by virtue of its high symbolic yield. The occasion of the journey (honeymoon) solemnizes the places travelled through, and the most solemn among them solemnize the occasion of the journey. The truly complete honeymoon is revealed by the couple photographed in front of the Eiffel Tower, because Paris is the Eiffel Tower, and because the true honeymoon is the honeymoon in Paris. One of the pictures in J. B.'s collection is bisected by the Eiffel Tower; at the bottom is J. B.'s wife. What seems to us an act of barbarism or barbarity is actually the perfect fulfilment of an intention:[34] the two objects designed to solemnize one another are placed right in the centre of the photograph, as centring and frontality are the most decisive ways of stressing the value of the object captured in this way.

As a result, the photograph becomes a sort of ideogram or allegory, as individual and circumstantial traits take second place. The person photographed is placed in a setting which is primarily chosen for its high symbolic yield (although it can also and incidentally have an intrinsic aesthetic value) and which is treated as a sign. Especially typical is the photograph in which one can just make out P., a tiny dot waving her arm, in front of the Sacré-

Coeur, taken, as so often, from a long way off, because the photographer wants to capture the whole monument as well as the person: in order to spot the person one must, as they say, 'know that she's there' (plate 4). The same is true of the number of shots which show a person linked not to a consecrated monument, but rather to a place as entirely meaningless as a sign to which one does not have the key. This is true, for example, of photographs taken from the first level of the Eiffel Tower or in the corridors of the métro: a pure allegory, the photograph then demands a caption: 'P. on the terrace of the first level of the Eiffel Tower' (plate 3). The scenery may also be completely indifferent and anonymous, a door, a house or a garden; but never to the point where it loses all informative content, since it at least expresses the encounter of a person and a place at an exceptional moment: it is the door of the house of the So-and-sos', where they stayed during their honeymoon in Paris. In other words, the logic of the reciprocal solemnization of people and scenery tends to turn the photograph into an ideogram which eliminates from the environment all circumstantial and temporal aspects, such as people moving, in short, everything that constitutes life. All that remains of Paris in J.B.'s collection are timeless signs: it is a Paris without a history, without Parisians, except by accident; in short, a Paris without events.[35]

Although the field of the photographable may broaden, photographic practice does not become any more free, since one may only photograph what one must photograph, and since there are photographs which one must 'take' just as there are sites and monuments which one must 'do'. Under the terms of its traditional functions, this practice therefore remains traditional in the choice of its objects, its moments and its intention: it therefore relates to the postcard, from which it often takes its aesthetic and its subjects, as the domestic photograph relates to the studio picture; even when it no longer includes familiar people and appears to be inspired by an intrinsic interest in the object shown, whether it be a landscape or a monument, its function is still that of expressing, to a profound degree, a certain relationship between the photographer and the object photographed. Ceremonial slide-shows provoke boredom (as the ritual jokes will attest), because the pictures are always dominated in both their intention and their

aesthetic by extrinsic functions and because, often expressing only the contingent and personal encounter between the photographer and the object, they lose all meaning and all value as soon as they are looked at in and for themselves by a viewer indifferent to the particular experience of the photographer.[36]

Thus, the practice which is subordinated to traditional functions may increase quantitatively without ever leaving the slightest amount of room for a properly aesthetic refinement, because moving on to a dedicated practice always presupposes something that is both more than and different from a simple intensification of occasional practice. Photography subordinated to family functions is different in kind from dedicated practice. In its emphasis on the picture produced, the former cannot, by definition, be intensified *ad infinitum* and, always associated with exceptional occasions, it remains occasional and often temporary. By contrast, the ardent practice which privileges the act of production may experience unlimited growth, because it naturally goes beyond its own product, in the name of the quest for technical and aesthetic perfection. Doubtless a concern that focuses only on the technical quality of the image may lead one to acquire quality instruments, but it develops on a different level from the refinement of the aesthetic quality of the image, with the result that, as we have seen, the most sophisticated cameras may be placed at the service of the most traditional functions. It is for this reason that film-making, more completely even than photography, is given over to family functions: the ambition to make films as an art is extremely rare, even among the most enthusiastic amateur cinema-goers, not only because it would presuppose both a high level of technical virtuosity and all the time and trouble necessary to carry out those operations which are less interesting than the actual filming, because they are less directly related to the fulfilment of the functions assigned to cinematic practice, but also because one would have to invent and construct scenarios which family life supplies ready-prepared in the form of organized sequences of events which have an immediate meaning, at least for the person filming them and for their future viewers.[37]

Because it is always aimed at the fulfilment of social and socially defined functions, ordinary practice is necessarily ritualistic and ceremonial, and therefore stereotyped as much in its choice of

objects as in its expressive techniques: as an institutional piety, it is only carried out in consecrated circumstances and places and, associated with the solemnization of the solemn and the consecration of the sacred, it is free of the ambition to accord the status of 'that which is photographed' to anything not objectively (that is, socially) defined as 'photographable' and everything that 'must be photographed', because the very principle that defines the basis of its existence also determines its limits. Inasmuch as the practice is only photography of the photographable, it is associated with those places and moments which, in both senses of the word, define it. The artistic attitude, the permanent and generalized disposition to promote any object to the status of the work of art, which, itself defining the principle behind its selections, is defined by the definition of its objects, is different in kind from a practice that does not contain within itself the principle of its own existence and definition.

DEVOTEES OR DEVIANTS?

The same reasons explain why it is that photographic practice can experience such a wide diffusion in the absence of any institutionalized incentive or training, why it so rarely fulfils a properly aesthetic intention, and why properly artistic ambition is encountered particularly among those individuals or social categories most thoroughly freed from traditional functions.[38] In fact, aspiration to a practice directed towards aesthetic ends is not systematically or exclusively the property of the most cultivated individuals, those most likely to apply to a specific activity a general disposition acquired by education; rather it is encountered among those who share the lowest level of integration into society, either by reason of their age, their matrimonial status or their professional situation.[39]

And we can understand this if we bear in mind the fact that the appearance of an intrinsic interest in photography presupposes the neutralization of traditional functions (which, as we have seen, are a function of the integration of the group) and that, in the absence of these determining factors, the very fact of practising photography constitutes an anomaly:[40] contradicting this tendency of one's

social category entails being forced to experience an exceptional practice with exceptional fervour.

Without seeking to take the symmetry too far, it is clear that if family photography is both an index and an instrument of integration, a photography defined by its rejection of the family function often reveals the lowest level of integration into the family group or the profession, while also often having the effect of reinforcing this low level of integration by expressing it. Thus, the marital comedy routine of mutual persecution (revealed in half-light-hearted, half-serious jokes) can easily come to revolve around the mania for photography:

> 'Of course, my wife doesn't like it,' says a foreman, the member of a camera club. 'For instance this evening, I'm late already; I know what she's going to say: "You and your photography." Believe me, women don't often like photography, I can tell you.'

The reason why many enthusiastic amateurs so categorically stress the sexual division of photographic tasks and interests, and jealously keep for themselves the more noble uses of the camera, leaving their wives with the traditional uses to which their 'femininity' has 'predestined' them, is probably that the ardent practice of photography – whose aesthetic credo is often limited, particularly in the least cultivated households, to the refusal of family photographs – by its very nature demands a complementary practice, which is left to the wife and entirely devoted to family functions.

In fact, the dedicated photographer always finds a minimal definition of his ambitions in the refusal of the ritual objects of ordinary photography. Once we know that the camera is almost always a jointly owned piece of property, used without distinction by one or other of the members of the group for ordinary purposes, it becomes apparent that autonomous use of the camera takes on the meaning of a rupture with this joint ownership: the rejection of the family photograph, if it does not actually refuse the family all value, at least amounts to a refusal of one of the family values by refusing to serve the family cult. And the behaviour of the fanatic who has to be asked to take a photograph of the children when he spends hours in the secrecy of his darkroom is opposed to that of the photographer who makes solemn and public

sacrifices to the family cult just as, according to sociologists, magic is opposed to religion.

It is not surprising that seasonal practitioners and devotees constitute two separate populations with completely opposite characteristics: fanatical photographers occur more frequently among bachelors than among married people, more frequently among childless families than in families with children, and among young people (especially between the ages of eighteen and twenty) more often than among older people, that is, in the categories where the number of occasional practitioners is at its lowest, as if the environment most favourable to dedication existed where traditional functions exert the least pressure.[41]

Although fewer bachelors than married people take photographs, they are always more ardent in their dedication to photography. Although fewer of them confer a traditional function on photography, they differ from married people particularly in the aesthetic intentions that they bring to the practice of photography. If, to use the terms with which Durkheim characterizes the different types of suicide, one can describe the practice of these photographers as 'egoistic' or 'anomic', it is clear that it would be pointless to seek the causes or conditions of this dedication in the intrinsic characteristics of the statistical categories where they are most often encountered. In fact, the connection is strictly negative, since dedicated practice, the negation of ordinary practice, is favoured (negatively) once the pressure of the family function eases, and vice versa. While the positive influence of integration becomes apparent in positive signs (such as possession of cameras), the determining factors of the dedicated practice are never seen so clearly as when they come to an end: thus the rate of participation in camera clubs drops sharply after marriage.

While there is no doubt that the fulfilment of the traditional functions of photography is impressed upon all subjects (independent of their economic and social situation) in a direct proportion to their integration within the family, it is still true that the value conferred on photographic practice depends on the implicit value-system of the group which defines the ways and means appropriate to the execution of those functions. Although these 'norms'[42] do not apply as strictly in urban society as they do in rural communities, the group only apparently abandons ordinary practice for the

whim of the individual. Thus, we can doubtless characterize the most enthusiastic photographers objectively according to their membership of statistical categories; but when they see themselves as enthusiastic photographers, they do not refer to those abstract categories of which they cannot have practical experience, but rather to socially and economically defined groups; dedication and fanaticism may take on quite different subjective and objective meanings, depending on the economic and social situation in and against which they are constituted, because they derive their style and their form from an explicit or implicit reference to that situation.

The different social classes encourage the practice of photography to different degrees. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that the proportion of subjects who do not own a camera and who express the intention to buy one increases regularly as one moves from craftsmen and shopkeepers (one in eight) to manual workers (one in six) to industrialists and senior executives (one in five), to reach its peak with clerical workers and junior executives (one in four). The particularly high frequency among clerical workers of plans to buy cameras is made more revealing by the fact that these categories do not have the highest incomes, and that the intention to buy is the result of socially endorsed aspiration and financial opportunities. In fact, when the intention to take up photography can be expressed more freely, and without explicit reference to financial means and expenses, the differences are again much more intense. The chosen and deliberate refusal of photography reaches a peak among the most senior executives and professionals, as well as among craftsmen and shopkeepers, while, on the other hand, the intention to take photographs is particularly strong among manual workers, junior executives and, especially, clerical workers. Although different meanings must be assigned to intentions whose modalities differ profoundly from one class to another, since they may range from verbal assent to a plan that has actually been carried out, via a lukewarm conformity to the implicit group 'norm', these responses relatively clearly reveal the value that each group confers on photographic practice: only obliging assent reveals, through the reasons that lie behind it, the position of photography within the system of values, because it always to some degree presupposes an obscure awareness of the need for assent.

This 'norm', which is revealed in the modal opinion or practice without, nevertheless, being comparable to a 'fashion', since it owes its permanence to the fact that it is rooted in the values of the group, also governs the attitudes of the youngest subjects, who tend to give photography the same values as their social category does. Because the *ethos* inspires behaviour more than it controls it, subjects are not consciously aware of the rules which it objectively imposes, even when they objectively refer to them in their conformist or deviant behaviour; various different values may be communicated and perpetuated within a group without any need for encouragement or for a call to order. Photography thus provides a privileged opportunity to observe how class values may be communicated in the absence of any formal education. Although photography does not form a part of any institutionalized educational system and does not to any degree contain the promise of immediate and direct social gain, and although, unlike more noble cultural activities, such as playing a musical instrument or going to museums, it is neither controlled nor even encouraged by example, the proportion of children taking photographs varies, in the different socio-professional categories, in a way identical to the proportion of photographers, apart from the fact that photographic practice seems to be more habitual among the children of senior executives than among those of junior executives.[43] This anomaly is easily explained: apart from the fact that, having higher incomes, senior executives can more easily provide their children with expensive equipment as well as the expensive leisure activities, such as travel, with which photography is often associated, they adhere to the very widespread representation according to which photography, far from competing with training in the fine arts, may play the part of an artistic foundation course, since it is, in the final analysis, one of the less frivolous amusements of the age of frivolity.

More generally, higher-income categories include a large proportion of subjects who, although they do not take photographs, express the wish to do so and often explain their abstention with reference to the lack of a camera; and the proportion of those who do not take photographs either because they have no camera or because of the expensiveness of the practice, remains constant independent of income, because higher demands are expressed in the behaviour of the practitioners as well as in the reasons invoked

upon by non-practitioners to justify their abstention; in fact, the refusal to take photographs in the absence of those means which are considered indispensable for the satisfaction of the demands of the practice which is held to be suitable (according to reasoning based on 'there's no point thinking about') attests that the photographic practice of each group is organized with reference to a norm which defines its intensity, quality and meaning. Each group bears within it a representation of the necessary quality of the practice which dictates the choice of camera and the extent of the equipment. If the proportion of those who justify their abstention solely with reference to the lack of a camera is just as high among junior executives as it is among manual workers, and higher than it is among clerical workers whose income is clearly lower, this is because the norms that define the quality of the camera prohibit the members of this class from buying a cheap camera, a box camera for example, which would be economically very accessible to them. Likewise, it is the implicit definition of the quality of the practice that determines the type of equipment which each class holds to be necessary: while among manual workers the modal practice does not require any additional instruments, among senior executives it presupposes a whole range of equipment.

But it is without a doubt the transgressions of the 'norm' that best reveal its reality and power, particularly when they involve economic penalties: the anomalies, revealed by statistics, which establish a relation between the practice or type of equipment and income, are produced by devotees or fanatics who, breaking with their group 'norm', eliminate any relationship between income and the expenditure required for the purchase of a piece of equipment.[44] More generally, if reference to the 'norm' serves to locate one's attitude in relation to the equipment that is generally held to be indispensable or suitable by the practitioners and non-practitioners in each category, it also provides the principle behind the photographic activity of those individuals who have broken with the implicit norm of their group, such as short-lived enthusiasm and lasting fervour, both of which are so widespread among deviants.

Among manual workers, who are generally inclined towards an occasional and non-intensive practice, the group of devotees is particularly small; both in spite of and because of the tendency,

characteristic of their category, towards a fairly low level of practice, more than half of the devotees have been involved in photography for more than ten years. A practice which is not encouraged by the group can only be sustained if it is transformed into dedication or aggravated into fanaticism. In a milieu which is not receptive to photography, intensive practice usually presupposes a choice, and a choice which is definite enough to overcome economic obstacles, hence a lasting choice. The intensity of the practice is not solely attributable to the concern of making sure one uses a piece of equipment which has cost a (relatively) large amount of money. In itself, the decision to buy a camera which costs a large amount presupposes a taste or a passion which are strong enough to last, and generally rules out short-lived whims. It is a different matter when the expensive equipment is a sort of attribute of status. In that case, it can equally express either regular dedication or a passing fancy.

Thus the form and the duration of dedication are a function of the relationship which subjects have to the type of practice that is most general in their group. One might even wonder whether, in the case of photography, implicit reference to the modal practice does not constitute the first principle of dedication; without a tradition communicable in the form of a body of knowledge and rules, without a dogma and a liturgy which would contribute to the definition of a hierarchy of practices ranging from episodic observance to assiduous dedication, it is only by reference to the modal practice that individual practice can be defined and regulated. Unlike the practice of the consecrated arts, where enthusiasm is measurable according to an ideal and may be both objectively and subjectively defined by the observation of a body of principles establishing a hierachy of the modalities of aesthetic consumption, dedication can only exist and be realized by leaving ordinary practice and transgressing the norm of the 'lukewarm'. In this way, in a group as well-disposed to photography as that of junior executives, enthusiasm can only be affirmed by the addition of supplementary rituals, such as the developing and printing of photographs; this explains why this category contains as many photographers who develop their own photographs as the category of manual workers, although the latter are much more inclined to do this by their familiarity with technology and the liking for

manual technical work, and particularly by economic concerns.[45]

The same logic doubtless explains why many people join amateur camera clubs, a step by which one isolates oneself from the mass of practitioners in order to undergo cultural initiation. While most of these clubs recruit most of their members from those social categories most drawn to photography (that is, chiefly the middle classes and in particular their lower fringe), there is no doubt that these devotees find encouragement for their enthusiasm in their social millieu; in fact, they seek above all to show that they would not be satisfied with too ordinary an enthusiasm. But apart from this, these 'aesthetes', whose aesthetic project is limited, particularly among the least cultivated, to the rejection of popular norms of what is photographable, constantly aspire to a new system of norms which can assure them of the reassuring certainties of which they have deprived themselves by breaking with ordinary tradition. This is true to the point where membership of a sect which promises its initiates new certainties and new rules may express the longing for membership of an integrated group which, by inverting it, betrays the rejection of the ordinary rules.[46]

CLASS DISTINCTIONS

Thus the relationship which photographers – and particularly the most demanding and the most ambitious among them – have to photography is never independent of their relationship to their group (or, to put it another way, their degree of integration within that group) and the relationship (expressing their situation within the group) that they have to their group's modal practice, itself a function of the value and position that the group gives to photography with reference, on the one hand, to its system of implicit values and the position of photography within the system of the fine arts (which varies according to the situation of the group in relation to that system), and on the other hand with reference to the value and position that other groups, by the same logic, give to photography.

To provide a thorough explanation of the real state of affairs, we must still bear in mind the extreme accessibility of photographic practice, as much from the technical as from the economic point of

view. In fact, photographic practice is distinguished both from practices which are expensive but require no intellectual training (such as tourism) and practices which are economically accessible but only to those who have had the necessary training (such as going to museums). In other words, photography is the most ordinary thing of all because of the existence of cheap cameras which are easy to use, and because the inclination to use them is not the product of training or education. It follows that the intention to give value to a practice as accessible as this necessarily includes at least a negative reference to ordinary practice: the different social classes can subject photographic practice to different norms, but these at least share the fact that they differ (in different ways) from the norm which governs the most ordinary practice. In this way photography provides a privileged opportunity to observe the logic which may lead some members of the *petite bourgeoisie* to seek originality in a fervent photographic practice freed from its family functions, while it may lead many members of the upper classes to refuse fervent attachment to a practice suspected of vulgarity by the very fact of its popularization.

Peasant society is strongly enough integrated and secure enough in its values to impose the imperative of conformity upon its members and eliminate the temptation for them to differentiate themselves by imitating city-dwellers. Thus neither economic obstacles, such as the expensiveness of the equipment, nor technical obstacles can explain the rarity of photographic practice in the peasant milieu.[47] Peasants only use – and can only use – photography as consumers, and as selective consumers, because the system of values in which they participate and which is rooted in a certain image of the 'true peasant', prohibits them from becoming producers and consequently identifying with city-dwellers.

Photography is seen as a luxury, primarily because the peasant *ethos* imposes a system whereby expenditure devoted to the extension of one's holdings or the modernization of tools takes priority over consumer expenses. But on top of this, innovation is always suspect in the eyes of the group, not only in itself, but, as a denial of tradition. Peasants are always prompted to see this as the expression of a desire for distinction, for singularity, a desire to impress or humiliate others. It is an attack on the principle which dominates all of social existence and has nothing to do with

egalitarianism. In fact, irony, mockery and gossip have the func-
tion of calling to order – to conformity and uniformity – the
presumptuous person or braggart, who, through his innovative
behaviour, appears to be lecturing or challenging the entire com-
munity. Whether this is his intention or not, he cannot escape
suspicion. Calling upon past experience and using everyone else as
witnesses, peasants will seek to deny that the innovation intro-
duced responds to any real need. In consequence, it must be mere
ostentation.

   But collective disapproval is qualified according to the nature of
the innovation and the area in which it intervenes. When it occurs
in the sphere of farming techniques and methods of cultivation, it
never provokes a total and blunt condemnation because, in spite of
everything, the innovator is given the benefit of the doubt; his
behaviour could, all appearances to the contrary, be inspired by the
most praiseworthy intentions, namely the desire to increase the
value of holdings; he contradicts peasant tradition, but he is still a
peasant. Moreover, moral condemnation may look like the sceptic-
ism of the technical man and the man of experience; the enterprise
will be sanctioned by the things themselves. In any case, because he
lays himself open to failure and ridicule, the innovator demands
respect.

   On the other hand, the community takes as an act of defiance
and repudiation any innovation which it suspects of being devoid
of any rational or reasonable justification. This is because be-
haviour that is ostentatious or perceived as such, like a gift which
excludes any counter-gift, places the group in an inferior situation
and can only be perceived as an affront, an insult to everyone's
self-esteem. In that case, repression occurs immediately: 'He
thinks he's something!', 'Who does he think he is?'

   Disapproval does not depend solely on the nature of the
innovation, but also on the social condition and status of the
innovator. Associated with city life, photographic practice is seen
as a manifestation of the desire to play at being a city-dweller.
Consequently, it looks like the renunciation of the parvenu. This
can be seen in the attitude of the countryfolk towards 'holiday-
makers', that is, people born in the village who return to spend
their holidays there. The least of their acts is commented upon, the
slightest infringement of customs is perceived as an act of preten-
sion and defiance:

'In general, people took a dim view of anyone who liked photographs. It has to be said that it looked as if they had come to annoy the peasants while they were right in the middle of their work. I mean, just being on holiday ...'

'M. F. used to take photographs. She kept wanting to take one of me. Such a fuss! [...] I sent her packing, because I was afraid people would make fun of me. I was embarrassed because my mother told me: "She's putting on airs, she comes down from Paris to put on airs." Being in Paris with some pathetic little job, starving to death and wandering about with a camera! [...] It was all out of proportion. She wanted to take family photographs but my mother wouldn't have anything to do with it. "It's all just airs. She comes down with that camera to get herself noticed so that everyone will know she's living in Paris", etc. [...] You mustn't stand out, you mustn't get yourself noticed.'

The practice of photography never attracts such keen disapproval as it does when, as a sign of status, it seems to express the effort to escape one's social rank: 'A housemaid, taking photographs!' The desire to distinguish oneself is then contrasted with reminders of common origins: 'We know where he comes from.' 'His father wore clogs!' The practice of photography, a frivolous luxury, would be ridiculous in a peasant; devoting oneself to this expensive city-dweller's caprice would be rather like going for walks with one's wife on summer evenings, like the retired people in the *bourg*.

'A peasant taking photographs, don't make me laugh! Leave that to the city people! Henri (my son) takes them, but he has lily-white hands. When you're dog-tired (*hart de mau*), you could take a fine picture of that!' 'I've never seen a peasant who took photographs on a regular basis. If one of them, exceptionally, dared to use a camera at weddings, he'd be laughed at. Come on, they're better at driving their carts! Some women of very good family take photographs before the wedding, but it's quite rare and it gets noticed. They put on airs, these pretentious women [*cagassères*]! They do it all wrong!' 'The peasants I know have better things to do than fiddling around with those contraptions. Especially the small peasants like us. They say it's expensive. You'd have to be well off, which isn't true of the people I know.' 'There aren't many people in the countryside with cameras around their necks. [...] There are still plenty with bagpipes around their necks, and thank heavens for that. [...] It's all

just a fashion, all that. If you're not keen on it you ignore it.' 'We're
embarrassed to take photographs. A bit ashamed, a bit clumsy. It's
all right for holiday-makers. They're city things. A peasant walking
around with a camera around his neck would be a failed gentleman
(*u moussu manquat*). You have to have fine hands to work those
machines. And the money? It's expensive. It works out expensive,
that gear!'

In short, taking photographs would mean playing at being a
city-dweller or, as they say, 'playing at being a gentleman' (
moussureyà). In fact, the peasant (*lou paysá*) is generally contrasted
with the 'monsieur' (*lou moussú*). The good peasant of former
times was as different from the 'peasantified' peasant (*empaysan-
nit*), the '*hucou*', the man of the woods, as from the 'gentrified'
peasant (*en-moussurit*). It was easy to overlook the fact that the
former was devoted to his work to the point of sacrificing to it
certain duties to society; the collective judgement was, on the other
hand, ruthless towards anyone who played at 'being the gentleman
(*faire le monsieur*)' to the detriment of his duties as a peasant.
'Gentrifying oneself' amounts to a dual infringement of the
fundamental imperatives of peasant morality. It means, in effect,
setting oneself apart by denying oneself as a member of the group
and as a peasant. It may be accepted that true city-dwellers, who
are entirely outside the group, take photographs, because that is
part of the stereotyped image that the peasants have of them. The
camera is one of the attributes of the 'holiday-maker' (*lou bacan-
ciè*). Not without a touch of irony, the peasants indulge the
holiday-maker's caprices, and pose, in front of their teams, think-
ing: 'They've got time to waste and money to spend'. They are are
much less tolerant towards the people who were born in the village
and who will return to the city; and even less towards the
inhabitants of the *bourg*, whom they suspect of taking photo-
graphs in order to look like city-dwellers. In other words, it is not
the practice of photography in itself that is refused: as a city-
dweller's caprice, it is perfectly suitable for 'outsiders', but only for
them; in this area, the innovative behaviour of the city-dweller
cannot provoke imitation, because toleration is only the desire to
ignore it or the refusal to identify with it. What is found absolutely
reprehensible is the use of photography as a means of distancing

oneself from the group and from one's social condition as a peasant.[48]

The real issue is clearly that of unquestioned and unconditional attachment to the system of the arbitrary rules that define the behaviour of the true peasant. It emerges quite clearly in this conversation between two inhabitants of the *bourg* of Lesquire, which should be followed according to the constant alternations between the pure and simple invocation of the social norm, which is both arbitrary and uncompromising, and reliance on explanation through secondary causes or reasons, contradicted by real behaviour (see figure 1).[49]

Peasant values are clearly expressed just as much in concessions and exceptions as in imperatives and interdictions. If photography is accepted when its function is the maintenance of social relations, and if it is tolerated during adolescence, the age of frivolity, these are transactions and compromises with the rule that are inspired by the very values from which the rule derives.

Adolescents have always had a statutory right to licit, that is, to symbolic and oneiric frivolity. In earlier times, young people were the prime beneficiaries of the controlled licence of traditional festivals such as the carnival; even today they are responsible for frivolous activities, the organization and preparation of festivities or the practice of sport, while serious business, such as the management of communal interests, is left to the adults. In this, photography is like dancing, and, more broadly, like all the technologies involved in courting and festivities. Permissible among young people, these practices are abandoned from the moment of marriage, which marks a massive break in their existence. Overnight, dances and outings come to an end, and along with them the photography that was sometimes associated with them.

> 'They take pictures when they fall in love (*cuan s'amourouseyen*), in their dancing days. Of course, when you're young you swap photographs; after you're twenty-five your ideas change, you have other things to worry about.' 'When a couple get married in the country, they have other things to worry about. B.E., the biggest of the peasants, took some pictures when he was engaged, and at the start of the marriage. Now they're living from hand to mouth, more

Figure 1

	III	IV
GENERAL NORMS contained *implicitly* in the particular norm		
STATEMENT of the **PARTICULAR NORM**	'You know, you don't throw money away.'	'It's seen as an extra.'
	Imperative of economy 'You don't throw . . .': 'One must not throw . . .'	Photography is a luxury

	V
EVOCATION of **REAL CONDUCT** as an objection to oneself	'We're having the kid's photograph taken in Pau.'
	One has the children photographed: Transaction with the particular norm, which is still maintained

	I	II
RATIONALIZATIONS explanation of behaviour by secondary causes	'Taking photographs? No, no, they don't know how.'	'There's no question of it.'
	Technical incapacity: 'No, no, they don't know how.'	Economic incapacity

VIII a

(Implicit) statement by example, of the fundamental social norm: not to single oneself out. Imperative of conformity.

VIII

'The idea of taking pictures yourself is unthinkable. It's almost like wearing a waistcoat in the old days'

IX

'Anyone with a camera over his shoulder is thrown out of the peasant world.'

The photographic act contradicts peasant values. It is sanctioned by ridicule.

X

'He's playing at being a gentleman.'

The photographic act is associated with the city-dweller, the 'gentleman' as frivolous behaviour (cf. previous theme: photography is a luxury.

VI

'No-one knows what it costs. My daughter-in-law is going to sell two dozen eggs; she isn't saying a word.'

The old people, the guardians of the norm, do not know the cost of photography.

VII

'Certainly, the old people see the pictures afterwards. But because they don't know how much it costs, because they aren't paying for it, even if they know it's expensive, it's compensated by the joy of seeing the children on paper.'

The joy of seeing the photograph compensates for the expense (which they know, but which they are supposed not to know).

X a	X b	XI a	XIII a
Opposition between the complete peasant and the gentleman, the centre of peasant values	Becoming a city-dweller means denying the peasant condition and excluding. In short, it means betraying the basic social norm. (Cf. VIII: not singling oneself out.)	Implicit reference to the system of peasant values: opposition between the accumulation of consumer goods and investment in land or usable material	Implicit reference to the system of peasant degrees of usefulness and uselessness

XIII
'But photography's different all the same.'

XII
'However, they all have radios. At the beginning, it was the same with radios.'

XI
'And then there are other things that need to be bought in the country apart from photographs and cameras.'

Explanation by economy

XV *b*

Another aspect of the same norm: the concern for useless things (of which photography is one – cf. IV – as a luxury) is incumbent on the wife. Photography contradicts virile values

XVI

'Yes! It's always the wife! Not the men, oh, no! They wouldn't go and get their pictures taken! Oh, my God! Peasants, well, they wouldn't think of it. They go to the market for the cattle fair with their animals, and they don't take the kids. The kids are the wife's affair ...'

Photography, when it is a matter of children, is one of the wife's duties. Photography of children is the least useless photography.

XVII

'Yes, there aren't many people who take photographs. BA. (craftsman from the *bourg*) tooks some. He gave it up.'

Rarity of photographic practice among men.

XV *a*

Norm of the division of labour between the sexes (linked to the system of values): the women are concerned with looking after the children

XV

'It's the wife who looks after them. She takes the kids to the photographer.'

Photographs of the children are the wife's affair (a statement which includes a reference to three sorts of different order)

XIV

'We do it for the kids.'

Reaffirmation of the exception with regard to children

XX*a*

Arbitrariness of custom

XX
'But it isn't among our customs. The blokes prefer hunting pigeons or hares. They don't take photographs.'

Statement of the norm as such

XIX
'Of course, you need time as well. You could find time . . .'

Elimination of the explanation by lack of time.
(Hunting . . .)

XVIII
'And yet . . . He had the means.'

Elimination of the explanation by economy

than us small peasants. That kind of whim goes quickly enough when you have a household to worry about, just like wanting to dance. And it's normal in my opinion. And anyway, as far as pictures are concerned, there are people who do it for a living and that' what they're there for, at least for big occasions.'

Thus, as an object or a practice, photography is always reinterpreted in terms of the logic of the system of implicit values which dominates rural society. The photographic image, an innovation which is used without being fully adopted, is accepted insofar as it can be accorded a social function. While it is tolerated among adolescents as an inconsequential and short-lived game, conceded to women, or rather to mothers, because it is then serving socially approved ends and consequently loses something of its frivolity, photographic practice on the other hand contradicts the virile values which make up the image of the 'true peasant', and attacks the imperative of conformity, an unwritten law which dominates the whole of social life; while the desire to distinguish oneself by imitating the city-dweller is mercilessly condemned and repressed as an act of defiance and the declaration of a rupture, it is also true that this besieged society is defending its very existence by prohibiting any capitulation to the seduction of urban values.

The free play of differentiation which the village community always seeks to thwart or control finds free expression in urban society. According to the logic of affirmation by opposition, the working classes of large cities play the part of a fixed term of reference, or, rather, of a foil, which is understandable since photography, unlike noble cultural practices, seems to be universally accessible. The practice of the working classes, which remains directly and entirely subject to traditional functions, owes most of its characteristics, in particular its relative homogeneity, to the influence of economic obstacles which affect clerical and manual workers to almost the same extent.[50] Those who take photographs, a relatively small number, are for the most part seasonal conformists, so that the few devotees look like deviants. Limited in its intensity, this practice is also prohibited any exceptional ambitions: it is dedicated to serving the most traditional functions. It either ignores the most prestigious materials, in particular colour

film, or uses them only sparingly, not only because of the price but
because the colour photograph generally accompanies a broaden-
ing of the scope of what is photographable by means of touristic
travel. As long as the picture is only required to capture a
recognizable souvenir (and, thanks in part to custom, nothing else
is desired from a family photograph), black-and-white photogra-
phy is satisfactory.[51] Restricted or inadequate equipment con-
demns the photographer to a rudimentary practice while also
expressing resignation to such a practice.[52]

Invested with value because it satisfies the demands of realism
and legibility, and because it fulfils aesthetic expectations better
than painting (better, at any rate, than modern painting), photogra-
phy is often the object of an immediate attachment indifferent to
the rules of propriety which govern the aesthetic consumption of
the privileged classes, doubtless because no-one poses the question
of whether it belongs to the universe of art, because it is not
examined as a work of art, and because there is even less concern to
locate it in relation to the fine arts whose legitimacy is acknow-
ledged without altering the judgement about photography. This is
clearly seen in the uncertainties and contradictions in the opinions
formulated by manual workers in response to various judgements
on photography which were suggested to them: while many of
them refused to see photography as an art,[53] seeing it instead as an
activity devoid of any difficulties or mystery, requiring no special
skill,[54] just as many subscribe to the judgements which place
photography above painting.[55]

These contradictions are more apparent than real, and are
fundamentally based on the fact that the problematic situation of
the interviewer and the survey situation itself throw up a question
which is artificial and imaginary for the working classes, that of the
aesthetic value of photography.[56] Thus, for example, from the fact
that most manual workers envisage using photography to decorate
their apartments, in the same way as painting, one may equally
well conclude either that they see photography as an art, or that the
question of art does not arise for them with regard to photography,
or even that certain types of photography obey the canons of an
'aesthetic' which, by definition, is not seen as such.

'I don't like cubism,' says one manual worker, 'or abstract photo-

graphy or painting. I don't understand it [...]. I like landscape photographs, particularly when they're in colour: you can see the period, the season, the place where it was taken. A colour photograph is more alive than a black and white one. It's almost Cinemascope in colours. It goes down nicely.'

As the alimentary metaphor attests, aesthetic contemplation is a first-order pleasure obtained from a work that recreates a reality which is delectable in itself, and which can be perceived immediately, without study or effort. This is why colour photography fulfils aesthetic expectations, as can be seen from the custom of decorating living rooms with colour postcards or reproductions of realist paintings.

> Here, for example, is how one manual worker envisages the decoration of his apartment: 'Wedding photograph, 30 cm × 20 cm, on a panel fairly high up. Then my children, underneath it. Over the fireplace, photographs of the country cottage, little 6 × 8's or postcard size. On my chest-of-drawers, little frames with photographs arranged so that you can see them. A photograph on either side of a bouquet of flowers. A panel of pretty postcards (landscapes, boats, the Place de France in Casablanca, the wilds in Algeria, Spain, Greece) [...]. I have reproductions of paintings, they're framed. I've got "The Angelus".'

Absent from the act of looking at photographs, properly aesthetic consideration is entirely alien to photographic practice. Not that the rejection of daring is solely attributable to economic causes; the very idea of 'experiment' is ignored to the point where it can only be imagined in the form of whimsies or the bizarre achievements of technical virtuosity: 'I've seen where some people have taken beautiful photographs, trick photographs, like the photograph where the Eiffel Tower is between the guy's legs. You don't often think of taking pictures like that' (worker, 40, practising photographer). Contrary to what these words suggest, (affected, once again, by the survey situation), it is not the unusual or original 'ideas' that are missing, but the idea of having ideas, because that would presuppose the photographic act being interesting to the photographer in and for itself. In fact, photographic practice is always strictly subordinated to the functions to

which it owes its existence and its persistence, the rarity and the cost of the equipment helping to reinforce this subordination.

Although photography still satisfies their 'aesthetic' expectations, and in particular their demand for realism, clerical workers no longer enjoy the same simple, direct and, perhaps, comfortable relationship to it. Reference to the fine arts, imposed or recalled by the survey situation, always insinuates itself into their judgements on photography, most frequently ending up by disturbing their self-assurance. The contradictions produced by indifference in the face of an unfamiliar problem are replaced by the ambiguities and uncertainties aroused by the question of the norms of legitimate cultural practice. Value is conferred upon photography by the attribution of rarity,[57] but it is only seen as a minor art.[58] Clerical workers refuse to use photography in decoration as they would painting, but although they refuse to frame traditional pictures or put them on show, they are happy to frame photographs taken from albums or magazines. And the same ambiguities are expressed in the practice itself; the very process that leads them to recognize photography as an art also encourages them to see it as a minor art, to such an extent that it can only ever give rise to an apologetic or, which amounts to the same thing, an aggressive aesthetic project.

