



Susan Sontag

On Photography

PICADOR

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ON

PHOTOGRAPHY

PICADOR
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A Brief Anthology
of Quotations

[H O M A G E T O W . B .]

I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me, and at length the longing has been satisfied.

—Julia Margaret Cameron

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I long to have such a memorial of every being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases—but the association and the sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed forever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think—and it is not at all monstrous in me to say, what my brothers cry out against so vehemently, that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest artist's work ever produced.

—Elizabeth Barrett

(1843, letter to Mary Russell Mitford)

Your photography is a record of your living, for anyone who really sees. You may see and be affected by other people's ways, you may even use them to find your own, but you will have eventually to free yourself of them. That is what Nietzsche meant when he said, "I have just read Schopenhauer, now I have to get rid of him." He knew how insidious other people's ways could be, particularly those which have the forcefulness of profound experience, if you let them get between you and your own vision.

—Paul Strand

That the outer man is a picture of the inner, and the face an expression and revelation of the whole character, is a

presumption likely enough in itself, and therefore a safe one to go on; borne out as it is by the fact that people are always anxious to see anyone who has made himself famous. . . . Photography . . . offers the most complete satisfaction of our curiosity.

—Schopenhauer

To experience a thing as beautiful means: to experience it necessarily wrongly.

—Nietzsche

Now, for an absurdly small sum, we may become familiar not only with every famous locality in the world, but also with almost every man of note in Europe. The ubiquity of the photographer is something wonderful. All of us have seen the Alps and know Chamonix and the Mer de Glace by heart, though we have never braved the horrors of the Channel. . . . We have crossed the Andes, ascended Tenerife, entered Japan, “done” Niagara and the Thousand Isles, drunk delight of battle with our peers (at shop windows), sat at the councils of the mighty, grown familiar with kings, emperors and queens, prima donnas, pets of the ballet, and “well graced actors.” Ghosts have we seen and have not trembled; stood before royalty and have not uncovered; and looked, in short, through a three-inch lens at every single pomp and vanity of this wicked but beautiful world.

—“D.P.,” columnist in *Once a Week*
[London], June 1, 1861

It has quite justly been said of Atget that he photographed [deserted Paris streets] like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance.

—Walter Benjamin

If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera.

—Lewis Hine

I went to Marseille. A small allowance enabled me to get along, and I worked with enjoyment. I had just discovered the Leica. It became the extension of my eye, and I have never been separated from it since I found it. I prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, determined to “trap” life—to preserve life in the act of living. Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes.

—Henri Cartier-Bresson

**It's hard to tell where you leave off
and the camera begins.**

A Minolta 35mm SLR makes it almost effortless to capture the world around you. Or express the world within you. It feels comfortable in your hands. Your fingers fall into place naturally. Everything works so smoothly that the camera

becomes a part of you. You never have to take your eye from the viewfinder to make adjustments. So you can concentrate on creating the picture. . . . And you're free to probe the limits of your imagination with a Minolta. More than 40 lenses in the superbly crafted Rokkor-X and Minolta/Celtic systems let you bridge distances or capture a spectacular "fisheye" panorama . . .

MINOLTA

When you are the camera and the camera is you
—advertisement (1976)

I photograph what I do not wish to paint and I paint what I cannot photograph.

—Man Ray

Only with effort can the camera be forced to lie: basically it is an honest medium: so the photographer is much more likely to approach nature in a spirit of inquiry, of communion, instead of with the saucy swagger of self-dubbed "artists." And contemporary vision, the new life, is based on honest approach to all problems, be they morals or art. False fronts to buildings, false standards in morals, subterfuges and mummery of all kinds, must be, will be scrapped.

—Edward Weston

I attempt, through much of my work, to animate all things—even so-called "inanimate" objects—with the spirit of man. I have come, by degrees, to realize that this extremely

animistic projection rises, ultimately, from my profound fear and disquiet over the accelerating mechanization of man's life; and the resulting attempts to stamp out individuality in all the spheres of man's activity—this whole process being one of the dominant expressions of our military-industrial society. . . . The creative photographer sets free the *human contents* of objects; and imparts humanity to the inhuman world around him.

—Clarence John Laughlin

You can photograph anything now.

