

To photograph is to define.

(For: European Photography).

In Logic, "to define" means an operation which ranges and/or delineates concepts. For instance: with the definition "a table is a piece of furniture" the concept "table" is ranged under the concept "furniture", and with the definition "a table is not a bed" a neat line is drawn between the concepts "table" and "bed". This paper intends to suggest that a photo camera may be considered to be, among other things, a logical tool, a tool which may be used to produce definitions.

If I define a table as a piece of furniture, what I do is to restrict the extend and to increase the content of the concept "furniture". There are more numerous pieces of furniture in the world than there are tables: the extend of the concept "furniture" is vaster than the extend of the concept "table". On the other hand I may say of a table that it is a sustained desk, which is not true of all the pieces of furniture: the contents of the concept "furniture" are poorer than the contents of the concept "table". The final purpose of the operation of defining is to get at a concept which has an extend of "one and one only", and an infinite content. Such a concept is for instance: "this table here". It is a concept which means one single and unique phenomenon, and which has an infinite content: it is round, brown, made of wood, there are specks on it, it is antiquated, and so forth ad infinitum, which renders it impossible to enumerate all the contents of the concept. Now concepts with which the extend is "one", and the content is "infinite" are called "proper names": "this table here" is a proper name. And the phenomenon meant by a proper name is called "concrete": the concept "this table here" means something concrete. The photo camera is a tool to produce proper names.

It looks as if nothing would be simpler than to delineate one proper name from another. "John" may be defined as meaning something which is not "Fred" or "Margaret", or even "Hans", or "Jean", or "Juan". Unfortunately this is not so. The proper name "John" has an infinite content, and so has the proper name "Fred", and in order to delineate the one from the other, one would have to enumerate everything that is contained within those two contents. Thus it becomes obvious that it is impossible to clearly separate one proper name from another, to properly define our concepts of the concrete world. It is only abstract concepts, ("names of classes"), which may be properly defined, and the more abstract they are, the easier it is to properly define them. Because the more abstract they are, the easier it is to enumerate their contents. Our concepts of the concrete world are necessarily confused, because "concrete" and "confused" are synonymous: both "con-crescere" and "con-fundere" mean "to entangle". The photo camera is a tool to dis-entangle our confusions. It is to produce proper names which may be properly delineated the one from the other. It is to render our concepts concerning the concrete world more proper.

To accomplish this overwhelming, superhuman task the photo camera ought to be capable to enumerate fully all the infinite contents of all the proper names which appear in all the photos. To put this differently: it ought to be capable of photographing all the concrete phenomena of the world, and each phenomenon in an infinite series of photos, such that no single photo would be identical with any previous or consecutive one in its series. This infinite number of infinite series would be "documentary photography" in the strict sense of that term. But to do this is of course

impossible for two reasons. The one is that such photo series would be infinitely larger than is the concrete universe, and the other is that to read such photo series would take an infinitely greater time than the expected duration of the concrete universe. Therefore, "documentary photography" is impossible in the strict sense of the term.

However, the documentary photographers are reasonable people: they admit to the impossibility of the task before them. And they are modest people: they content themselves with photographing only a few among the concrete phenomena around them, (with giving proper names to only a few among them), and with documenting those few phenomena with short photo series only, (with enumerating only a small part of the contents of the proper names they have produced). They modestly hope to thus contribute modestly to render our concepts of the concrete world more proper. But unfortunately they are mistaken in this: what they are doing is very bad logic. Their choice of the concrete phenomenon to be documented is illogical, and they pick from the contents of the chosen phenomenon the few photos of their series in an illogical manner. By thus proceeding illogically, they render our concepts of the concrete world even less proper, instead of rendering them more proper.

Fully automated cameras try to escape from the impossibility of their task by a different method: they circle around a concrete phenomenon, (for instance Mars or a molecule), and they photograph it from all possible angles, until somebody gets tired of it, or until they break down. This is excellent logic: the choice of the phenomenon is properly stated, (for instance as a function of a scientific discourse), and the photo series pick from the contents of the proper names the camera produces in a heuristic manner, and it is interrupted by pure chance. Now of course it cannot be said of fully automated photo series that they enable us to conceive properly of the concrete world, (they are far too fragmentary to be able to do so). But it may be said of them that they render our concepts, (or our will to conceive), ever more proper, and that they will do so even better in the future.

If one compares "documentary" to fully automated photo series, one may see what it is that is cleansed thanks to full automation within our will to conceive of the concrete world: it is ideology which is being eliminated from it. Such a comparison permits us to grasp the essence of ideological thought within the very gesture of photographing: the "documentary" photo series were made from specific points of view, while the fully automated ones were made during a gliding of the camera from one point of view to another. Thus fully automated cameras do cleanse our concepts of the concrete world from our wish to stand on a point of view, (and to defend it). Fully automated cameras are tools for the production of concepts free from points of view, (of prejudiced conception). They are logical tools.

Of course: the products of cameras, (the photos), need not necessarily be taken to be proper names of concrete phenomena, (concepts). They may be taken to be models of experience, (works of art), or models of behavior, (political articulations). Still: if the camera is a fascinating tool for philosophical contemplation, it is so because it is a machine for the production of concepts. Not because it is a new kind of brush, or a new kind of sword, but precisely because it is a new kind of brain. Cameras are philosophically interesting, not because they are successors to something, but because they are predecessors of machines for thinking and for reflecting. It is not that they help us to see better, or to act differently, but because they make us

think more properly, that cameras are so fascinating. That is: they make us think more properly, if we use them as logical tools, as tools for defining.