> 'A photograph's like a painting, when all's said and done [. . .]. It reflects a little of the character of the person who takes the picture, and it's a style, really.' Nevertheless, indifference, incompetence or clumsiness are confessed as they never would be in relation to the legitimate arts: 'As for me, I've no style when it comes to taking photographs, absolutely none [. . .]. I've never been attracted by photography.' (Clerical worker, 25, photographer)

There are fewer practitioners among clerical workers, but they are more dedicated and better equipped than among manual workers,[59] and in order to justify their abstention clerical workers more often refer to the expense involved in photographic practice, and the frequency of photographic practice increases less quickly among clerical workers with higher income than it does among manual workers, because clerical workers implicitly refer to a more

demanding definition of the practice, preferring not to take it up at all rather than be restricted to an intermittent practice using limited means.[60] A concern about the legitimacy of photography explains why abstention is less frequently presented as being definitive in this social category than it is elsewhere[61] and is justified by a whole series of arguments, automatic or unthinking refusals being relatively rare. Likewise, aesthetic choices are confessed less naively, and a taste for back-lighting, for example, may be legitimated with reference to a painter or a painting.[62]

Thus the equivocal relationship between this group and scholarly culture is revealed in its attitude to photography, which may be, varying according to different individuals, or even within the same individual, the subject of a refusal inspired by the sense of the low rank of this expensive practice, or of an attachment that is uncertain of its legitimacy.[63] Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the meaning which photographers give to their activity: subjects who, at least at the level of discourse, seem to be satisfied with the functions traditionally conferred on the practice, are relatively rare.[64] The confusion concealed behind this casual attitude is also expressed in the fact that, anxious not to limit themselves to the ritual occasions for the practice, and unable to take a positive decision without the rules and models which could provide them with an artistic culture that they recognize but which is alien to them, clerical workers are often condemned to a sort of empty aesthetic intention, defined in a strictly negative way by the rejection of the canons of the 'aesthetic' expressed in working-class photography.[65] The only option that therefore remains for assiduous practitioners, their ardour dampened by a sense of illegitimacy and uncertain of its norms, is to change to a practice for which they can only claim aesthetic value by immediately including it within the contingent particularity of personal preferences so as to avoid comparison with the legitimate arts.[66]

> You take a picture of the place you like without worrying about whether it's going to rain or whether it's going to be nice [. . .]. To give you an example, I might take a picture of a chair that says something to me because it has a leg missing, and yet it's nothing at all. It won't say . . . anything at all. It'll show what I wanted to take, so I'll like it at any rate. If I show my photographs to somebody,

they'll say: 'What's interesting about that?' (Clerical worker, 23, bachelor)

The ambiguous situation of this group – which nothing, or very little, separates from manual workers, even in the economic sphere and especially in the cultural sphere, beyond the desire for separation – is expressed in the ambiguities of its attitude towards photography: an apologetic attachment to the 'popular aesthetic' and the values it expresses is irreconcilable with an empty and negative goodwill which is almost always limited to the refusal of popular 'naiveté', except in the prudent relativism expressed in the saying: 'There's no accounting for taste'.

The same attitude is betrayed in everyday aesthetic choices. Consecrated by its opposition to everything old or traditional, the taste for 'the modern' provides the principle of selection which enables one to overcome uncertainties. In photography, this attitude can be expressed by the adoption of the most prestigious media, colour photography and home movies, which seem to occur more frequently among clerical workers than among manual workers. The tendency towards aesthetic daring recurs in home decoration. Breaking with the norms of propriety imposed by discretion and conformity to the rules of conformism, clerical workers in country villages or the suburbs of small towns often introduce the daring of nameplates painted in flashy colours which, as if to pre-empt irony by challenging it, put on display a feeling such as: 'It suits me' or 'I like it'.

The same ambiguities and the same contradictions reappear, but in a more marked and more manifest way, among junior executives. Strongly inclined to grant photography artistic status, and anxious, at least in their statements, to liberate it from its function of compiling family souvenirs, they often reject the popular definition of photography which is based on a distorted image of the technical object as a machine to be applied to all the traditional uses, challenge the realist aesthetic that is commonly associated with this image, and generally agree that photography requires the same amount of work as painting.[67] Does this mean that the ambitions which they inscribe in their practice conform to their declarations of intention? While junior executives associate photography more closely with leisure and particularly with tourism,

and while they take slightly fewer family photographs, the effort to break with the popular aesthetic is much less marked in their practice than in their aesthetic judgements or declarations of intention.[68]

Discourse is the privileged site for the affirmation of differences, because the desire for self-distinction is more easily accomplished by affirmations of principle than by a real practice, because the logic of cultural borrowing means that the external forms and the superficial appearance of behaviour are easier to communicate than its deeper underlying attitudes. In other words, not having acquired the generalized skill of adopting with regard to any object the aesthetic attitude which would correspond to their intentions, even the most dedicated practitioners are often condemned to contradict their stated requirements in their actions. Thus they express the originality of their artistic intention by photographing different objects rather than photographing the same objects in a different way, refusing ritual functions rather than introducing new meanings into them.[69]

While it does not on its own predispose subjects to adopt the aesthetic attitude towards all possible objects or to organize their practice positively in terms of an artistic vision of the world, the intention of self-distinction at least provides a rudimentary body of negative precepts which can be actualized in behaviour. Thus, among devotees the refusal of the traditional functions of photography is most often associated with the refusal of the most expensive and the most naively ostentatious technologies, such as colour photography and home movies.[70] But, in the absence of a body of precepts and principles which would allow the affirmation of virtuosity, the vituperation of the barbarian is the only way to testify to aesthetic goodwill.

> I rule out family souvenir photographs which don't recreate the atmosphere and don't form a part of any aesthetic, which are rigid. I won't have anything to do with traditional photographs with individuals posed alone or in a group at the foot of the Parthenon. I hate human groups in shorts plastered all over the ruins of the Parthenon. Last summer, I waited for twenty minutes for a moment when I could photograph a group of columns and avoid getting any tourists in my field of vision. (Teacher, 30)

Because the most noble and rare practices are closed to them,
subordinate and junior executives can find a means of affirming
their difference in photography, the poor man's aestheticism, as
they can in all second-order cultural practices, whether they be the
reading of popularizing magazines such as *Historia* or *Science et
Vie*, or erudition about the cinema.[71] Because its determinations
are purely negative, the apophatic aesthetic of the devotees is still
determined, in the choice of its objects or in the manner in which it
captures them, by the 'popular aesthetic' which it denies.

The originality of the attitude of junior executives is more easily
assessed once we know that the practice of photography is less
common among senior executives, although they have a higher
income and their life-style provides them with a large number and
variety of opportunities for taking photographs. While a higher
proportion of senior executives own cameras, this does not in any
way indicate a more frequent or, more particularly, a more fervent
practice;[72] possession of equipment, even a considerable range of
equipment, seems to be an effect of income rather than a sign of
dedication; precisely because of their accessibility, the most expen-
sive cameras and accessories are not necessarily associated with an
enthusiastic practice.[73] The proportion of devotees is lower among
senior executives, as increased income and leisure time, along with
the extension and diversification of their touristic opportunities,
only has the effect of increasing the number of seasonal practi-
tioners.

Everything combines to indicate that photography provokes
ambiguous attitudes; a higher proportion of senior executives may
accord artistic value to photography, and in their discourse they
may more methodically refuse to limit photography to its tradi-
tional functions, the compilation of family souvenirs and illustra-
tions of major events; but in fact their photographic activity
indicates that they do not give photography the value which they
accord it in their statements: their practice, which is generally not
intense, is to a large extent devoted to traditional functions. As one
leaves the order of abstract judgements concerning photography in
general, which are reducible to universal aesthetic principles, to
move towards propositions which, excluding any appeal to know-
ledge, invite respondents, however indirectly, to refer to concrete
experience, that is, to the practice itself, senior executives often

abandon the aesthetic ambitions which they had expressed in the abstract, while junior executives more frequently manifest their aspiration to a virtuoso practice.[74] Must we conclude from this that the judgements in which they grant photography artistic status express only a polite acquiescence which would be contradicted by the condemnation revealed in their actual behaviour?[75] In fact, ambiguities of attitude and contradictions between statements and behaviour seem to be basically restricted to the position of photography in the fine arts. On the one hand, like any practice that brings artistic values into play, photography is an opportunity to actualize the aesthetic attitude, a permanent and general disposition; but on the other hand, precisely because photographic practice, even in its most accomplished form (and *a fortiori* in the form that it is given by every amateur), comes very low in the hierarchy of artistic practices, subjects feel less imperatively obliged to exercise their aesthetic sense.[76] This explains why an open attachment to the most traditional forms of photography, sometimes flaunting itself as if out of spite or defiance,[77] is encountered at least as often as artistic experiment, to the same extent between different subjects and within a single subject.

In short, while photography may be seen as an art, it is only ever a minor art. Hence, in this area, barbarism and incompetence are of no more consequence than virtuosity; reserved attachment or aloof refusal are two similar ways of expressing the limited value conferred upon photography, 'a cheap form of expression reserved for talentless people' (senior executive, 42). Easily capable of fluent commentaries on the aesthetic of photographs, the most cultivated people are eager to dissociate themselves from enthusiastic attachment or naive infatuation because they see photography as being merely an opportunity to put into practice the aesthetic tastes and knowledge acquired through the practice of other arts, in short, a sort of exercise in application:

> I bring aesthetic concepts to photography. My judgment constantly intervenes to prevent me from taking simple tourist photographs. (Lawyer, 30)

All discourse about photography takes on the artificial air of an exercise in rhetoric, because feelings or tastes are being engaged

without being applied to their proper objects. Since it has not been properly socially consecrated, photography can only be granted value at the whim of each viewer, who, because he likes it and not because it is imposed by cultural propriety, may decide to promote it, as if in a game and in the space of a moment, to the status of an art object.

Thus, dedication to photography can only be maintained insofar as consecrated activities, like going to concerts or the theatre, museums or art cinemas, do not compete with it or devalue it. It follows that senior executives in Paris, who, as we know, play a greater part in cultural activities, practise photography much less often than senior executives in Lille. Similarly, while a higher proportion of the children of senior executives take photographs during childhood, the proportion who then go on to engage in an intense and fervent practice is smaller than it is among the children of clerical workers and junior executives.[78] Thus, out of a population of literature students, the proportion of photographers is always greater among the children of clerical workers and junior executives than among the children of senior executives, the reverse of what we observe with regard to the most consecrated cultural behaviour (apart from membership of film societies).[79] Similar competitive phenomena may be noted in other areas: if the proportion of television-owners is barely higher among senior executives (35.8 per cent), despite the difference in income, than among junior executives (31.5 per cent), if ownership of a record-player and ownership of a television are almost systematically mutually exclusive, and if senior executives are keen to point out that they use television only selectively,[80] this is doubtless because consecrated practices devalue less prestigious practices, and perhaps also because the members of the upper class seek to distance themselves from distractions which are tainted with vulgarity by their very diffusion.[81]

Is it enough to invoke the cultural and artistic status of photography in order to explain the ambiguity of the attitudes that it provokes? The complete understanding of behaviour necessarily presupposes the study of ideologies which, at the cost of false systematizations and systematic distortions, formulate the practical logic of behaviour and thus constitute one of the most significant mediations between the objective and the subjective. A comparison of the practice with statements about the purposes explicitly

assigned to it enables us to grasp both the experience of the legitimate rule and the logic by which it is translated into reasons or justifications for action, that is, into general judgements about photographic practice and the value of photography, as well as into the experiential accounts that subjects may give of their own practice or the practice of others. Called upon to formulate their opinions on two types of judgement of very diverse modalities, on the one hand general and abstract statements about the aesthetic value of photography which, like dissertation topics, suggest no reference to the reality of the practice or to the intentions which it actualizes in real terms, but invite the demonstration of an aesthetic disposition or a disposition towards aesthetics,[82] and, on the other hand, propositions about ordinary practice which, in stereotypes borrowed from everyday talk, formulate ordinary experience by caricaturing it,[83] the members of the upper classes are shown to be both more predisposed than others to grant photography aesthetic value as such, and less inclined to accord it value as an activity.

Contradictions at the level of discourse are more than an ideological epiphenomenon; in fact, while they combine the conditions of a practice aimed at properly aesthetic ends, namely economic means, artistic culture and the occasions for a practice with a greater variety of objects (chiefly because of tourism), senior executives still grant the traditional uses of photography an importance comparable to that conferred upon it by the working classes. Since it is the object of numerous stereotypes, there is no doubt that the practice of photography more than any other (with the possible exception of tourism) implies a reference to the social image of the practice; and in their own practice all individual photographers refer objectively to the image that they have of the practice of others, and the image that others have of their practice. Is it not because they perceive it as a vulgar practice that members of the upper class refuse to see it as an object worthy of enthusiasm or passion? 'My husband doesn't take photographs. He knows how to behave', says the wife of a senior executive, who explains his abstention as follows:

> I don't want to take photographs, because everyone takes too many. People have stopped looking and only think about taking pictures. It's perverse . . .

To see this as mere rationalization, obscuring reality rather than unmasking it, would be to fall into methodological error under the pretext of a method. In fact there is a whole spontaneous sociology made up of satirical anecdotes and critical half-thoughts on the absurdities of certain photographic devotees.[84] These conversational commonplaces are communicated and reinforced by cartoons in magazines, the jokes of *chansonniers* and certain best-selling books which take pleasure in describing and analyzing the customs and habits of contemporary people. Could we understand the success enjoyed by the works of Pierre Daninos if we could not see that they confirm their readers in the certainty that their way of life is the best one, in contrast to the falsely refined pretensions of the aristocratic classes, and the vulgarity of the middle classes as expressed in a passion for photography or television?[85] Daninos's irony, which reprimands the naive enthusiasm of photographic fanatics and gibes at their ridiculous paraphernalia, borrows its themes from that common discourse that reassures by challenging the assurances of others:

> 'I feel a very sincere admiration for all those people who march around Spain and Italy laden with bags, cases, telemeters, extra lenses, pose-meters, thermocolorimeters ("for taking the temperature of colour") and who, never losing the smallest clasp from their bags, or the tiniest roll of film, advance with great strides into the Leican era'.[86] Through the absurdities of people's behaviour, one can see the attitude to culture which is particularly expressed by a certain type of tourism: 'What I particularly fear about the "small-formats" is knowing that terrible state of slavery to which they condemn an infinite number of people who would really seem to deserve a better fate. When they arrive on holiday at a beauty spot or in front of a recommended *campanile*, travellers immediately think of their cameras [. . .]. Rather than contemplating the landscape with their frontal eyes, these people rush to have it admired by this third eye extracted from the abdomen'.[87]

Deprived of that refined art of contemplation without words or gestures that certain landscapes or certain monuments demand, unrepentant photographers exhaust themselves in the laborious quest for pictures. Finally forgetting to look at what they are photographing,[88] they travel without seeing and never know what

their cameras are reproducing for them.[89] Through its satire of passionate photographers and photographic mania, the Daninos *doxa* indirectly expresses the rules of touristic consumption and the photographic practice acknowledged by the upper class.

To conform to the norms of one's class is therefore above all to refuse a vulgar practice and to deny the norms of the classes from which one wishes to distinguish oneself, thus depriving their behaviour of any meaning. These norms only become apparent in the form of negative precepts which are continually recalled and revived by the fear of ridicule. But they can be negative without being reduced to the simple negation of the norms of other classes. The refusal of vulgar practice expresses the demand for differentiation in terms of the logic of the class *ethos*. Small-format fanatics substitute the laborious asceticism of acquisition (expressed in the verb 'to do' as in 'to do Italy') for the art of abandoning oneself to contemplation, and the anxious accumulation of souvenirs of traces and demonstrations of 'doing', for the detachment of the aestheticism achieved by direct emotion. This kind of behaviour is opposed to consecrated behaviour as effort is opposed to a natural gift, or acquired knowledge to natural distinction. The representation that the upper classes have of touristic and photographic practice clearly obeys the same charismatic principle as their representation of the cultivated disposition and their disposition towards culture.

The pursuit of differences in status (which can be seen at all levels of the social hierarchy) only serves to intensify class differences. In the absence of any authorities which could objectively define a hierarchy of types of practice and provide an unquestionable scale of the most conformist types of conduct, refinement and distinction can only be affirmed with regard to photography when they are opposed to vulgarity, and members of the upper classes can only make negative definitions, either by defining a good photograph as a 'work that does not look like the work of anyone else' or, in their aesthetic choices, follow the rule of 'not taking simple tourist photographs'. In short, even in the most favourable case, photographic practice is hardly ever directed towards properly and strictly aesthetic ends. Apart from the absence of a language and established norms, which makes the task particularly difficult, the aesthetic intention, which is only ever one

of the forms of the pursuit of differentiation or 'distinction', is only definitively manifested in refusals, and is fulfilled just as thoroughly in a practice that is anxious to break with common laxity as it is in pure and simple abstention.

Photography thus owes its immense diffusion to its social function, but also to its own characteristics and, *inter alia*, the limits of its diffusion. If, more than any other cultural practice, the practice of photography appears to respond to a natural need, this is doubtless due to the extent of its popularization, but also because, unlike going to museums or concerts, it does not have the support of an authority with the explicit role of teaching or encouraging it, and because it does not bring gratifications any more than abstention brings disapproval.[90]
This also explains why educational differences (and hence class differences) are not apparent here with the same force and the same clarity as they are in legitimate practices. However, practices which are just as popular, such as listening to the radio or going to the cinema, permit the actualization of very marked differences in attitude. Thus, for example, the choice of channel and broadcasts listened to is as strongly linked to social status via the level of education attained as going to museums, and the attitude of listeners is more selective and attentive the higher their cultural level.[91] Why does photography not effectively encourage the actualization of differences such as these? Cultural ambition is probably expressed more easily in the case of simple consumption, such as listening to the radio, than in practice. And in fact, as we have seen, cultural goodwill can be asserted in statements (particularly among the middle classes) without finally being embodied in actual behaviour. But we should be careful not to exaggerate this opposition: in fact, radio consumption may be no less active than photographic practice when it makes explicit choices rather than relying on automatism, and when it presupposes an attentive attitude. Morover, the simple intention of self-distinction is not enough, any more than it is in the case of photography, to provide positive definitions for the practice; the cultural situation of the middle classes is as uncomfortable as it can be because leaving the path of error does not set one back on the right path, and the undiscerning refusal of the popular practice and 'aesthetic' may

lead one to adopt anything that seems at first glance to be distinguished from it.

The realization of the artistic intention is particularly difficult in photography, probably because, fundamentally, it is only with difficulty that photographic practice can escape the functions to which it owes its existence.[92] It would be naive to believe that photography has made aesthetic experience available to everyone: in fact, the same principle leads to photography's being both a popular practice and very seldom an opportunity for aesthetic experience. Almost always assuming social functions, conscious or unconscious, and intimately involved in family life, its values and rhythms, its reasons and its *raison d'être* are borrowed from elsewhere. The traditional norms of the practice are imposed with greater force the more strongly the practice itself is imposed. So, all else being equal, subjects who do not take photographs much more often have an aesthetic attitude towards photography. The same principle means that the aesthetic intentions most firmly expressed are only rarely applied, and that an aesthetic attitude is more readily adopted towards the photographs of others. The photographer who shows his works is acting improperly, while the painter is not, because, not being a universal subject, the photographing subject cannot address the universality of viewers. If my feelings towards the child that I am photographing or towards the photograph of the child are not the same as those which I have towards the portrait of a child (either because it is my child or because it is my photograph), I cannot demand that anyone else look at this photograph as they would look at a portrait of a child, and I cannot forbid them, if they happen to look at it in this way, to find it devoid of interest.

But while it may be natural that among the majority of amateurs one only very rarely comes across a practice freed from traditional functions, since they only take photographs in order to serve functions that are so strongly demanded of them that they cannot consider taking exclusively beautiful pictures, how are we to explain the fact that aesthetic demands are more often expressed by abstention than by a more demanding practice? In fact, photography can only provoke an institutional piety, sustained by its social function; the desire to progress to a more intense practice aimed at properly and exclusively artistic ends is most likely to become lost

in an apophatic aesthetic or, at most, to be accomplished (by negating itself) in the total renunciation of any practice, because the different social classes can only distinguish themselves in this regard by distancing themselves, in different ways, from ordinary practice.

The actualization of the aesthetic intention is particularly difficult here, not only because the neutralization of the functions commonly served by the practice is more difficult here than elsewhere, but also because the representation that one has of photography and its artistic value inclines one to express the concern with self-distinction, either through abstention or through a disillusioned attachment rather than through aesthetic experiment; given its inferior rank in the hierarchy of the arts, photography appears to merit neither effort nor sacrifice, and attempts to apply artistic intentions to photography appear excessive because the models and norms required for this are missing, and also because the opportunities for personal expression or creation seem to lie in the choice of object rather than in the treatment of that object, which could have, one imagines, only a limited number of variations. In fact, these three reasons are closely linked: it is clear that the effort of aesthetic experiment would seem to be more called-for if photography were a consecrated art and, if this were so, the application of the aesthetic intention would be infinitely more simple, since the individual experiment would come armed with a whole body of principles and precepts defining an autonomous photographic aesthetic, and would be able to find, in consecrated models, the aesthetic certainties capable of orienting a practice assured of its artistic value.[93]

If this is so, we can see how the individuals who take it upon themselves to treat photography as an artistic activity can only be a minority of 'deviants', defined socially by their greater independence from the conditions that determine the practice of the majority not only in its existence but also in its objects, its occasions and its 'aesthetic', and by a particular relationship to scholarly culture linked to their position in the social structure. The very reasons that turn the privileged classes away from photography may in fact incline certain members of the middle classes to seek in it a substitute within their reach for the consecrated practices which remain inaccessible to them.

2
The Social Definition of Photography

Pierre Bourdieu

Ars simia naturae

If it is legitimate to wonder (as we shall below) how and why photography is essentially predisposed to serve the social functions which have been very generally conferred upon it, it remains the case that the social uses of photography, presented as a systematic (i.e. coherent and comprehensible) selection from objectively possible uses, define the social meaning of photography at the same time as they are defined by it.

AN ART WHICH IMITATES ART

Thus it is commonly agreed that photography can be seen as the model of veracity and objectivity: 'Any work of art reflects the personality of its creator,' says the *Encyclopédie française*. 'The photographic plate does not interpret. It records. Its precision and fidelity cannot be questioned.' It is all too easy to show that this social representation is based on the false evidence of prejudices; in fact, photography captures an aspect of reality which is only ever the result of an arbitrary selection, and, consequently, of a transcription; among all the qualities of the object, the only ones retained are the visual qualities which appear for a moment and from one sole viewpoint; these are transcribed in black and white, generally reduced in scale and always projected on to a plane. In other words, photography is a conventional system which express-es space in terms of the laws of perspective (or rather of one

perspective) and volumes and colours in terms of variations between black and white. Photography is considered to be a perfectly realistic and objective recording of the visible world because (from its origin) it has been assigned *social uses* that are held to be 'realistic' and 'objective'.[1] And if it has immediately presented itself with all the appearances of a 'symbolic communication without syntax',[2] in short a 'natural language', this is especially so because the selection which it makes from the visible world is logically perfectly in keeping with the representation of the world which has dominated Europe since the Quattrocento.

As Pierre Francastel observes:

> Photography – the means of mechanically recording an image in conditions more or less analogous to those of vision – has made visible not the real character of traditional vision but, on the contrary, its systematic character: photographs are taken, even today, as a function of the classical artistic vision, at least insofar as this is permitted by the conditions of lens-manufacture and the use of only one lens. The camera provides the vision of the Cyclops, not of man. We also know that we systematically eliminate all those recordings which do not coincide with a vision that is not real but rather more-or-less artistic. For example, we do not take a picture of a building from close up, because the recording will not correspond to the traditional laws of orthometry. Try focusing a wide angle lens on the centre of the transept crossing of a gothic cathedral and look at the extraordinary document which you will obtain. You will see that what is called 'normal vision' is simply a selective vision, and that the world is infinitely richer in appearances than one would have thought.[3]

And Proust gives a very beautiful illustration of photography's powers to disconcert, of which the common practice is deprived:

> ... the most recent applications of photography – which huddle at the foot of a cathedral all the houses that so often, from close to, appeared to us to reach almost to the height of the towers, which drill and deploy like a regiment, in file, in extended order, in serried masses, the same monuments, bring together the two columns on the Piazzetta which a moment ago were so far apart, thrust away the adjoining dome of the Salute and in a pale and toneless background manage to include a whole immense horizon within the span of a

bridge, in the embrasure of a window, among the leaves of a tree that stands in the foreground and is more vigorous in tone, or frame a single church successively in the arcades of all the others – I can think of nothing that can to so great a degree as a kiss evoke out of what we believed to be a thing with one definite aspect the hundred other things with which it may equally well be, since each is related to a no less legitimate perspective.[4]

Elsewhere, Proust describes those 'wonderful photographs of scenery and towns', which can provide an

unusual image of a familiar object, an image different from those that we are accustomed to see, unusual and yet true to nature, and for that reason doubly striking because it surprises us, takes us out of our cocoon of habit, and at the same time brings us back to ourselves by recalling to us an earlier impression. For instance, one of these 'magnificent' photographs will illustrate a lay of perspective, will show us some cathedral which we are accustomed to see in the middle of a town, taken instead from a selected vantage point from which it will appear to be thirty times the height of the houses and to be thrusting out a spur from the bank of the river, from which it is actually at some distance.[5]

Is there not as great a distance between these 'magnificent' photographs and ordinary photographs as there is between perspective as a science of the real and perspective as a 'hallucinatory technique'?[6] The ordinary photographer takes the world as he or she sees it, i.e. according to the logic of a vision of the world which borrows its categories and its canons from the arts of the past.[7] Pictures which, making use of real technical possibilities, break even slightly away from the academicism of vision and ordinary photography, are received with surprise. Because that which is visible is only ever that which is legible, subjects in all social milieux always resort to certain systems of reading of which the most common is the system of rules for the reproduction of the real that govern popular photography; faced with the most unusual pictures, the forms deciphered by lovers of photography are those which belong to a photographic tradition, such as the study of material; on the other hand, the omission of the norms of the canonical aesthetic, such as the absence of a foreground or a

noticeable background meaningfully linked to the form (for example palm trees to express exoticism), frustrates understanding and appreciation when it does not provoke pure and simple refusal.

But the whole paradox of popular photography is revealed in its temporal dimension. An instant incision into the visible world, photography provides the means of dissolving the solid and compact reality of everyday perception into an infinity of fleeting profiles like dream images, in order to capture absolutely unique moments of the reciprocal situation of things, to grasp, as Walter Benjamin has shown, aspects, imperceptible because they are instantaneous, of the perceived world, to arrest human gestures in the absurdity of a present made up of 'pillars of salt'.

In fact, far from seeing its specific vocation as the capturing of critical moments in which the reassuring world is knocked off balance, ordinary practice seems determined, contrary to all expectations, to strip photography of its power to disconcert; popular photography eliminates accident or any appearance that dissolves the real by temporalizing it.[8] Only ever capturing moments which have been torn from the temporal flow by virtue of their solemnity, and only capturing people who are fixed, immobile, in the immutability of the plane, it loses its power of corrosion; when an action takes shape, it always embodies an essential movement, 'immobile' and outside of time, the balance or grace of a gesture as eternal as the social meaning it embodies; married couples standing arm in arm express, through a different gesture, the same meaning as the joined hands of *Cato and Porcia* in the Vatican. In the language of every aesthetic, frontality means eternity, in opposition to depth, through which temporality is reintroduced, and the plane expresses being or essence, in short, the timeless.[9] Thus, by adopting the arrangement and posture of the figures in Byzantine mosaics, farmers posing for wedding photographs escape that power of photography which derealizes things by temporalizing them.

Rather than using all the possibilities of photography to invert the conventional order of the visible, which, because it dominates the entire pictorial tradition and consequently an entire perception of the world, has paradoxically ended up by impressing itself with all the appearances of naturalness, ordinary practice subordinates photographic choice to the categories and canons of the traditional

vision of the world; it is thus not surprising that photography can appear to be the recording of the world most true to this vision of the world, i.e. the most objective recording.[10] In other words, because the social use of photography makes a selection, from the field of the possible uses of photography, structured according to the categories that organize the ordinary vision of the world, the photographic image can be seen as the precise and objective reproduction of reality. If it is true that 'nature imitates art', it is natural that the imitation of art should appear to be the most natural imitation of nature.

But, at a deeper level, only in the name of a naive realism can one see as realistic a representation of the real which owes its objective appearance not to its agreement with the very reality of things (since this is only ever conveyed through socially conditioned forms of perception) but rather to conformity with rules which define its syntax within its social use, to the social definition of the objective vision of the world; in conferring upon photography a guarantee of realism, society is merely confirming itself in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective.[11]

'BARBAROUS TASTE'

It is doubtless due as much to the social image of the technical object which produces it as to its social use that photography is ordinarily seen as the most perfectly faithful reproduction of the real. In fact 'the mechanical eye' accomplishes the popular representation of objectivity and aesthetic perfection as defined by the criteria of resemblance and legibility because this image is the product of an object; idolaters and detractors of the apparatus most often agree, as M. Gilbert Simondon observes, that the degree of sophistication of an apparatus is proportional to its level of automatism.[12] However, and for the same reason, the photographic act in every way contradicts the popular representation of artistic creation as effort and toil. Can an art without an artist still be an art? It goes without saying that photography does not realize the artistic ideal of the working classes as an ideal of imitation to the same extent as realist painting, the production of reproduction.

Many subjects sense and express the difference which in their eyes separates the photographic act from the act of painting; by the very fact that there barely seems to be any photograph that is untakeable, or even one which does not already seem to exist in a virtual state – since all it takes is the simple pressing of a button to liberate the impersonal aptitude by which the camera is defined – the hope is that the photograph will be justified by the object photographed, by the choice made in taking the photograph, or in its eventual use, which rules out the idea of taking a photograph simply in order to take a photograph as either useless, perverse or *bourgeois*: 'It's a waste of film' or 'You have to have film to waste'; 'Some people, I swear, don't know what to do with their time'; 'You'd have to have time on your hands to take things like that'; 'That's *bourgeois* photography'. By contrast, the still life, even if it is unusual, is more readily granted to the painter, because the simple and successful imitation of reality presupposes a difficult art, and thus testifies to mastery.

This gives rise to certain of the contradictions in the attitude towards mechanical reproduction which, by abolishing effort, risks depriving the work of the value which one seeks to confer on it because it satisfies the criteria of the complete work of art. A contradiction that is all the more stark since the work of art, particularly when it is not consecrated, always provokes the fear of being duped; the soundest guarantee against this is the artist's sincerity, a sincerity which is measured according to its effort and the sacrifices it makes. The ambiguous situation of photography within the system of the fine arts could lead, among other things, to this contradiction between the value of the work, which realizes the aesthetic ideal that is still most widespread, and the value of the act that produces it.

But this contradiction, which only becomes apparent in questions (often induced and artificial) about the artistic value of photography, does no more to alter the attachment of the working classes to the photographic image than does the concern, by which aesthetes are haunted, of knowing whether, because of its subordination to a machine, photographic art allows that transfiguration of the object (even if it is ugly or meaningless) by which we are accustomed to recognizing artistic creation. Is the technology that produces the most faithful reproduction not the one most likely to

fulfil the expectations of popular naturalism, for which the beautiful picture is only the picture of a beautiful thing, or, but more rarely, a beautiful picture of a beautiful thing? 'Now that's good, it's almost symmetrical. And she's a beautiful woman. A beautiful woman always looks good in a photo.' Thus the Parisian worker echoes the plain-speaking of Hippias the Sophist: 'I shall tell him what beauty is and I'm not likely to be refuted by him! The fact is, Socrates, to be frank, a beautiful woman, that's what beauty is.'

Without a doubt, photography (and colour photography especially) entirely fulfils the aesthetic expectations of the working classes. But must we go so far as to say that popular photographs are the realization of an aesthetic intention or ideal, or, in order to explain it completely, is it enough to mention the constraints and obstacles of technology? It is true that most occasional photographers have access only to instruments which offer a very limited range of possibilities; it is also true that the basic principles of popular technique, communicated by salesmen or other amateurs, particularly consist of prohibitions (not moving, not holding the camera at an angle, not photographing into the light or in bad lighting conditions) which are generally confirmed by experience because of the poor quality of the cameras used and the lack of technical competence. But is it not abundantly clear here that these prohibitions encompass an aesthetic which must be recognized and admitted so that transgression of its imperatives appears as a failure? A different aesthetic might intentionally aim for the blurred or unfocused pictures which the popular aesthetic rejects as clumsy or unsuccessful. If, in the case of popular photography (as was for a long time true for the primitive arts), explanation with reference to technical constraints may be satisfactory at first glance, this is primarily true because the field circumscribed by technical imperatives, that is, the sphere of what may technically be photographed, exceeds the range circumscribed by social imperatives, i.e. the sphere of what must be photographed; in this case the technical and aesthetic quality of a picture defined primarily by its social function can only be a *sine qua non*, without ever arousing interest on its own account.

So everything takes place as if photography were the expression of an implicit aesthetic employing a very strict economy of means, and objectified in a certain type of picture without ever (by its very

essence) being perceived as such. In every way the opposite of a pure aesthetic, the popular 'aesthetic' expressed in photographs and in the judgements passed on photographs follows on logically from the social functions conferred upon photography, and from the fact that it is always given a social function.

In its traditional form, this aesthetic strictly identifies aesthetic with social norms, or, perhaps, strictly speaking, recognizes only the norms of propriety and suitability, which in no way excludes the experience and expression of beauty; the making of a gesture or an object in a way that conforms most strictly to the most traditional norms provides the possibility of more or less subtle, more or less successful justifications which permit praise or admiration. Because it presupposes the uniqueness and coherence of a system of norms, such an aesthetic is never better fulfilled than it is in the village community. Thus, for example, the meaning of the pose adopted for the photograph can only be understood with relation to the symbolic system in which it has its place, and which, for the peasant, defines the behaviour and manners suitable for his relations with other people. Photographs ordinarily show people face on, in the centre of the picture, standing up, at a respectful distance, motionless and in a dignified attitude. In fact, to strike a pose is to offer oneself to be captured in a posture which is not and which does not seek to be 'natural'. The same intention is demonstrated in the concern to correct one's posture, to put on one's best clothes, the refusal to be surprised in an ordinary attitude, at everyday work. Striking a pose means respecting oneself and demanding respect.

When one attempts to persuade subjects to keep a 'natural' posture, they become embarrassed, because they do not think themselves worthy of being photographed or, as they say, 'presentable', and the best thing one can hope for is simulated naturalness, the theatrical attitude.[13] The behaviour of the photographer taking pictures from life seems absurd or suspicious. Hence these questions: 'Where are these photographs going to end up? Paris? Aren't they for the cinema at least? Because you only see things like that in the cinema! They'll show anything!' In the eyes of the peasant, the city-dweller is the one who succumbs to a sort of perceptual 'anything goes-ism'; and this attitude appears incomprehensible to him because he refers to an implicit philoso-

phy of photography according to which only certain objects, on certain occasions, are worthy of being photographed.[14]

And we must avoid bluntly opposing the taste of city-dwellers for 'the natural' to the taste of peasants for the hieratic; this would in effect mean ignoring the fact that concessions to an aesthetic freed from social conventions are always more apparent than real. We might imagine, for example, that holidays favour the production of pictures marked by that casual attitude which they encourage and which is expressive of them. In fact, the 'stage' is most often set up beforehand and if, like painters, many amateur photographers force their models into composed and laborious poses and postures, it is because, here as elsewhere, the 'natural' is a cultural ideal which must be created before it can be captured. Even the surprise picture, the accomplishment of the aesthetic of the natural, obeys cultural models: the ideal is still to be 'naturally' as one wants to appear or as one must appear.

In most group photographs, subjects are shown pressed against one another (always in the centre of the picture), often with their arms around one another. People's eyes converge towards the camera so that the whole picture points to its own absent centre. In photographs of couples, the subjects stand with their arms around each other's waists, in a completely conventional pose. The norms of behaviour which must be maintained before the camera sometimes become apparent, in a positive or negative form. The person who, in a group assembled for a solemn occasion such as a wedding, who strikes an unsuitable pose or neglects to look at the camera and pose, provokes disapproval. As they say, 'he isn't there'. The convergence of looks and the arrangement of individuals objectively testifies to the cohesion of the group.

The expression of this sentiment can be seen in the case of photographs showing families, which have been submitted to different subjects for their judgment: all (except one) prefer a pose which is natural but dignified, and photographs in which people stand upright, motionless and dignified are preferred to photographs 'taken from life'. 'In this one, they're proud; they're out walking . . .' 'In this one they aren't looking straight ahead, they're distracted. The child is leaning on his father.' Another draws the distinction between a pose which is 'stiff (*guindée*)', which would

provoke laughter, and one which is 'dignified (*digne*)', and meets
with approval. On the other hand, if the picture in which the
members of the family seem distracted by one another provokes
disapproval, it is because the weak cohesion of the family group is
read into it, when it is the group as such that the photograph ought
to capture. As one cannot demand that these photographs of
strangers should supply what one customarily seeks in them,
namely the evocation of familiar faces, memorable places or mo-
ments, one demands that they should at least be the representation
of a social role, a requirement which would not be asked of one's
own photographs since they fulfil it automatically. 'Well, it's a
family. I don't like the mum, she looks miles away. She's a bit more
of a mum in this one. All the same, though! She's a funny mother,
with her dangling arms ... This picture's horrible. Ah! this one's
nice, the children are being polite, mum's giving father her arm. It's
a family souvenir.' When we deal with a personal photograph, we
know that the mother is a mother and the father a father; in
anonymous pictures, the function of the different characters must
be clearly symbolized. Mother or father or fiancés, the photograph
must show them as such.

It is certainly possible that the spontaneous desire for frontality is
linked to the most deep-rooted cultural values. Honour demands
that one pose for the photograph as one would stand before a man
whom one respects and from whom one expects respect, face on,
one's forehead held high and one's head straight.[15] In this society
which exalts the sense of honour, dignity and respectability, in this
closed world where one feels at all times inescapably under the
gaze of others, it is important to give others the most honourable,
the most dignified image of oneself: the affected and rigid pose
which tends towards the posture of standing at attention seems to
be the expression of this unconscious intention. The sitter addres-
ses to the viewer an act of reverence, of courtesy, according to
conventional rules, and demands that the viewer obey the same
conventions and the same norms. He stands face on and demands
to be looked at face on and from a distance, this need for reciprocal
deference being the essence of frontality.

The portrait accomplishes the objectification of the self-image.
Consequently, it is only an extreme form of one's relationship to
others. Thus it is understandable that the taking of photographs

always provokes a certain unease, especially among peasants, who are most often condemned to internalize the pejorative image that the members of other groups have of them, and who therefore have a poor relationship to their own bodies. Embarrassed by their bodies, they are unnatural and clumsy in all the occasions which demand that one relax and present one's body as a spectacle, as in dancing and posing before the camera. And it is always as if, by means of obeying the principle of frontality and adopting the most conventional posture, one were seeking as far as possible to control the objectification of one's own image. Axial composition, in accordance with the principle of frontality, provides an impression that is as clearly legible as possible, as if one were seeking to avoid any misunderstanding, even if this were to mean sacrificing 'naturalness'. Looking without being seen, without being seen looking and without being looked at, or candidly, so to speak, and, to an even greater extent, taking photographs in this way, amounts to the theft of the images of other people. Looking at the person who is looking (or who is taking the photograph), correcting one's posture, one presents oneself to be looked at as one seeks to be looked at; one presents one's own image. In short, faced with a look which captures and immobilizes appearances, adopting the most ceremonial bearing means reducing the risk of clumsiness and *gaucherie* and giving others an image of oneself that is affected and pre-defined. Like respect for etiquette, frontality is a means of effecting one's own objectification: offering a regulated image of oneself is a way of imposing the rules of one's own perception.