—Robert Frank

I always prefer to work in the studio. It isolates people from their environment. They become in a sense . . . symbolic of themselves. I often feel that people come to me to be photographed as they would go to a doctor or a fortune teller—to find out how they are. So they're dependent on me. I have to engage them. Otherwise there's nothing to photograph. The concentration has to come from me and involve them. Sometimes the force of it grows so strong that sounds in the studio go unheard. Time stops. We share a brief, intense intimacy. But it's unearned. It has no past . . . no future. And when the sitting is over—when the picture is done—there's nothing left except the photograph . . . the photograph and a kind of embarrassment. They leave . . . and I don't know them. I've hardly heard what they've said. If I meet them a week later in a room somewhere, I expect they won't recognize me. Because I don't feel I was really there. At least the part of me that was . . . is now in the photograph. And

the photographs have a reality for me that the people don't. It's through the photographs that I know them. Maybe it's in the nature of being a photographer. I'm never really implicated. I don't have to have any real knowledge. It's all a question of recognitions.

—Richard Avedon

The daguerreotype is not merely an instrument which serves to draw nature . . . [it] gives her the power to reproduce herself.

—Louis Daguerre (1838, from a notice circulated to attract investors)

The creations of man or nature never have more grandeur than in an Ansel Adams photograph, and his image can seize the viewer with more force than the natural object from which it was made.

—advertisement for a book of photographs by Adams (1974)

This Polaroid SX-70 photograph is part of the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

The work is by Lucas Samaras, one of America's foremost artists. It is part of one of the world's most important collections. It was produced using the finest instant photographic system in the world, the Polaroid SX-70 Land camera. That same camera is owned by millions. A camera of extraordinary quality and versatility capable of exposures from 10.4

inches to infinity. . . . Samaras' work of art from the SX-70, a work of art in itself.

—advertisement (1977)

Most of my photographs are compassionate, gentle, and personal. They tend to let the viewer see himself. They tend not to preach. And they tend not to pose as art.

—Bruce Davidson

New forms in art are created by the canonization of peripheral forms.

—Viktor Shklovsky

. . . a new industry has arisen which contributes not a little to confirming stupidity in its faith and to ruining what might have remained of the divine in the French genius. The idolatrous crowd postulates an ideal worthy of itself and appropriate to its nature—that is perfectly understandable. As far as painting and sculpture are concerned, the current credo of the sophisticated public, above all in France . . . is this: "I believe in Nature, and I believe only in Nature (there are good reasons for that). I believe that Art is, and cannot be other than, the exact reproduction of Nature. . . . Thus an industry that could give us a result identical to Nature would be the absolute of art." A vengeful God has granted the wishes of this multitude. Daguerre was his Messiah. And now the public says to itself: "Since photography gives us every guarantee of exactitude that we

could desire (they really believe that, the idiots!), then photography and Art are the same thing." From that moment our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal. . . . Some democratic writer ought to have seen here a cheap method of disseminating a loathing for history and for painting among the people. . . .

—Baudelaire

Life itself is not the reality. We are the ones who put life into stones and pebbles.

—Frederick Sommer

The young artist has recorded, stone by stone, the cathedrals of Strasbourg and Rheims in over a hundred different prints. Thanks to him we have climbed all the steeples . . . what we never could have discovered through our own eyes, he has seen for us . . . one might think the saintly artists of the Middle Ages had foreseen the daguerreotype in placing on high their statues and stone carvings where birds alone circling the spires could marvel at their detail and perfection. . . . The entire cathedral is reconstructed, layer on layer, in wonderful effects of sunlight, shadows, and rain. M. Le Secq, too, has built his monument.

—H. de Lacretelle,
in *La Lumière*, March 20, 1852

The need to bring things spatially and humanly "nearer" is almost an obsession today, as is the tendency to negate the

unique or ephemeral quality of a given event by reproducing it photographically. There is an ever-growing compulsion to reproduce the object photographically, in close-up. . . .

—Walter Benjamin

It is no accident that the photographer becomes a photographer any more than the lion tamer becomes a lion tamer.

—Dorothea Lange

If I were just curious, it would be very hard to say to someone, "I want to come to your house and have you talk to me and tell me the story of your life." I mean people are going to say, "You're crazy." Plus they're going to keep mighty guarded. But the camera is a kind of license. A lot of people, they want to be paid that much attention and that's a reasonable kind of attention to be paid.

—Diane Arbus

. . . Suddenly a small boy dropped to the ground next to me. I realized then that the police were not firing warning shots. They were shooting into the crowd. More children fell. . . . I began taking pictures of the little boy who was dying next to me. Blood poured from his mouth and some children knelt next to him and tried to stop the flow of blood. Then some children shouted they were going to kill me. . . . I begged them to leave me alone. I said I was a reporter and was there to record what happened. A young girl hit me on the head with a rock. I was dazed, but still on my feet. Then they saw reason and some led me away. All the time helicop-

ters circled overhead and there was the sound of shooting. It was like a dream. A dream I will never forget.

—from the account by Alf Khumalo, a black reporter on the *Johannesburg Sunday Times*, of the outbreak of riots in Soweto, South Africa, published in *The Observer* [London], Sunday, June 20, 1976

Photography is the only “language” understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence—where people are free—it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. We become the eye-witnesses of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind . . .

—Helmut Gernsheim
(*Creative Photography* [1962])

Photography is a system of visual editing. At bottom, it is a matter of surrounding with a frame a portion of one’s cone of vision, while standing in the right place at the right time. Like chess, or writing, it is a matter of choosing from among given possibilities, but in the case of photography the number of possibilities is not finite but infinite.

—John Szarkowski

Sometimes I would set up the camera in a corner of the room, sit some distance away from it with a remote control in my hand, and watch our people while Mr. Caldwell talked

with them. It might be an hour before their faces or gestures gave us what we were trying to express, but the instant it occurred the scene was imprisoned on a sheet of film before they knew what had happened.

—Margaret Bourke-White

The picture of Mayor William Gaynor of New York at the moment of being shot by an assassin in 1910. The Mayor was about to board a ship to go on holiday in Europe as an American newspaper photographer arrived. He asked the Mayor to pose for a picture and as he raised his camera two shots were fired from the crowd. In the midst of this confusion the photographer remained calm and his picture of the blood-spattered Mayor lurching into the arms of an aide has become part of photographic history.

—a caption in “Click”:
A Pictorial History of the Photograph (1974)

I have been photographing our toilet, that glossy enameled receptacle of extraordinary beauty. . . . Here was every sensuous curve of the “human figure divine” but minus the imperfections. Never did the Greeks reach a more significant consummation to their culture, and it somehow reminded me, forward movement of finely progressing contours, of the Victory of Samothrace.

—Edward Weston

Good taste at this time in a technological democracy ends up to be nothing more than taste prejudice. If all that art does is create good or bad taste, then it has failed com-

pletely. In the question of taste analysis, it is just as easy to express good or bad taste in the kind of refrigerator, carpet or armchair that you have in your home. What good camera artists are trying to do now is to raise art beyond the level of mere taste. Camera Art must be completely devoid of logic. The logic vacuum must be there so that the viewer applies his own logic to it and the work, in fact, makes itself before the viewer's eyes. So that it becomes a direct reflection of the viewer's consciousness, logic, morals, ethics and taste. The work should act as a feedback mechanism to the viewer's own working model of himself.

—Les Levine (“Camera Art,”
in *Studio International*, July/August 1975)

Women and men—it's an impossible subject, because there can be no answers. We can find only bits and pieces of clues. And this small portfolio is just the crudest sketches of what it's all about. Maybe, today, we're planting the seeds of more honest relationships between women and men.

—Duane Michals

“Why do people keep photographs?”

“Why? Goodness knows! Why do people keep things—junk—trash, bits and pieces. They do—that's all there is to it!”

“Up to a point I agree with you. Some people keep things. Some people throw everything away as soon as they have done with it. That, yes, it is a matter of temperament. But I speak now especially of photographs. Why do people keep, in particular, *photographs*?”

“As I say, because they just don't throw things away. Or else because it reminds them—”

Poirot pounced on the words.

“Exactly. *It reminds them*. Now again we ask—why? *Why* does a woman keep a photograph of herself when young? And I say that the first reason is, essentially, vanity. She has been a pretty girl and she keeps a photograph of herself to remind her of what a pretty girl she was. It encourages her when her mirror tells her unpalatable things. She says, perhaps, to a friend, ‘That was me when I was eighteen . . .’ and she sighs . . . You agree?”

“Yes—yes, I should say that's true enough.”

“Then that is reason No. 1. Vanity. Now reason No. 2. Sentiment.”

“That's the same thing?”

“No, no, not quite. Because this leads you to preserve, not only your own photograph but that of someone else . . . A picture of your married daughter—when she was a child sitting on a hearthrug with tulle round her. . . . Very embarrassing to the subject sometimes, but mothers like to do it. And sons and daughters often keep pictures of their mothers, especially, say, if their mother died young. ‘This was my mother as a girl.’”

“I'm beginning to see what you're driving at, Poirot.”