The conventionality of attitudes towards photography appears to refer to the style of social relations favoured by a society which is both stratified and static and in which family and 'home' are more real than particular individuals, who are primarily defined by their family connections;[16] in which the social rules of behaviour and the moral code are more apparent than the feelings, desires or thoughts of individual subjects; in which social exchanges, strictly regulated by consecrated conventions, are carried out under the constant fear of the judgement of others, under the watchful eye of opinion, ready to condemn in the name of norms which are unquestionable and unquestioned, and always dominated by the need to give the best image of oneself, the image most in keeping with the ideal of dignity and honour.[17] How, under these condi-

tions, could the representation of society be anything other than the representation of a *represented* society?

If, among the working classes of urban society, social norms still govern the photographic aesthetic, they impress themselves in a less total and certainly in a less absolute way. In fact, once one begins to analyze the judgements of manual and clerical workers, excluded from a scholarly culture of which they are aware and whose sub-products they consume, it becomes apparent that the 'aesthetic' which finds expression in their individual judgements derives its specific characteristics from the fact that it is seen, at least in a confused way, as one aesthetic among others. Even when they identify a beautiful photograph with the photograph of a thing that is beautiful aesthetically, or, even better, morally, they know that there are other definitions of perfection; more precisely, they are never entirely unaware of the aesthetic intentions of the social groups most distant from their own, or the disdainful image which those groups have of their practice.

Unlike the aesthetic of the simple man, unproblematic attachment to one coherent system of norms, the 'popular aesthetic' is defined and manifested (at least partially) in opposition to scholarly aesthetics, even if it is never triumphantly asserted. Reference to legitimate culture is never really excluded, even among manual workers. Unable either to ignore the existence of a scholarly aesthetic which challenges their own aesthetic, or to abandon their socially conditioned inclinations, not to speak of asserting and legitimating them, they escape this contradiction by establishing, sometimes quite explicitly, a dual scale of judgements; they must experience their relationship to aesthetic norms in terms of the logic of dissociation, since they must separate the obligatory practice from the obligatory judgement on that practice: thus, even when they aspire to other photographic genres, at least in intention, they would never dream of condemning the family photograph. This dual set of norms is never so manifest as when it forces a single subject to choose, on his own, between what he does and what he would like to do: 'It's beautiful, but I'd never think of taking it', 'Yes, it's very beautiful, but you'd have to like that sort of thing; it's not for me', formulas which, by their insistent recurrence, demonstrate the tension that affects the 'popular aesthetic' as a 'dominated aesthetic'.
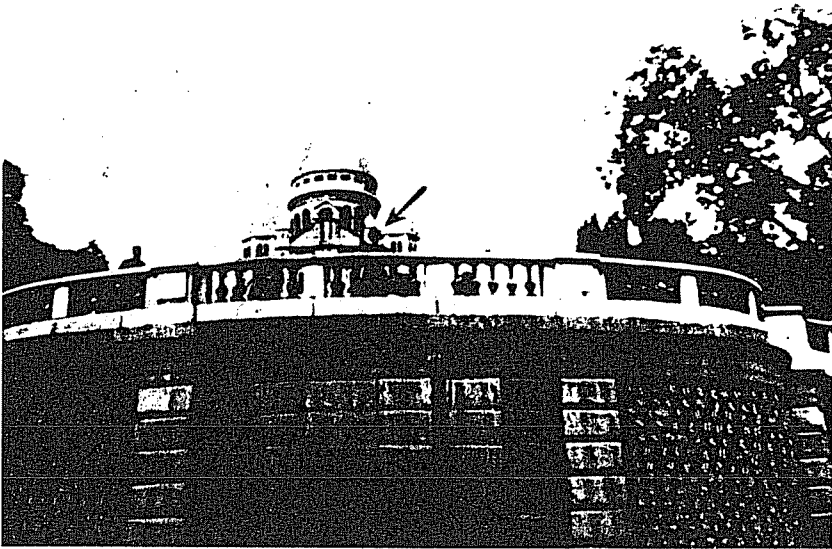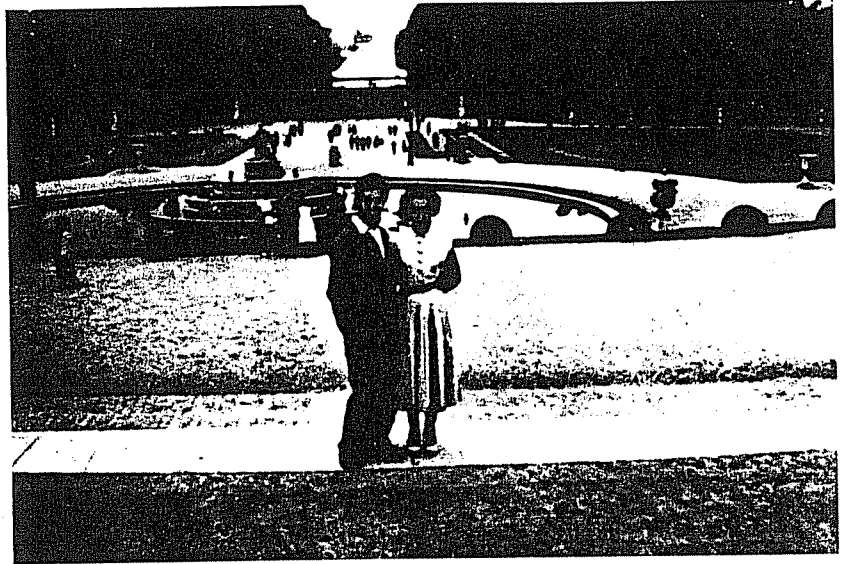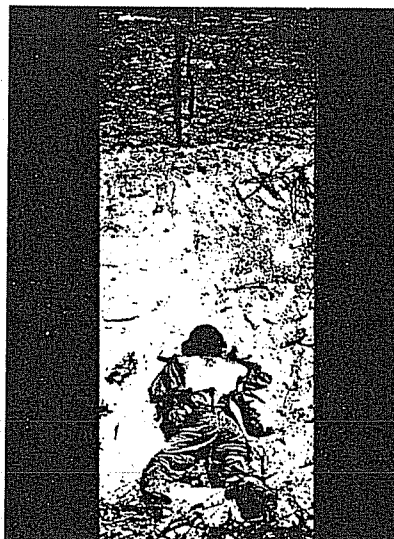
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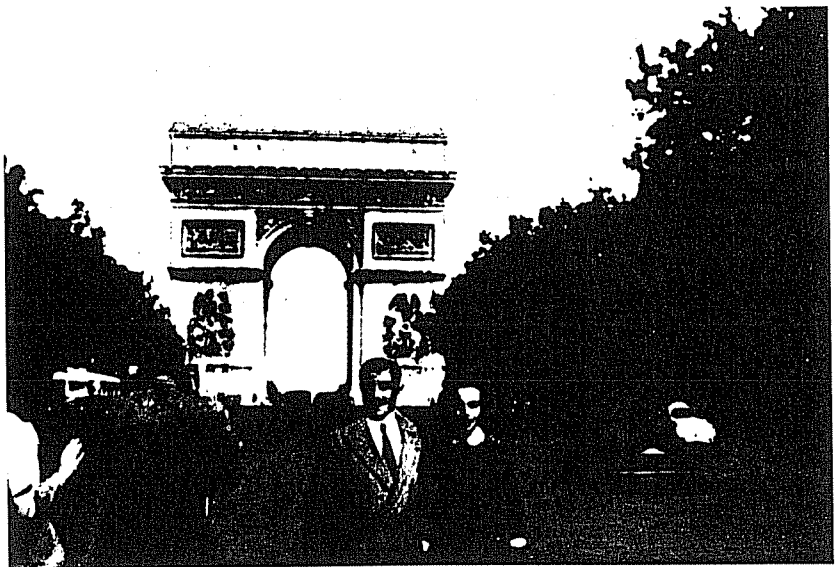
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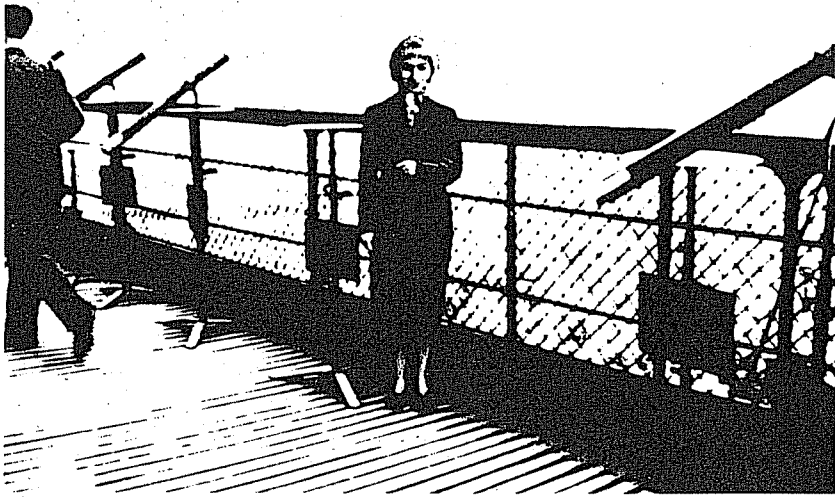
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7 'Those hands mean work'

8 'Who would you show it to?'

9 'A pregnant woman's normal, but it's amazing in a photograph'

10 'A photograph for people who like that kind of thing'

Insofar as it does not encompass the principle of its own systemization, must we see the system of working-class judgements of taste as an aesthetic? It is no accident that, when one sets about reconstructing its logic, the 'popular aesthetic' appears to be the negative opposite of the Kantian aesthetic, and that the popular *ethos* implicitly answers each proposition of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' with a thesis contradicting it. But manual and clerical workers may take a view completely opposite to that of the philosopher without consequently abandoning the aesthetic qualification of their judgements. One does not photograph simply anything, or, perhaps, not everything is suitable to be photographed; this is the thesis which, implicitly present in all the judgements, provides proof that aesthetic opinions are not simply arbitrary but, like the practice, obey cultural models. 'It's not something you'd take a picture of', 'That's not a photograph' – these judgements, peremptory and clear-cut, often accompanied by scandalized gestures, negatively express something immediately self-evident. The fact that the contravention of a rule may be apparent without the rule being perceived or, even less, formulated as such, does not rule out the possibility that the key to aesthetic judgement, applied to a particular case, lies in a system of implicit principles and rules which it betrays more than it states.

If sociology – which treats value-systems as so many facts – objectively places practices and works which, like popular photography, might be seen by aesthetes as an anti-aesthetic, under the general heading of aesthetics, it would be a sort of inverse ethnocentricity to see this as the expression of a 'popular aesthetic': in fact, the experiences corresponding to these practices have nothing to do with the pursuit of beauty in and for itself, even though they may be described as analogous, within a different order, to those experiences produced in artists and aesthetes by the contemplation or production of works of art. The judgement of taste analysed by Kant presupposes a different lived experience which, like the popular experience of the beautiful, is socially conditioned or which, at any rate, is never independent of social conditions, those which make possible 'people of taste'.

Kant, in order to apprehend in its pure state the irreducible specificity of aesthetic judgement, strove to distinguish 'that which pleases' from 'that which gratifies' and, more generally, to separate

'disinterestedness', the sole guarantee of the specifically aesthetic quality of contemplation, from the 'interest of the senses' which defines 'the agreeable', and from 'the interest of Reason' which defines 'the Good'. By contrast, working-class people, who expect every image explicitly to fulfil a *function*, if only that of a sign, refer, often explicitly, to norms of morality or agreeableness in all their judgements. Whether praising or blaming, their appreciation refers to a system of norms whose principle is always ethical. Thus, for example, the photograph of a dead soldier may provoke judgements which are only apparently contradictory, i.e. in their individual applications (plate 10).

> 'That's not beautiful. I don't like that. On the other hand, I'm a conscientious objector and I'd never take a picture of that.' 'I'm against this photograph from a moral point of view. A subject with no interest for anyone except career soldiers.' 'Well, you see, I did my military service in Algeria, I don't like that, I'm opposed to that.' 'It's a war photograph. I'm a pacifist. I hate that.' 'I don't like pictures like that. There's enough war already.' 'It's a photograph for people who like that kind of thing, and as far as the military and me are concerned, well . . .'
>   'It could be used to show the horror and uselessness of war.' 'We could use a lot of documents like that to show the horror of war.' 'It's a document, you could use that for propaganda.' (Dead soldier)

These opposing judgements really refer to an aesthetic which makes the signifier completely subordinate to the signified, and which can be better realised in photography than in the other arts. An art of illustration and imagery, photography can be reduced to the project of showing what the photographer chose to show, and with which it becomes, one might say, morally complicit, since it approves of and bears witness to what it shows. And subjects are only reproducing the objective intention of photography when they confer upon what it approves or disapproves a function of approval or disapproval.

This 'functional' aesthetic is necessarily pluralistic and conditional. The judgement of taste necessarily implies a restrictive reference to conditions defined in generic terms, that is in terms of the type of function or the type of intention revealed in the finished photograph.

'It's not bad journalism; take while it's happening, it'll have been risky enough, but if it was taken afterwards it's of no interest.' 'Brilliant, if it isn't a montage!' 'Fine, if it's to be shown to kids in school.'

The insistence with which subjects recall the limits and conditions of validity of their judgements shows that they are explicitly and determinedly challenging the idea that a photograph may please 'universally'. Discerning, for each photograph, its possible uses and audiences, or more precisely its possible use for each audience, subordinating appreciation to several conditional hypotheses, is a way of understanding, or, rather, of appropriating an impersonal and anonymous photograph, deprived of the obvious function which gives commonplace photography its meaning and value.

The distinguishing principle between that which is photographable and that which is not cannot become independent of the individual imagination: it remains the case that the ordinary photograph, a private product for private use, has no meaning, value or charm except for a finite group of subjects, mainly those who took it and those who are its objects. If certain public exhibitions of photographs, and particularly colour photographs, are felt to be improper, this is because they are claiming for private objects the privilege of the art object, the right to universal attachment. 'A photograph of a pregnant woman is fine as far as I'm concerned, but no-one else is going to like it' (pregnant woman in profile), said one manual worker, finding, through the issue of the rules of propriety, the issue of what is 'showable', that is, for what may claim the right to universal admiration. And it is remarkable that colour photography, which, even more than black-and-white photography, is designed to be shown sometimes obliges photographers to adopt the point of view of others with regard to their own photographs, introducing them through the perspective of human respect to a practice that is more universal in its intentions. Because they are dimly aware that the very fact of showing photographs includes the demand for attachment, photographers may sometimes feel obliged to show only those photographs that could 'interest everyone'.[18]

But the ordinary use of photography almost completely excludes any concern for the universality of the picture that is

produced or looked at, and which derives its interest not from
what it is in and for itself, but from what it is for one person or for
a group of people. This is true to the point where anonymous
photographs and personal photographs are subject to two com-
pletely different perceptions; invited to give their opinion on the
photographs of an unfamiliar family, city-dwellers and even
peasants may adopt a purely formal and technical point of view.
Having adopted this unfamiliar perspective, they are quite capable
of distinguishing natural poses from poses which are false and
therefore open to criticism, disagreeable from cheerful disposi-
tions, successes from failures. But it is only because the situation
created by the survey is artificial that they isolate, at least partially,
the formal or aesthetic aspect of the image. While J. B. and his wife
agreed in according their preference to the picture of J. B.'s wife in
front of the Eiffel Tower, the picture on which a roadsign is seen
coming out of the mother's head, is frequently criticized. This is
proof that the two images are perceived in quite different ways: in
one case, the symbolic tie uniting the person with the object is
immediately understood and approved, and therefore necessary,
while in the other it is not. The inhabitual character of the attitude
adopted when confronted with these photographs becomes appa-
rent in the remark with which one respondent concluded his series
of criticisms: 'If these were mine, I'd put them all in my album.'

Photographs are certainly taken just as much – if not more – in
order to be shown as in order to be looked at. But reference to
viewers may be present in the intention of taking a photograph as
well as in the appreciation of the photographs of others, without
the photograph's losing its personal relationship to the photo-
grapher; those viewers are defined by the personal relationship that
links them to the photographer or the viewer of the photograph.

Reference to possible viewers is often formulated in judgments on
artistic photographs: 'If they were mates of yours, you'd have to
take it, it would make everyone who knows them laugh.' (grimaces)
'If it's a souvenir because they went to England, I can understand
them taking it to show their friends.' (shadows of men in fog). The
confusion provoked by photographs which are not 'showable'
reveals the same preoccupation even more clearly: 'Who would you
show that to?' (pregnant woman in profile). 'It's not a picture you'd

show your friends' (reclining nude) 'It's fair enough but you couldn't show it to anyone outside the family' (woman breast-feeding). And another subject makes explicit the principle behind these judgments: 'She's the mum, isn't she! [. . .] I think that's nice, very nice, that's something you can show to people.' (Woman breast-feeding)

Because the picture is always judged with reference to the function that it fulfils for the person who looks at it or the function which that viewer thinks it could fulfil for another person, aesthetic judgement most often takes the form of a hypothetical judgement relying explicitly on the recognition of 'genres', whose 'perfection' and range of application are conceptually defined. Remembering that the paradox of aesthetic judgement lies, for Kant, in the fact that it includes claims to universality without, however, returning to the concept for its formulation, we see that the most common attitude towards the photographs shown is precisely the opposite of this: almost three-quarters of the phrases of appraisal begin with the word 'if', and the judgement provoked by the first reading of the image is almost always generic: 'It's maternal', 'It's human', 'It's a bit risqué'. The effort of recognition is accomplished by classification within a genre or – which amounts to the same thing – the attribution of social use, as the different genres are defined primarily with reference to their use and their users: 'It's a publicity photo', 'It's a pure document', 'It's a laboratory photo', 'It's a competition photo', 'It's a professional photo', 'It's an educational photo', etc. Photographs of nudes are almost always rejected in phrases which reduce them to the stereotype of their social function: 'All right in Pigalle', 'It's the kind of photograph people sell from under their coats'.

   Artistic photography escapes this type of categorization only insofar as it is understood as the instrument of a kind of social behaviour: 'That's a competition photo', declare many of the subjects. The confusion provoked by certain pictures reveals a doubt concerning the genre to which they belong, and their attribution to an indifferent genre exempts the viewer from taking a stance on their aesthetic quality.[19] It is from its participation within a genre that each individual photograph derives its purpose and its *raison d'être*. It follows that the hierarchy of preferences

expresses the more or less straightforward particpation of the photographs shown in more or less consecrated genres prohibit entirely unfavourable judgements: 'It goes on,' says one worker shown a photograph of a starlet. Certain subjects, as if disarmed by the high frequency of pin-up photographs as a genre, almost apologize for not appreciating them, and refrain from condemning them completely.

It is not surprising that the 'barbarous taste' which bases appreciation on informative, tangible or moral interest most strongly rejects images of the meaningless (*insignificant*), or, which amounts to the same thing in terms of this logic, the meaningless-ness of the image.[20] The desire to take a beautiful photograph is insufficient reason for taking a photograph:

> 'It's not a photograph that I would take, personally: it means seeing the photograph as an end in itself and not as a means of expression' (breaking waves). 'That reminds you of nothing, evokes nothing, gives you nothing' (leaf). 'It should give you ideas, that one there doesn't make you think of anything at all.' 'I don't like cubism, unrealistic paintings, Picasso and everything ... I wonder what made them take this photograph.' (pebbles)

The subordination of the image to a function is such a strong requirement that it would amount to taking some of the ritual character away from the photographic act and depriving the photographed object of its value if one were to introduce the pure intention of aesthetic experiment, capable by definition of being applied to any object, after the manner of theoretical science which, as a particular way of seeing the real, remains, according to Descartes, essentially identical independent of the nature of the object treated, as the sun remains the same independent of the variety of objects that it illuminates. The taking and contemplation of the family photograph presuppose the suspension of all aesthetic judgement, because the sacred character of the object and the sacralizing relationship between the photographer and the picture are enough unconditionally to justify the existence of a picture which only really seeks to express the glorification of its object, and which realizes its perfection in the perfect fulfilment of that function. Certainly any concern for the aesthetic quality of the

picture is more likely to be the exception the more ritualistic the object photographed and, from babies to landscapes, via pets and famous monuments, the likelihood of the suspension of aesthetic concerns continues to diminish without ever quite disappearing.[21] More generally, a photograph, even a figurative one, is rejected when no function can immediately be assigned to it, just as non-figurative paintings are refused when they do not show an identifiable object, that is, when they do not suggest any resemblance to familiar forms. One expects photography to give a narrative symbolism, and as a sign or, more precisely, an *allegory*, unequivocally to express a transcendental meaning and increase the notations which could unambiguously constitute the virtual discourse which it is supposed to bear.[22]

> 'That would be all right as long as you had a foreground giving you a situation: I'd take that, if there was something to guide you: a balloon, a beach, a parasol.' 'I would have taken a base, a rock so that you could recognize something.' 'I would have taken that from further away so as to have a group, so that you could see what it was.' 'I wouldn't take a picture of water without boats' (breaking waves). 'I can understand how you would photograph flowerbeds, flowers, pretty gardens, but as for this leaf!', 'I would have photographed the whole plant.' (leaf)

When the object photographed is not intrinsically predisposed to be a photographic object and includes nothing which would indisputably merit this promotion, it may sometimes be regretted that the photographic act cannot lend it value by using some technical feat or 'trick', which would reveal the skill involved and thus betray the professionalism and merit of the photographer. But in most cases the judgement applied to the photograph in no way dissociates the object from the picture and the picture from the object, the final criterion of appreciation.[23]

> 'I might take that if they were pebbles with weird and striking shapes.' 'These pebbles aren't interesting, there's no distinctive sign there unless there's a trick, like enlarged gravel, for example.' 'Yes, if there was some sort of effect, like some water, but like that it's just barren' (pebbles). 'That poor leaf really isn't particularly beautiful!' (leaf)

Of all the intrinsic characteristics of the picture, only colour can suspend the rejection of photographs of trivial things. There is nothing more alien to popular consciousness than the idea that one can and should want to conceive an aesthetic pleasure which, to use Kantian terms, is independent of being agreeable to the senses. Thus, judgement passed on the photographs most strongly rejected because of their uselessness (pebbles, tree-bark, wave) almost always ends up with the reservation that 'in colour, that could be pretty'; and some subjects even manage to make explicit the maxim that governs their attitude when they assert that 'if the colour is good, colour photography is always beautiful'. It is precisely popular taste that Kant is describing when he writes: 'Taste that requires an added element of charm and emotion for its delight, not to speak of adopting this as the measure of its approval, has not yet emerged from barbarism'.[24] In fact, tangible, informative or moral interest is the supreme value of the popular aesthetic.

Refusing the meaningless (*insignificant*) picture (in its twofold sense of being devoid of meaning and devoid of interest) or the picture which is ambiguous and anonymous, actually means refusing photography as an endless finality. The value of a photograph is measured above all by the clarity and the interest of the information that it is capable of communicating as a symbol, or, preferably, as an allegory. The popular reading of photography establishes a transcendent relationship between signifier and signified, meaning being related to form without being completely involved in it. Photography, far from being perceived as signifying itself and nothing else, is always examined as a sign of something that it is not.[25] The *legibility* of the picture itself is a function of the legibility of its intention, (or of its function) and the aesthetic judgement to which it gives rise is more favourable the more total the expressive adequacy of the signifier to the signified.[26] However, it includes the expectation of the title or the caption which states the signifying intention and allows one to judge whether the realization is in accordance with the explicit ambition, whether it adequately signifies it or, preferably, illustrates it. The confusion provoked by certain aesthetic experiences is probably basically due to the fact the subject does not know what its intention is, or even what is intention and what is clumsiness.

'A lock of hair, a tress, that's pretty as well; it's all messed up; they've done that on purpose; he's played on the flaws to show nothing but hair. That's really great, that one! Was it an artist who took that?' 'One thing I miss is never having done any photography. You can't tell what it is that's been messed up' (woman's hair). 'A leaf? Oh, yes! it looks a bit like a leaf. But taking pictures like that, all the same! Is it from far away or close up? [. . .] Well yes, if I'd known that, I'd have understood. If I knew photography I'd understand.' (leaf)

On the other hand, and although it breaks the rules of the 'popular aesthetic' by amputating the sitter's face, the close-up photograph of an old woman's hands meets with strong appreciation among the peasants because they immediately see it as the allegorical expression of a thesis (plate 7): 'Oh, that's easier! The wonderful hands of a good farmer; hands like that have won agricultural prizes hundreds of times. That woman has worked in the fields as much as she has in the kitchen; she's certainly tended the vines, looked after the animals: very nice.' What is perceived, understood and appreciated is not the old woman's hands but old age, work and honesty.

A similar process characterizes realist taste: as photographic technology is commonly held to be the technology most capable of providing a faithful and truthful reproduction of reality, the adequacy of the realization to the original proposition plays the same part here as the distance between reproduction and reality, likeness, does in painting. The primary form of the judgement of taste is the appraisal of a disparity between the realization, the signifier, and a transcendent signified, a real idea or model. While painting encourages a demand for realism, photography, which always and automatically appears realistic and therefore achieves no special merit by being so, inclines the viewer to expect conformity to a formulable intention.[27] More profoundly, photography provides an exceptional opportunity for the expression of realist taste; in fact, the moment one questions – because of a distorted image of the machine – the possibility of the photographic act transfiguring the object represented, one is forced or enabled to measure the beauty of the representation against the

beauty of the thing represented. What is shameful about the photograph of a meaningless object is not solely the fact that it does not refer to anything that precedes or transcends it – any statement to illustrate, meaning to reconstruct or use to serve – it is also that one is less willing than ever to admit that this signifier without a signified only appears meaningless because it is its own signified: once one takes issue with the true state and merit of the effort. of reproduction, the literal representation of the world becomes a pleonastic treatment of the world.[28]

Thus, the photographic image ordinarily acknowledged as the most faithful reproduction of reality perfectly fulfils the expectations of the popular naturalism that relies on a fundamental attachment to the object created, naturalist photography, 'the choice that praises', which in many of its aspects evokes a naturist cult.[29] The picture of a meaningless object is refused with such force, and the systematic distortion of the given object, and of the human face in particular, provokes such a feeling of outrage, because abstracting reinterpretation is seen as a technique of exclusion and an attempt at mystification, but also and particularly a gratuitous attack on the thing represented.

> Photographs which take too many liberties with the human body provoke unease or indignation: 'If you're going to take it, you might as well take the whole thing, mightn't you? The face is missing, it's irritating.' 'It isn't bad, but I'd like to see the expression on the face.' 'I'd have taken the face as well' (hands of an old peasant-woman). 'You just see an arm, there's something missing, it isn't enough' (child at the breast, close-up). The face, and especially the facial expression, concentrate the expressiveness of the body so that their removal is felt as a denial of expression: 'Fortunately you can see the eye, and the eye is everything', says one subject.

This is why photographic practice, a ritual of solemnization and consecration of the group and. the world, perfectly fulfils the deeper intentions of. the 'popular aesthetic', the festive aesthetic, that is, the aesthetic of communication with others and communion with the world.
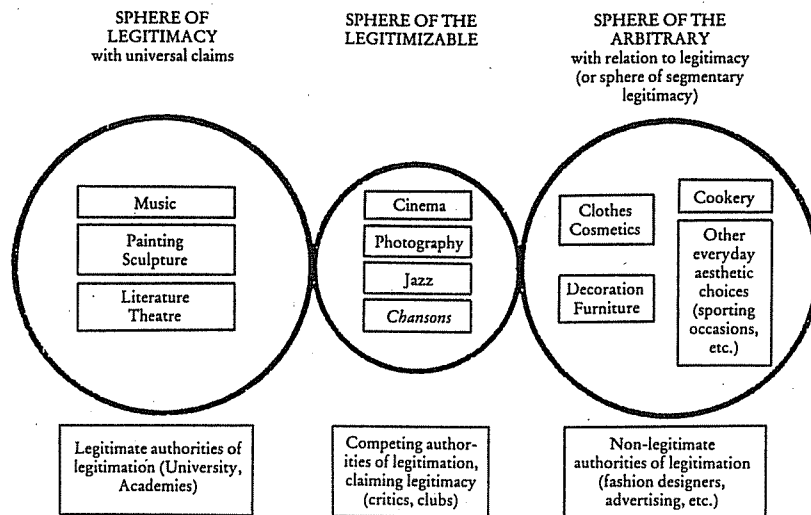
THE HIERARCHY OF LEGITIMACIES

'Barbarous taste' is never entirely free of all reference to 'good taste'. It appears, for example, that the inclination of working-class subjects to rely on 'concepts' – of genre or perfection – capable of supplying the norm from which appreciation may be deduced, also expresses the relationship that any culturally disadvantaged group is condemned to have to the legitimate culture from which it is *de facto* excluded; deprived by definition of the implicit and diverse knowledge of the norms of good taste, the working classes always seek objective principles which are the only things capable, in their eyes, of forming the basis of an adequate judgement, and which can only be acquired by a specific or broad education. The concern with rules or with the rules of the genre, and the hope that judgement in matters of taste (as a 'reflecting judgement') may also become a 'defining judgement', subsuming the particular within the general (rule, principle or law), also ultimately expresses acknowledgement of legitimate culture and the certainty of cultural dispossession. All the same, photography (and the judgements which it provokes) provides an exceptionally favourable opportunity for grasping the logic of the 'popular aesthetic', because it tends less than fully recognized practices and works to make one afraid of losing face by revealing one's ignorance of consecrated norms and obligatory opinions.

This is so because, in a given society at a given moment, not all cultural meanings, theatrical presentations, sporting events, recitals of songs, poetry or chamber-music, operettas or operas, are equivalent in dignity and value, and they do not all call for the same approach with the same urgency. In other words, the various systems of expression, from theatre to television, are objectively organized according to a hierarchy independent of individual opinions, which defines *cultural legitimacy* and its gradations.[30] Faced with meanings situated outside the sphere of legitimate culture, consumers feel they have the right to remain pure consumers and judge freely; on the other hand, within the field of consecrated culture, they feel measured according to objective norms, and forced to adopt a dedicated, ceremonial and ritualized attitude. Thus jazz, cinema and photography do not give rise –

Figure 2

SPHERE OF LEGITIMACY with universal claims	SPHERE OF THE LEGITIMIZABLE	SPHERE OF THE ARBITRARY with relation to legitimacy (or sphere of segmentary legitimacy)

Legitimate authorities of legitimation (University, Academies)	Competing author-ities of legitimation, claiming legitimacy (critics, clubs)	Non-legitimate authorities of legitimation (fashion designers, advertising, etc.)

because they do not claim it with the same urgency – to the attitude of dedication, which is common coin when one is dealing with works of scholarly culture. Some virtuosos, in a bid for legitima-tion, transfer to these arts models of behaviour that are current in the realm of traditional culture. But in the absence of an institution to teach them methodically and systematically as constituent parts of legitimate culture, most people experience them in quite a different way, as simple consumers. Erudite knowledge of the history of these arts, and familiarity with the technical or theoretic-al rules that characterize them are only encountered in exceptional cases because people do not feel as forced as they do in other areas to make the effort to acquire, preserve and communicate this body of knowledge which is a part of the obligatory preliminaries and ritualized accompaniments of scholarly consumption.

One therefore passes gradually from the fully consecrated arts such as theatre, painting, sculpture, literature and classical music to signifying systems which are abandoned – at least at first glance – to the arbitrariness of individual taste, whether they be decoration, cosmetics or cookery. The meanings that fall within the sphere of legitimacy all share the fact that they are organized according to a particular type of system, developed and inculcated by the school, an institution specifically responsible for communicating know-ledge, organized into a hierarchy, through a methodical organiza-

tion of training and practice. It follows that preferences or skills belonging to the sphere of legitimacy, far from being randomly distributed, tend towards a hierarchical or methodical organization; systematization clearly operates on a more or less elevated level according to whether the exercise has been practised for a longer or a shorter time, and with greater or lesser intensity: and we find that systems of taste with regard to legitimate works are closely linked to educational levels.[31] The existence of *consecrated works* and the whole system of rules defining the sacramental approach presuppose an institution whose function is not only one of communication and distribution but also one of legitimation. In fact, jazz and cinema are served by expressive means which are at least as powerful as more traditional cultural works; there are coteries of professional critics with erudite journals and radio and television discussion platforms at their disposal which, as a sign of their pretension to cultural legitimacy, assume the learned and tedious tone of university criticism, taking on its cult of erudition for erudition's sake, as if, haunted by the issue of their legitimacy, the only thing they could do was to adopt and exaggerate the external signs of statutory authority of the guardians of the monopoly of the cultural legitimacy, the professors: as if their situation of competing for legitimacy and the power of legitimation forced them to express the most divergent or preferably indispensable judgements, and only ever to reach limited groups of amateurs, such as jazz circles and cinema clubs.

The position of photography within the hierarchy of legitimacies, half-way between 'vulgar' practices, apparently abandoned to the anarchy of tastes and noble cultural practices, subject to strict rules, explains, as we have seen, the ambiguity of the attitudes which it provokes, particularly among the members of the privileged classes. The effort of some devotees to establish photography as a fully legitimate artistic practice almost always appears foolish and desperate because it can do practically nothing to counteract the social key to photography, which is never recalled so strongly as when one seeks to contradict it. People who wish to break with the rules of ordinary practice, and who refuse to confer upon their activity and its product their accepted meaning and function, are constantly forced to create a substitute (which may not appear as such) for that which is given as an immediate

certainty to the devotees of legitimate culture, namely the sense of the cultural legitimacy of the practice and all the supports that go with it, from technical models to aesthetic theories. Unlike a legitimate practice, a practice in the process of legitimation poses and imposes, to those involved in it, the question of its own legitimacy. It is no accident that passionate photographers are always obliged to develop the aesthetic theory of their practice, to justify their existence as photographers by justifying the existence of photography as a true art.

Does this mean that when subjects do not feel measured according to the objective norms of an aesthetic orthodoxy their judgements of taste are abandoned to arbitrariness and deprived of any systematic character? In fact, they are organized according to a type of systematic arrangement which has nothing more to do with individual psychology than that which structures the preferences and knowledge of 'cultivated' people, but which is based precisely upon the *class ethos* – the set of values which, without attaining systematic explanation, tend to organize the 'conduct of life' of a social class. Thus, as we have seen, for the working and middle classes, the aesthetic expressed as much in photographic practice as in judgments on photography, appears as a dimension of the *ethos*, so that the aesthetic of the great mass of photographic works may be legitimately reduced, without being reductive, to the sociology of the groups that produce them, the functions which they assign to them and the meanings which they confer upon them, both explicitly and, more particularly, implicitly.

PART II
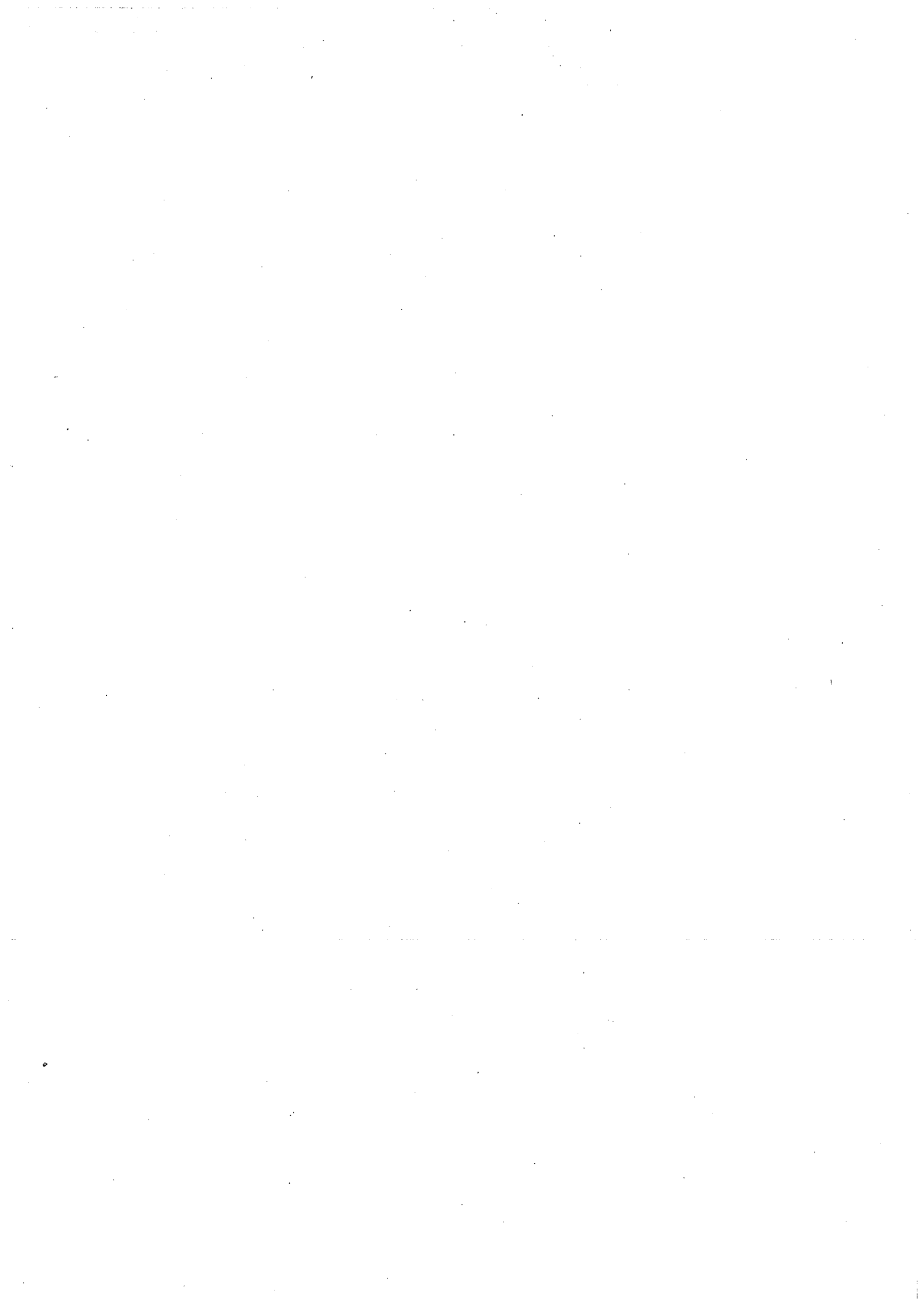
Alongside the great mass of users of photography who, experiencing its demands without seeing them as constraints, realize the social function of photography in their behaviour without perceiving it as such, there are also those who, either by choice or by professional obligation, cease to give it this immediate and unquestioned attachment. Whether, as press or publicity photographers, they technically exploit the ordinary representation of photographic objectivity or on the contrary attempt to load a 'realistic' figuration with a symbolic content; or whether, as amateurs or artists, they attempt to break with the canons of the popular aesthetic and grant photography a recognized place in the system of the fine arts, the groups studied below have in common the break that they have made from naive attachment to the social definition of photography, which is never recalled more clearly than when one attempts to mock it or to exploit it.