“And there is, possibly, a *third* category. Not vanity, not sentiment, not love—perhaps *hate*—what do you say?”

“Hate?”

“Yes. To keep a desire for revenge alive. Someone who has injured you—you might keep a photograph to remind you, might you not?”

—from Agatha Christie's
Mrs. McGinty's Dead (1951)

Previously, at dawn that day, a commission assigned to the task had discovered the corpse of Antonio Conselheiro. It was lying in one of the huts next to the arbor. After a shallow layer of earth had been removed, the body appeared wrapped in a sorry shroud—a filthy sheet—over which pious hands had strewn a few withered flowers. There, resting upon a reed mat, were the last remains of the “notorious and barbarous agitator” They carefully disinterred the body, precious relic that it was—the sole prize, the only spoils of war this conflict had to offer!—taking the greatest of precautions to see that it did not fall apart. . . . They photographed it afterward and drew up an affidavit in due form, certifying its identity; for the entire nation must be thoroughly convinced that at last this terrible foe had been done away with.

—from Euclides da Cunha’s
Rebellion in the Backlands (1902)

Men still kill one another, they have not yet understood how they live, why they live; politicians fail to observe that the earth is an entity, yet television (Telehor) has been invented: the “Far Seer”—tomorrow we shall be able to look into the heart of our fellow-man, be everywhere and yet be alone; illustrated books, newspapers, magazines are printed—in millions. The unambiguousness of the real, the truth in the everyday situation is there for all classes. *The hygiene of the optical, the health of the visible is slowly filtering through.*

—László Moholy-Nagy (1925)

As I progressed further with my project, it became obvious that it was really unimportant where I chose to photograph.

The particular place simply provided an excuse to produce work. . . . you can only see what you are ready to see—what mirrors your mind at that particular time.

—George Tice

I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed.

—Garry Winogrand

The Guggenheim trips were like elaborate treasure hunts, with false clues mixed among the genuine ones. We were always being directed by friends to their own favorite sights or views or formations. Sometimes these tips paid off with real Weston prizes; sometimes the recommended item proved to be a dud . . . and we drove for miles with no payoffs. By that time, I had reached the point of taking no pleasure in scenery that didn’t call Edward’s camera out, so he didn’t risk much when he settled back against the seat saying, “I’m not asleep—just resting my eyes”; he knew my eyes were at his service, and that the moment anything with a “Weston” look appeared, I would stop the car and wake him up.

—Charis Weston (quoted in Ben Maddow,
Edward Weston: Fifty Years [1973])

Polaroid’s SX-70. It won’t let you stop.

Suddenly you see a picture everywhere you look. . . .
Now you press the red electric button. Whirr . . . whoosh . . . and there it is. You watch your picture come to life,

growing more vivid, more detailed, until minutes later you have a print as real as life. Soon you're taking rapid-fire shots—as fast as every 1.5 seconds!—as you search for new angles or make copies on the spot. The SX-70 becomes like a part of you, as it slips through life effortlessly. . . .

—advertisement (1975)

. . . we *regard* the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there.

This need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without colour and even perhaps a face in reduced proportions struck them as inhuman.

—Wittgenstein

Is it an instant picture of . . .

the destructive test of an axle?

the proliferation of a virus?

a forgettable lab setup?

the scene of the crime?

the eye of a green turtle?

the divisional sales chart?

chromosomal aberrations?

page 173 of Gray's Anatomy?

an electrocardiogram read-out?

a line conversion of half-tone art?

the three-millionth 8¢ Eisenhower stamp?

a hairline fracture of the fourth vertebra?

a copy of that irreplaceable 35mm slide?
 your new diode, magnified 13 times?
 a metallograph of vanadium steel?
 reduced type for mechanicals?
 an enlarged lymph node?
 the electrophoresis results?
 the world's worst malocclusion?
 the world's best-corrected malocclusion?

As you can see from the list . . . there's no limit to the kind of material that people need to record. Fortunately, as you can see from the list of Polaroid Land cameras below, there's almost no limit to the kind of photographic records you can get. And, since you get them on the spot, if anything's missing, you can re-shoot on the spot. . . .

—advertisement (1976)

An object that tells of the loss, destruction, disappearance of objects. Does not speak of itself. Tells of others. Will it include them?

—Jasper Johns

Belfast, Northern Ireland—The people of Belfast are buying picture postcards of their city's torment by the hundreds. The most popular shows a boy throwing a stone at a British armored car. . . . other cards show burned-out homes, troops in battle positions on city streets and children at play amid smoking rubble. Each card sells for approximately 25 cents in the three Gardener's shops.

“Even at that price, people have been buying them in

bundles of five or six at a time," said Rose Lehane, manager of one shop. Mrs. Lehane said that nearly 1,000 cards were sold in four days.

Since Belfast has few tourists, she said, most of the buyers are local people, mostly young men who want them as "souvenirs."

Neil Shawcross, a Belfast man, bought two complete sets of the cards, explaining, "I think they're interesting mementoes of the times and I want my two children to have them when they grow up."

"The cards are good for people," said Alan Gardener, a director of the chain. "Too many people in Belfast try to cope with the situation here by closing their eyes and pretending it doesn't exist. Maybe something like this will jar them into seeing again."

"We have lost a lot of money through the troubles, with our stores being bombed and burned down," Mr. Gardener added. "If we can get a bit of money back from the troubles, well and good."

—from *The New York Times*, October 29, 1974
("Postcards of Belfast Strife Are Best-Sellers There")

Photography is a tool for dealing with things everybody knows about but isn't attending to. My photographs are intended to represent something you don't see.

—Emmet Gowin

The camera is a fluid way of encountering that other reality.

—Jerry N. Uelsmann

Oswiecim, Poland—Nearly 30 years after Auschwitz concentration camp was closed down, the underlying horror of the place seems diminished by the souvenir stands, Pepsi-Cola signs and the tourist-attraction atmosphere.

Despite chilling autumn rain, thousands of Poles and some foreigners visit Auschwitz every day. Most are modestly dressed and obviously too young to remember World War II.

They troop through the former prison barracks, gas chambers and crematoria, looking with interest at such gruesome displays as an enormous showcase filled with some of the human hair the S.S. used to make into cloth. . . . At the souvenir stands, visitors can buy a selection of Auschwitz lapel pins in Polish and German, or picture postcards showing gas chambers and crematoria, or even souvenir Auschwitz ballpoint pens which, when held up to the light, reveal similar pictures.

—from *The New York Times*,
November 3, 1974 ("At Auschwitz,
a Discordant Atmosphere of Tourism")

The media have substituted themselves for the older world. Even if we should wish to recover that older world we can do it only by an intensive study of the ways in which the media have swallowed it.

—Marshall McLuhan

. . . Many of the visitors were from the countryside, and some, unfamiliar with city ways, spread out newspapers on

the asphalt on the other side of the palace moat, unwrapped their home-cooking and chopsticks and sat there eating and chatting while the crowds sidestepped. The Japanese addiction to snapshots rose to fever pitch under the impetus of the august backdrop of the palace gardens. Judging by the steady clicking of the shutters, not only everybody present but also every leaf and blade of grass must now be recorded on film, in all their aspects.

—from *The New York Times*, May 3, 1977
 (“Japan Enjoys 3 Holidays of ‘Golden Week’
 by Taking a 7-Day Vacation from Work”)

I’m always mentally photographing everything as practice.

—Minor White

The daguerreotypes of all things are preserved . . . the imprints of all that has existed live, spread out through the diverse zones of infinite space.

—Ernest Renan

These people live again in print as intensely as when their images were captured on the old dry plates of sixty years ago. . . . I am walking in their alleys, standing in their rooms and sheds and workshops, looking in and out of their windows. And they in turn seem to be aware of me.

—Ansel Adams (from the Preface to
Jacob A. Riis: Photographer & Citizen [1974])

Thus in the photographic camera we have the most reliable aid to a beginning of objective vision. Everyone will be compelled to see that which is optically true, is explicable in its own terms, is objective, before he can arrive at any possible subjective position. This will abolish that pictorial and imaginative association pattern which has remained unsurpassed for centuries and which has been stamped upon our vision by great individual painters.

We have—through a hundred years of photography and two decades of film—been enormously enriched in this respect. We may say that we see the world with entirely different eyes. Nevertheless, the total result to date amounts to little more than a visual encyclopaedic achievement. This is not enough. We wish to produce systematically, since it is important for life that we create *new relationships*.

—László Moholy-Nagy (1925)

Any one who knows what the worth of family affection is among the lower classes, and who has seen the array of little portraits stuck over a labourer’s fireplace . . . will perhaps feel with me that in counteracting the tendencies, social and industrial, which every day are sapping the healthier family affections, the sixpenny photograph is doing more for the poor than all the philanthropists in the world.