Consequently these studies primarily have the function of verification, because, if the foregoing analyses are true, the social function of photography is precisely the reality with which the various groups are struggling, and which resists their onslaughts just as much as they seek to force it.

But the meaning of this confrontation could not have been understood if we had not grasped the concrete form which it assumes in each individual situation and the functions which it takes on for each of the groups involved.* (Pierre Bourdieu)

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* This project necessitated a different mode of composition: each social unit had to be made the object of a particular description (which could be entrusted to a particular author). Nevertheless, each of the concrete studies must be understood with reference to the others, inasmuch as it describes a specific response to a common problem.

3

Aesthetic Ambitions and Social Aspirations:
The Camera Club as a Secondary Group

Robert Castel and Dominique Schnapper

*Basically, there's a process in photography that you're not in control of.
There's always something in photography that isn't perfect*
(A member of the club *'Trente et Quarante'*)

If, in its ordinary form, photographic activity is both an index and
a means of social integration,[1] the members of a camera club are,
from the start, deviants in terms of this primary function. Their
first act is to break the ties that bound photography to the family
institution. Even before they are capable of any scholarly techni-
ques, the new members join in mocking traditional photography in
which people stand 'in rows like onions', 'stiff as posts' (Member
of Worsbach camera club). Later, the initiate continues to scorn
the time when 'he used to take photographs like everyone does,
photographs of the family, dad, mum, little personal photographs'
(Head of the rue Mercoeur camera club); 'We don't take family
pictures any more' (Member, Bologna). The claim that is being
asserted here is significant, but the desire to distance oneself does
not exactly match up with the practice: while the members of a
camera club often continue to take family photographs, this
inevitable concession to the primary group does not, in their eyes,
affect their status as 'real' photographers. They refuse to be the
makers and consumers of a photography whose sole function is the
solemnization of the events of family life. 'I'm the only person I

know who doesn't have pictures of his kids on display in the sitting-room' (Member, Bologna). But if the photography that they want to make is not justified by this personal content, and the system of values to which it refers, what new function does the camera club fulfil? Apart from the desire for a certain consensus appropriate to any secondary leisure group,[2] one would be tempted to answer that its purpose is to allow its members 'to take photographs', 'quite simply'. This answer would be neither wrong nor necessarily tautological. It is their interest in photography that unites the members of a camera club in the first place, and they have in common a rate of practice which is higher than that of the set of the population which takes photographs.[3] The camera club provides a means of moving from a naive practice to a scholarly practice within a group which supplies formulas and tips in order to intensify photographic activity.

However, the frequency of the practice does not directly condition its modality. The members of a camera club have in common not only their valorization of the photographic act, but, more particularly, their desire to take photographs in a different way. Having lost the primary justification of the photographic act within the primary group, the family, they are in search of a secondary legitimation. But is this desire to effect a qualitative change in the practice enough to institute photographic activity as an autonomous activity?

Photography does not seem to acquire a really new and specific function in the camera club. Everything takes place as if it were rather the means of expression for an aspiration whose origin is not to be found within photography. Photography is never an end in itself, and once it ceases naively to express social relationships it is obliged to rely on a system of norms which are sometimes those of art, sometimes those of technology.

In a sense, this assertion expresses a simple and banal truth. It is normal that a new medium for the two-dimensional representation of reality should draw comparison with the traditional arts of this type, particularly painting. It is also normal that the intervention of the camera and the meaning of its operations should create new problems and new interests, centred on technology. It might thus be part of the 'essence' of photography to oscillate between the imitation of painting and *an interest in technology*, the systematic

exploitation of the technical resources of photography.

But what is essential from the sociological point of view is the fact that the rhythm of this oscillation is not determined by the demands of the photographed object itself, both because the meaning of photographic practice is defined in terms of the social representation of photography, and because this relationship assumes a different meaning according to the situation of the person experiencing it. From this point of view, camera clubs may be schematically classified in two groups: the members of 'aesthetic' camera clubs are afraid of seeing their activity reduced to mere technology in the name of a traditional conception of culture, while the other camera clubs seek to use technology to find a new justification for their activity as photographers.

But the 'choice' between these two attitudes is never arbitrary, and sociological analysis sheds light on the reasons behind it. Distinct groups, through and with their way of taking photographs, express a certain awareness of their situation in the social system. Sometimes – to begin by schematizing the opposition – photography bears the aesthetic aspirations of a fringe of the *petite bourgeoisie* and the middle class by translating their desire for membership of the upper class whose cultural models it imitates. Sometimes, in the photographic practice of other, more working-class social strata, there emerges an original perception of the camera, and, through it, of technical objects in general.

These are the main ideas which we saw as organizing the material provided by the study of a certain number of camera clubs. When we said, above, that the exploitation of photography in a camera club was not dictated by demands specific to the photographic object, this should be understood as meaning that photographic activity is not an autonomous activity, certain of its media and its norms. On the other hand, something of the social definition of photography remains in the effort to negate it. It is the weight of this definition that actually accounts for the difficulties experienced by camera clubs when they seek to invent a new use of photography.

IMPATIENCE WITH LIMITATIONS

It is tempting to try and demonstrate the importance of the social definition of photography and the social reasons for locating oneself in relation to it, first of all in the type of club which best seems to escape it by claiming to base its practice in the pursuit of properly aesthetic values. This is true of two camera clubs which define themselves by their grand aesthetic ambitions; the camera club of Bologna, some of whose members have won a national and international audience, and an avant-garde Parisian camera club, the *'Trente et Quarante'*, which brings enlightened amateurs together around a number of professionals.[4]

Justification for the practice, in these clubs, is seen first of all in a series of refusals. The logic of these refusals leads to a minimal definition of photography which is an attempt at the radical negation of its ordinary definition.

The first refusal is that of technology, or rather the refusal to make technology an essential stage of photographic creation. It is expressed first of all in a discrediting of the camera:

> I've an old camera that's twenty years old. Is that of the slightest importance? With this Rolleiflex I've been able to take photographs with opposing aesthetics. (Bologna)

What is being refused via the camera is the apparatus whose mechanical virtuosity is seen as eliminating any initiative on the part of the operator. This fear of being dispossessed by the camera appears in a curious myth of the natural camera which would reconcile automatism and spontaneity:

> I always feel my cameras are in the way. They get more and more superfluous. If I could take a photograph without a camera, I'd be very happy; I don't have to prove that I'm a mechanic . . . I'd like to take a picture with a camera without this constraint of being seen, being armed; for example a camera hidden in your pocket which could go off at the same time as your eye saw. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

The contradiction of a 'camera-less photography' is clearly seen

only as a magical solution to the contradiction introduced by the technical object into an activity which would prefer to be free, when in fact its condition of existence lies in the automatism of taking pictures.

The same contradiction occurs between the real interest devoted to technical operations and the explicit desire to discredit them. All enlightened photographers agree on the major importance of darkroom work, and claim that one starts taking real photographs from the day one starts doing one's own developing and printing.[5] But at the same time they refuse to admit that these operations may valorize photography as such.

> Anyone can take beautiful photographs. You just have to start doing it, and after a few months the problems stop. Here we've gone past that stage. (Bologna)

> In photography, the technical aspect is fairly slight and you can learn it straight away. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

The contradiction between the care actually devoted to technical processes and the importance attached to them at the level of discourse is explained by the fear of over-inflating technology, which would reduce photography to a process of the mechanical reproduction of reality:

> Artistic issues are infinetly more interesting than the study or imitation of more-or-less worn-out printing processes which rarely add to the aesthetic value of a work. (Lille)

Technology could only be rescued by a valorization of manual operations. But if technology can be inventive, it is still opposed to a conception of 'creation' based on inspiration. This refusal is all the more paradoxical because these same men are unanimous in their regret of the lack of freedom which the camera leaves them:

> Photography isn't quite an art. The camera doesn't leave you with that much freedom; it's not like being a painter. (Lille)

> Photography is easier than painting or drawing because I get what I see straight away, while it takes the painter a long time to recreate what he sees. (Lille)

However, in their search for new processes, they condemn those offered to them by technology. We shall encounter this contradiction again. It is the position of an aesthetic – an ethic – which negatively conditions the refusal of technology: 'I don't have to prove that I'm a mechanic' (*'Trente et Quarante'*) because I have to prove that I am an artist in terms of a concept of art for which technology could only serve as an external foundation course. If we now consider the content, the subjects photographed, we find a series of new refusals organized according to the same logic. Photographers avoid meanings that are objective, overly heavy, as if they were afraid that they would crush the properly aesthetic quality of the work. Beauty must lie not in the signified, but in the transposition from the signified to photographic language. Thus, in Bologna, the following are explicitly rejected: first of all documentary, anecdotal or satirical photography; secondly, didactic photography which 'seeks to demonstrate, to convince; that isn't the role of photography'; thirdly, 'romantic' photography, with an overstated sentimental content:

> A. T. is in his romantic phase; we all start out like that, because at bottom we all have some romantic aspirations, and that is the first thing that one seeks to express by taking photographs. But A. T. is a beginner and, like the rest of us, he'll grow out of this phase.

Finally photography which is too 'pretty' because of the very beauty of the object photographed, whether it be a person, a landscape or a monument:

> Before, when you took portraits, you wanted, say, the girl you were photographing to be as beautiful as possible; now we want the photograph to be as beautiful as possible.

For the aesthetes, these photographs constitute the general and despised category of the 'cliché':

> You come across clichés particularly among the beginners: hackneyed subjects. As soon as you have a little photographic education you can't look at them any more. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

There must be 'play' in the photographed object, in the sense used

by Sartre when he says that there should be play in words: otherwise photography will be fixated on its content, while a certain margin of freedom is necessary in order to turn it into a creation. Thus the refusal of technology and the refusal of supersaturated content are complementary. By means of these refusals, an 'original' aesthetic seeks to preserve a right to existence.

Aesthetic beauty lies solely in photographic transposition because this transposition must reveal the freedom of a style:

> After an hour, fed up with hearing 'Ahh, what a lovely child!', I said, 'But aren't there any good photographs?' (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

Style is art, and art lies in stylistic originality:

> At the moment, I'm looking for a new style (Bologna). You have to keep looking for something new, an angle that hasn't been done before . . . (Bologna)

It is in this way that the photographer, like a painter, makes his mark on material which would otherwise remain a vulgar transposition of reality:

> If the photographer has a personality, he will have a way of taking photographs so that you can recognize him. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

The field of the photographic is therefore defined in relation to the photographing subject, and not in relation to the object photographed. This stylistic imperative is so categorical that it impresses itself on the photographer even against his or her will. Thus the systematic pursuit of originality, in the club *'Trente et Quarante'*, ends up making the members specialize against their will:

> They're trying to get him to see that he has to find his own way: have him take a number of photographs on the same subject. [. . .] Personally I don't want to specialize. I'm trying to get out of it. If I take journalistic pictures they tell me: 'That isn't as good as photographs of trees, or landscapes.' That gets on my nerves. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

It seems to be through this desire for the 'personalization' of photographic activity that the ambiguous reference to painting can best be understood. In the discussion and criticism of the finished work, which makes up the daily life of camera clubs, or in reply to questions about the aesthetic value of photography, these photographers spontaneously and constantly refer to the art of painting. But they do it according to two modalities which betray the bad conscience of photographic activity.

Some hold that photography is an art just as painting is:

> Photography is a fine art which is not inferior to painting, but is simply different. After all, painters have their brushes just as we have our cameras; they have their own technology. (Bologna)

Others see their activity in a more modest light:

> It isn't an art, it's a pleasant pastime; it isn't as good as painting, because the mechanical intermediary and chance play too large a part in it. (Bologna)

It will have been noticed that even the most humble photographers still locate themselves in relation to an art which they do not think they can match, and that even the most optimistic to some extent regret the technology involved.

Likewise, analysis of the content of the works shows that they are classified in two approximately similar groups, those which are clearly influenced by painting, and which seek to compete with it, and those which pertain to a properly photographic aesthetic and more openly make use of technical resources.

So reference to painting does not always have the function of a model to be humbly accepted. The fascination with painting or the desire to differentiate between painting and photography convey the same aspiration to art. Painting is the noble art, the one which provides the clearest guarantee of aestheticism for an activity in search of security. Whether they are ambitious or modest, photographs are always located in relation to painting.

Our problem is not one of knowing whether photography is an art like painting, or even whether photography is or can be an art. It is a matter of trying to understand this aspiration to art in its

dual modality of the refusal of technology and the reference to painting. Indeed this modality of the aspiration to art appears contradictory on the aesthetic level. If photography were an art, why would it not systematically seek to exploit its own specific resources? These media can create 'beautiful' harmonies by breaking away from the realism of reproduction. Photographers are aware of the limits that the realism of reality imposes upon them:

> Photography is so figurative in its own right that the photographer remains figurative. But he could be figurative in an advanced way. (*'Trente et Quarante'*)

But everything takes place as if they were prohibiting themselves from being 'figurative in an advanced way' with the specific media of photographic technology, and, when they do decide to do so, it is in a shamefaced way, playing down that aspect of the work. Thus a member of the *'Trente et Quarante'* is proud that the club has 'a fairly low technical level compared to other clubs: "careless (*négligée*)" photography. But more original'.

But 'originality' does not mean 'gratuitousness': on the contrary. Beauty must be deserved. *In extremis*, this leads to the masochistic justification of effort for effort's sake: 'For me, the more trouble I take, the better the photograph. For me, lucky chances don't count.' (Lille).

But even if it were the case that work was so meritorious in itself, why could one not make 'technical' efforts? Why assert simultaneously – and contradictorily –: 'I'm against people working in the darkroom. The thing that counts is taking the picture. Playing about with potions is for chemists. I'm against tricks'? Only 'chemists'' or 'mechanics'' work is despised, while it is considered good that 'the painter takes time to create what he sees'.

So what is being condemned here is the idea of a technology being reduced to utilitarian prosaism. To salvage it, one would only have to combine the technical processes with the artist's intentions, as occurs in the work of the painter: technology, the sequence of its operations controlled by the form of a project, would then become an essential element of creation itself. Photographic technology could be devoted to efforts to valorize the product as a work of art. By what argument do the most inventive

photographers reduce it to a mechanical automatism? The impossibility of openly accepting technical processes cannot derive directly from aesthetic values themselves, even less so since many of these photographers support the most modern tendencies in painting.[6] The desire to protect a definition of the work of art from technology is not a product of the demands of art itself, but rather of the fact that art is imagined in terms of an idealized representation of its conditions and its social role, which excludes open participation in a technology that is itself represented as 'vulgar' because of its social conditions and its social role. This pressure on photography and art itself, from external norms, accounts for the concrete modality assumed by photographic practice and is in turn explained by the situation of those who are socially compelled to see art and technology under these conditions and in these roles.

The sociological situation of the Bologna camera club may help us to explain this dual relationship. This is not simply one particular camera club in one particular town. For a series of convergent reasons, Bologna presents a limiting case which is as close as possible to the ideal type as regards appreciating the meaning of the social image of photography. For the *bourgeoisie* of Bologna, dominated by a system of ancient values as strict as that of the most traditional rural society, painting is a familiar and necessary element of *bourgeois* decoration. No sitting-room is imaginable without a certain number of paintings, which are not acquired, kept or noticed for their aesthetic value, but rather as signs of a certain social status. This complicity of art and class is again reinforced by the fact that history of art is taught in the classical grammar schools which are attended almost exclusively by the members of the traditional *bourgeoisie*. But art is an area of life more than something with a properly aesthetic value: the people of Bologna hardly ever go to museums, and the Pinacoteca, beyond the boundary within which cultural activity occurs, is almost ignored. The legitimation of art is effected by means of a noble tradition and noble training, monopolized by a determinate social group.

So there are few societies in which painting is more exclusively the possession of a socially and culturally dominant class; also, there are few cities in which the values of this class so rigidly impregnate everyday social relations, and are so accepted as the

necessary form of the 'art of living'. Most particularly, this society has reinterpreted the innovation of photography within the terms of its own norms, by seeing it as the means of solemnizing the events of family life. The photographic portrait of the children has replaced the traditional family portrait and fulfils the same function in the *bourgeois* drawing-room.

Economic developments have also brought about the promotion of a 'new *bourgeoisie*' of junior executives in industry and commerce, which has a comparable standard of living, leisure and sometimes culture, but which is made subordinate to the prestige of the traditional *bourgeoisie* and cannot hope to enter it. Aesthetic aspirations in particular are mediated by the image of the use made of art by the traditional *bourgeoisie*. The possession of works of art, and even the practice of painting, are held to presuppose membership of the dominant class. In a society in which painting is seen as part of a rich historical and cultural tradition, one would not 'dare' to paint without a solid artistic culture.

However, contrary to appearances, the photographs of the members of the camera club require more 'skill' than a certain type of Sunday abstract painting, shown annually at the local painting exhibition. But because it is not included within prestigious traditions, it seems to be detachable from its '*bourgeois*' use. It can capture the aesthetic aspirations of the members of the lower class, even when, in the final analysis, this aspiration would prefer to be attached to the noble art of painting. Photographic practice is, compared to painting, second best, and photographic success is a lesser success.

With one exception,[7] all the members of the photographic club belong to this social stratum. They are not *dottore*, or *professore*, or *avvocato*, or, even less, *commandatore*.[8] Apparently scorning these titles in a city which lays too much value on them,[9] they claim to be an enclave of pure aesthetes, freely united by their common project. Strangers to 'high society', even through a third party, they do not in any way attempt to make themselves known, even if they do not do everything within their power to avoid the reintroduction of a purely social relationship through the artist's relationship with his public.[10] Constituted outside of society, the camera club forms a discrete and marginal group apparently with its own preoccupations and debates, its autonomous aesthetic.

However, for these men, the impossible model of painting is omnipresent in their ideal of photography. Despite their brilliant success, they continue to judge their activity as inferior:

> It would be very interesting if painters would agree to come to the club to talk to us. Obviously, it would be interesting for us, not for them, because we have no training.

But let us pass over the conscious expression of a feeling of inferiority and a longing which are both perfectly understandable. Let us also pass over the rather puerile desire to play at being misunderstood in order to identify with the *peintres maudits* of avant-garde coteries.[11] The important thing is that at a deeper level this ambivalence positively conditions the concrete practice. In an enlightening paradox, the activity of these photographers seeks to negate what they are, by locating them in relation to what they cannot be. Technology is the key to their real condition (or rather – for better or for worse – their means of existence) and they refuse to integrate it within the system of aesthetic values. They exclude it precisely as something which it is not necessarily, but which they fear it might be, when compared with a noble and inspired representation of art: prosaic and desacralizing, automatic and blind, its products necessarily lack the personal intention and the laborious merit that lie at the root of the *petit-bourgeois* concept of value. Conversely, painting, a socially inaccessible model, remains the obligatory aesthetic reference, even if only to reinforce the impression that it is effectively inaccessible. The practice is the compromise between these two tendencies. In pursuit of a new aesthetic, they retain their longing for another impossible aesthetic, rejecting technology as a means of aesthetic transformation. But this dual obstacle derives from the social image of painting and from the technology imposed upon them by their social condition, and it is therefore social disapproval that explains the contradictions in their aesthetic activity.

This example is privileged in many ways, and should not be universalized without caution. The type becomes a little less clear when we consider the practice in a less rigid social situation. In the club 'Trente et Quarante', in which the plurality of Parisian cultural and social currents makes such an analysis impossible, one

nevertheless finds a practice and aesthetic concepts that closely follow those of the Bologna club. The members certainly belong to a less rigid society, but, on the other hand, in the Parisian cultural sphere, they are strongly subjected to the pressure of trends in avant-garde painting. Also, while they remain aware that they cannot match painting on its own territory, their social origin, comparable to that of the Bologna photographers, makes them aware of the same contradiction between aesthetics and technology.[12]

On the other hand, major differences appear very clearly when we look at the Lille camera club, further than the Parisian club from the home of artistic values, and more liberated than the Bologna club from rigid socio-cultural traditions. However, if hierarchies are less strongly marked than they are in Bologna, social perception is still more acute in a provincial city than it is in Paris. The artistic aspiration of a minority of *petits bourgeois* is then expressed as an empty cultural desire, in the absence of any organization, principles or realization. The club's products have a very low aesthetic value, and its 'theories' do not attain the coherence of those of the aesthetes of Paris or Bologna because there is no firm point of reference to support the desire for differentiation. Instead, we start to record openly positive statements on the role of the camera and technology, but in a context which makes them contradictory: refusing any imagination or daring, they condemn technical experiment with reference to the *petit-bourgeois ethos* of productive work justified by a clear intention:

> When you have an intention, you end up conveying it. When you start out saying: 'Let's see what happens here', you're an idiot or a crook. Abstract photography is dishonest.

The aesthetic reference, the necessary justification of the club as a guarantee of nobility, is clearly maintained, but with a certain lack of realism that betrays the mediocrity of the practice. Membership of a camera club tends to acquire the function of a magical act which would be sufficient on its own to guarantee a participation in art that is unrealizable in concrete terms:

I'd exhibited photographs in the corridors and it hadn't worked. I thought it was because I wasn't qualified, because I hadn't joined the club.

This 'bad conscience' and mediocrity, then, convey the unease of a group of *petits bourgeois* who are too far removed from traditional aesthetic values to participate effectively in them, but who also want to distance themselves from an acceptance of technology that could be seen as 'popular'.

The above remarks risk having something of an impressionistic character. However if one index of the validity of a sociological model is the fact that the model is modified according to the transformations of the objective situation, additional proof is supplied by the fact that the maximum change to be discovered in the social and ideological context of camera clubs corresponds to the maximum transformation both in the practice itself and in the rationalizations of the practice.

THE PATIENCE OF THE PROFESSION

Compared with the camera clubs mentioned above, youth clubs (*Maisons de jeunes*) recruit from more working-class milieux.[13] It is as examples of this new social stratum that we shall consider them here. In fact, the 'youth' of the members (relatively speaking, since in Vincennes the average age is twenty-four) is not the determining factor. Even the adult clubs include a high proportion of young people, and when an opposition comes about, it is expressed in the style of the club. Thus, in the '*Trente et Quarante*', the faction of young people represents the more aestheticizing tendency. Neither, in order to explain these differences, could one suggest that the youth club representatives might be less 'motivated' towards a practice presented to them as an easy activity, laid on by the club. Membership of the camera club corresponds to a positive choice because of the many possibilities on offer.[14] Most subjects interviewed are in any case real photographical fanatics, spending their free days and even their nights in the darkroom. Finally, while the study focuses on the youth club public, the data recorded are strictly homologous to those supplied

by the survey carried out on an adult camera club of identical socio-professional origin, the camera club of the Renault factories.

The directors of a youth club, where photography is only one among several leisure activities, start out from a perspective uninvolved with photography, and even the organizers of the camera club itself are in the position of being 'instructors' in the broadest sense of the term: there is a 'youth club spirit' into which photography, at least as far as the directors are concerned, must be integrated. Thus, for its director, the *Maison de jeunes* at Vincennes has the function of 'organizing a transitional stage between the solitary life of the boy left to his own devices and the man's life which he will have to lead'. Photography forms a part of this programme of 'popular culture':

> The purpose of photographic practice is to teach the young person to see, to be a witness to his time, to have no hesitation in taking photographs, for example photographs of demonstrations. The purpose is to make them see more acutely, to enable them to become men.

This moralistic ideology is shared by most of the camera club organizers, at least at the level of their explicit intentions:

> The human role of photography is to be the witness of one's time. (Organizer, Mouffetard camera club)

> The *Maison de jeunes* is concerned with offering young people certain interesting activities, as an antidote to leather jackets and *bistrots* – it gives them an activity outside of work. Photography is a morally healthy activity. (Organizer, rue Mercoeur)

Some members even explicitly link their photographic practice to their situation in the labour process:

> No, you don't do photography here to learn a trade, it's not that, it's so that a guy who spends all day on a job that doesn't give him a lot of satisfaction can compensate for the lack of interest in his job. (Member, rue Mercoeur)

Thus, from the start, photography is not considered for its intrinsic value, as one organizer explicitly states:

> Photography isn't worth a lot on its own. I don't want to give people a passion for photography for photography's sake, but to let them discover the world through it, to say something about it. (Organizer, rue Mercoeur)[15]

But this moral justification generally seems to be a rationalization, and has little direct influence on concrete practice. Among the products of the members of a camera club, there are hardly any 'committed' photographs, but rather pictures of flowers, monuments and landscapes. 'When they see a beautiful photograph in a magazine, they try to do the same,' one organizer complains. Among the organizers themselves, the moralistic intention often takes the form of a magical incantation which does little to conceal its separation from the practice, as in the case of this organizer who repeats throughout the discussion: 'Don't forget we're in a youth club' and who actually monopolizes the darkroom along with a few friends.

The real effectiveness of this type of rationalization is largely negative, but with regard to a very important point: it almost completely relieves the subjects of any obligation to find an aesthetic basis for the practice, an essential preoccupation, as we have seen, in *petit-bourgeois* clubs. It makes it possible from the start to locate photography in a different universe from art, since even before it finds its aesthetic guarantee, photographic activity already has certain titles of nobility.

In its most extreme but exceptional form, this indifference extends to a total refusal to take the aesthetic dimension into account by turning it into a mystification:

> Only shopkeepers talk about art. (Member, Vincennes)

Or again, something which could be the rational justification of the above:

> Any fool can take a good photograph: you just have to be there and press the button.

More generally, the possession of another justification, even if it remains very abstract, permits a high degree of laxity with regard

to the aesthetic canons: 'We don't pay a lot of attention to the laws of aesthetics. Personally I'm in favour of liberalism. Everyone should be able to do whatever they want.' (Member, Mercoeur) This attitude allows a pedagogy of bad photography, remorselessly censured by the other type of club:

> We have criticism and emulation. There's a lot of swapping of technical formulas. It's better to see pictures with faults. Even a beginner can help the others along. [. . .] Imitation has an educational interest. It's a basis. (Group leader, Mouffetard)

In contrast, what is being refused here, on the grounds that they belong to a different universe, are the scholarly experiments dear to the aesthetic amateurs:

> We don't take abstract photographs. You'd have to have an idea. Personally, I tried it once with a tree-trunk, but it's just a distraction. We aren't the kind of people who take weird pictures. (Organizer, Mouffetard)

So what is a 'beautiful' photograph? We should speak instead of 'good' photography. It is not scholarly photography, the 'drawing-room photography' or 'hallway photography' so despised as elements of *bourgeois* decoration. It is photography that communicates a 'message',[16] perceptible in a sub-aesthetic system with sentimental values and – with the exception of its value within the family – in this photography we shall see the reintroduction of all the extrinsic justifications which the photographers in Bologna sought to exclude:

> Yes, photography is a statement about the times we live in, about what you've seen, an idea you've felt very strongly and which you want to make others feel. For example, I took a photograph of a tramp. I wasn't about to say to him, 'Look, I feel sorry for you, I'm going to take your photograph if you don't mind, thank you very much.' No, I saw what the guy looked like, I said to myself: 'That's human nature', and I took the photograph. Afterwards, the guy asked me for 200 francs. [. . .] It's a really good picture, because it shows other people what despair is like. If you like, one way round it might be dressing up in rags, going and sitting next to the guy and

> saying: 'Come on, I'm one of you lot'. But there are people who
> don't have the courage to do that, but they still want to show this
> misery, so they take the picture. (Organizer, rue Mercoeur)

Sometimes, as here, it is a question of anarchistic moralism;
sometimes sentimentality broadens out into a social and political
awareness:

> A beautiful photograph is a committed photograph. If you go to
> Cuba you take a picture of a crowd ... That's a statement.

The above educational imperative reappears as the external goal of
the practice, transposed into the very content of the photograph. A
picture is justified only if the message which it conveys gives the
photographic act a scope outside itself. Photography which,
because of the simplicity, gratuitousness and contingency of the
operation, fails to find its meaning within itself, attempts to find a
basis by showing only 'weighty subjects', that is, 'imposing'
subjects. But this choice is not inspired by the 'photogenic'
character of the object, that is, by a photographic aesthetic. The
objectivity of the photograph is the objectivity of the meaning
which it communicates within a system of values extrinsic to
photography. To refuse photography for photography's sake is the
best way of refusing art for art's sake.

> Taking a picture of something just for the sake of taking a picture of
> it, for that pleasure alone, no, that wouldn't make me happy at all.
> (Member, rue Mercoeur)

If, from the aesthete's point of view, one can take issue with the
naiveté of this attitude, the introduction of naive moral or para-
political meanings is still the quickest and often the only way to
attain an activity that claims to escape arbitrariness.[17]
    But the same thing is true of pictures of tramps, blind people,[18]
little Neapolitan beggars, and pictures of demonstrations or pic-
tures of Cuba: the 'good subject' cannot be universalized, and at
best only provides an exception to the prosaism of the practice.
Personal 'commitment' only provides an episodic justification,
which cannot be generalized without bad faith. The photographic
act is too simple, too banal and too frequent to be externally

dictated by an ethical or political imperative. An exclusive aspiration to 'good photography' would kill off the practice, or force it into a permanent state of separation from its justification.

Fortunately there is always technology, the immediate and permanent given of photographic experience. A taste, a sense or even a love of this technology appears to be the most authentic justification for most of the amateur photographers from the working classes. Located at the level of experience, and intervening at each stage of the operation, it provides the activity with a concrete and immediate meaning, inasmuch as it can do so. Schematically, one might say that along with a minority of 'photographic ideologues' whose attempt to find a basis for the activity in an external *ethos* is in any case destined for failure, it is in technology that the mass of practitioners in this type of camera club find an adequate guarantee for taking photographs with a clear conscience. If it is true that 'a good photograph is a technically good photograph' (Member, Vincennes), it is when he humbly confesses: 'I supply formulas, tiny little formulas', that the organizer of the working-class camera club comes closest to the expectations of his audience.

The darkroom is actually the heart of the camera club:

> There's no group here, there are only the users of the darkroom. (Organizer, rue Mercoeur)

> More members turn up at the darkroom than at the meetings. (Member, Mouffetard)

> I came to the camera club for the darkroom and a general interest in the place: educational possibilities. (Primary school teacher, Mouffetard)

The prestige of the darkroom derives from the fact that it permits the free indulgence of a taste for handiwork:[19]

> Photography is a sort of handiwork; we're all amateurs here. (Member, Vincennes)

Certainly, economic interest also has a part to play in the use of the darkroom.

> We come here particularly to develop, as it's less expensive, you understand. If we had to have all our pictures developed by a photographer we couldn't do it, whereas here we have all the material. (Member, Vincennes)

But this interest does not exclude a taste for manual operations which can become an enthusiasm, and which is sometimes express-ed in dithyrambic terms:

> You should see the new arrivals and their eagerness, their excite-ment when they see the picture appear on the film. It's incredible, the first time, the emotion they feel. They're breathless. (Member, rue Mercoeur)

Doubtless we are touching here on the fundamental motive which leads most of the core members to the working-class camera club:

> Normally, I forget there's a film in my camera. This year I told myself that it would be a shame not to bring back some photo-graphs, now that we have a darkroom at our disposal. Then I hurried up to finish a film as quickly as possible.

The subject is unimportant, but gratuitousness has ceased to be a problem. The picture ends up being the indifferent pretext whose sole function is to permit the technical operations of the darkroom. In fact, the end of the aforementioned film has captured the same cows in the same field:

> I like animals, so I said to myself, since I wanted to take some photographs along, you might as well take these cows, they're as good as anything else. (Member, Worsbach)

Certainly, to use the terms of the aesthetes of the club '*Trente et Quarante*', this is a photographer without a 'photographic cul-ture'. But indeed, many, or even most, photographs are taken, even in some camera clubs, without a 'photographic culture', and without an aesthetic culture. The camera club at the *Maison de jeunes* is primarily a centre for the dissemination of a technical culture, which is something quite different.

Does each of these choices involve an 'adult' and coherenet concept of photography? Participation in one or the other could then be explained by attachment to a system of implicit values 'chosen' according to the social situation of the photographer. Or are there two successive stages, since a technical training is only the first phase of photographic initiation? Clearly it all depends on the emphasis placed on the technical opportunities provided by photography. If it were true that 'in photography the technical aspect is fairly slight and easy to learn', then technology could only be an external foundation course for properly photographic work. But then it is difficult to see how the activity could escape the unease that grips it once it begins to formulate aestheticizing pretentions. If, on the other hand, technology can determine the aesthetic content of photography, then perhaps what is taking shape here is a new conception of aesthetics.

It will be clear that the results for clubs with working-class members derive all their meaning from their comparison with the aesthetes' clubs. In neither case does photographic practice find its justification within itself. But the relationship between technology and aesthetics should not be interpreted as a pure and static opposition. Just as in Bologna or at the *'Trente et Quarante'* (and even more justifiably in Lille), a preoccupation with technology is not absent but rather rejected in the name of a different system of values, so here aesthetic interest is not eliminated, but experienced with a bad conscience:

> Photography's an art, if you like. (Group leader, Mouffetard)
>
> Photography's less of an art than painting, which is pure imagination.
>
> Photography's very simple, it's a matter of adjustment and lighting. (Ex-group leader, Vincennes)

These quotations from organizers suggest that this hesitant reference to art – which supplements ideological justification without seeming to contradict it – is introduced by the organizers themselves, in an attempt to find the most noble guarantees for their activity. But – as in the case of ideological justifications – the mass

does not follow.[20] This seems to be the principal reason, among others, for those tendential conflicts that divide all camera clubs and turn them into areas of overt or hidden tensions, when identical involvement in one activity should actually as as a bond between people who have no real motive for disagreement. The core member seems to arrive at the camera club with a very prosaic idea of photographic activity. He or she responds with passivity or hostility to the pretension, however hesitant, of organizers keen on playing the role of prophets of art or initiators into a committed ethic.[21] Do these contradictions in the youth club not in their own way illustrate the fundamental contradiction in all 'scholarly' photographic activity?

If this 'scholarly' practice does not seem to justify itself and seeks some aesthetic, ideological or technical guarantee, the 'choice' between these possibilities can still not be arbitrary if we have been able to organize a schematic opposition of two types of club according to these categories. The patent difference is due to the social categories from which these clubs recruit their members: the lower fringes of the *petite bourgeoisie* on the one hand, and the upper fringes of the *petite bourgeoisie* and the middle class on the other hand.

But we should probably attempt to identify this role of social status. The style of photographic activity is not directly produced – any more here, in all likelihood, than it is elsewhere – by socio-professional status expressible in objective terms of income. Rather it is produced by a way of experiencing this status at the level of a group *ethos*, which is more precisely expressed by its relationship to culture. It is this relationship between photographic activity and culture – or rather the style of photographic activity as a means of revealing the photographer's relationship to culture – that we must now attempt to define.

For the purposes of this appraisal, we must discover what produces a positive response in the practice of a given group. The above results, which were aimed at demonstrating the prosaism of photographic activity in certain clubs, may have appeared negative. But they would only be so from an aestheticizing perspective, that is, in terms of a certain prejudice about the 'essence' of culture. Yet the surest way to miss the meaning of a popular aesthetic would be to refer it to canons to which it is unrelated. The relationship to

painting and particularly to 'art for art's sake' is a reference to canons which are entirely meaningless to practitioners.[22] To qualify the photographic practice of certain social categories in terms of an absence of art would simply be to demonstrate a lack of perspicacity on the part of a sociologist seeking to measure his subjects by a yardstick of his own invention (or rather to project upon them the dominant ideas of his own social group). Just as peasants do not perceive the stiffness of their photographs as shameful because they seek only a likeness and the attestation of family relationships, so the members of a working-class camera club have no reason to condemn emotionally moving photography or committed photography or simple technical experimentation, because they have no reason to relate their practice to a theory of art for art's sake.

But perhaps we might invert the terms of the problem and inquire whether there are reasons for judging this taste for technology to be inferior, a conception of technology and art in which technology is generally subordinated to art in photography and, finally, whether technical valorization of technology do not achieve the meaning of the practice just as reasonably as, or more reasonably than aesthetic valorization, given that the latter often betrays a bad social conscience.

Compared with aestheticizing clubs, it appears that the characteristic of photographic practice in working-class clubs lies in the attempt to promote an original relationship to technology; we might wonder endlessly about whether this could form the basis of a culture, but it constitutes one element of a coherent vision of the world, defined – by its very purity – more against the traditional conception of aesthetics than in imitation of it.

In fact, once one abandons the model of painting, which in this case risks introducing obscurity and incoherence, the characteristics of popular photographic practice can be seen to be organized as a rational whole. Photographic activity expresses and nourishes what we might roughly call a technical attitude to the world. The photographic act is primarily a relationship to the camera, and through it a relationship to the 'mode of existence of technical objects'. The supremacy of the camera, which is an obstacle from the artistic point of view, is, from the point of view of technical values, a positive victory of the instrument over nature. It is also a

conquest of the instrument, a feeling of mastery, of possession, of facility – and, at a pinch, of joy – that is discovered in the various stages of technical manipulation: 'The first time, watching the picture appear really did something to me. You say to yourself: "What? Did I take that?"' (Member, Mercoeur). This naive phrase recaptures the enthusiasm, blunted for us by habit, which in 1839 brought all of Paris into the age of the daguerrotype, from the scholars of the Académie des Sciences to the mass of Sunday strollers.[23] But in each 'snap' – and the more so the more 'naive' it is – there is still something of the awareness of power conquering technology, which has put paid to the ancient terror of pictures by allowing them to be reproduced at will. Would it be an exaggeration to say that the discovery of photography was a Promethean invention, playing its part in the programme of the desacralization of nature discussed by Max Weber? Contemporaries of the event seem to have had no illusions on the matter. While religious minds were unsettled – before psychiatrists came to believe that in the magic of pictures they had rediscovered the basis of a mysterious phantasmagoria – scholars were assessing the positive meaning of the event.