—*Macmillan’s Magazine* [London], September 1871

Who, in his opinion, would buy an instant movie camera? Dr. Land said he expects the housewife to be a good prospect. “All she has to do is point the camera, press the shutter release and in minutes relive her child’s cute moment, or

perhaps, birthday party. Then, there is the large number of people who prefer pictures to equipment. Golf and tennis fans can evaluate their swings in instant replay; industry, schools and other areas where instant replay coupled with easy-to-use equipment would be helpful. . . . Polavision's boundaries are as wide as your imagination. There is no end to the uses that will be found for this and future Polavision cameras."

—from *The New York Times*, May 8, 1977
 ("A Preview of Polaroid's New Instant Movies")

Most modern reproducers of life, even including the camera, really repudiate it. We gulp down evil, choke at good.

—Wallace Stevens

The war had thrust me, as a soldier, into the heart of a mechanical atmosphere. Here I discovered the beauty of the fragment. I sensed a new reality in the detail of a machine, in the common object. I tried to find the plastic value of these fragments of our modern life. I rediscovered them on the screen in the close-ups of objects which impressed and influenced me.

—Fernand Léger (1923)

575.20 fields of photography

aerophotography, aerial photography

astrophotography

candid photography

chromophotography

chronophotography

cinematography

cinemotomicrography

cystophotography

heliophotography

infrared photography

macrophotography

microphotography

miniature photography

phonophotography

photogrammetry

photomicrography

photospectroheliography

phototopography

phototypography

phototypy

pyrophotography

radiography

radiophotography

sculptography

skiagraphy

spectroheliography

spectrophotography

stroboscopic photography

telephotography

uranophotography

X-ray photography

—from *Roget's International Thesaurus*,
 Third Edition

The weight of words. The shock of photos.

—*Paris-Match*, advertisement

June 4, 1857. — Saw today, at the Hôtel Drouot, the first sale of photographs. Everything is becoming black in this century, and photography seems like the black clothing of things.

November 15, 1861. — I sometimes think the day will come when all modern nations will adore a sort of American god, a god who will have been someone who lived as a human being and about whom much will have been written in the popular press: images of this god will be set up in the churches, not as the imagination of each individual painter may fancy him, not floating on a Veronica cloth, but fixed once and for all by photography. Yes, I foresee a photographed god, wearing spectacles.

—from the *Journal* of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt

In the spring of 1921, two automatic photographic machines, recently invented abroad, were installed in Prague, which reproduced six or ten or more exposures of the same person on a single print.

When I took such a series of photographs to Kafka I said light-heartedly: "For a couple of krone one can have oneself photographed from every angle. The apparatus is a mechanical *Know-Thyself*."

"You mean to say, the *Mistake-Thyself*," said Kafka, with a faint smile.

I protested: "What do you mean? The camera cannot lie!"

"Who told you that?" Kafka leaned his head toward his shoulder. "Photography concentrates one's eye on the superficial. For that reason it obscures the hidden life which glimmers through the outlines of things like a play of light and shade. One can't catch that even with the sharpest lens. One has to grope for it by feeling. . . . This automatic camera doesn't multiply men's eyes but only gives a fantastically simplified fly's eye view."

—from Gustav Janouch's *Conversations with Kafka*

Life appears always fully present along the epidermis of his body: vitality ready to be squeezed forth entire in fixing the instant, in recording a brief weary smile, a twitch of the hand, the fugitive pour of sun through clouds. And not a tool, save the camera, is capable of registering such complex ephemeral responses, and expressing the full majesty of the moment. No hand can express it, for the reason that the mind cannot retain the unmutated truth of a moment sufficiently long to permit the slow fingers to notate large masses of related detail. The impressionists tried in vain to achieve the notation. For, consciously or unconsciously, what they were striving to demonstrate with their effects of light was the truth of moments; impressionism has ever sought to fix the wonder of the here, the now. But the momentary effects of lighting escaped them while they were busy analyzing; and their "impression" remains usually a series of impressions superimposed one upon the other. Stieglitz was better guided. He went directly to the instrument made for him.

—Paul Rosenfeld

The camera is my tool. Through it I give a reason to everything around me.

—André Kertész

*A double leveling down, or a method of leveling down
which double-crosses itself*

With the daguerreotype everyone will be able to have their portrait taken—formerly it was only the prominent; and at the same time everything is being done to make us all look exactly the same—so that we shall only need one portrait.

—Kierkegaard (1854)

Make picture of kaleidoscope.

—William H. Fox Talbot
(note dated February 18, 1839)