These connotations were lost as a cultural factor precisely because photography became an everyday activity. But they still very humbly lend inspiration to the prosaism of the most ordinary of activities. Apart from a certain relationship to the camera as a benevolent apparatus whose rather mysterious characteristics are at the service of the user, the technical attitude implies a relationship to handiwork as a personal activity which extends and fulfils the vocation of the camera by acting as a corrective to robotic automatism.[24] More generally, familiarity with this apparatus is the particular expression of a familiar relationship with apparatuses in general, and, through acquaintance with apparatuses, of a certain participation in a technical culture.[25]

What is it that makes the camera club a privileged index of this attempt to establish a new relationship to culture? The idea that its proponents have of an activity is concretely translated into the set of the behaviour with which they communicate the rules to others. The teaching of a practice is thus an objectively perceivable indicator of the system of representations around which the practice is organized. Is it therefore surprising if, in working-class

clubs, the organizer 'provides tiny little formulas', and wears himself out exploiting stereotyped rules, which does not rule out a degree of dogmatism?[26] But at least he is attempting, over a series of stages, to lead the club members towards the mastery of the technical conditions of photography: a pedagogy of error, the educational value of imitation and attention to technical processes are the means of developing this awareness that photographic activity starts out from a basis of knowledge.

On the other hand, in the clubs with an aesthetic vocation, a blunt and intuitionist criticism betrays, in an equally revealing manner, a totalitarian conception of photography, like a talent that separates the initiates from the non-initiates: 'It's photography from 1880', 'It's not worth even starting to talk about it' (*'Trente et Quarante'*), 'We've seen it all before', 'Nothing new, nothing original' (Bologna). Thus, in the *'Trente et Quarante'*, meetings are dominated by the confrontation of two leaders who agree only in their relentless hounding of philistines. No dialogue takes place, because there is no opportunity for the objective justification of the values which are being asserted. The opposition of personalities reveals the absence of any aesthetic theory. The rejection of hackneyed work – work with the previous decade's aesthetic – and the assertion of style take the place of a doctrine. The result is a pedagogy of terror: 'People have to get used to it, understand my suggestions, get over my forbidding appearance and my rigorous criticisms' (*'Trente et Quarante'*). As the other leader says: 'Anyone with the spirit not to get angry comes back'.[27]

Thus the clear opposition between two styles of leader and two types of criticism precisely reflects the opposition of the two types of club which we have distinguished. In its most general form, it is a matter of the incompatibility of a rational pedagogy on the one hand, adapting the means to the chosen end and planning out the various phases of a progressive training, and on the other hand a sermon preached in the name of a mysterious essence of photography, asserted all the more dogmatically the greater the teacher's inability to define it (although there is no compulsion to define what is, by its very nature, ineffable).

Is the opposition of these pedagogies not based on two traditions, one of which makes culture an almost mystical object of initiation while the other makes it a means for the rational

conquest of nature? Let us say, in any case, that this analysis confirms the inability of photography to establish an autonomous aesthetic on its own, and that the pursuit of justification is determined, via the image of photography itself, by the social image of art and technology, their roles and their conditions.

4

Mechanical Art, Natural Art: Photographic Artists

Jean-Claude Chamboredon

In everything that is composed, the ordering and the ordered are apparent. [. . .] And even in beings which have no life, there is an ordering principle.

Aristotle (*Politics*)

All of the photographer's intellectual and artistic work occurs prior to material execution. Where the photographer could be compared to a painter in terms of the creation of his work in his imagination, there is as yet no protection in law, and, when the idea comes to be translated into a product, any comparison becomes impossible. His work has been created by light, [. . .] while the man himself has been able to disappear from the beginning of the operation; his work will occur even without the intervention of his intelligence and his mind. The personality will have been absent from the product at the sole moment when that personality could have granted it protection.

Thomas, Solicitor General of the Imperial Court

Of all the subjects who can be interviewed about photography, it is probably for aesthetes that the sociologist's questions pose the fewest problems: their problematic relationship to photography forces them to ask themselves spontaneously the questions that are put to them. The wish to cultivate photography as an art means condemning oneself to a practice that is uncertain of its legitimacy, preoccupied and insecure, perpetually in search of justifications.[1] However perfunctory or rich it may be, aesthetic discourse, present among all virtuosos, in its own way expresses and resolves the very contradictions which photographers encounter in their activity, and which they attempt to overcome using the system of rules and prohibitions to which they subject their art. Hence,

simply because it repeats or recalls formulas and discussions long since relegated to the imaginary studies of school exercises, we should not neglect this aesthetic discourse, seeing it merely as an ideological rationalization. The tired commonplaces of this lived rhetoric express the contradictions thrown up by the awareness of illegitimacy and the difficulties implied by the constitution of photography as an artistic medium.[2]

EXCEPTIONS AND COMMONPLACES

Aesthetic discourse always betrays the awareness of the existence of a contradiction between the aesthetic use and the social definition of photography. In fact, the very same contradiction appears beneath the diversity of tropes and arguments used in an attempt to overcome or conceal it.[3] Hidden by the juxtaposition of fragmentary propositions which in turn assert the objectivity and the artistic value of photography, resolutely negated in the dilemma, questioned by the use of comparisons or apologues borrowed from other arts or technologies, and finally blurred by the paradox, the contradiction is still never forgotten. The oracles heeded by the virtuosos, as well as the most assured of those virtuosos, are specialists in the use of paradox, suggested in small-talk or dogmatically asserted in manifestos.

> Thus subtle allusions to the subjectivity of the photographic lens (*objectif*) are often replaced by the development of the paradox: 'Photography is never objective. There was a time when I desperately tried not to add anything to what I say, to put nothing of myself into my photographs, and the harder I tried, the more immediate was the reaction of the viewers: "But it's a photograph by Brassaï". Man is an unrepentant creator. Teach a child to write with normal caligraphic models; the first reflex of any child is to distort those models, to leave its mark in its handwriting. Where is absolute objectivity to be found? The greatest scholars can't find it. De Broglie states: "A phenomenon is modified by the mere fact of being observed."'[4]

The frequency of these aesthetic discussions, the proliferation of different propositions and the eagerness with which virtuosos seek

out thinkers capable of providing a theory for their activity show that the primary function of this aesthetic discourse is reassurance: it seeks to minimize the contradictions encountered by virtuosos, and symbolically to reaffirm the conditions that make photographic art possible. Certainly, the situation of an activity in the process of legitimation, and the awareness of illegitimacy, explain the need for justification and the ambiguity of aesthetic theories which are always close to self-defence. The same reasons tend to explain the confusion of the rationalizations and the inflation of the discourse. In fact, as soon as the issue of legitimacy is raised, rash justifications and precarious theories proliferate. Do the legitimate arts not owe the more rational or systematic character of their aesthetics to the fact that their legitimacy is not in question rather than to the necessity or truth of the answers that they would authorize? Perhaps the very possibility of the question would be enough to call an activity into question and problematize both its rules and its intentions.

However, if a longing for legitimacy goes some way towards explaining the existence of the question and the anxious pursuit of justifications, the uniformity of the questions and the stereotyped character of the answers are explained by the specific facts of the activity as it is constituted by its social definition. The effort to legitimate non-legitimate arts is actually translated into experiences which in various ways answer many different questions and whose form, intentionally scholarly and complex, remains identical. In the case of photography, it is the system of questions and problems that remains identical, while the means of resolving them varies according to the verbal and photographic virtuosity of the specialists and the cultural situation of the groups to which they belong. Rhetorical inflation betrays the awareness of deviation; like normal behaviour, it reveals the existence of a rule that becomes a problem precisely for those who do not follow it. Photographic virtuosos do not only wish to legitimate a non-recognized activity, as jazz or cinema critics seek to do; they also attempt, by transforming a technology used for other ends into an artistic medium, to deny the social definition of the uses and possibilities of photography.[5]

The contradiction is felt most intensely among art photographers, because, unlike journalists and publicity photographers, they cannot find excuses and alibis in the specific demands of a

profession (in the dual sense of both a trade and a professional body). Among the latter, in fact, the bad use of photography may, on the one hand, be imputed to those who commission and dictate it, the journalists or copywriters, or on the other hand, it may be justified by the need to respond to the specific vocation of the professional group, and to respect its norms. Among photographic aesthetes, opposition to the social definition of photography can only seem like an intentional and deliberate violation. Press photographers can ignore the fact that their practice challenges the social definition of photography because they see this challenge as a necessity imposed by the social organization in which they find themselves caught, and because this necessity itself is only per- ceived in a fragmentary and discontinuous way. On the other hand, when aesthetes do not want to see the origins of the contradiction which they feel as lying within themselves or their projects, they can only impute them to the social definition of photography and its cultural status: in fact, by invoking the absence of informed criticism and an educated audience, they are merely denouncing and incriminating the illegitimacy of their activites. It is among aesthetes, because they are the most openly opposed to it, that one can most clearly see the social definition of photography and the difficulties which it creates for those who wish to turn photography into the instrument of an autonomous aesthetic activity. The problem envisaged here is therefore not one of knowing whether the photographic image can give rise to aesthetic emotions – in fact it is impossible to see what, by its nature, would prohibit this. Rather, we shall ask how the condi- tions of the creation and the particular characteristics of the reading of photographs affect and inspire the attempts of virtuoso photographers to win recognition from an audience and a group of artists.

AN UNCERTAIN CREATION AND AN ARBITRARY AESTHETIC

Virtuosos most often juxtapose a vague aesthetic discourse with precise technical language, less in order to conform to the distinc- tion of the noble and the trivial than because they are unable to provide a precise description of their activity.[6] Because it is

impossible to apply traditional aesthetic language to it, photographic creation is difficult to define as such.

> As to the way in which one expresses oneself, there are a thousand and one ways of distilling the things by which we have been seduced. So let's leave the ineffable with all its freshness and not say another word about it.[7]

The description of the most specific aspects of the activity therefore always implies logical ellipses and knowing allusions which successively define photographic activity as an exploration of the natural universe and as the creation of an artistic universe.

> Every chance he gets, he goes off exploring the banks of the Saint-Martin canal, or, most often, the grey streets of the working-class districts: Ivry, Pantin, Aubervilliers. This is how he builds up his visions of a universe that is his own . . .[8]

This text, in which exploration is used to refer both to the stroll of the walking man and the quest of the artist, is only one example among many of a common process: polysemy conpensates for the absence of an established discourse and a precise vocabulary for the description of photographic creation.

The absence of an autonomous critical tradition is doubtless the immediate cause of these uncertainties.[9] But the very difficulties encountered in the attempt to create such a tradition are at least partially explained by the discontinuity and heterogeneity of the operations that make up the photographic act.

The fragmentary and discontinuous character of the discourse therefore refers to the diversity of the phases making up the photographic act, which demand complex descriptions because they are related to different aesthetics. Thus, activities of creation and control, which are important to varying degrees during the taking, developing and printing of the photograph, successively authorize opposing representations of the creative act: it may now be described as architectural asceticism and the Appolonian art of composition, now glorified as demiurgical inspiration and the Dionysian art of creative invention. The diversity and heterogeneity of these moments therefore bring about a fragmentary percep-

tion of the photographic act: perceived as a discontinuous succes-
sion of different operations, it cannot be conceived as a creative act
occurring over a homogeneous period of time and constantly
inspired by identical intentions. The moment of inspiration is
difficult to reconcile with the succession of moments of the making
of the product. In fact, artistic creation must be located within a
period of time whose successive moments interpenetrate to recon-
cile the instantaneous character of inspiration with the length of
the operations necessary for its appearance. For the painter, the
sequence of gestures may seem to be the simple development of an
intention that provokes and inspires them while itself remaining
constant. For the photographer, on the other hand, the technical
process, which requires the successive execution of distinct and
discontinuous operations, necessarily implies a certain type of
temporal sequence which breaks up the evolution of the act of
creation. This explains efforts to capture the creative act in its most
abstract phase, the 'lead-up', the 'high point' which enters the
successive operations and integrates them within the unity of a
single creative inspiration, otherwise hopelessly condemned to be
fragmented during execution.[10]

But discontinuities in the perception of the course of the
operations over time in their turn determine the discontinuous
perception of the photographic act, the successive phases of which
may assume different meanings. The intermittencies of the photo-
graphic act allow us to perceive the cultural ambiguity of photo-
graphy, explaining it while they express it. In fact, photography
may be linked to different models, and may be read as an activity
of recording and reproduction, of artistic creation or technical
operation. And the diversity of the uses of photography, material-
ized to some extent in processes, instruments and methods, in the
final analysis explains how it is that photographers can have an
ambiguous or contradictory perception of their activity, and yet
never manage to see the operations which they carry out as being
acts of pure creation.

In two ways, these representations throw into question the
image that photographers seek to present of themselves: being
both servants of an apparatus and transcribers of the external
world, they can only doubt their creative freedom and the
uniqueness of their creations. The refinements of aesthetes are only

a response to the challenge which the apparatus, as something close to nature, and the external world, as nature's masterpiece, present to the photographer who seeks to create a cultural order by subjecting the objects of the natural world to a chosen order. As a result these two questions are not equally pressing and pregnant. The issue of the uniqueness of the creation, thrown up by the awareness of illegitimacy, appears in and through its relationship to an audience. Always vaguely present, it only becomes pressing when the photographer examines his or her practice and its value. This, in most cases, it only gives rise to an original theory of the relationship between the photographer and his or her object, without actually determining the choice of objects photographed, except in cases defined by the absence of any audience capable of legitimating the photographer's works by recognizing their uniqueness or originality.

> In these latter cases, the external approach provides a complete explanation of the aesthetic, the choice of objects and the stages of the act of creation. It might even be shown that in the case of certain aesthetes, the choice of their preferred subjects could be explained by this concern. This is doubtless true in the case of photographs of chemical substances. 'With crystals, you are already inside things, and everything is in motion, being born, disappearing, you are acting on matter' (J. P. Sudre). The same is true of the choice of the portrait, particularly when it is justified by the desire to discover the interiority concealed by appearances, as in this comment in which a critic explains the intentions of a portraitist: 'Stone by stone he skilfully demolishes the facade behind which every human being seeks to conceal his pettiness'.[11] It is here that we shall find an explanation of the taste for psychological manipulation that certain photographers declare, occasionally so unrestrained that some will go as far as to borrow the language of psychoanalysis or imitate its methods: 'I take psychoanalytical portraits; it creates photographic dramas, for which you have to be tough . . .'

Virtuosos, or their spokesmen, elaborate theories of the world and perception which vary in complexity but which are inspired by the same intention. It is always a matter of establishing a difference *de facto* and *de jure* between the vision of the artist and that of other viewers. Some attempt to do this simply by stressing the changing diversity or the transience of the subjects which they photograph.

'The subject that I photograph is ephemeral' (J. P. Sudre). 'Of all the means of expression, photography alone captures a precise moment. We are dealing with that which disappears and which cannot be brought back to life, hence our distress and also the essential originality of our profession.' 'What could be more transient than a facial expression?'[12]

Others rely on theories which assert the impossibility of perceiving the sights presented by the photographer.

> In ten-thousandths or even billionths of a second, photography reveals to the human eye, which is itself too slow, the separation of phases of movement, and a world previously unknown is opened up.[13]

Some construct whole theories of perception and distraction.

> 'When we go for a walk, there is a whole host of sights which we feel unconsciously, with our whole bodies, but which we cannot see with any precision, because we would no longer be able to walk.' This theory is explained in apologues: 'Going for a walk in the Dordogne one day, in autumn, I picked up the leaf of a poplar from all the leaves lying on the ground, and put it on a piece of white paper. Then, stopping at the next inn, I asked for a sandwich, and the inn-keeper came to serve me. When he saw the poplar leaf, he cried "That's lovely, what is it?" It was his poplar, but he had never seen its leaves; now he was seeing for the first time.'[14]

We can even see the beginnings of idealist aesthetics, which seek to establish a monopoly of artistic vision by relying on a sort of theory of reminiscence which attributes to the artist the exclusive ability to read imperceptible allusions in the perceived world.

> Thus, in reviews of the photographs of the painter Hans Hartung: 'This photographic work shows us the way, always scholarly and always distinguished [...] in which the painter looks at his surroundings, detaching a form from formless things [...], and it is in this way that a stone turned over in the painter's hand finally produces, before his eyes, a sculpture which we could not have found.'[15] 'Nature is full of Hartungs.'[16] But Hartung alone is capable of noticing them.

The issue of legitimacy, a question thrown up by the photographer's relationship to an audience, therefore determines the defences of the practice rather than governing the practice itself. But the dialogue between the creator and the apparatus, also experienced in daily practice, gives rise both to justificatory discourses and to a system of practical rules constituted as an aesthetic. The concern which inspires these norms is explained by the popular representation of the machine; an opaque device with creative intentions, given a sort of autonomy, the tool can paradoxically seem to be in competition with the creator. Because the camera imposes its temporal rhythm, because the photographic process sets in motion a series of physical-chemical reactions which do not seem to require the support of an intention in order to occur, because the objects which the photographer perceives are selected from the collection of natural objects, photographic creation can always be reduced to a natural recording of nature.

The same reasons lead photographers both to fear and to substantiate the idea that a photograph can be repeated and a style copied.

> Yes, that's the problem. Now everyone's starting to copy Clergues, photographs of mud, carcasses and so on.

Style can always be broken down into 'tricks', and here originality is not the synthetic appearance of a work but the combined effect of processes whose analysis, and hence whose reproduction, is seldom considered impossible. If photographic aesthetes in particular are keen to challenge this idea, it is not primarily because the existence of multiple prints strips photography of the 'aura' attached to a unique work. While forgeries and copies do not deprive the original painting of its uniqueness, and even serve only to underline it, the proliferation of identical photographs constitutes a uniform series in which all works are of equal worth; the proliferation of works of comparable style destroys the originality of the style which they are imitating because nothing – or apparently nothing – prevents the copy from equalling the model.

The questions which aesthetes ask themselves are not determined by the possibilities which photography actually presents, but, as can be seen here, by the social definition of this technology

and by the social conditions regulating its use. In fact, while everything makes the exact repetition of a photograph unlikely (because that would presuppose too great a series of coincidences), it is still considered possible because the social definition of photographic technology encourages this, and merely considering it possible is enough for it to be able to question the originality of artistic creation. Likewise, if forgeries are never mentioned, this cannot be explained by the autonomous existence of the sights recorded, which are aspects of nature and not the creation of the artist, but rather by the absence of any sources for the recognition and sanctioning of originality. The threat of reproduction is therefore only one of the modalities of the threat of dispossession which aesthetes cannot avoid sensing, because of social definition of their activity.

How else are we to understand why we find an aesthetic of objective chance is never encountered among photographers, even amongst those who draw their inspiration from surrealism?

> Thus, Man Ray has never accepted the theory of objective chance, and has instead privileged control and mastery. For example, he denies having used solarizations in a bold and uncontrolled way: 'I was working in a hotel room in Montparnasse. One day, by accident, the curtain opened. That produced solarizations. I did the experiment a hundred times, directing and controlling it. When I had controlled it absolutely, I exhibited my works. People said, "Your experiments are interesting." I answered, "I'm not showing you my experiments, but only my finished works."'[17]

Likewise, the exploration of the 'visual unconscious', the specific vocation of photography according to Benjamin, has never entered any aesthetic programme.[18] Chance and *naïveté* are not recognized as means of legitimate creation, because the apparatus interposes itself and constantly threatens to intercept the creative intention, and also because the work of art can be seen as a work of juxtaposition, the product of the interplay of the instrument and chance.[19] This representation becomes all the more compelling through being substantiated by the unintentional successes of amateur photographers.

> In fact, art can be anywhere, for example in a photographer who makes a masterpiece without knowing it.

It is, on the other hand, much more than a circumstantial concern. The vaguenesses in the legislation on authors' rights and the discussions on this matter, in which jurisprudence abounds, objectively testify to the ambiguity of the photographic act, situated half-way between being a creative act and a manufacturing operation.[20] Any attempts to institute a magical relationship between the photographer and the camera, and to use the irrational and incomprehensible elective affinity with the instrument to negate the constraint imposed by the process and the uniformity that it brings about, can only ever be verbal assertions contradicted by the concrete conditions in which photographs are made.

> There is an emotional attachment to a camera; I love my Leica both physically and emotionally.

In fact, the state of photographic technology obliges photographers to carry out specific operations which pre-exist their intentions, and which can therefore not be conceived as gestures freely brought about by their creative intentions and modelled on those intentions.

It seems, then, that photographic aesthetes who seek to assert the creative intention are only repeating the cultural experience in its original form. In order to assert the victory of culture over the nature of the object and the camera, they must subject themselves to arbitrary rules and institute a rigorous system of prohibitions. Whether one reduces the machine to a slave-like obedience, or takes liberties with the rules for its use, this decisive aesthetic is always based on the same intention, namely that of negating the fate that automatism appears to impose.

> 'So Clergue doesn't develop his pictures in a bath at the temperature indicated? When he develops them in a different way, it will be the result that M. Clergue is after. By the very fact of developing in a different way from other people, he is imprinting his personality, his signature. There are three categories of photographers: those who do not develop correctly – they are the mass; those who develop correctly – that's the machine; Clergue develops in his own way: that's what great photographers do.' 'Photography must be reduced to a slave-like obedience.'

In Man Ray's aesthetic, the mistake is an extreme realization of

this intention: in fact it brings together the absolute of mastery and the absolute of arbitrariness.

> Man Ray, who used to call himself a *'fautographe'*,[21] declared: 'The violation of the materials used is a guarantee of the creator's convictions.'[22]

The rules to which aesthetes subject themselves therefore always apply within very narrow boundaries: in order to assert the goodwill of the artist, they must deny the authority of the process, without ever admitting or acknowledging the effectiveness of chance. This aesthetic enterprise is like an ethic of pure intention.[23] The photographer who perfectly realized the rigorist ideal of a practice entirely freed of the determinations imposed by the instrument and its objects would risk going beyond the limits of photography. But this utopia cannot be realized completely (although it appears to be the latent key to all actual tendencies) without abolishing the specificity of photography. Whether they formally imitate the processes of other arts, or have no connection with photography apart from that produced by the use of photographic chemical substances (*chimigrammes*), or the use of light as a graphic medium (*photogrammes*), the experiments of certain photographers are condemned in the name of the specificity of photographic art.

In fact, everything takes place as if there were a set of processes, gestures, objects and genres from which the various forms of expression chose their own media, each one attempting to create, from this collection of possibilities, a specific system that differed, in its media, objects and processes, from the systems elaborated by the other arts.[24] As supporters of a threatened art, photographic aesthetes seek all the more jealously to preserve the originality of their media: thus, for example, imitating the processes or activities of the painter would mean slipping into the plagiarism or caricaturing of a consecrated art.[25] It is only at this cost that their vocation as photographic aesthetes can sustain its value and originality. Attentive fidelity to the specific process is only a form of fidelity to the vocation: it makes it possible to constitute photographic art in opposition to the other arts, and protects it from a comparison which would reduce it to the status of a minor art. But it has one

other function in particular. In seeking to negate the natural determinacy of creation, one risks falling into the indeterminacy of an ambiguous body of cultural work, which appears to be the approximate and mediocre realization of intentions better served by other arts, and partially and imperfectly amenable to an infinite number of criteria.

> Photography is so rich that photo-montage spoils everything. You already have an infinity within your hands, and if you take on another one, it stops working and you're lost. (J.-P. Sudre)

The aesthetic intention asserted in the rules ensuring and demonstrating mastery of the camera cannot therefore do away with the camera, since it still remains the activity's best principle of regulation. The history of photographic art shows that it can only be constituted and seen as an art if it finds a principle of limitation within its object or its media.[26] In the United States, after a period that introduced an art photography which was merely a 'sterile forgery of academic painting', the first aesthetic, that of the 'Photo-cession' movement, defined by Stieglitz around the 1910's, and still inspired by painting, allowed direct and sometimes complicated manual interventions, which would now be refused as deriving from drawing or engraving.[27] This freedom which photographers allowed themselves within their media was permissible and possible because a principle of limitation existed within their aims: finding an unambiguous aesthetic principle in resemblance to paintings, art photography could be realized without the dictation of any limitation in its media. Is the painstaking systematization of licit media to which virtuosos subject themselves not made all the more necessary the more uncertain their objects?

AESTHETIC REMINISCENCE AND SOCIAL STATUS

The photographer's works seem never to be explicit enough to impose, unaided, the meaning that the photographer sought to give them. Aesthetes reveal, as much through their anxieties as through their choice of subjects, that they always doubt the value of their means of expression and the possibility of creating totally

meaningful photographs. Even the most recognized virtuosos sometimes assert their disillusion with meaningless pictures.[28] The possibility of the realization of a photograph which would, unequivocally and unaided, impose the meaning with which the photographer has loaded it, often strikes them as inaccessible or, at best, extremely difficult.

> What I am desperately seeking is the one photograph that is self-sufficient in its rigour – but without claiming to be art, psychoanalysis or sociology – and in its intensity, and whose subject goes beyond the anecdotal.[29]

Reference to the object represented always introduces a proliferation of parasitic signs, sketches of uncontrolled meanings, lateral meanings which authorize all possible readings without ever establishing one. Only external and extrinisic signs can remove the ambiguities from photography. One may wonder, for example, whether old photographs do not owe their evocative power to the oblivion and displacement that replace the plethora of suggested meanings with one sole meaning, that of antiquatedness or datedness. In Atget's photographs, we no longer see streets or shops in their contingent particularity, which we cannot recognize: we perceive only one meaning, the past in itself.

The artistic media used by photographers most often seek to render the photograph unambiguous, and to link the excess of signifier to one sole signified. The most vulgar of these is the caption, since it is a statement of the insufficiency which it is designed to alleviate. But there are more subtle forms which are of the same order and satisfy the same need. Thus, for example, there are 'literary photographs', homages to painters and writers.[30] Do portraits of artists not owe their particular value to the works and lives of their models, which constitute something like the caption to the photograph? In a portrait of Giacometti by Cartier-Bresson, it is because we can see, beside Giacometti, the graceful and tremulous silhouette of his statues, that we are able to read the 'blur' of the sculptor's silhouette. Thus the rhetoric of photography always tends to constitute one sole meaning by limiting or organizing the profusion of signs partially contained by the constantly perceived reference to the object reproduced.

Virtuosos compose series of photographs on one subject; thus, for example, Lucien Clergue has composed series of views of bulls in the arena, nudes, dead birds.

The superfluous assertion of one sole signifying intention over a series of photographs allows the photographer to neutralize the proliferation of contradictory signs in order to show nothing but this single intention through his series of successive views.

Within the individual photograph, accumulation and antithesis constitute the privileged figures of photographic rhetoric: in one, the multiple signs reinforce and support one another in order to supply a meaning; in the other, the diversity of signs is neglected in favour of the meaning produced by the opposition of two objects united in a chance meeting. This uncertainty cannot be eliminated solely by using distortion to suppress all reference to the model. The objects created, freed from any relationship to a model, still fail to attain an unambiguous meaning, while the contradictions involved in their creation multiply; the absence of any object of reference reinforces doubts about the image as an act of blind production.

In the absence of any established symbolic system, photography's signs remain vague, confused and ambiguous. Thus, the audience which reads them cannot adopt the aesthetic attitude towards them, or entertain specific expectations. At best, art photography is the object of a negative definition, in contrast to press or publicity photography, and as illustrative photography it seeks a reading which is indifferent but not aesthetic. The very way in which aesthetes show their photographs attests to various efforts to present them as specific and hence to produce in the audience attitudes different from those ordinarily adopted. Thus the choice of a particular format, the exhibition of photographs glued to wood, the destruction of the negatives to give the print the 'aura' of a unique work, and finally the choice of exceptional subjects, whether they be 'meaningless', noble or poetically valorized, have the sole purpose of stressing the strangeness of the photographs and, as a result, of provoking a reading which is in itself exceptional. Surely a properly photographic symbolism could be constituted if photographs were read with reference to other works or according to interpretative schemata comparable to those applied to other works of art.

Aesthetes thus act upon the immediate cause of their difficulties, but without seeing that this itself depends on a remote cause and that the socially defined characteristics of photography barely make it possible to adopt an aesthetic stance towards photographs.

Using an expressive medium which is uncertain because it is unable to refer to a system of symbols, photographers must therefore seek the meaning of their photographs in valorized objects, and in the traditions which valorize them. The aesthetic which one might call 'Platonic', an aesthetic based on deciphering and unveiling, also expresses the deeper meaning of photography.[31]

> The photographer sees in the object the photograph which he will take. He is not drawn by the object itself but by a certain 'photographic material'. This is why the imagination is very important to the photographer, comparable to that of the musician: when Mozart heard birdsong, what he actually heard was possible 'musical material' rather than a 'song'.[32]

Thus photography has affinities with the many different forms of collecting natural objects seen as allusions, hidden designs for works of art, such as collections of flotsam or stones.[33]

This aesthetic is close to that which Proust describes in Elstir, which he attributes to the 'erosion' of genius:

> He was nearing the age at which we count on bodily satisfactions to stimulate the force of the brain, at which mental fatigue, by inclining us towards materialism, and the diminution of our energy, towards the possibility of influences passively received, begin to make us admit that there may indeed be certain bodies, certain callings, certain rhythms that are specially privileged, realising so naturally our ideal that even without genius, merely by copying the movement of a shoulder, the tension of a neck, we can achieve a masterpiece.[34]

The photographic gaze perceives and captures objects which seem to 'carry within them ready-made' a work of art. But the reminiscences of the gaze are only made possible by knowing and associating with groups that define a tradition.

The list of valorized subjects is not actually defined with

reference to a culture, but rather by familiarity with a limited group. Divisions between virtuosos may thus be explained by the diversity of the relationships which they have with these groups and by the diversity of the traditions and relationships to culture that are determined by membership of them. We may see, for example, that for the most established virtuosos the hierarchy of valorized objects is defined by a group of artists and writers.

> Many of Brassaï's photographs refer to literary themes (cats, the world of Paris by night); this is also true of the photographs of Lucien Clergue, which resemble a 'photographic poetry'.

Individual aesthetics can therefore only be completely understood if one takes into account the relationship that the photographers have with the groups that define the meaning which they find scattered in things.

It is always the relationship to a legitimate group and an audience that defines the modality and pregnancy of the questions which virtuosos ask themselves, and that determines their awareness of the specific characteristics of photography. For example, if photography never has the value of uniqueness because it is considered repeatable, it is also because the audience is not prepared to look for differences and is in any case incapable of discerning the subtle variations which would distinguish comparable photographs and which define the original style of a photograph. The absence of style and originality is primarily the absence of an audience capable of perceiving what constitutes style and originality. The concern for legitimacy and the issue of aesthetic freedom therefore originate in and through the relationship to a group.[35] while the concern for creative freedom, determined by the relationship with the camera, exists among all photographers, it takes different forms according to the relationship which photographers have to those groups that define the set of meaningful subjects for them. Thus, *petits-bourgeois* aesthetes in camera clubs find, in their groups, the norms of an academicism which defines a series of legitimate subjects. Dedicated to the applied pursuit of those subjects, they ignore the question of creative freedom and exclude tricks and technical experimentation in order to defend an aesthetic of correctness. As cultural consumers, they have achieved

their aims when they are able to recognize, in the natural world, the prestigious themes of a scholarly tradition which they thus attempt to appropriate.

> The accumulation of artistic schools cited by a camera club president in support of his opinion gives an indication of this: 'I learned to love and to appreciate: Egyptian art, Etruscan pottery, Greco-Roman sculptures, the mosaics of Ravenna, the primitive painters, the great artists of the Renaissance and their works, the painters of the Flemish school. Closer to our own times, the Impressionists, Rodin, Bourdelle ... all works whose beauty has shaped my taste and become a solid basis on which to rest my aesthetic judgements.'[36]

They ignore the challenge of the machine because the artistic intention cannot be realized either better or otherwise than in the discernment shown by a person of taste in his selection of the most noble subjects.

Thus we can understand why the aesthetic exercise is naturally organized like a competition. Because of the existence of an unshakeable hierarchy of noble aesthetic objects, aesthetic success can only be the recognition of those objects, and artistic perfection can only be the faultless presentation of those objects captured in the most beautiful way: aesthetic activity can then proceed within the fixed frame of the competitions which call forth the hierarchy of noble objects and focus attention upon them. This aesthetic attitude is actually linked to an ambiguous cultural position which produces a sense of the existence of noble arts and subjects, and yet does not allow a thorough knowledge of them. The practice of academic photography therefore enables one to become familiar with the legitimate arts by providing a training in the knowledge of their preferred subjects or privileged situations.

Consecrated virtuosos, for their part, find a fairly clear definition of legitimate subjects in the tradition of the group of artists or writers with which they associate and whose portraits they often take. A virtuoso is actually consecrated less by the purchase of his works by museums or collectors than by the admiration and acknowledgement of a group of writers or artists. The most famous aesthetic photographers, such as Man Ray, Brassaï and

Clergue, are primarily distinguished by their membership of a group of artists or writers whose works, statements or prefaces constitute a commentary, in either an immediate or a remote way, on their works. The admiration of one's peers constitutes a partial legitimacy which is at least enough to establish the photographer as an artist. Thus their attention to technical norms is less fastidious; the artistic intention and artistic quality are adequately proven by the choice of the objects which are given value within the confines of their group. The anxious pursuit of the highest degree of meaning is more important than the effort to assert mastery, because the heterogeneity of the milieu with which they associate, which is open to various different schools, brings them into contact with traditions that are sometimes divergent.

Always integrated within a group and attached to a tradition, whether academic or modern, these virtuosos are opposed to those who, not recognizing the legality of academicism and not sharing in the certainties of the artistic milieu, are condemned to the solitary quest for the work of art. It is among the latter, unsure of their creative freedom and uncertain of the meaning of their work, that the problems posed by the use of photography are felt most acutely. They therefore strive most assiduously for the meaningful work masterfully created. But decisive norms and vacillating meanings sustain the idea of arbitrariness and the insecurity of artistic activity. Their aesthetic effort therefore consists particularly in the symbolic declaration of the conditions of its own possibility, and their work, like their aesthetic, is only the assertion of a pure artistic intention.

> There are no rules but, in all the arts, the essential thing is the artist's statement. The important thing is the man behind it, everything that man thinks and tries to express [. . .]. For the painter, his painting and what it shows are unimportant; the important thing is the man behind it [. . .]. The public is ill-informed; as far as the public is concerned, anything is good.[37]

While it finds its extreme expression in isolated aesthetes, none of the groups that we have distinguished is unfamiliar with this insecurity because the recognition and reassurance which they find in various groups are never such as to suspend questions and allow them to forget their doubts.

In fact, more than their condition, which is never so secure that they can make a living from their products, the awareness of the situation in which their artistic effort is accomplished and the circumstances which make it possible always make it seem questionable.[38] Thus, because the originality of a work faces threats from two quarters, first the threat of going unnoticed because there is no audience capable of recognizing it, and secondly that of being negated because the particularities of its style will be turned into processes, the role of the group which recognizes and sanctions the artistic work seems to be essential. It is only through the group that the precedence and uniqueness of the work can be established: the merit of the work thus always seems to be recognized for reasons which lie outside the work itself.

An aesthetic born of the fear of seeing the creative intention 'naturalized' by the camera, and a symbolism defined only in relation to a group, do not have sufficient necessity to be recognized as universal. This insecurity explains why photographers often assiduously seek the 'outward signs' of the artist, such as an abstract pretension to freedom, a taste for coteries, artistic rhetoric, the general use both in speech and lifestyle of attitudes characteristic of the 'artistic style'. The very diversity of the legitimating authorities is given a function here. By their very opposition, the various groups amount to a reciprocal guarantee of the solidity of the theories which they defend or which they produce. In the world of virtuosos, the interplay of criticism and polemic at least has the function of confirming each group in its belief in the value of its theories.

As decisive cultures which always reveal the intention behind them and the groups which secrete them, photographic aesthetes are experienced as false and illegitimate rules. Behind these rules, aesthetics always perceive the groups which have produced them. Aesthetic discussions always seem to be the particular form of a relationship between groups, and this perception is made all the more keen and acute by the fact that each of the antagonistic groups always definitively denounces the aesthetics opposed to its own as the arbitrary decrees of a coterie. Whether competition judges are accused of using aesthetic canons to substantiate their own dominance,[39] or whether the relationship between photogra-

phy and painting is described as that between two rival companies,[40] factional dicussions always betray a social perception.

Photographic aesthetes are clearly aware of the social situation of their art. When they denounce the ambiguous cultural status of photography, they are naming the true source of their anxiety. That status probably derives from the specific characteristics of the photographic act and its instrument, but on the other hand it unquestionably serves to explain the nature of the relationship between aesthetes and their instruments, and the contradiction in an attempt at aesthetic promotion which never succeeds in finding, in obedience to arbitrary laws, the security and certainty which come from respect for the ordinary norms of the practice, which have been abolished but not replaced or superseded. All aesthetes at least agree in calling for a photographic museum,[41] a consecrated place for the preservation of consecrated works, because this generic consecration would at least justify the ambition of aesthetic creation through photography.

It remains to be asked why virtuosos place themselves in such an awkward situation by choosing to treat photography as an art. To choose a means of expression which condemns the artistic intention to be declared rather than realized, one must doubtless be driven by the pure intention to be an artist. So by studying the groups which produce this particular form of aesthetic ambition, camera club virtuosos and particularly professional photographers, we can understand the origins of the vocation of the photographic artist. The sociological process which restricts conscious plans to their objective meaning is less likely to risk being reductive here than it does elsewhere; in fact the aesthetic intention which chooses to act in an area where it is condemned to remain an intention is perhaps nothing but the veiled expression of a social intention.

5

Professional Men or Men of Quality: Professional Photographers

Luc Boltanski and Jean-Claude Chamboredon

Professor: *What distinguishes these languages is neither the words,*
which are all absolutely the same, nor the structure of the
sentences, which is similar in every case, nor the intona-
tion, which offers no variation, nor the rhythm of speech
... what distinguishes them ... Are you listening to me?
.....
Pupil: *Is what?*
Professor: *Is an intangible thing. An intangible thing you can only*
grasp after a certain length of time, after much difficulty
and long experience ...
Pupil: *Really?*
Professor: *Yes, really, Mademoiselle. There are no rules for it. You*
have to have the knack, that's all there is to it. And to
have the knack needs study, study, and still more study.
<div align="right">Ionesco, The Lesson</div>

THE EXPECTATION OF THE PROFESSION AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PROFESSIONALS

Does practising photography as a professional activity mean being integrated into a professional group and seeing oneself in this way?[1] Photographers are, or claim to be, isolated; should the rarity of friendships and personal ties between photographers not be taken as an indication of this?[2] Photographers are said to be

'individualistic', 'particular', 'jealous of their work', in short, independent people who 'pinch other people's ideas and can't co-operate'. Speaking of themselves and their profession, photographers always define themselves in terms of their uniqueness and originality, comparing themselves more often with other photographers than with professionals from other areas. Refusing the profession any unity the better to assert the diversity among professionals, photographers always seem inclined to see any examination of their profession and their situation within this profession as aggressive. They only come out of themselves to construct the utopia of an organized profession. The image of regulated diversity, which is only a dream, complements and reinforces that of informal diversity, which is given as reality.

> Groups of photographers are often deceptive: take the group *des Quinze*. It was a group of artists, a union of forces aiming for the same goal, a set of things which were well established from the start, a bond was sealed. But in fact there was no general line. [. . .] Fifteen photographers met to talk, to talk to each other. [. . .] They did communicate among themselves, they formed groups, they met and talked about their profession. Those were the basic reasons behind this movement. They had dinners; I went, and the coversation was lamentable. After that, it fell apart. (Industrial photographer)

Is this lack of unity not due to the characteristics of the profession rather than the 'character' of the professionals, and does it not reflect the objective diversity of conditions? The profession includes employees but also independent photographers, small craftsmen working alone or with the help of a family assistant, or real business managers employing more than ten workers. The disparity of salaries and incomes is as great as that of the initial investments needed to set up in business, which can range from the purchase of a good second-hand camera for a freelance photographer to the purchase of a big studio, for example, or the equipment necessary for the treatment of colour emulsions. The variety of tasks is even greater. Many photographers develop the work of amateurs, sell cameras and photographic products and accept all orders for photographs. A new type of professional is appearing, however, specializing in darkroom work or in camer-

awork, and practising, for example, industrial, fashion, stage, press, portrait, art photography and so on. So many different specializations which authorize their practitioners to use the title of photographer, and whose diversity makes the task of exhaustively and strictly defining the profession a difficult one.[3]

Are actual differences in attitudes (and in the representations of those attitudes) not arranged according to the categories that objectively define the position of photographers within their profession? The proportion of photographers who assert, for example, that photographic activity is an artistic activity, or an artistic profession, or a 'job like any other', remains the same independent of professional status, specialization, income or even type of activity. The same is true with regard to reading the professional press, a good index of the interest taken in the activity, the definition given of it, or even of integration within the professional milieu.[4] We could provide many examples of this kind. Everything takes place as if the distribution of attitudes and images of professional activity within the society of photographers were due solely to the rules of chance, or solely to psychological determinants and individual choices. Diversity of training must be added to differences in status, income or specialization.[5] There is no legislation governing entry into the photographic profession. One may become a photographer whenever and however one chooses. Neither the possession of the most basic state diploma (the Certificat d'Aptitude Professionelle – CAP) nor attendance at a school, nor even apprenticeship with a photographer is legally required for the practice of the profession.[6]

However, apart from a small number of specializations (medical or astronomical photography, for example), which call for the application of specific methods, whose technical complexity perhaps derives less from photography itself than from the area in which it is used, the practice of specializations is strictly independent of professional qualification, since the acquisition of a school qualification does not systematically lead to the practice of those specializations which seem most specific. It does not increase the chances of practising photography as a craft, or the chances of running larger businesses. For employees it is even less of a promise of a higher salary, since the hierarchy of incomes varies in an inverse ratio to qualification.[7] It affects neither the representa-

tions which photographers have of their professional future and the conditions necessary for success, nor their opinion about the type of training needed in order to practise the profession.

Can the diversity of photographic milieux and the uselessness of professional qualifications not be explained with reference to the evolution of a profession which constantly demands lower levels of competence? Even if one rejects the picture that photographers sometimes draw (which makes too sharp a contrast between an idealized past and a present in decline), the fact remains that the professional practice of photography today demands lower levels of knowledge more quickly acquired. The advanced state of cameras and photographic products, principally the work of manufacturing engineers, has permitted the rationalization of work. Tasks which previously fell to professional photographers have been simplified: the most delicate and difficult operations, requiring the use of complex equipment, have been taken away from photographers to become the specialization of qualified technicians. Thus, while photographers have ceased, since the end of the last century, to make their own emulsions, they still had to control the effect of light on those emulsions, choose the aperture of the diaphragm in relation to the shutter speed, and prepare baths for the development of prints. In the absence of special apparatuses or because of the rudimentary character of the equipment (and especially because of the difficulties involved in using films and papers with a very low range of exposure) these diverse operations required skill and dexterity in the use of an endless number of fragmentary formulas.

> In the old days there weren't any high-speed films. Back then, the photographic profession had a higher status than it does today. The first facility was the electric light. Now they have an electronic flash; before, in the press, we used to work with magnesium, and you had to be quick; in the agencies they used to come back with plates at night, and printed them straight away. And there were no glazers; we had to dry them in gas-heated cupboards with grilles. (Sports photographer, 65)

So photographers had to be highly skilled in formulas and techniques. They acquired particular and intermittent skills, sepa-

rated from the theoretical principles behind them, which were tried
out and put into practice after being observed rather than being
abstractly learned in an experimental situation and assimilated
through imaginary applications. Traditional apprenticeship was
therefore particularly well-adapted to this kind of knowledge.
Apprenticeship was necessary for all those who wished to practise
the profession; apprentice photographers had to become familiar
with the complete range of tasks, even the most humble. The
complexity and length of this training conferred a certain
homogeneity on the professional group, especially in that it
enabled the group to control the recruitment of its members: the
hoi-polloi of amateurs and unqualified people was unable to join
the profession.

> Young people went to the darkroom, and there was a sort of natural
> promotion. They came out according to their ability. You had to be
> able to express yourself in photographs. They added a technology
> to that. Because in photography 50 per cent is taking pictures and 50
> per cent is darkroom work. Half the work is done in the darkroom.
> More than anything, the photographer relies on technology. But
> now the human quality of the photographer has changed. (Press
> photographer, 55)
>
> At that time, photographers were artists. They had to make their
> collodium plates themselves. They learned by being apprenticed to
> photographers; it was preferable to going to school. There are a lot
> more photographers around now, because when young people
> don't know what to do, they buy a Rolleiflex and call themselves
> photographers. But it's very easy. It isn't at all like the 13 × 18. The
> other day, there was a young photographer at my house. I said to
> him: 'Could you photograph the house opposite with a 13 × 18 and
> get it in focus?' He said he couldn't. There are more photographers
> because the profession is easier. (Photographer of art works, 63)

Rationalization and technical advances therefore tend to deprive
the professional group of its unity and the profession of its
specificity because they facilitate access to it or turn photography,
in its most complex forms, into a secondary technology rapidly
acquired by specialists in other disciplines.[8] Consequently, the
diversity of behaviour and attitudes may be explained less by the
professional practice than by the diversity of the directions which

it can take and the expectations to which it can give rise. Can these be understood other than by analyzing the differences in photographers' social backgrounds, and in the reasons for their choice of profession? Since the photographic profession does not recruit subjects of comparable educational level and with similar training, the study of the diverse which they may have received cannot teach us anything about the nature of the profession, its degree of technical complexity or the ease with which it is entered, but it does tell us about the people whom it recruits and, more precisely, their attitude towards a profession which they have chosen to learn. The choice of a professional qualification and the particular form of that qualification are never independent of the level of general education. In fact, the diversity of the education which photographers have had does not merely prove the absence of any rules of recruitment, it more particularly attests to the diversity of academic careers, which can finish either at the level of primary or higher education.[9] The acquisition of a professional qualification is less frequent the higher the educational level.[10] But it cannot be claimed, as the statements made by the photographers themselves sometimes suggest, that training or skill, acquired or cultivated outside of the institutionally defined paths, can replace professional qualifications.

> In fact, photographers often make similar qualities or abilities the condition of success: 'To enter this milieu, you need a few qualifications' (Photographer of art works). 'Yes, you have to be talented, talent's very important' (Advertising photographer). 'It's a profession that requires a lot of taste' (Industrial photographer).

A taste for photography, marked by an intense practice before entry into the profession (and often by membership of a camera club) is, in inverse proportion to qualification, more frequent the higher the educational level, only because, at the age at which one becomes a photographer, the chances of practising photography as an amateur increase in parallel.[11] The practice of photography as an amateur is as frequent among photographers who have acquired a qualification as it is among those who have not,[12] and has no other influence on professional situation; success in the profession is independent of the attitude which one held towards photography before entering the profession.

Paradoxically, it is the most general training that seems to determine the clearest objective differences between photographers. In fact, those subjects who have completed secondary education are clearly opposed to those with only primary education, through their higher chances of becoming craftsmen and of having the taking of photographs as their chief activity.[13] But objective differences in professional situation cannot really be attributed to differences in educational level if we know that the need for lengthy studies is acknowledged only by those who have taken such a course themselves: far from being a matter of general agreement among photographers, it is only the reflection of the trajectories which some of them have followed before practising their profession; and if we also know that not all differences in educational level are always translated into differences in professional situation.[14] Is there no primary cause which would explain both the objective differences between photographers and the diversity of their training, the secondary cause of those differences?

In every social class, a professional school training is taken by clearly defined groups: adolescents from the upper classes who have not completed their secondary studies, and adolescents of middle- and working-class origin with a primary educational level.[15] The diversity of educational levels is attributable not to unequal abilities in passing through the stages of a required or at least a desirable course of education, but to the different modalities – of length or form, theory or practice – of training for the profession in the various social classes. If subjects from the working classes enter the profession at an early age, most often after passing the CEP and, in most cases, having acquired the CAP in photography, for subjects from other classes (and the highest classes in particular) training for the profession takes a longer time and more theoretical forms.

In fact, those who choose to obtain a professional qualification are the photographers whose scholastic career has not conformed to the demands of their class of origin.[16] This is the only explanation for the identical nature of the behaviour of young people from the upper classes who have been through higher education and those of middle-class origin who have an intermediate educational level. Going to a professional school is often simply

a symbolic means of conforming to the course taken by most of the members of one's class of origin, more completely so the closer the curricula of the school are to the general education provided by grammar schools.[17] Consequently, first of all, those subjects who enter the profession by going to a photographic school are the subjects of highest social origin, and those among them with the lowest educational level; secondly, students at photographic schools are characterized by their high rate of scholastic failure; thirdly, the differences that separate them in this respect from the set of adolescents of their class of origin increase the higher their social origin.[18] Because pedagogical discourse in its traditional form has to confer value on the activity which it communicates, especially among upper-class children, professional training is never judged to be too theoretical or too advanced.

> The opposing judgements of two pupils of different social origin –
> the first the son of a teacher, the second the son of a policeman –
> with regard to the education provided by the school provide a good
> illustration of the difference in the models of professional training
> and the scholastic expectations of the different classes: 'A school
> education was more or less what I was expecting. I think there could
> have been still more general courses. General culture is necessary
> for dealings with the outside world. We should do some geography.
> You have to have some education. Also, two years of school is too
> short. There are things you should do that you don't do.' 'There are
> new general courses in maths and physics. That's fine from the
> point of view of general culture, but it's not really vital for us. The
> most important thing for me is to get my diploma, and I hope to get
> it. If the only thing that mattered was photography, that would be
> all right; but there are general courses: physics, maths, English, that
> could bring your average crashing down.'

The diversity of the itineraries followed by photographers determines different attitudes towards the profession. These in turn to a large extent contribute to the diversification of the photographic milieu, and even more strongly to the way in which professionals perceive it. Variations in the age of entry into the profession, which reflect differences in the duration of studies, the type of profession studied and the chosen form of training, involve a series of systematically oriented variations. Everything takes

place as if all the attitudes, which become more diverse the more clearly they are manifested, were primarily defined in opposition to a specific attitude, characteristic of subjects who become photographers before the age of twenty; as if, without constituting the modal type, these subjects formed an exemplary category from which all subjects seek to distinguish themselves because it illustrates, by its very existence, the ease of access into the profession and the low level of its demands. Since the training acquired is always determined by the values of the class of origin rather than by the demands of the profession, it does not give rise, as it does in other fields, to inequalities in access to the profession, but rather to differences which are immediately asserted or sought in professional attitudes. The different meaning of the photographic profession for different classes depends on the context in which it occurs and precisely on the chances of rising to a more prestigious status, both of which are dependent on the chances of access to higher education. While the profession recruits a large number of its members from subjects of middle-class origin, for whom it represents a profession with a status more or less equal to that of their class of origin, it is especially characterized by the high proportion of subjects of upper-class origin.[19] The latter, while they most often choose photography for negative reasons, most frequently justify their choice of profession with reference to a vocation.[20] To justify this apparent paradox it is not enough to cite the ideological transformation of fate into free choice, and to reveal the function of this transformation which, by asserting the spontaneous choice of a profession, and precisely this profession, enables one to negate one's failure in training for other professions. But we are encouraged to do this by statistics which show that the assertion of a vocation, often associated with scholastic failure among the pupils of the École Technique de Photo et de Cinéma, is in no way linked to the objective signs of a particular taste for photography, whether they be an intense practice, the reading of photographic magazines or going to photographic exhibitions.

In 'yielding' to the photographic vocation, adolescents from the upper classes are conforming to the norms of their class, according to which a talent is the secret of scholastic success and the condition for one's choice of profession.[21]

They are content to adopt – outside its normal sphere and under

the pressure of constraints – an attitude which normally applies only to the most prestigious professions. Claims to exceptional talent are perhaps an unverifiable way of claiming membership of a group which always tends to portray itself as a meritocracy: is it not better to declare an irresistible vocation for a profession with a lower status than those normally practised by the members of one's class than to train rationally for a low-status profession? The photographic profession in particular lends itself to these ideological games because, since it requires no rationally organized training, it permits oneiric representations of professional choice.[22]

Is there not a parallel between the situation of these subjects and some subjects of working-class origin who become photographers and choose a status which could be described as 'an upward downclassing'? This choice, exercised outside ordinary limits and ignoring the upward path normal within their class (such as that presented by technical training), denotes, as well as the wish to escape their class of origin, a marginal situation which makes that wish possible.[23] This marginality gives rise to exceptional aspirations without, however, allowing them to be rationally exercised or realized.[24] Thus the choice of the photographic profession and the situation in which that choice is made, always linked to downclassing or, as is often the case among people of middle-class origin, seen in a disparity between aspirations and their realization, reveals the ambiguity of the profession, which may be secreted in diverse trajectories and receive very different meanings, as well as in the similarities which profoundly unite those who choose it: whatever their social origin, they unite in cultivating charismatic representations of the profession and of those who practise it. Because, in the area of the arts or entertainments, the acquisition of a profession has generally occurred outside the limits in which professional choices are normally made,[25] it has been enough to decree that a hobby should be turned into a profession without also deciding on the means and educational routes towards the realization of that transformation.[26] Finally and particularly, because this choice is necessarily made outside the normal procedures of the class of origin, it can appear to be inspired by the possession of exceptional qualities, that is, a free determination that escapes the normal rules. This explains why charismatic representations are more frequent the greater the distance from normal procedures,

and similarly why subjects from the upper classes and subjects from the working classes agree on this point, the latter, by relying on 'taste' or 'imagination', providing a more modest replication of the vocation cited by the former. It also explains why rational representations of the choice of the profession and the qualities which it demands occur most frequently among the children of photographers.

The ambiguity of the profession, which thus predisposes it to be a privileged site of social mobility, explains why the real divisions within the profession, independent of all specific characteristics, training or special ability, depend solely on social origin. Here, social origin does not only determine the perception which subjects have of their profession (and particularly the attitudes which they adopt towards their colleagues), but directly gives rise to differences in professional status: the chances of becoming a craftsman rather than an employee and, this being the case, of running a relatively sizeable business, taking photographs and practising prestigious specializations rather than darkroom work, rise with social origin.[27] The heterogeneity of recruitment into the photographic profession, as well as the diversity of the meanings that it can be given by those who practise it, are therefore the truth that is betrayed by photographers' assertions about the lack of unity in the professional milieu. But the very reasons for this diversity and the constancy of the differences linked to social origins that lie beneath the diversity of professional situations call for a study of the profession and the success that it proposes.

GOOD MANNERS: PHOTOGRAPHERS AND SUCCESS

The particular type of social mobility favoured by the photographic profession can only be understood if one considers the professional mobility of the subjects that it recruits. The photographic profession often seems to be simply a stage in a chaotic professional course characterized as much by the multiplicity and diversity of professions as by the brevity of their practice.[28] The proportion of photographers who have never practised any other profession increases regularly as one passes from the highest to the lowest social categories.[29] The diversity of previous professions

becomes understandable once we see that it realizes an order that is precisely the commonly acknowledged hierarchy of professional statuses: among photographers of upper-class origin, the professions previously practised are, for the most part, of a lower rank than the professions which define membership of the upper classes. A symmetrical and inverse movement may be observed among photographers of working-class origin: here, the status of most professions practised prior to becoming a photographer is higher than the status of the class of origin. Photographers of middle-class origin have most seldom passed through social levels either lower or higher than their level of origin.[30] The high degree of professional mobility and the direction in which it occurs prove (especially for subjects of upper-class and working-class origin) that mobility before entering the photographic profession as a final (or temporary) choice is determined by the desire for status, and may be described as a project of upclassing. The choice of the photographic profession often indicates movement from low-status professions to a profession with a slightly higher status or a status which is less well defined and therefore less easily identifiable.[31]

In fact, the title of photographer covers individuals whose status can be perceived as being very different: the status of a darkroom worker, specializing in printing, is close to that of a manual worker; that of a photographer employed by a large industrial enterprise is comparable to that of an office worker or subordinate executive; that of an illustration or magazine photographer is close to the status of junior or senior executives. One may be content to exploit this proliferation of different statuses, using it as a social 'camouflage'; one may also attempt to examine the different levels within it. Insofar as promotion within the profession does not require the acquisition of a diploma or a qualification, hope for advancement always seems to be permissible. These two reasons allow us to understand why, rather than being a temporary step, the choice of the photographic profession appears to be definitive in most cases: extreme previous mobility is followed by an extremely low degree of planned mobility. Photography assures those who engage in it, if not of upclassing, then at least of the hope and promise of upclassing.[32] Subjects no longer wish to change profession, but rather to change their activity within the photographic profession, that is, to practise different specializa-

tions and attain a different status. Paradoxically, among those subjects who, having limited aspirations, entered the photographic profession directly (and are therefore less directly motivated by the desire for upclassing) the desire for change is most rarely expressed.

In seeking an improvement in their status, photographers still do not all refer to the same image of what constitutes success, as is shown by their inability to agree on the names of those who have succeeded, and, whether they are craftsmen or employees, whether they practise the most humble activities (in the darkroom, for example) or actually take photographs, the *dissensus* is equally strong in all cases.[33] Everything takes place as if, in the absence of objective and stable criteria for success (such as the possession of qualifications), no group had sufficient authority on its own for its admiration to constitute success and consecrate the 'successful' photographer.[34]

> 'What consecrates a photographer? A difficult question: a painter, yes, that's easy, but not a photographer,' notes one subject who is nevertheless eloquent on the need to succeed and the way to do it.

The supreme assurance (which is primarily a reassurance) of the photographer who is successful or who sees himself as being so[35] is often replaced, among those seeking to move upwards, by confusion and insecurity, and it then becomes apparent that 'there is never any security in work matters, there is no guide to success' (Industrial photographer). Fame, under these conditions, generally appears to be temporary; it is a function of the generation of photographers to which one belongs. The *dissensus* is weaker within each generation because, in most cases, personal acquaintance replaces fame; the person presented as a great photographer is the one who seems to be the most prestigious among one's personal acquaintances. Essentially based on relationships, this imitation of fame does not go beyond the sphere of mutual acquaintance.

> Great photographers? [. . .] I don't know many of them any more. My generation is very scattered. Before the war, yes. Now, I don't know, I don't go to photographic exhibitions. I haven't time. We work hard, I can assure you. (Photographer of art works)

However, the list of great photographers provided by respondents falls into a pattern and a hierarchy if we consider the specializations that they practise. The specializations which as a whole involve the smallest number of photographers (illustration, magazine journalism, fashion) are most often quoted in this context, and those which involve the largest number (portraits, advertising, industrial photography) are mentioned most rarely or not at all. Great photographers are primarily those involved in major specializations:[36] everything appears to indicate that the status of these specializations depends more on the professional groups with which they bring one into contact than on the photography itself; the press photographer's status comes from journalism, and that of the fashion photographer from the social milieux of high fashion.

> On the social ladder we're classified according to a place that isn't rightfully ours. [...] Also, I never introduce myself as a photographer, but as a photo-journalist. (Magazine photographer)

For photographers, contact with prestigious professional groups is really an opportunity to photograph valorized objects. The major specialization is defined by the importance and nobility of the object photographed; so much so that a change in status may be accomplished by a change in specialization, which, because it involves neither special equipment nor a different qualification, is simply a change in object. Invited to name, from a series of possible photographic subjects, those from which a 'beautiful photograph' could be made, photographers seem to be guided, in their choice or rejection, primarily by the prestige of the object suggested as the subject of a photograph. Classified in descending order of refusal, the series of objects is organized more or less according to the hierarchy of the prestige of specializations:

> The subjects most frequently refused (a car accident, a wounded man) recall the most humble uses of photography, photographic evidence, legal photography, etc. Then come the subjects which are characteristic of the ordinary tasks of the professional photographer: photographs of insignificant objects to meet customers' wishes (a butcher's stall, a cabbage, a snake, monuments), or even, and particularly, the 'first communion photograph', which symbolizes and summarizes the set of tasks which make up minor

photography, local photography; less frequently refused are the objects which resemble the subjects of major features (folk-dancing, tramps fighting, or a weaver at his trade). Finally, little scenes half-way between portrait, journalism and illustration (woman nursing her baby, or little girl playing with a cat) are seldom refused, while the subjects of illustration photography are hardly ever refused (still lifes or landscapes).

But the photographed object itself only derives its 'aura' from its symbolic participation in prestigious social milieux. Thus all representations of success are organized around the image of the fashionable photographer.

The regrets of the oldest photographers, who nostalgically evoke Nadar and Disdéri,[37] as well as the satisfactions of certain portraitists,[38] show that the work of great photographers is only really ennobled when it presupposes personal contact between the sitter and the photographer. The fact that portraits are in the process of disappearing is deplored, because the portrait, of all photographic genres, is the one which most easily allows one to be compared with the social milieu for which one is working: here it occurs directly via the person belonging to the prestigious milieu, and not via an object which may participate in the milieu that commissioned the work but which does so more remotely. If we may speak of a crisis in photography, when, for example, industrial photography is a fast-growing specialization, bringing about the greatest commercial successes, it is because industrial photography does not enable one to become a great photographer, primarily because it 'is a relationship to a subject and not to a milieu' (Portrait photographer).

> Perhaps I don't have the same facility for industrial photography, it's drier; I do it, but it doesn't interest me as much. I like human contact; that's why I do journalism and publicity photography. I like all the opportunities you get for collaborating with other people. (Publicity photographer)

The limiting case, where one abandons professional photography once one has reached the peak of one's career, to go on practising it only as an enlightened dilettante, seems therefore to fall within the logic of photographic success. A profession in which

the supreme consecration may be marked by leaving the profession, photography is primarily a mirror of great lives and great objects. The image which photographers seek to give of themselves (whatever their rank within the profession) is always defined in opposition to the image of the small local photographer, who is generally criticized. The photographer must demonstrate his value, giving preference to general qualities at the expense of properly professional qualities. The photographer should have a 'good general culture', be a 'versatile character', 'be able to do everything', formulas which cover a whole host of vague qualities, all summed up in this expression: 'having taste', 'having class'. But what predominates in this image is the life of connections, contacts and travel, while the image of work and the particular activities of photographers intervene only very rarely.[39] Asked about their vocation, students from a photographic school give a description of the photographer's occupation which repeats the terms used by the professionals. In the absence of a real vocation for an established artistic occupation, photography is pursued primarily because it creates or seems to create familiarity with certain classes or the experience of certain life-styles.

> One can 'rub shoulders with artistic milieux'. 'I hope to be able to move towards artistic milieux or the milieux attached to them' (Son of senior executive). But even more, one has the opportunity to live like an artist – 'I'm not a musician, I have no gift for painting, I hope that the demands of photography will let me act the way I want' (Son of junior executive), or like an 'explorer' – 'I hope to become one of those men of leisure who can discover and sample all the joys of existence, a photographer or reporter whose pictures are appreciated, and who gets talked about. A man who has moved in all milieux, from the bush where there isn't a trace of human life to overcrowded and noisy cities.' (Son of senior executive)

Knowledge of the particular routes by which professional success is achieved enables us to understand the enduring influence of social origin on the objective situation of photographers. While an inheritance may enable one to set up in business from the moment of entry into the profession by buying a studio, a shop or a darkroom, the family fortune is not restricted to the communication of capital. One also inherits one's family connections and its

reputation, which in its turn creates connections. The extent of this network of family connections and the distinction of those connections acts as a protective milieu, firstly because it enables one to find work more easily and, from the moment of entry into the profession, to practise the most prestigious specializations, but even more so because the acquaintances communicated by one's family or acquired through one's family function as a springboard into high society and into high society photography.

> I didn't like studying, I wanted to be a reporter. When I was fourteen, my father made me leave school. He knew X. who runs X. (a major magazine) and I went in as an assistant, then really quickly I became a reporter (Press photographer). I have a lot of contacts, some of them in show business. That's what enabled me to become what I am. There isn't anyone else like me in my specialization. (Dance photographer)

Acting directly upon the communication of the network of connections indispensable for the achievement of a career in photography, social origin indirectly but strictly determines the acquisition of new connections. 'Good manners' and 'grand manners', 'bearing' and 'style', which go to make the man of fashion, indispensable conditions for penetrating the world of the great and remaining there are, of all the benefits which the children of the upper classes receive from their families and their social milieux, the most important and the most useful. In their way of speaking,[40] but equally, if not more so, in their way of dressing, photographers are organized in a perfect hierarchy according to their class of origin.

> Sartorial elegance decreases as one moves from the highest social classes to the lowest, while the wearing of overalls, an index of being inclined (or resigned) to see photography as being merely a job, and a job like any other, which is frequent among photographers of working-class origin, occurs particularly among those of middle-class origin;[41] and instead of the true elegance to which they know they cannot lay claim, the 'dandy' style, it is the 'painter' style, untidy and artistic, that the latter affect when they seek to distinguish themselves from technicians.

Photographers who practise the most prestigious specializations, and particularly those of upper-class origin who practise more modest specializations (darkroom work), dress with the most elegance and distinction. A manifestation of success among the former, and of the desire to succeed among the latter, the sartorial effort of both contrasts with the casualness, and even more with the threadbare correctness of the all-purpose photographer, the local photographer, who is refused all hope of social advancement, and who knows it.[42]

> At our place we're always well-dressed. We know how to behave, we can go to anyone's house and we'll always be received, we can photograph anyone. It isn't like the *France-Soir* photographers with their dirty polo-necks and their badly-ironed trousers – how do you expect to go and photograph an ambassador in an outfit like that? (*Paris-Match* photographer, father senior executive)

Social origin therefore affects success via the body *hexis* and via the hope of success, itself subordinated to the objective chances of success. This is how we must understand the hypertrophy of social signs which photographers manifest in their way of life, their language, their clothing and even their cars, wealth which is visible and made to be seen. Aspiration to 'class' in bearing and manners is always one of the acts, and not the least among them, of the project of upclassing represented by the choice of photography as a profession. Photographers of upper-class origin transpose this sensitivity to fashion and use it in their actual photographic activity. Sometimes, in the absence of any real cultural heritage, scholastic knowledge or qualifications, social origin still leaves at least a certain ability to assimilate fashion trends, and it is primarily this ability that successful photographers call 'taste'.

> You have to have taste, that's really important. There's no hierarchy among photographers. You either have taste or you haven't, whatever you try and do about it. (Portrait photographer)

The quest for novelties, in a professional milieu in which information and models are difficult to communicate, has to be pursued particularly by reading magazines or brochures which

explain processes or suggest examples. Transposing the attitudes of the cultivated man into the professional domain, photographers of upper-class origin may be well informed about new movements, schools and processes. They know, before word has filtered through to the mass of photographers, that 'grain', for example, or 'accentuation of contrasts' signal refined photography,[43] at a given point in time.

The intention of cultivating artistic photography and of practising it 'as an amateur', for oneself, as an artist and without any hope of income from it, seems to constitute one of the most stable norms of the photographic profession.[44] But why does the intensity of amateur practice – which increases with social origin among adolescents wishing to become photographers – vary in an inverse proportion, becoming stronger among photographers of working-class origin than among others?[45] For photographers of working-class origin, the practice of photography as an amateur constitutes the only means of raising a status which is always low at the moment of entry into the profession, and which has every chance of remaining so. Being a printer in an agency, or taking photographs for passports, evidence or documents, prevents one from taking great photographs within the sphere of one's professional activity.

The increase in amateur practice accompanies an extension of the range of the photograpable (as seen from the rate or number of refusals in the series of subjects presented to photographers for their judgement) which is explained by a shift from the logic of professional photography to that of art photography. Rehabilitating all subjects and asserting that personal talent may be all that is required to turn them into beautiful pictures, photographers with the lowest chance of accomplishing great photography eventually reject the hierarchy of subjects as it is recognized and perceived by the professional milieu. The amateur practice of art photography only appears to be a rational means of promotion. While it may be true that success does not depend on specific qualities or on the possession of a particular talent, this practice cannot be enough on its own to raise the status of photographers of low social origins. Because their knowledge of the processes which constitute photographic art at a given point in time is generally vague, and because they are always 'one fashion behind', and finally because every-

thing in their outward bearing, as in their way of life, separates them from the great photographers who refuse any contact with them, their aspirations can only be fulfilled outside the professional milieu. Whether they then turn to camera clubs or become resigned to simply practising their art for themselves, their attempts to achieve the dilettantism of the professional always finally return them to the amateurism of the amateur. Thus photographers from the working classes often attempt to improve their status without great hopes of success. They are more aware than photographers of middle-class origin of the importance of inequalities in social origin, and feel them more strongly, not only because they are more strongly subjected to their constraints, but also because they are subordinated to the prestigious models provided by photographers of higher social origins. They have a clearer suspicion about the truth of the profession and professional success, as for instance this former employee who, when asked about the great photographers, answered: 'Great photographers? I don't know . . . The great photographers are the ones who photograph the stars.'

In this way we can understand the profound rationality and similarity of the different types of training for the photographic profession. If success depends on socially acquired talents and the signalled membership of the privileged classes, a training at the École Technique de Photo et de Cinéma, which lays claim to rationality and universality, and the charismatic training of the Institut Français de Photographie, are both profoundly justified. The former, keen to have all the appearances of higher education, provides one of the social indications of membership of the *bourgeoisie*, the acquisition of a profession after a long period of study. The courses at the ETPC are striking in their resemblance (reinforced through a series of successive modifications) to courses of general education, both secondary and higher. They are characterized by the emphasis placed on the teaching of abstract culture, privileging the theoretical material that can be seen as the more or less remote basis of photographic operations (mathematics, physics, chemistry), at the cost of practical apprenticeship in these operations themselves. The history of photographic production is ignored in favour of the history of the legitimate arts

(history of art) and the teaching of the most noble subjects (French, languages).[46] The training provided by the IFP, a charismatic initiation concerned with revealing and cultivating qualities which are held to be natural talents, confers a scholastic baptism as well as a magical consecration upon a socially acquired talent.[47] The IFP, a school which is open to all, does not demand advanced knowledge:

> 'I've a boy leaving this year who's really thick, who can't write French, who's capable of becoming a great reporter because it's in his blood [. . .]. At the start, the level was low; this year, for the first time, they're all at the fourth-form stage (*troisième*). As far as I'm concerned, I really don't care whether they've got their qualifications or not; the important thing is that a boy should have the minimum French, the minimum maths, and say to himself: "I've got that", and devote himself to his job. Some students have had enough of school and desks' (Head of the IFP). The pedagogy of revelation uses means that range from the course outing (every Saturday the students are taken to tourist spots) to the solitary pursuit of photographs (a monthly essay on such subjects as: 'The charm of the crowd', 'Which is the greater happiness: giving or receiving?') and the analysis of the private self (the first session of the year is devoted to a dissertation on the subject: 'Who am I?'). By this means, the school is seeking to make its students 'use their grey matter, look for inspiration, not be limited to doing printing, purely manual work.' (Head of the IFP)

Finally, studies are sanctioned only by the composition of a thesis carried out entirely by the student, a series of photographs on a single subject, titled and captioned, glued into an album like a press report. Under the guise of being a craftsman's 'masterpiece', this is a charismatic test, the opposite in every way of rational examination.

If the logic of the development of theoretical and general education and the evolution of photography mean that the former school tends to prepare its students for work as qualified technicians and engineers as well as for the photographic profession, the second conforms more perfectly to the image of the profession and the qualities which ensure success, and therefore recruits the children of the *bourgeoisie* who are predisposed by their high

degree of scholastic failure and by their inherited social polish to the photographic vocation.[48]

It is nonetheless true that the project of upclassing through photography is realized here at least cost, and in the least irrational way. Because the photographic profession is protean, and because it is also a business and a manual occupation, the attempt at upclassing can be carried out without major risks. The photographic profession provides those who take it up if not with the certainty of success then at least with the assurance of minimum gains. Because photography not only produces works of art but also supplies services which may be subjected to rational examination (the printing of amateur photographs, for example), because, if they are unable to sell their services, photographers can switch to selling objects (cameras and chemicals), it is always possible to live or at least to get by on photography.[49] Other professions whose artistic character is more clearly asserted would be better suited than photography to attempts at upclassing. Thus, for example, courses in dramatic art appear to fulfil a function similar to the courses given in photographic schools: they recruit a similar type of student, apart from the fact that a majority of students at photographic schools are boys, while girls are in the majority at drama school.[50] In this we should see not so much the influence of psychological factors as the index of an economically rational type of behaviour. Because photography is more capable than the theatre of providing a living, it tends to attract boys, while the theatre attracts girls.[51]

Beyond arbitrary distinctions, all photographers feel they are subject to the same fate because they all make their living from photography. But can one consitute photography as a profession when one has refused the tasks and convictions that go to make up the local photographer? If the local photographer is the one from whom one must distinguish oneself, as the only one easily assigned a place in the status hierarchy, he is also the only one with a real and socially recognized job. Inheriting a tradition, often the son or even the grandson of a photographer, he is a reminder of the fact that there may be a comfortable professional use of photography. While they deny the social definition of photography or attempt to scoff at it in order to deny their social condition and the status attached to it, most professional photographers are, on the con-

trary, unable to establish a comfortable relationship to their activity.

Because local photographers, based in suburbs or small towns, but to an even greater extent the travelling photographers of the countryside, conformed to the social definition of photography, they were readily integrated within a group. Directly in touch with the public who commissioned them, they were able and obliged to adapt to the tastes of the public. Repositories of specific knowledge which was enough to confer authority upon them, they fulfilled – and were the only ones who could do so – a well-defined social function, and fulfilled it in conformity with precise norms; they filled a need. Primarily required to capture the high points of social life, the photographer, specializing in charismatic techniques designed to stage-manage the high points of solemnities and to arrange gestures and fix smiles in order to create the social person, was a kind of master of ceremonies.

But, for all these reasons, local photographers have suffered more than any others as a result of the development of amateur photography. In competition with amateurs, they no longer have any way of defining themselves except with reference to those amateurs. At first they can find a means of subsisting by serving amateurs, supplying them with materials and chemicals, developing and printing their photographs. Partially dispossessed of their social function, local professionals can no longer remain naively attached to the social definition of photography. They distance themselves from it, and project it on to the amateur, of whom they have a simple stereotype. That is what most frequently prevents them from finding, in the role of expert and advisor of amateur practice, the means of expressing the value and specificity of their activity. The advice given by these photographers more often consists in commercial recommendations than in educational precepts. When consulted, local professionals give the amateur back the image of photography that he already has, confirming it with their authority.[52] These attempts to find a function and a commercial profit by guiding the practice of amateurs may go further. Professionals may set up and direct clubs of amateur photographers, sometimes for essentially commercial ends.

This is true of the *Cinephot* club in the town of L. (40,000

, inhabitants), set up by a major retailer of photographic material. Each of the shop's customers receives a club membership card. Photographic activity as such is reduced to the level of an alibi. The club does not essentially fulfil its function of bringing together shared interests and technical initiation. Its main purpose is to promote sales. The director of the club, at first thrown out of the union for unfair competition, was later admitted back into it, when other retailers followed his example.

However, most small photographers refuse to deal with the amateur, not only because he is setting up in a sort of unfair competition, but even more because he is jeopardizing the specificity of their activity.[53] Thus photographers find homogeneity and cohesion in their fear of the amateur and of those professionals, like street photographers, for example, who shamefully negate the specificity of the trade and revive the sense of illegality of a profession which cannot be practised illegally. Only the diversity of attitudes towards the professional group (and no longer only the diversity of professional activity) is arranged and organized in terms of the objective diversity of professional situations, proving, through organized *dissensus* on the ways of setting about 'defending the profession' the *consensus* on the need to defend it. Because it realistically reflects the diversity of social and professional conditions and the varied degree of insecurity attached to them,[54] the diversity of attitudes towards the professional group is actually a unifying factor. Paradoxically, at the very moment when photographic activity is becoming easier and consequently less specific, the category of photographers is tending to constitute itself as a professional group. At least there is agreement on this point: the profession 'must be revalorized', there is a 'prestige in being a photographer' which must be defended against those who are bringing it into disrepute.

> The photographic profession must become organized like all other professions. Photography is a job like any other. You can't simply say that photography and home movies are different. They are artistic techniques, certainly, but techniques which must not escape the general framework of the other professions. Photographers need brains. They deserve as much respect as anyone else. (Address by a teacher at the ETPC to an old pupils' meeting, 18 January 1964)

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 Claude Bernard, *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale* (Flammarion, Paris, 1984), chapter II, para. 1, p. 52.
2 Claude Bernard, *ibid.*
3 The same methodological demands are imposed on the ethnologist who, at the risk of abstraction, must only see the reconstruction of the system of models as a moment of the survey, designed to describe the relationship which unites the system of models and the system of dispositions. This is not the place to demonstrate how the logical oppositions which organize a mythic-ritual system are rooted in dispositions (particularly in attitudes regarding time) that extend to the body *hexis*.
4 G. W. F. Hegel, *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, trans T. M. Knox (Oxford 1942) Preface.
5 8,135,000 cameras in working order, at least one camera in half of all households, 845,000 cameras sold each year; these figures adequately reveal the enormously wide diffusion that photographic practice owes to its accessibility.
6 Judgements about photography include, on the one hand, the whole popular philosophy with regard to the technical object, and, more precisely, the apparatus and, on the other hand, real spontaneous aesthetic 'theories'; for example, the frequent refusal to consider photography as an art is inspired by a summary definition of the camera as an apparatus, as well as by a highly ethically coloured image of artistic activity.

7 F. W. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Kaufmann Walter, 1974), p. 245.
8 But efforts to constitute a 'pure' photography with an autonomous aesthetic often lapse into contradiction because the refusal to admit and subsume that which creates both the specificity of the photographic act and its accessibility leads to the borrowing of aesthetic norms from consecrated arts such as painting.
9 Three monographs were written in 1960, one on a village in the Béarn, the second on Renault factory workers, and the third on two photographic clubs in the region of Lille. In all cases the studies relied particularly on prolonged observation and free discussion.
10 The proportion of practitioners ranges from 39 per cent in towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants to 61 per cent in towns of 2,000 to 5,000 inhabitants.
11 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, Introduction.

CHAPTER I   THE CULT OF UNITY AND CULTIVATED DIFFERENCES

1 We have not reproduced all the statistical data on which the analyses presented here were based, and which will therefore be found along with the questionnaire used, in the Appendix to the original French edition of this work.
2 At this point we are content to establish broad connections. Examined more closely, the relationship between the practice and the quality of the practice on the one hand, and audio-visual equipment on the other, appears problematic. While there is a higher frequency of abstention among subjects who do not have a radio (50 per cent), it is also strongly present among owners of both a radio and a television (46 per cent) and among those who have a tape-recorder, a radio and a television (31 per cent). Similarly, while, precisely because of their expense, the practices of colour photography and home movies are naturally more frequent among those subjects who have the most audio-visual equipment, they nevertheless remain the province of a minority.
3 This is not an imaginary description, but the summary of a 'psychological study of photography' carried out by an organization specializing in market research and motivation research.
4 This should not lead to the conclusion that psychology has nothing to say on this matter. In fact, it alone can answer the question posed by sociology: why are this activity and particularly this product, the photographic image, predisposed to serve functions conferred on them by society?

5   One should recall Durkheim's criticism of Spencer: 'Social facts are
    not the simple development of psychic facts, but the second are in a
    large part only the prolongation of the first in the interior of
    consciences. This proposition is very important, for the contrary
    point of view exposes the sociologist, at every moment, to mistaking
    the cause for the effect, and conversely.' (*Division of Labor in
    Society*, trans. G. Simpson, Collier-Macmillan, 1964).

6   This approach not only condemns us to mistaking the effect for the
    cause, but also leads to the risk of seeing what is in fact only the
    language of acquiescence or empty answers as the authentic state-
    ment of satisfactions and reasons. In fact, influenced by the survey
    situation, subjects often give the most prestigious of possible satis-
    factions as an actual meaning for their behaviour, or choose their
    response, as if at random, from a series of possibilities each as
    artificial as the others because the question is completely false to
    them.

7   The following analyses are based on statistics drawn from the
    research which we carried out in 1963 and which dealt with a sample
    of 692 subjects living in Paris, Lille and a small provincial town, and
    from a group of studies carried out by private organizations: (1)
    ORIC, *Étude statistique des marchés de la photographie*, 1958 ((a)
    T.I, (b) T.II, appendices)); (2) SOFRES, *Enquête statistique sur le
    marché des jeunes*, 1964 (T.II, *Leurs modes d'information*); (3)
    SEMA, *Étude du marché des appareils photographiques grand format
    en France*, 1962 ((a) T.I, (b) T.II, appendices)); (4) *Étude psycho-
    sociologique du marché de la photographie petit format*, 1961 (report
    no. 3); (5) SEMA, *Étude psycho-sociologique du marché potentiel de
    la photographie de petit format*, 1961; (6) Kodak Pathé, *Étude du
    marché du cinéma 8 mm en France*, 1963. Consequently, each time
    reference is made to these external sources in the notes, they will be
    designated by the number given here. So as not to burden the text
    unnecessarily, we have only kept the data indispensable to our
    demonstration, and provided more precise details in the appendix to
    the French edition.

8   Generally speaking, this type of practice involves very low consump-
    tion of films, most often in black and white. 32.5 per cent of
    photographers use one or two films per year, and almost 70 per cent
    use less than six films (SEMA, 3a); we also know that 12 per cent of
    photographers describe their practice as being entirely intermittent,
    and 56 per cent as occasional. Non-intense practice is the most
    closely dependent on traditional occasions, family festivities and

holidays; it most generally makes do with the most rudimentary cameras (box cameras) and the least expensive materials (black and white).

9   64 per cent of households with children have at least one camera, as against 32 per cent of households without children. One should not be deceived by the fact that cameras often have privileged users: in half of all households, the camera is considered family property. The same reason explains why, in households with more than one child, the number of camera-owners remains more or less constant whatever the number of people in the household, and also explains why higher income may involve a wide diffusion of cameras without noticeably increasing the number of cameras owned per household. Because it is chiefly used to photograph the whole family as an integrated group the camera may be jointly owned.

10 Precisely because, for most photographers, it is only a simple ritual, photography is associated with very poor psychological content, and 'psychological' analysis, oscillating like any explanation from final causes between tautology and *flatus vocis*, is condemned to study 'instincts' which are just as mysterious as their relationship to actual behaviour. It is also because the social function of photography is as universal as membership of a group that the fulfilment of this function may be taken for a universal and therefore a natural need. The sociological explanation therefore accounts for both photographic practice in its modal form and the illusory explanation that 'motivationist' psychology seeks to give of it.

11 The observations which have formed the basis of these analyses were carried out in the village of Lesquire in Béarn. Two monographs, one of them written in an Alsatian village by Mlle Huguette Kaufmann, the other in a Corsican village by Mlle Claude Bauhain, enabled us to check all the points of the analyses presented about Lesquire.

12 Likewise the photographs shown by the villagers often include the annual photograph of the rugby team, in line, dressed up, and very seldom any photographs showing the stages of the game, which are relegated to the photographic 'box'.

13 What we see reproduced here, within a generation, is the history of the portrait, indissociable, as Philippe Ariès has shown, from the history of family structures and related systems of attitudes: the appearance of children's portraits is linked to the 'invention' of childhood, itself dependent on a transformation of the family completely analogous to that which operates today among the middle and working classes, which tends to organize all of family life

around the intimacy of the couple and the children (cf. P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* Plon, Paris, 1960, pp. 34, 382).

14 Very marked from the ecological and morphological points of view (families being considerably larger in the hamlets), the opposition between the *bourg* (264 inhabitants in 1954) and the hamlets (1,090 inhabitants), dominates all aspects of village life, economic life first of all, as the *bourg* had, since 1918, progressively absorbed all urban functions: it is the residence of retired people, civil servants and members of the professions (or 44.2 per cent of heads of families), craftsmen and shopkeepers (36.6 per cent); farm workers, manual workers and owners of businesses were only a very small minority (11.5 per cent), while they constitute almost all (88.8 per cent) of the population of the hamlets. Between the last houses of the village where they speak French, and the first farms, barely one hundred metres away, where they speak Béarnais, held by the villagers to be an inferior and vulgar language, one crosses a real cultural border, separating the villagers with urban pretensions from the farmers of the hamlets, attached or bound to their traditions and often held, by this very fact, to be backward. (A more profound analysis of this opposition is to be found in my 'Célibat et condition paysanne', *Études rurales*, no. 5–6, April–September 1962, pp. 32–135.)

15 Stressing the essentially social character of primitive art, Raymond Firth observes 'the almost entire absence of landscape', and notes that representations of the human figure are always very 'conventional': 'In general, primitive figure sculpture is concerned to bring out certain social attributes of the figure or to express through it certain sentiments which are of importance in the culture of the people.' R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (Watts and Co., London, 1951) p. 174.

16 Most recent photographs in the collection of B. M. are of the same type. Four of them can be distinguished immediately: those which show B. M. with his cattle, his goad over his shoulder, and his nephew in the same attitude. Photographs of daily life, taken from life? In fact, posed and allegorical photographs: on the one hand, the little Parisian pretending to be a farmer, on the other, not B. M. but the postcard showing a farmer at the head of his team, his body straight, his beret over his ear, his *agulhade* (goad) over his shoulder.

17 These connections are borne out by the various surveys. It must be added that the rate of camera ownership is a function that increases according to the number of people in the household (up to five or six people).

18 The proportion of families spending their holidays with relatives or friends decreases regularly as one rises through the social hierarchy: 59.9 per cent for service staff, 52.6 per cent for manual workers, 50.5 per cent for clerical workers, 38.8 per cent for junior executives, 33.8 per cent for the professions and senior executives and 31.0 per cent for managers in commerce and industry (Cf. 'Les Vacances des Français en 1961', *Études et conjoncture*, no. 5, May 1962).

19 The birth of a child often leads people to take up photographic activity once more, and the rate of cameras in use drops from 63 per cent for households with a child of less than five to 50 per cent for households with a child aged between six and thirteen (ORIC, 1a).

20 These indications are drawn from the analysis, carried out by J.-C. Chamboredon and A. Maillet, of a random sample of 500 amateur photographers catered for by a craftsman from the Paris region.

21 Of all photographic accessories, the flash has enjoyed the widest diffusion, doubtless because it adds to the solemnity of the photographic act and doubles its power of solemnization, evoking the pomp of the official ceremonies with which it is habitually associated. It is also and particularly true that as family festivities tend to become children's festivities, Christmas (which has for some years given rise to an intensification of the consumption of films) is the celebration *par excellence* of family intimacy.

22 Photographs are rarely shown (particularly in black and white) because they are seen as a means of documentation or information (13 per cent) or a work of art (2 per cent of subjects mention their pride as photographers). If, in most cases, subjects do not indicate a particular purpose or a precise reason, if even the purely affective intention of 'showing the loved ones' is rare (6 per cent of justifications), it is because, like the festivity that it evokes, the intimate ceremony during which one shows photographs is an end in itself.

23 There is a whole set of themes, objects and situations that are eminently photographable: the 'clowns of the group', people dressed up, the 'life and souls of the party' the characters invested with the role of leading the festivities, and, as such, statutorily humorous; picnics or certain military service occasions.

24 The most frequent distribution of roles in working-class and *petit-bourgeois* milieux makes photographic practice a masculine privilege, while the business of remembering its occasions is generally incumbent on the wife, the guardian of family traditions: the wife uses the camera less often than the husband (39 per cent as against 59 per cent), but the fact that competence in technical matters is statutorily accorded to men does not entirely account for the attribution to the

husband of this act of the family cult (ORIC, 1a). It is incumbent on the head of the family to carry out the ritual of solemnization that the wife can only initiate, copy or duplicate.

25 E. Durkheim, *Suicide*, trans. J. A. Spaulding and George Simpson (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1970) p. 377.

26 These analyses have been taken from the monographic study carried out in 1962 by Mlle Claude Bauhain.

27 As a rite of passage, first communion marks entry into the world of adults: it is not accidental that watches are the most frequent presents given at this occasion, since it marks the necessity for adolescents to conform to the temporal rhythms of adult life.

28 This connection between social identity and historical continuity might be seen in the fact that the most disadvantaged classes are the most completely deprived of any traces of their past. 'Photographs of members of past generations are almost non-existent (in the lower class). The children have no idea what the family looked like or did, a generation or two ago.' J. H. S. Bossard and Eleanor S. Boll, *Ritual in Family Living* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1950) p. 131.

29 Every group has an original representation of the practice and the equipment which it is considered good form to possess. Each individual is reminded of this representation via the other members of the group: thus, the intention to buy a small-format camera is most frequent among photographers who include owners of small-format cameras among their relations.

30 We know that the proportion of families going away on holiday increases as one rises through the social hierarchy and also that, within the same professional category, differences in income determine considerable disparities in the proportion of holiday-makers ('Une enquête dans les industries parisiennes de l'automobile et les industries textes du Nord', *Sondages*, no. 2, 1962).

31 Exceptional circumstances do not simply involve the taking of a few solemn photographs, a temporary concession to the demands of the family function. They also determine the purchase and use of the roll of film. The uniformity of themes within the same film proves that it is dedicated to the solemn occasion, to the point where those rare photographs which are original or apparently inspired by an intrinsic interest in photography are generally a whimsy which one permits oneself as an added extra, once the obligatory photographs have been taken or because one wants to have the film developed more quickly.

32 According to the survey quoted above, 12 per cent of subjects asked about their holidays spontaneously designated family life as their

favourite distraction, while the question called more for the naming of precise activities.

33 Photography is naturally associated with travel and particularly that trip to end all trips, the honeymoon in Paris. During a long journey of around ten days, J. B., an artisan from Lesquire, takes only four photographs, of which one presents the fact of having made a journey (J. B.'s wife sitting on the grass, beside the stationary vehicle, at the side of the road), as against forty-six in Paris. The things most often photographed are the monuments and locations which most fully embody Paris or the stereotyped image ordinarily held of it: Versailles (ten photographs), the Eiffel Tower (eight), the Tuileries (six), Notre Dame, Champs Élysées and the Arc de Triomphe (two).

34 Conscious or unconscious? Of all the photographs, this and one other showing the couple in front of the Arc de Triomphe (plate 2) are the favourites of the people who took them.

35 The study of a random sample of 500 amateur photographs reveals that 74 per cent of the photographs include people. Monuments appear as secondary signs rather than appearing in their own right: in most cases, they are associated with a person, and form the background of the photograph. While they are rare within the set as a whole (10 per cent), landscapes can, more than monuments, constitute the proper object of photography (one in two landscape photographs does not include a person): but given that there is nothing remarkable about them in the eyes of the viewer, it may be supposed that they represent the particular relationship to the object rather than the object in and for itself. The diversification of subjects that can be identified among practitioners using transparencies does not always show, as one might expect, a liberation from the family function of photography. The picture records objects (ships, cars, train) or circumstances which simply express preparations for a journey or the journey itself. In most cases, it records objects which are completely consecrated and heavily stereotyped, calling for recognition rather than contemplation.

36 In its aesthetic and its subjects, landscape photography is barely distinguished from family photography, apart from the fact that it is more often in colour, both because it is more often taken by tourists, and therefore people who are more able to use this expensive medium, and because the colour print more successfully satisfies the demands of realism.

37 Makers of home movies who consider exhibiting their films and putting a soundtrack to them, in short, making an artistic practice of movies, are very rare (40 per cent of those who express the intention

of intensifying their activity, or 20 per cent of all makers of home
movies) (Kodak-Pathé, 6).

38 If it is granted that the borderline between photography with a
traditional function and properly aesthetic photography lies not
between family photography and holiday photography, but between
both of these and the photography of other objects, we may estimate
that 'aesthetes' constitute less than 10 per cent of the population of
photographers.

39 If the proportion of practitioners is related to educational level, this
is probably due to a large extent to the indirect influence of income
(it is known that the two are closely related). The specific influence
of education (which is always difficult to isolate) determines differ-
ences (as to the intensity of the practice and its occasions) between
subjects who have had primary education and subjects who have had
secondary or higher education; but there seems to be less acknow-
ledged interest in photography among subjects with higher educa-
tion than among subjects with secondary education. The former
accord more importance to family photography while the latter
barely ever limit photography to its traditional function, and tend to
define it as a leisure practice, perhaps because, being predisposed
towards a studious use of free time, they do not have the material or
intellectual means to practise the other cultural activities to which
higher education provides access.

40 Bachelors who do not practise photography seldom resort to argued
judgements (14 per cent of cases), unlike married subjects (32 per
cent of cases), because they feel that their abstention is normal.

41 While the rate of ordinary practice increases regularly to peak in
maturity and then decrease (since 64 per cent of practitioners fall
within the 31–45-year-old category and 58 per cent are over 46),
dedicated practice does not vary with age (31 per cent of devotees are
in the 18–30 age-range, and 30 per cent are over 46) and even shows a
slight drop where ordinary practice peaks, in the age-range between
30 and 45 (28 per cent). Similarly, in the lower income range, the
number of passionate photographers is highest (28 per cent) as
against 21 per cent in the upper income range. Finally, in the
category of those without professions photographers are the least
numerous (one in three rather than two in three) but the most ardent.
Similarly, interest in photography which is expressed in the intention
to buy a small-format camera seems to develop inversely to the
modal practice; aspiration to a virtuoso practice is limited by
marriage and children, the main causes, as we have seen, of the
intensification of the modal practice: among bachelors, 41 per cent of

photographers intend to buy a small-format camera, 33 per cent among married people without children, and 27 per cent among married people with children.

42 Everything takes place as if each group were aware of its 'norms' with reference to the norms of other groups. In the individual case, one would therefore have to speak of *norms of reference* rather than groups of reference.

43 A survey carried out among young people aged between eleven and fourteen (ORIC, 1b) shows how the practice of photography differs from apprenticeship in the noble arts. In half of the cases, young people do not engage in the practice when they could use a camera, and most of those who do practise have very limited technical knowledge and seldom engage in an intense practice (only 37 per cent of children using more than two rolls of film per year), and finally, the simple fact of being able to use a camera provided by one's parents is most often (75 per cent of cases) sufficient incitement to engage in the practice, because the practice of photography, as a simple pastime, is never the object of organized training or encouragement, and because it is freely admitted that this activity which remains a game, however 'educational' it may be, may still be the object of a temporary involvement from which one may detach oneself just as quickly as one became involved in it, either in order to satisfy other whims or from boredom.

44 Purchasers of average-price small-format cameras particularly cite the influence of friends; on the other hand, the purchase of more expensive and rarer cameras, the preferred instruments of fanatical practice, implies a break with one's immediate group and its 'norms': in this case choice is determined either by reading or by testing cameras out.

45 This seems to be shown by the fact that one may encounter, among manual workers, photographers who develop their own prints without belonging to the group of devotees.

46 Given that devotees and fanatics make up a very small proportion of photographers (around 10 per cent), and *a fortiori* of the population as a whole (around 5–6 per cent), the survey sample does not enable us to characterize them adequately. That is why it was necessary to study them in amateur camera clubs (cf. Part 2, chapter 1).

47 Photographic practice depends strongly on income; but it is clearly related to habitat (dispersed or grouped) through the degree of attachment to urban values.

48 Most of the peasants interviewed cite the case of relations who have taken up photography since leaving the village. But the peasant who

sees a sister or a cousin, a son or a brother who have gone to work in a factory, coming back with a camera, finds himself justified in associating the practice of photography with becoming a city-dweller. Consequently, rather than provoking imitation, these examples, however close they may be, only confirm the peasant in his conviction that photography 'is not for the likes of him'.

49 The statements can be placed on four different levels, and the sequence of the moments of the conversation has been marked with Roman numerals.

50 In our sample, the two categories have very similar average incomes.

51 48 per cent of workers agree that a photograph is good when one can recognize what it shows.

52 Our figures show that 34 per cent of photographers among manual workers have no equipment and 36.5 per cent have a limited amount of equipment, while among clerical workers, the figures are respectively 23.5 per cent and 39 per cent.

53 50 per cent of manual workers agree with the proposition that photography is not an art.

54 'Taking photographs is within the scope of everyone; it's ordinary': 55 per cent of manual workers agree with this judgement, 32 per cent of them without reservation.

55 'A photograph is better than a painting, because it's more accurate': 55 per cent of manual workers agree with this judgement, 32 per cent of them with certainty. 'A photographer can make more varied works than a painter, he can change more easily': 70 per cent of manual workers agree, 48 per cent of them without reservation.

56 The same analyses would also apply to home movies.

57 'Taking photographs is within the scope of everyone; it's ordinary': 55 per cent of clerical workers disagree with this proposition (34 per cent of them strongly).

58 Clerical workers refuse to put photography on the same level as painting, even when the formulation of the judgements proposed in the questionnaire seems to invite them to do so.

59 Our figures show that 45 per cent of clerical workers do not practise photography, and this is true of 39 per cent of manual workers; but, among those who do practise, the proportion of devotees is higher among clerical workers (25 per cent) than among manual workers (19 per cent). Among clerical workers, 23 per cent of those who take photographs have no equipment, as against 34 per cent of manual workers; and similarly, 17 per cent have average equipment as against only 7 per cent among manual workers. A greater number of clerical workers (16 per cent) than manual workers (9 per cent) own

virtuoso cameras, small-format cameras and Reflex cameras.

60 Only 6 per cent of practitioners between the ages of 18 and 30 are dedicated photographers among manual workers, as against 25 per cent among clerical workers. While it is insignificant among other social categories (craftsmen and shopkeepers, senior executives), the proportion of adolescents involved in amateur photographic clubs is 1 per cent among manual workers and their children, 3 per cent among junior executives or their children, 13 per cent among clerical workers or their children (SOFRES, 2).

61 The deliberate refusal of photography is least frequent among clerical workers: 48 per cent of subjects who do not practise intend to persist in their abstention.

62 'If you like, what I like is contrast, a lot of darkness but a little light ... like in this painting.'

63 24 per cent of subjects justify their abstention with reference to a lack of interest in photography.

64 Only 21.5 per cent of clerical workers frame traditional family photographs, either taken by themselves or by a member of their family. Clerical workers admit more rarely than manual workers that they show their photographs 'to pass the time', while the proportion of those who say that they present their photographs 'to show what they have seen' increases considerably.

65 Among clerical workers, the refusal of the souvenir photograph is most frequent (35 per cent, including 20 per cent without reservation), but responses become more uncertain when it comes to defining the importance of preserving souvenirs.

66 This also shows why camera clubs, perceived as sanctuaries of aesthetic certainty, draw their members primarily from this category.

67 In photographic terms, junior executives are related to craftsmen and shopkeepers as clerical workers are related to manual workers, the fact that craftsmen and shopkeepers include a higher proportion of practitioners than manual workers being, apparently, a simple effect of income. While dedicated practice is only represented, among craftsmen and shopkeepers, among the best-equipped practitioners, among junior executives it can be associated with more limited equipment; similarly, while abstention, in manual workers and shopkeepers, takes the form of a refusal which is frequently expressed unambiguously and with no concern for justifications, among junior executives it is often presented as being provisional, and refusal is only rarely affirmed in a peremptory fashion. In their practice, these two groups accord a different value to photography. Junior executives accord photography the status of an art more often

than craftsmen and shopkeepers, and also more frequently oppose those propositions that include a devalorization of the photographic image or practice.

68 Out of a concern to distinguish themselves from the mass of practitioners, junior executives less often admit to making sacrifices to family functions, but they show through other indications (with regard to the photographs that they claim to show, for example) that their practice is much less liberated from traditional imperatives than they would wish to admit.

69 This is why a statement such as this one is entirely exceptional: 'Even when you're taking souvenir photographs, it's still possible to capture things in an interesting way. You can't just take them any old way. [. . .] You have to try to have souvenir photographs, but they should also be artistic' (Accountant, 24, member of camera club).

70 Relatively more widespread among craftsmen and shopkeepers.

71 In order to indicate the place occupied by photography in what one might refer to as *middlebrow culture*, it will be enough to note that the readers of *Science et Vie*, of whom 44.1 per cent are members of the middle classes (as against 31.7 per cent from the upper classes and 24.2 per cent from the working classes) are distinguished by a very high level of photographic equipment: 91 per cent of them own at least one camera, and 27.5 per cent more than two cameras. The rate of camera-ownership increases as one rises through the social hierarchy, but the difference between the middle classes and the upper classes is relatively slight: 93.5 per cent for the middle classes and 96 per cent for the upper classes (information supplied by Pascale Maldidier). Whether the emphasis is placed on the technical or the aesthetic aspect, photographic practice is most often integrated within a project of cultural upclassing through the efforts of the autodidact.

72 Once one goes beyond the consideration of rough indices, which only reveal differences due to inequalities in income, junior executives are distinguished from senior executives by a whole set of characteristics which reveal greater interest in photography. The rate of unused cameras is lower among junior executives than it is among senior executives; they own fewer small-format cameras than senior executives, but the latter have fewer box cameras: if economic obstacles prevent the purchase of a virtuoso instrument, the demands made with regard to the quality of the practice are expressed in the refusal of a rudimentary camera and in the use of the instruments of a more enlightened practice (SLR-type cameras) or in the use, pending better things, of older cameras (bellows cameras) which still offer more possibilities than box cameras.

73   Among senior executives, seasonal conformists still make up 13 per cent of photographers with a large amount of equipment.

74   Opinions formulated on two of the judgements put forward: 'Almost all of a good photographer's pictures come out well every time' and 'You have to take ten photographs to get one good one', are very revealing. The response to the first proposition is a compromise between aspiration to a virtuoso practice and reference to the results of one's practice. The memory of unsuccessful pictures (an accident which one may suppose to be general) forbids one agreeing with the judgement suggested, since that would amount to excluding oneself from virtuoso practice; thus this proposition reveals the ambitions of the practice, but in a way that is still abstract. The second proposition invites an even more concrete reflection since it is stated not as a general rule but as a truth drawn from experience. Thus, among junior executives, it reveals greater real demands, while among senior executives the first proposition showed higher abstract ambitions.

75   Senior executives who do not take photographs feel obliged to justify their abstention with circumstantial arguments: only 16 per cent of subjects not practising photography cite their lack of interest in the activity; 33 per cent justify themselves with arguments other than those suggested by the questionnaire.

76   This means that photography is treated as a simple act of consumption, and that senior executives are easily drawn towards the more prestigious forms of the practice, colour and home movies, without wanting to make artistic use of them. Thus, only 29 per cent of senior executives seeking to develop their cinematographic activity (as against 45 per cent of junior executives) seek to treat film-making as an artistic practice by editing and adding soundtracks to their films (Kodak 6).

77   Thus for example, while they actually place less emphasis than manual workers on the traditional functions of photography, a higher proportion of senior executives than manual workers explicitly acknowledge affective functions in photography ('Showing the loved ones').

78   The adolescents of the middle classes and particularly the lower fringe of those classes are more often attached to photographic practice because the purchase of equipment has meant, for them or for their families, a particularly major sacrifice, testifying to a particularly keen aspiration, and also because photography is not in competition with more noble cultural practices or consumptions. Very close to manual workers in all other areas, clerical workers are only distinguished from them by the emphasis that they give to

photography, while junior executives, who still attach considerable importance to photography, are distinguished from clerical workers by their participation in clubs with a cultural function (JMF, film-clubs) which is just as frequent as that of senior executives (SOFRES, 2).

79	Cf. P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron, *Les Etudiants et leurs études* (Mouton, Paris, 1964), p. 94.

80	Cf. 'Une enquête par sondage sur l'écoute radiophonique en France', *Etudes et conjunctures*, 10, Oct. 1963, pp. 923–1002.

81	As proof that the meaning conferred on photography is essentially positional and oppositional, the photographic practice that members of the upper classes, particularly in Paris and in the Paris region, tend to refuse as vulgar because it has been popularized can be used in other social contexts as a sign of differentiation. Thus, further away from the site of cultural values and having fewer opportunities for noble distractions, the *bourgeoisie* of small and medium-sized towns can use photography as a means of questioning the values of traditional society and its leisure techniques by transforming the collective instrument of solemnization into an autonomous leisure accessory. It can be shown that the proportion of camera-owners reaches a peak in towns of 20–50,000 inhabitants, rising from 38.9 per cent in towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants to 60.9 per cent in towns of 20–50,000 inhabitants, slipping back to 51.2 per cent in Paris and the Paris region. In the South Corsican village studied by Claude Bauhain, the taste for photography is most frequent among those subjects most liberated from traditional norms, either by reason of their education, their class and status, or because of the course that their lives have taken, and expresses (sometimes explicitly) the desire to withdraw from the pressure of the group, which is felt to be suffocating. Thus, the desire which they often express to see a camera club set up reveals the desire to escape customary leisure activities, meetings in the café or family evenings. What the emancipated *petite bourgeoisie* is seeking in its cultivation of leisure activities borrowed from urban society, which is the controller of all distinction, is the utopia of a differentiated society in which, thanks to the free play of affinities and differences, social relations could be organized according to the diversity of social conditions and lifestyles and no longer according to family ties.

82	'Photographs are dead, cold: they cannot convey an atmosphere.' This judgement provokes disagreements among 84 per cent of junior executives, 67 per cent without reservation, and among 85 per cent of senior executives, 72 per cent without reservation. 'The personality

of the photographer does not appear in the photograph, while that of the painter appears in his painting.' This proposition provokes disagreements among 65 per cent of junior executives, 57 per cent without reservation, and among 70 per cent of senior executives, 58 per cent without reservation.

83 For example: 'People obsessed with showing their photographs are unbearable.' This judgement provokes agreement among 69 per cent of junior executives, 32 per cent of them resolute and 77 per cent among senior executives, 44 per cent of them resolute.

84 All of these analyses would also apply to television.

85 An eminent representative of this type of literature, Pierre Daninos is not the only person to have suggested the portrayal of vulgarity by satirizing customs. Even if discourse about vulgarity abandons the irony of the satirist in favour of the dignity of the moralist or even the veracity of the 'scholar', it always retains the same functions of reassurance or ideological 'rearmament'.

86 Pierre Daninos, *Sonia*, p. 357.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 358.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 358: 'A little while ago I found myself by one of the most beautiful bays on earth, one of those landscapes which can only lead one to contemplation. A dove settled momentarily on the cornice of an ancient temple. A sailing-boat passed across the open sea. The sunset glowed on the horizon. It was a divine time of day. But beside me, one of those men seemed to be prey to the greatest agitation. At one moment he would be marching towards the temple, the next he would be moving away from it, unable to stand still. His third eye in his right hand, he was anxiously examining a sort of wart, cosily sheathed in leather, which he was holding with his left. He was watching for the ideal moment to "take" the temple, the dove, the sailing boat and the bay, all at the same time.' The motivations and the function of this ideology are apparent here: first of all, the desire to distance oneself from vulgar consumers, marked by the objectivist and 'ethnographic' style of the story ('one of those men'), in particular in the description of the equipment; otherwise, the opposition between contemplation, the sole conceivable attitude, and voracious and undiscerning consumption (wanting to 'take everything at the same time'), which reveals that there are unwritten laws of touristic consumption which must not be ignored on pain of vulgarity.

89 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 359.

90 Whether it is a matter of communicating techniques or promptings and encouragements, the role of family and school is reduced to

practically nothing. As for professional photographers who could take the role of experts, they complain that most people buy their cameras in big shops rather than from specialists who could guide their choice and give them advice; but in fact, whether in the case of the purchase of cameras or films or developing and printing work, in almost all cases they behave like shopkeepers rather than technicians, and their advice, even when it is requested, always remains very vague in the purely technical field, and, *a fortiori*, in the aesthetic field.

91 The 'cultural' channels, France III and IV, have a very limited audience (2 and 0.4 per cent), which is also according to social class and level of education. (*'Une enquête par sondage sur l'écoute radiophonique'*, *loc. cit.*, p. 951). The differences are still more marked with regard to favourite programmes (pp. 988–9 and 992).

92 Radio, television and cinema are only vehicles which can provide cultural content that is just as noble (that is, consecrated) as other means of communication. It follows that while appearing to place all users in identical conditions, they authorize very different uses: first of all, because users can choose between contents of very different artistic quality, and, moreover, because they can adopt extremely divergent attitudes towards the same content, even if only in terms of the intensity of the attention given.

93 At present, even when they cannot make explicit the rules which govern their judgement – rules which are very rare, always applied directly to the particular case and almost always technical – amateurs remain faithful to the idea of a basic normativeness, and remain attached to the certainty of the existence of a body of rules that they could and should know or that are known to others. As it is generally impossible for them to formulate their aesthetic doctrine, manual workers and junior executives who are keen on photography reveal their obsession with a law – and an unbending law – of photography by their insistent references to the imperative character of the few technical rules of composition vulgarized by the didactic advice in specialist magazines. Thus the first perceptive reaction to the photographs shown obeyed the canons of this aesthetic ideology more than the logic of good visual forms. What was immediately apparent was conformity or non-conformity to formal formulas: 'You would need a bit of sky', 'The sky doesn't take up two-thirds'. People who are 'cut in half' were only very seldom seen in their own right, and were at first taken to be mistakes with regard to the rules of framing.

CHAPTER 2   THE SOCIAL DEFINITION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1 The restructurings of the field of systems of pictorial expression, from the engraving to the 'photo-novel', reveal that each of these systems derives its perceptual and aesthetic rules from its social use. Photography did not simply appropriate one of the functions which had, until that point, been specific to engraving, the faithful reproduction of the real; leaving engraving with the task of illustrating fiction, it reinforced the pre-existing requirements of objectivity and realism by realizing them.

2 W. M. Ivins, *Prints and visual communication* (M.I.T. Press Cambridge, Mass. 1953), p. 128.

3 Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et Société*, Audin, Lyon, 1951, p. 47.

4 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past, The Guermantes Way*, trans. Terence Kilmartin, vol. 2 (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1981) p. 378.

5 Marcel Proust, *ibid., In a Budding Grove*, vol. 1, p. 896.

6 Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphoses ou perspectives curieuses*, Baltrusaitis, Paris, 1955.

7 Because there is nothing less natural than this selective and conventional representation, photography can still produce, in some subjects, an experience of 'estrangement', even within the familiar universe. An 85-year-old inhabitant of Lesquire showed great astonishment at an old photograph taken from the balcony of a house opposite his own. At first, he could recognize nothing. He turned the photograph around in all directions. He was shown that it was a picture of the town square. 'But where's it taken from?' He passed his finger along the houses. He stopped, and, pointing to the first-floor window of a house, said: 'But that's my house, isn't it?' He recognized the house next door: 'Where's it take from? Is that the church?' He recognized new details but remained just as confused because he was unable to locate himself.

8 Once again, children are an exception to this, perhaps because their nature is one of change; photography is appropriate, since it is a matter of capturing the ephemeral and the accidental, as it cannot save the fleeting view from complete disappearance without constituting it as such.

9 Cf. Yves Bonnefoy, 'Le temps et l'intemporel, dans la peinture du Quattrocento', *Mercure de France*, February 1958.

10 Photographic representations only really appear 'lifelike' and 'objective' because they obey laws of representation which were produced

before the media for creating them mechanically existed. Used by painters from the beginning of the sixteenth century and continuously improved from then on, in particular by the addition of a convex lens, the camera obscura became very widespread as the ambition to produce 'lifelike' images was reinforced. We also know about the fashion, during the second half of the eighteenth century, for portraits known as 'silhouettes' (drawings in profile made from the shadow thrown by the face). In 1786, Chrétien perfected the *'physionotrace'*, which made it possible to trace three-quarter-face portraits from which, when they were reduced onto copper, a number of copies could be printed. In 1807, Wollaston invented the camera lucida, a device using a prism which made it possible to see the object to be drawn and the drawing itself at the same time. In 1822, Daguerre introduced the 'Dioramas', transparent pictures subjected to changing lighting; in search of pigments which would give his pictures more dramatic force, he carried out experiments on light-sensitive chemical products, pursuing the dream of chemically capturing the image formed in the camera obscura. Learning of Niepce's invention, he improved it and turned it into the daguerrotype. Photography was predisposed to become the standard of 'realism' because it supplied the mechanical means for realizing the *'vision of the world' invented* several centuries earlier, with perspective.

11 The law is doubtless one of the best indications of the meaning objectively conferred on photography by our society. If photographic representation of the naked body leads more readily than representation in paintings to accusations of obscenity, this is doubtless because the realism attributed to photography means that it appears less capable of carrying out the operation of 'neutralization' (in the phenomenological sense) that is achieved by representation in paintings.

12 M. Gilbert Simondon points out that in fact 'automatism is a fairly low degree of technical sophistication' and that 'real sophistication in machines [. . .] corresponds not to an increase in automatism but on the contrary to the functioning of a machine taking on a certain margin of indeterminacy'. (*Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, Paris, Aubier, 1958, p. 11.)

13 The photograph in the J. B.'s collection, showing J. B.'s father beside the chainsaw falls into this category (plate 6); the affected pose and the seriousness of the gaze into the camera tend to some degree to 'compensate', for the person photographed, for the incongruity of clothing and décor.

14 Shown the photograph of a pregnant woman (plate 9), pebbles or a leaf, the reaction is almost always the same: 'The things they go out looking for!' 'The things they photograph!', 'Taking things like that, for heaven's sake!', 'It's a relaxed, natural pose . . . If the woman was having herslef photographed, she'd correct her posture.' (The observations reported here and below were formulated by peasants and workers shown a set of twenty-four professional photographs, the subject of which will be quoted each time they are mentioned.)

15 Among the Kabyles, the man of honour is the one who 'looks people in the face (*fait face*)', who looks the others in the face, uncovering his own face (cf. P. Bourdieu, 'The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society', in J. Peristiany (ed.) *Honour and Shame, The Values of Mediterranean Society*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966, pp. 191–241). From a similarity between *sp-ek* (from Latin *specio*) and *sep* (from Sanskrit *sàpati*, to show respect), Émile Benveniste observes that 'notions of "homage" and "looking" are often associated, cf. French *égard* and *regard*, English regard, respect, etc.' (*Origines de la formation des noms en indo-européen*, Maisonneuve, Paris, 1973, p. 157).

16 In Béarn the younger son who marries an elder daughter and goes to live with her often loses his surname to be known solely by the surname of his new home.

17 W. Hausenstein has brought to light the connection between frontality and the social structure of 'feudal and hieratic' cultures (*Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 1913, vol. XXXVI, pp. 759–60). Philippe Ariès also establishes a relationship between the transformation of the art of portraiture and the transformation of the structure of the family and the system of related attitudes, noting that there is a progressive movement from paintings in which the members of the family 'pose, in a rather solemn attitude, designed to emphasize the connections that bind them' (in such a painting by P. Pourbus, 'the husband rests his left hand on his wife's shoulder; at their feet, one of the two children is repeating the same gesture on the shoulder of his little sister') to portraits in which 'the family is captured in an instant, taken from life, at a point in its everyday life' (P. Ariés, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, pp. 389–90). Thus the different ways of treating the family portrait according to different social classes tend to reproduce, in a synchronic way, the different moments of the history of the portrait.

18 It is therefore still for reasons remote from aesthetics that one can be led towards aesthetic preoccupations. The influence of the situation of public presentation seems to be borne out by the fact that the

number of private photographs is much smaller among those who take colour photographs than among those who do not, and that, more than anyone else, they submit the photographs shown to a prior choice, without, however, showing the same selectiveness in their practice.

19 For example: 'What is it? A film still? If it's the photograph of a heavily made-up famous actor, it's fine; if not, it's worthless.'

20 When the image of a meaningless object is accepted, it is because both the fact of its having been taken and the people who took it are held to be meaningless. Thus, peasants can accept that people take photographs of pieces of bark or piles of pebbles, but without attaching the least value to them. If, with a slightly shocked amazement, one accepts this frivolous city-dweller's fancy, it is because, when all is said and done, photography is seen as a meaningless and frivolous activity, which should be left to city-dwellers.

21 Spontaneous discourse about photography rarely occurs on an aesthetic level, and even more seldom is photographic practice spoken of in the language of artistic creation. In a sample of 500 amateur photographs, the pictures which showed any technical or aesthetic effort amounted to less than 10 per cent.

22 Disconcerted by the semantic availability of the image, and refusing to admit the immanence of the signified to the signifier, one only invents a meaning by inventing the subject who could help the meaningless object to find meaning by conferring a function upon it. 'That's fine for someone who likes water' (breaking wave). 'That isn't any use except for studying plants; as a worker, I'm not interested in it.' 'I'd only take that one if I collected leaves.' 'No, it's a collector's photograph.' 'It might be interesting to botanists.' (leaf).

23 The proof that the beautiful image is the image of a beautiful thing (socially defined) is supplied by the fact that when one names a series of objects, asking whether they could produce a photograph that was beautiful, interesting, meaningless or ugly, one obtains very much the same hierarchy (*relatively independent of social class*) as when one presents artistic photographs of the same objects (the numbers in brackets represent the percentage of subjects who considered that these objects could produce a beautiful photograph): a sunset (78), a landscape (76), a little girl playing with a cat (56), a woman breast-feeding (54), a folk-dance (46), a weaver at work (39), a still life (38), an Old Master (37), the bark of a tree (35), a famous monument (27), a first communion (26), a snake (20), a rope (16), a

metal frame, a pregnant woman (15), cabbages, a railway cemetery, a quarrel between tramps (12), a butcher's stall (9), a wounded man (8), a car accident (1).

24 I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford University Press, London, 1952), p. 65.

25 This appears to be the popular attitude with regard to all meaning. For example, if classical music or non-figurative painting are found disconcerting, it is because subjects feel incapable of understanding what they *must* mean as signs.

26 Just as much in a rural environment as among the working classes of urban society, the hierarchy of preferences is the result of a compromise between the hierarchy of legibilities and the hierarchy of values. An easily identified photograph, even if it represents a subject that is morally shocking, will be preferred to another, whatever its subject, which is less easily identifiable. When the two hierarchies coincide, as in the case of the pregnant woman, or, particularly in the rural environment, of the old woman's hands, judgement is almost unanimously favourable: the characteristic techniques most violently attacked in meaningless photographs (blur, lack of focus, etc.,) may then be praised as 'artistic haziness', 'suitable for the subject', 'poetic'; and in fact, as one person in the survey enlighteningly said, 'it's one of those things that you can enjoy with your eyes closed'. Less 'expressive' pictures, or those which permit several different readings, always produce a certain awkwardness.

27 This means, among other things, that, paradoxically, the most enlightened amateurs and even professionals refuse to base the legitimacy of their creations, as everything would incline them to do, on the exaltation of 'objective chance'. The picture always bears its mechanical origin as a defect, and the most perfect accomplishment is held to be suspicious if it is not legitimated by the statement of an intention.

28 This partly explains why realist taste is much more firmly stated with reference to photography than with reference to painting, even in the cultivated class which, as we have seen, is not very distinct from the other social classes when it comes to establishing a hierarchy of objects according to whether or not they would make a beautiful photograph. It is also true that realist taste, very widespread among all classes of society, is more readily expressed with reference to photography than with reference to a consecrated art such as painting.

29 Factorial analysis confirms the existence of a set of correlations

between the behaviour and opinions which express attachment to the image of photography as a *mechanical reproduction of the real*.

30 Legitimacy is not the same as legality: if the individuals of the most culturally disadvantaged classes almost always recognize, if only reluctantly, the legitimacy of the aesthetic rules suggested by the dominant culture, that does not mean that they cannot spend their whole lives, *de facto*, outside the field of application of those rules without the rules losing any of their legitimacy, their claim to universal acknowledgement. The legitimate rule can in no way determine the behaviour falling within its sphere of influence, and can even have nothing but exceptions, but it still defines the modality of the experience accompanying that behaviour, and cannot avoid being seen and acknowledged, especially when it is transgressed, as the rule of cultural behaviour when it claims legitimacy. In short, the existence of what I call cultural legitimacy consists in the fact that all individuals, whether or not they wish it to be so, and whether or not they admit it, are, and know they are, placed within the field of application of a system of rules and objective sanctions which make it possible to qualify their behaviour and organize it in a hierarchy in terms of culture.

31 The survey on the museum-going public has revealed the existence of a very close connection between systems of taste with reference to painting and educational level. (Cf. P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel, *L'amour de l'art, les musées d'art européens et leur public*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1st edn, 1968, 2nd edn, revised with additions, 1969, pp. 93–101).

CHAPTER 3   AESTHETIC AMBITIONS AND SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

1 This chapter is based on surveys which were carried out by a number of researchers from the Centre de Sociologie Européenne and which have been the subject of reports and articles: 'Les clubs de photographes amateurs de la région lilloise', by Raymonde Moulin (in *Éléments pour une sociologie de la photographie*, CSE, stencilled publication, pp. 175–253); 'La pratique de la photographie parmi le personnel des usines Renault', (*ibid.*, pp. 82–174) by Jean-Claude Passeron; 'Photographie et peinture – Le club photographique de Bologne', by Dominique Schnapper (in *Revue française de sociologie*, 1964–5); 'Quatre photo-clubs de la région parisienne' (stencilled publication, CSE, 1960, 65 pp.) by Arlette Lagneau and Françoise Flament. From the study on photography in Alsace carried out by

Huguette Kaufmann (stencilled publication, CSE, 1963, 46 pp.) we have borrowed some information on the Worsbach camera club.

2 'The purpose of the club is to get together', 'I go to the club to be distracted, to have some company' (Lille).

3 Membership of a camera club is both a result and a cause of the richness of the practice. If almost all the members are already highly productive, 'from the day you join the camera club you take three times as many photographs' (Camera club member, rue Mouffetard).

4 The analysis will be centred around these two camera clubs which take to its limit this aestheticizing concept of photography, opposed to that which predominates in the youth clubs. The Lille camera club represents an intermediate stage. We shall later attempt to give sociological reasons for these differences.

5 And, in fact, the classic procedures (framing, intentional asymmetry, large close-up, blur, graininess, exaggerated enlargement, high-contrast printing, soft-focus, triple image, etc.) are used just as much in Bologna as they are in the club '*Trente et Quarante*'.

6 In Bologna, the members take photographs which are inspired, following Brassaï's 'Vieux Murs', by studies of material, illustrated by Dubuffet and his followers in Bologna.

7 But an exception which has the value of being a counter-proof. As a land-owner *and* a painter, none of the photographs taken by G. F. attempts to compete with painting. Nor do his judgements reveal the least ambivalence, and he calmly asserts: 'Photography is an art, with a small "a"; painting has a large "a". I'm mostly a painter.'

8 Compared with the social origin of the Francesco Francia artists' association, where, leaving out professionals, at least 84 per cent of members have an aristocratic or academic title or an honorific distinction.

9 Although in many cases they have known each other for more than ten years, most of the members of the club are unable to locate each other socially, and when they can, they avoid doing so. In Bologna this is so extraordinary that it can only correspond to a desire (conscious or unconscious?) to establish the group outside social traditions, or indeed counter to them.

10 Neither can it be coincidental that, despite its value as recognized in Italy and elsewhere, the camera club has, over the past number of years, organized only one exhibition in Bologna.

11 'The others think I'm mad for taking abstract colour pictures. They don't understand.' In fact, when asked, 'the others' all said they thought the 'misunderstood' man's photographs were interesting and very beautiful.

12 One might add that among the members of the *'Trente et Quarante'*, aesthetic concepts are strongly inspired by professional photo-graphers (the club's two 'leaders' are professional). We shall see below the extent to which professional photographers have an acute perception of social relations and tend to locate their activity socially.

13 The thirty-two members of the Vincennes camera club (twenty-four men, eight women, average age 24), include one student, three photographic technicians, thirteen skilled workers, fifteen minor civil servants and minor tertiary employees (industrial designers, workers in banks and insurance, cashiers, accountants etc.).

14 The camera club in Worsbach, Alsace is the twentieth project, set up in April 1963, of a very dynamic youth club founded in 1945 by the school headmaster.

15 The proposition holds both from an educational perspective (teaching photography to others) and a personal one (for one's own practice): 'I wouldn't do journalistic photography showing things I didn't agree with. That would be prostitution'.

16 'Photography is a language. [. . .] There needs to be exchange.' At the *'Trente et Quarante'*, they also talk about 'language': 'Photography is an art of communication'. But they are not talking about the same 'message'. In the aesthetic clubs, the emphasis is on the form of communication, the recognition of a style. In the youth clubs, it is the signified that is to be communicated: the density of the subject constitutes the 'message'.

17 A survey led by J.-C. Passeron at the Renault camera club, with the same socio-professional representation, exactly corroborates this analysis: a refusal of virtuoso photography, of pure experiment, the call for a meaning that is both human and acceptable in terms of the photographer's political and moral ideology: 'That's good. You could take that around the peasants to show them what it's like to work in a factory.' 'Who would you show that to?' 'What's the use of that?' etc., in short: 'What does that mean?' – these commentaries show that the justification of photographs is not to be found in the nature of photography or aesthetics.

18 'Photography should photograph what is anti-social, on the margins. [. . .] For example, when we did that report on blind people, it was incredible. [. . .] People who couldn't see anything themselves, all excited to hear pictures being discussed. Yes, blind people even more than tramps are creatures at the edge of society. They're the ones who should be photographed.' (Member, rue Mercoeur.)

19 almost all camera club photographers practise handiwork. The

proportion is almost 100 per cent in youth clubs. All the women members of camera clubs who were interviewed practise handiwork. Apparently paradoxically (but that is easily justified by the interplay of art and technology), it is only among great photographers and pure aesthetes that a disdain for experiment makes its appearance.

20 In the Renault factory camera club, which has a similar social composition, of forty-nine members interviewed, thirty-one rejected the question: 'Is photography more beautiful or less beautiful than painting?' 'There's no comparison,' they answered. It is likely that a sizeable proportion of the other answers (six considered it 'less beautiful' and twelve 'sometimes more beautiful') simply signal an acquiescence provoked by the survey situation.

21 In Vincennes, the conflict arises between a majority, concerned with 'democratic' and 'committed' photography and an aestheticizing minority centred around a former actor. At the rue Mouffetard, the organizer voices his pretensions which alternate between being moralistic and aestheticizing, to an audience which is regularly passive at meetings and only enthusiastic about the darkroom. In Worsbach, the two outside organizers officiate in the darkroom to some baffled young people and disdainfully remark about their creations: 'That isn't photography.' Only the camera club on rue Mercoeur appears to have few tensions. This is because, to be allowed into the darkroom, one has to be a friend of the organizer.

22 An analysis only applies to the social category with which it deals. The perspective is reversed if one moves to the section of the *bourgeoisie* which draws its inspiration from a longing for the noble arts (Cf. Part I). In that case, reference to painting is not only legitimate but even becomes essential, being imposed precisely by subjects who wish to refer to it as a means of resolving the difficulty of experiencing their social status. Even if this 'voluntarism' resulted in a distortion of the meaning of photographic activity as it is more naively experienced by a more working-class audience, the pretension would be found on the part of the respondents, and not on the part of the interviewers.

23 Cf. Arago's presentation speech at the Académie des Sciences, 1839.

24 Two types of assertion in working-class clubs on the qualities sought in a camera: 'To take good pictures you need a good camera' and 'The most complicated cameras aren't the best ones'. They can be reconciled if one takes handiwork into consideration as a way of making the camera more sophisticated and 'personalizing' it.

25 A survey on the readers of a populist technical magazine, *Science et Vie* – mostly clerical workers, technicians, junior executives in

industry – shows that a high level of camera equipment coincides with a high level of technical equipment (73 per cent own a sound reproduction system and 23.5 per cent a camera). (Information supplied by Pascale Maldidier)

26 'The base of this monument is missing, so you'd either have *had* to use a telephoto, or else you *must* take the whole monument.' 'You need some foreground.' 'You *must* avoid symmetry.' (Extract from an account of a meeting at the rue Mouffetard camera club)

27 Similarly, after a discussion at the *'Trente et Quarante'*: 'It was amazing this time – M. didn't tear the new member's photographs apart the way he usually does.' And M.: 'In my opinion it isn't a good idea not to criticize and systematically encourage beginners.'

CHAPTER 4   MECHANICAL ART, NATURAL ART

1 Cf. Part I, chapter 2, 'The Social Definition of Photography'.

2 Although art photography is a temptation for all professionals and an aspiration for some amateurs, we have restricted ourselves to the analysis of the group of those who seek to turn photography into an autonomous aesthetic form and who, whether as amateurs or professionals, produce work for exhibition and are concerned with justifying an aesthetic as such. The characteristics of this situation dictated the course of the study, which is devoted first to the analysis of journals, bulletins and manifestos and to the observation of the groups that produce them, then to discussions centred around questions and problems thrown up by content analysis. We analysed the collections from the last few years of *Feuillets de la société française de photographie, Officiel de la photo et du Cinéma, Caméra* and *Ciné Photo Magazine* (1956) as well as texts by virtuoso photographers collected in various publications. After this we carried out a series of twenty free discussions.

3 Content analysis, whose classic techniques provide an understanding of the major themes of aesthetic discourse, must lead to a study of the syntax in which this content is organized. Here, in the figures of rhetoric and via the recurrence of the problems which they express in their different ways, one can grasp the concern for the relationship with the social norm, which is more important than the various aesthetic theories thrown up to conceal it.

4 Brassaï, paper read at the *Séminaire sur l'image dans la société industrielle* 1961–2, organized by the *Centre de sociologie européenne*.

5 Is the transformation of traditional craft techniques (pottery, weaving, ironwork) into artistic media not facilitated by the disappearance of traditional crafts and, with them, the social definition of the uses and possibilities of the corresponding technologies?

6 This dissociation is inscribed just as much in the separation of headings in specialist journals as in the way in which camera club meetings divide into the technical and the artistic.

7 H. Cartier-Bresson, *H.C.B.* (Delpire, Paris).

8 *Ciné photo magazine*, January 1956.

9 'In Germany, in America, there are critics who are aware of the issue, but not in France.' One hardly ever comes across articles devoted to photography in the many arts columns of the major journals (*Temps modernes*, *Esprit*, *N.R.F.*), nor even in the arts magazines specializing in the visual arts (*Plaisir de France*, etc.). The only regular photographic column, a fairly brief commentary accompanying the reproduction of some photographs, is found in a current-affairs magazine aimed only at the widest possible audience (*Point de vue*, *Images du Monde*).

10 Agnes Varda's aphorism: 'Everything happens beforehand' bears out this attitude (quoted by L. Clergue in *L'Arc*, no. 22, Spring 1963).

11 *Ciné photo magazine*, June–July 1956.

12 H. Cartier-Bresson, *H.C.B.*

13 O. Steinert, 'Sur les possibilités de création en photographie', *L'Arc*, no. 22, Spring 1963.

14 Brassaï, paper at *Séminaire sur l'image dans la société industrielle*, 1961–2.

15 Dominique Aubier, *Caméra*, no. 3, August 1960.

16 E. Sougez, *Caméra*, no. 3, August 1960.

17 Extract from a conversation with Man Ray, *Jeune Photographie*, no. 42, October 1961.

18 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Jonathan Cape, London, 1970. Even those who invoke the 'visual unconscious', such as Otto Steinert, quoted above, the founder of the *'Subjektive Photographie'* movement, seem to refer more often to the distortion of static subjects than to the breakdown of movement.

19 We found no text or theory asserting or suggesting the possibility of a naive photographic success; photography has no Douanier Rousseau but, instead of naive artists, it has misunderstood artists such as Atget.

20 Cf. R. Gouriou, *La photographie et le droit d'auteur* (Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, Paris, 1959). So, for example,

the law of 11 March 1957, which 'for the first time includes photographs among the works of the mind', reserves this privilege for 'photographic works with an artistic or documentary character', thereby revealing that while the creative intention may be absent from a photograph, it is still always an issue.

21 'mistake-photographer' (trans.)

22 Quoted by Beaumont Newhall in 'Photographes d'hier et d'aujourd'hui', *Profils*, no. 15, Spring 1956.

23 Content analysis reveals that, in the aesthetic commentary, the terms designating the artist's intentions, such as sincerity, authenticity, conviction, recur more frequently than those naming the qualities of the work, such as graphic style, contrast or framing.

24 The many cases in which one art attempts to compete with another, poetry with music or sculpture, painting with poetry, do not erase the distinctions which separate them. Similarity is always sought at the level of results, not at the level of processes and objects and, consequently, it only serves paradoxically to stress the differences.

25 'Interventions by photographers are photographic interventions; development of the negative; printing of the picture. The moment one blocks something out from the negative or adds something to the print, one is in the realm of drawing.'

26 This historical reference, which takes its information from an article by Beaumont Newhall on the evolution of photographic art in the United States (*Profils*, no. 15, 1956) does not claim to reconstruct the complete development of the history of photographic art, but to illustrate the logic at work in more than one photographic aesthetic.

27 For example, negatives made on paper could be corrected in pencil, and composition was close to the work of painters. (Beaumont Newhall, *Profils*, no. 15, 1956)

28 'I've never found a landscape which illustrated a subject I've thought of: with a landscape, I'm influenced by it, I get my camera and take a picture. When I get my photograph, my vision has been betrayed; it's realistic, it's objective, the perspective is absolute, there are no distortions introducing the personality of the photographer [. . .]. When I was photographing this dune, I was sincere, well, there's no point. Sincerity doesn't pay. It doesn't say anything.'

29 H. Cartier-Bresson, *H.C.B.*

30 'When I take photographs for myself, they are literary, imagined photographs composed as attempts to illustrate a theme.'

31 'For me, photography is the recognition in reality of a rhythm of surfaces, lines and values.' (Cartier-Bresson, *H.C.B.*)

32 Brassaï, paper, *Séminaire sur l'image dans la société industrielle*, 1961–2.

33 Certain sculptures by Brassaï consist in bringing out the implicit allusion contained in a pebble or a stone: a slight addition, a helping hand from the artist clearly reveals the meaning to which the object was making a barely perceptible allusion.

34 Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past, In a Budding Grove*, p. 910.

35 If one is forced to distinguish between types of questions when one wishes to understand the intentions of aesthetes and the specific problems encountered by them, individual aesthetics arise from the simultaneous reference to these two orders of problems.

36 J. Fage, 'Evolution de l'art ou un cas de conscience', *L'Officiel*, July 1962.

37 J.-P. Sudre. Similar characteristics could be found in the traditional arts. When the work of art, challenging a tradition based on difficulty, becomes the sketch or the refusal of a work, it must take an artistic life as its basis. The difference between the work of chance and artistic creation is that the latter implies an artistic effort, intention and life. The principle of differentiation is external. Does this not explain the growing interest in the lives of artists, the proliferation of artists' biographies and memoirs? For a masterpiece not to be misunderstood, it must be the work of a recognized artist, that is, an artist known as such.

38 This explains certain reservations, even among recognized artists who, like Cartier-Bresson, deny any aspiration to art and claim simply to be aiming for great illustration photography.

39 'These inventors have collected key works from here and there, along with their regulations and canons, and, flourishing them to the four corners of human stupidity, have installed themselves as artistic presidents, commissars and advisors' (*Ciné photo magazine*, August–September 1956).

40 For example, in expressions in which the metaphor presents the relationship between artistic forms as the relationship between small companies: 'The art world will surely speak of him as the greatest gift to photography' (*Feuillets de la société française de photographie*, June 1960). 'This creator achieves effects which it would be interesting to compare with the work born from the imagination of a great name in contemporary French painting.' (*ibid.*)

41 All the journals and manifestos make this claim.

CHAPTER 5 PROFESSIONAL MEN OR MEN OF QUALITY

1 The survey on the photographic profession (January–June 1964) examined two hundred subjects. After fifty semi-directed discus-

sions had been carried out, a questionnaire was circulated around fifty professional photographers. A reasoned sample was drawn up on the basis of statistics that already existed but which were very imperfect because of the objective characteristics of the profession. Uncertainty with regard to status and a high rate of mobility made enumeration difficult and categories uncertain.

2   Interviewed about the professions of their best friends, 65 per cent of the professionals in the survey did not mention photographers. 'I never have photographer friends, it's an occupation where people don't talk to each other, you have no contacts, people make life hard for each other.' (Portrait photographer, 45)

3   35 per cent of photographers included in the survey are employees, and 65 per cent work independently. 63 per cent of the businesses run by the latter include less than four people, 27 per cent between four and seven people, and 10 per cent include eight people and upwards.

   24 per cent of the salaried workers in our sample earn less than 800 francs per month, and 22 per cent earn more than 2,500 francs.

   33 per cent of photographers interviewed only take photographs, 17 per cent do only darkroom work; 50 per cent do both.

4   The number of magazines read does not vary significantly, either according to specialization or status as employee or craftsman, or even according to income or the size of business operated.

5   13 per cent of photographers interviewed are former pupils of ETPC. 10 per cent have been to other schools (some of them to the Institut Français de Photographie in Paris, but mostly to schools in Germany or Switzerland), 7 per cent have taken evening classes to be able to show the certificate of professional aptitude (CAP) in photography. And 67 per cent have no qualifications, having learned the profession either on their own or in an apprenticeship. These results may be compared to those of a survey carried out between 1944 and 1946 by the British Institute of Public Opinion on professional photography (quoted in Krazna Krautze, *Photography as a Career*, Focal Press, London, 1946). 50 per cent of the photographers covered by this survey were trained as apprentices, 22 per cent learned as amateurs, 12 per cent in school and 16 per cent in various unspecified ways.

6   'Six or seven years ago there was an attempt on the part of employers to regulate entry into the photographic profession. It was a draft plan: to become established as a photographer, according to this draft plan, you had to have practiced for at least five years; you had to be admitted by your peers' (Photographer, CNRS photographic service).

7   It would seem that at present the opposite happens: 17 per cent of specialist photographers have been to a photographic school, as against 33 per cent of 'all-purpose' photographers. Photographers with a school qualification earn an average of 910 francs as against 1,200 francs for those without a qualification.

8   In the training course organized by Kodak (Centre d'Information et d'Applications Photographiques) professional photographers, always few in number, are even fewer the more specific the techniques being taught (for example, courses in 'photographic techniques', 'graphic arts', 'microphotography, macrophotography', 'industrial gammagraphy'). The recipients of these courses are chiefly technicians who thus acquire a secondary training in a week.

9   In our sample, 20 per cent of subjects have the CEP, (*Certificat d'études primaires*, marking completion of primary schooling), 23 per cent have the BEPC (*Brevet d'études du premier degré*, marking completion of the first part of secondary schooling), 18 per cent have the *baccalauréat*, 14 per cent have started higher education, 10 per cent have no qualifications. The diversity of the courses taken and the training received is apparent from the diversity of schooling: 20 per cent of subjects have completed primary schooling, 56 per cent have at least begun secondary schooling, 14 per cent have taken higher education.

10 While 57 per cent of the subjects with primary education possess a professional qualification, the rate is 41 per cent for subjects who have had secondary education without obtaining the *baccalauréat*, and 15 per cent for subjects who have obtained at least the *baccalauréat*.

11 35 per cent of subjects who have only had primary education have previously practised photography all year round as against 52 per cent of those who have had secondary education. Membership of clubs varies in a similar way – 4 per cent of subjects who have had primary education, 17 per cent of those who have begun secondary studies without completing them, and 23 per cent of those who have completed secondary education. In order to interpret these variations, one must remember that the age of entry into the profession is much lower among subjects who have had primary education than among those who have had secondary education.

12 An identical proportion of qualified and unqualifed photographers have attended a camera club. An even higher proportion of qualified photographers (68 per cent) than unqualified photographers (40 per cent) took photographs all year round.

13 Subjects with only primary education become employees in 44 per cent of cases, and the main body of their activity is devoted to

darkroom work in 64 per cent of cases. On the other hand, holders of a *baccalauréat* become craftsmen in 80 per cent of cases and are mainly involved in the taking of photographs in 73 per cent of cases.

14 For example, subjects who have begun secondary education (most often sanctioned by the possession of the BEPC or the preliminary examination) do not generally enjoy a better professional situation than photographers with a primary education.

15 The survey whose results we are using here dealt with two Parisian photographic schools. The *École technique de photographie et de cinéma*, set up in 1926 on the initiative of people involved in photography and the cinema, was integrated into the system of technical education in 1937, becoming a trade school; today a state technical school (*lycée technique d'État*), the ETPC (which has around one hundred and fifty pupils) prepares students for technicians' diplomas, and diplomas for advanced technicians in photography and cinematography. The Institut Français de Photographie, a recently founded private school with around two hundred and fifty students, only prepares students for the CAP in photography. In each of these schools a questionnaire was circulated among all students.

16 Thus, among upper-class subjects, the proportion of those who have acquired a professional qualification rises from 18 per cent for subjects who have completed secondary studies to 53 per cent for those who have not, and 100 per cent for those who have had only a primary education.

17 Among the students at the ETPC, the majority (80 per cent) of subjects, the children of senior executives and professionals, have not passed the *baccalauréat*, being thus clearly distinguished from the adolescents of their class of origin, most of whom hold this qualification. While 38 per cent of professionals have the *baccalauréat*, this is true of only 9 per cent of ETPC students. Similarly, 72 per cent of the children of senior executives who have entered the profession directly have the *baccalauréat*, as against 30 per cent of those who have been to photographic school.

18 85 per cent of the ETPC students who have not completed the first part of the *baccalauréat* and 70 per cent of those who have not completed the second part have taken one of the preparatory classes for at least a year. The children of senior executives and members of the professions, more numerous among the pupils of the ETPC (47 per cent) than among students in higher education (34 per cent), very rarely have the *baccalauréat* (20 per cent of cases) as against the majority of upper-class children.

19   29 per cent of photographers are children of senior executives and professionals, and 13.6 per cent are subjects of working-class origin (workers, farmers, service staff), as against 46 per cent who are of middle-class origin (including 33 per cent children of craftsmen and shopkeepers, mostly the children of photographers). Some indications appear to show that the choice of this profession is not encouraged within this group. Thus the proportion of children of clerical workers in the profession (3.1 per cent) is lower than that of clerical workers in the population as a whole (10.8 per cent). Thus again, the children of junior executives appear to seek work as photographic technicians rather than as photographers.

20   While almost all adolescents from the upper classes have the *baccalauréat*, this is only true of 53 per cent of upper-class photographers and, even more clearly, we have seen, of 20 per cent of the ETPC students, children of senior executives and members of the professions.

   57 per cent of photographers from the upper classes justify their choice of profession with reference to artistic taste or vocation, as against 47 per cent of photographers from the middle classes and 33 per cent of photographers from the working classes.

   At identical educational levels, photographers of higher social origins have a greater tendency to claim a photographic vocation. Thus, among subjects who are not holders of the *baccalauréat*, 43 per cent of the children of senior executives claim to have entered the photographic profession by vocation or artistic taste, while this is true of only 29 per cent of the children of manual workers and service staff.

21   Cf. P. Bourdieu and J. C. Passeroni, *Les Héritiers* (Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1964).

22   Thus the proportion of subjects claiming to have chosen their profession because of artistic taste or vocation is much lower (40 per cent) among subjects who have not completed their course of secondary studies than among those whose scholastic career has been completed in a regular manner, whether primary (50 per cent) or secondary (65 per cent).

23   Thus the children of manual workers represent 8 per cent of the total number of photographers in our sample and 6 per cent of the students at ETPC, although they make up 32 per cent of the total number of students in technical education. Photographers from the working classes prefer not to reveal the company they keep (among these subjects, the rate of non-responses to the question 'what is the profession of your best friends?' is highest, reaching 52 per cent)

rather than mentioning working-class subjects or craftsmen among their best friends. If their choice is distributed only among subjects from the upper classes and subjects from the middle classes (thus distinguishing themselves from other photographers), this must be attributed to downclassing and the awareness of downclassing.

24 Thus photographers of working-class origin are the children of subjects who work as craftsmen or service staff. This sample does not include children of industrial workers. We can cite the following professions: chauffeur, electrician, cook, head waiter.

25 48.8 per cent of photographers practised photography throughout the year before entering the profession; 16 per cent attended a camera club. These figures become significant when related to those for the whole set of adolescents (cf. Part I, chapter 1, 'The cult of unity and cultivated differences').

26 In fact there are professions which one may discover by first practising on a part-time basis, as an amateur. But the initiation which occurs as a game or a pastime never constitutes the whole of a training for a profession. An apprenticeship in skills and techniques must be added to it.

27 64 per cent of subjects of middle-class or upper-class origin become craftsmen. 57 per cent of subjects of working-class origin become employees. While 59 per cent of the photographic craftsmen of upper-class origin employ fewer than four people, this is true of 67 per cent of photographers of middle- and working-class origin. While 67 per cent of subjects of working-class origin have a job which consists exclusively or principally in darkroom work, this is true of only 37 per cent of subjects of middle-class origin, and 33 per cent of subjects from the upper classes. Furthermore, for the latter, this situation is temporary in most cases. In order to be convinced of the influence of social origin on the specialization practised, it is enough to note the modal categories in each group: 39 per cent of photographers from the upper classes chiefly take journalistic, publicity, art or theatre photographs; 24 per cent of photographers of middle-class origin take chiefly industrial photographs, and 30 per cent print amateur photographs and sell photographic products; 65 per cent of photographers of working-class origin print amateur photographs and sell photographic products.

28 40 per cent of the subjects interviewed had practised at least one other profession before becoming photographers.

29 Only 45 per cent of subjects of upper-class origin had never previously practised other professions. This figure rises to 52 per cent for subjects of middle-class origin, and 63 per cent for subjects of working-class origin.

30 Thus, only 38 per cent of subjects of upper-class origin worked, before becoming photographers, in professions with a status identical to that of their class of origin; 48 per cent of them worked in professions whose status was lower than that of the professions which define membership of the upper classes. 70 per cent of subjects of middle-class origin have worked in professions comparable to the professions practised by members of the middle classes, 11 per cent in inferior professions and finally only 5 per cent in professions close to upper-class professions. Finally, of subjects of working-class origin, 37 per cent worked in professions which were superior to the jobs of their class of origin, professions which located them in the middle classes, and 50 per cent in professions with a status equal to their status of origin.

31 First of all I was an electrician for six months, then a woodcutter for a year. After leaving the yard I was hired by a photographer with a shop and gradually I learned my way around the trade. In the army, I was a reporter for the 2nd DB. From the end of 1950, I was working as an independent photographer, doing industrial and portrait photographs. In '52 I went to the Alpes Maritimes where I did illustration photography and studied for myself. Around 1955 I spent some time in India: I was reporting for an agency. In 1957 I went back to Paris where I did various jobs for an agency. Then, after I got the Niepce prize, I settled for good in the Vaucluse. Now I'm only doing poetic photography (Art photographer, father engineer, qualification: CEP).

32 Inversely, among the subjects who, limited in their aspirations, entered the photographic profession directly (and are therefore less directly inspired by the desire for upclassing) the desire for change is expressed most rarely.

33 The percentage of names of photographers cited only once out of all the names mentioned is approximately the same for employees (62 per cent of names quoted once only) and craftsmen (65 per cent of names quoted once only). Similarly, the *dissensus* is identical for those working in darkrooms or taking photographs.

34 84 different photographers' names were cited out of a total of 263 mentions. We must also isolate three photographers who were the only ones who seemed to form the basis of a consensus: Cartier-Bresson cited 38 times, Doisneau and Brassaï each cited 19 times. If these 76 mentions monopolized by three photographers are substracted from the total, the average number of mentions per name quoted is 2.16. The percentage of names of photographers cited once only out of the total number of mentions is approximately the same for employees (62 per cent of names cited once) and craftsmen (65

per cent of names quoted once). Similarly, the *dissensus* is invariable for those doing darkroom work and those taking photographs.

35   A photographer from *Réalités* told us: 'At the moment, what makes a great photographer is the use of his photographs by a magazine like *Réalités*, or more precisely, a regular collaboration with *Réalités*.'

36   30 per cent of the photographers cited chiefly do book or magazine illustrations. 28 per cent of them take journalistic photographs for the major magazines such as *Life*, *Paris-March* and *Réalités*. Then come fashion photographers (20 per cent of the photographers cited), and finally 12 per cent take portraits, 5 per cent take stage photographs and 5 per cent publicity photographs. None of the photographers cited among the great photographers is involved in industrial or scientific photography.

37   The Emperor Napoleon III, marching at the head of his troops to Italy for another of his 'prestige wars' with Austria, stopped his army, which waited on the street while he and his staff walked into Disdéri's studio to sit for *carte-de-visite* portraits. The story spread. Immediately every person in Paris had to have *carte-de-visite* photographs made by Disdéri. What a showman! Disdéri rose to the occasion. He dressed extravagantly. His wide full beard he draped over satin blouses of shrieking colours which he bound at the waist with enormous belts; below, he wore short hussar trousers. Dressed in this outlandish costume, Disdéri took pictures in his studio with dramatic, imperious gestures. The crowds loved it; they flocked to his studio. (Peter Pollack, *The Picture History of Photography, from the Earliest Beginnings to the Present Day*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1958.)

38   'If I have to photograph the managing director of a big company, he'll submit to my wishes, I'll even have trouble bringing him back to subject status after crushing him as an object' (Magazine photographer).

39   'The thing that attracted me to this profession was the travelling life, going abroad, contact with people' (Set photographer). 'People don't know how to place us, we get the most amazing comments: "But you've had an education!"' (Magazine photographer).

40   The proportion of photographers interviewed who use refined language and speak in a polished way rises from 32 per cent for those of upper-class origin to around 14 per cent for those of working- or middle-class origin. On the other hand, only 7 per cent of the photographers from the upper classes use incorrect or slang French, while this is true of 33 per cent of those of working-class origin.

41   Among the photographers interviewed, the proportion of elegant or

very elegant photographers, which is 54 per cent for photographers of upper-class origin, falls to 20 per cent for those of middle-class origin, and 7 per cent for those of working-class origin. Overalls are worn by only 7 per cent of the photographers of upper-class origin, and respectively by 25 per cent and 21 per cent of photographers of middle- and working-class origin. Finally, the proportion of photographers who are slovenly in their dress or dress 'like artists' rises from 7 per cent for photographers from the highest classes to 16 per cent for those of middle-class origin, falling back to 14 per cent for those of working-class origin.

42 The proportion of photographers who received the interviewers in overalls rises from 15 per cent for those with a specialization to 20 per cent for 'all-purpose' photographers, and finally to 27 per cent for those working in the darkroom. The proportion of elegant or very elegant photographers, which is 37 per cent for those practising a specialization, falls to 14 per cent among photographers 'without a specialization', rising to 21 per cent for those working in the darkroom. Finally, it is among 'all-purpose' photographers that one comes across the highest proportion of slovenly and careless subjects (23 per cent).

43 The reading of magazines is more frequent among subjects of upper-class origin (60 per cent read two magazines and more) than among those of middle-class (50 per cent) or working-class origin (41 per cent).

44 While only 25 per cent of those who practised throughout the year before entering the profession abandoned this type of practice, 55 per cent of those who previously took photographs only occasionally took the practice up.

45 59 per cent of adolescents of upper-class origin took photographs throughout the year before entering the profession, as against only 19 per cent of adolescents of working-class origin. On the other hand, 80 per cent of professionals of working-class origin practise photography as amateurs, as against 67 per cent of professionals of upper-class origin.

46 The teaching of theoretical subjects occupies 40 per cent of the total hours of the course for the first year, and 18 per cent in the second year, rates which, in the wake of imminent reform, are due to rise respectively to 65 per cent and 56 per cent.

47 In fact, judgement is not made according to any rational criterion. We found a precise definition neither of the laws of the genre nor even of the relative rationality which would permit the comparison of tests carried out under the same conditions on the same subject.

48 70 per cent of IFP pupils claim to have come to photography through a vocation or artistic taste.

49 According to the 1954 census, 22,240 people (16,000 men and 6,240 women) make their living from photography.

50 At least this is what a survey currently in progress appears to show; for example, Tania Balachova's dramatic art course includes 74 per cent girls and 26 per cent boys.

51 The high proportion of girls in drama courses appears economically less rational, as the profession actually employs 60 per cent men and 40 per cent women (figures from the actors' union). Less urgently compelled to earn a living, girls can more easily take trainings which are oneiric and symbolic.

52 The role of advisor is not an attribute specific to the professional. Advice is given more often, and more profusely, when the purchaser of material or chemicals is received by the proprietor's wife (advice given in 33 per cent of cases) than the proprietor (advice given in 19 per cent of cases). (These results were obtained by studying a sample of 400 files on imaginary purchases.)

53 The distress with which photographers view their occupation will be more easily grasped if one is aware that 70 per cent of professionals interviewed consider that some amateurs take better photographs than professionals. This figure is higher among craftsmen (73 per cent) than among employees (64 per cent) and among the craftsmen it is higher among those who work chiefly in sales and in the darkroom (76 per cent). The attitude of resignation towards amateurs increases in proportion to the chances of coming into contact with them.

54 Craftsmen are the photographers who feel their status most threatened: 'The photographic craftsman is running out of steam. The black-and-white photographer will disappear, and colour requires too much capital; I've watched all my colleagues disappear' (Craftsman, photographer of works of art). It is doubtless for this reason that their rate of union membership is higher than that of employees (19 per cent of employees are members of a union as against 52 per cent of craftsmen).

Index