In defense of **tourist photography**

STEPHEN F. HALLER * [shaller@wlu.ca]

Abstract | The casualness with which tourists take photographs, coupled with this sense that it is somehow a violation of privacy, creates interesting ethical dilemmas. In general, people feel that photography is often wrong, or unethical, or rude, but they cannot articulate exactly why, and if they try, they start to realize the contradictions in their outlook. In deciding whether photography can wrong someone, one can divide criticisms against photography into two general categories. First, there are issues that arise from the way the camera, and/or photograph is used; and second, there are issues that arise from the medium itself, regardless of its use. The first category of criticisms, then, leads to advice about how best to go about taking pictures as a tourist. The second category implies that there may be features inherent in photography that cannot be avoided, and which therefore might necessitate that an ethical tourist gives up taking pictures altogether. We reject this conclusion and argue that if tourist photographers are considered to be amateur journalists and artists, then they might be similarly exempt from many of these concerns.

Keywords | Photography, Tourism, Ethics, Philosophy.

Resumo | A descontracção com que os turistas tiram fotografias, aliado a um sentimento de que é de alguma forma uma violação de privacidade, cria dilemas éticos interessantes. Em geral, as pessoas sentem que a fotografia é muitas vezes errada, ou antiético, ou rude, mas não conseguem articular exactamente o porquê, e se tentarem, começam a perceber as contradições nas suas perspectivas. Ao decidir se a fotografia pode ser algo de errado para alguém, permite dividir as críticas contra a fotografia em duas categorias gerais. Em primeiro lugar, há questões que surgem a partir da maneira como a camera, e/ou fotografia é usada e, segundo, há questões que surgem a partir do próprio meio, independentemente do seu uso. A primeira categoria de críticas, então, leva a conselhos sobre a melhor forma de tirar fotos como um turista. A segunda categoria implica que pode haver características inerentes à fotografia que não podem ser evitadas, e que, portanto, pode exigir que um turista ético desista de tirar fotos completamente. Rejeita-se esta conclusão e argumenta-se que, se fotógrafos turísticos são considerados jornalistas e artistas amadores, então poderiam ser igualmente isentos de muitas dessas preocupações.

Palavras-chave | Fotografia, Turismo, Ética, Filosofia.

* **PhD in Philosophy** from the University of Guelph (Canada). **Associate Professor** at Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada).

1. Introduction

In his *Journey to Portugal*, José Saramago describes how he passed up an opportunity to photograph a huddle of black-dressed women "who have been talking there since the world began", because he felt "embarrassed, still unaccustomed to the boldness normally adopted by tourists" (Saramago, 1990, p. 5). Less embarrassed than he, hundreds of millions of tourists take such candid photos every day. The sense that the tourist's camera rudely intrudes into people's private lives is so commonplace that organizations issuing codes of ethics for travelers have singled out photography for special attention. In a widely reproduced list of guidelines created by the Centre for Responsible Tourism, it is recommended that one should avoid offensive behaviour, and then, in order to drive home the point, it is added that "this applies very much to photography", as if this was the most flagrant of all possible offences (Living Heritage Website).

The casualness with which tourists take photographs, coupled with this sense that it is somehow an offensive activity, creates interesting ethical dilemmas. People often feel that photography is unethical, or rude, but they cannot articulate exactly why, and if they try, they start to realize the contradictions in their outlook.

In deciding whether photography can wrong someone, one can divide criticisms against photography into two general categories. First, there are issues that arise from the way the camera, and/or photograph is used; and second, there are issues that arise from the medium itself, regardless of its use. The first category of criticisms, then, leads to advice about how best to go about taking pictures as a tourist. The second category implies that there may be features inherent in photography that cannot be avoided, and which therefore might necessitate that an ethical tourist gives up taking pictures altogether. We reject this conclusion and argue that if tourist photographers are considered to be amateur journalists and artists, then they might be similarly exempt from many of these concerns.

2. Using the camera ethically

Photography has many uses including documentation of events, art and journalism. Cameras can be used insensitively, just as cell phones can, or radios, or just about anything else. The distinction of interest here is between a tourist's use of photography, and other types of uses. Professional photographers whose aim is to make money are bound by different ethical principles than tourists, since profit-making brings into play considerations not of concern for tourists, whose aim is to collect images for memory and personal use alone. Commercial photographers are expected to pay their subjects, and ask their permission prior to photographing them, and failure to do so is considered a misuse of photograph images. The usual considerations of honest transactions apply, which in this case include the subject's informed consent and negotiated remuneration.

Consider Steve McCurry's famous photograph of an Afghan girl which was published on the cover of National Geographic in June 1985. Taken in a refugee camp in Peshawar, Pakistan, McCurry describes how he came to take this photo in a refugee camp: "I saw this one particular girl who had this really kind of haunted look in her eye. So I got permission to photograph her" (Dela Torre, 2013, p 1). However, it is unclear what is meant by permission in this case, since that she had no idea that her face was to become an iconic image reproduced millions of times. It was this sense of an incomplete financial transaction which likely provided one motivation for McCurry to track down this girl 17 years later, and compensate her and her community in various ways (National Geographic News, 2003).

It might be thought that the same criteria of an ethical business transaction should be applied to tourists and their subjects. It is not unusual for those

being photographed to request payment for the right to take their picture. Even though the amount requested may be only a small token, many photographers would refuse to pay on principle. Tourists are not taking photographs for financial reward, and so they do not see how the exchange of money is relevant to their activities. Most tourist photographers have some artistic intentions of creating beautiful and meaningful images; or they have semi-journalistic intentions of documenting their trip. These spheres of activity are normally considered exempt from market demands, at least in the creation of the images, if not their consumption.

Journalists never pay for a story. They insist on this because the exchange of money would compromise their integrity. Journalists have a duty to report truth, and the exchange of money provides an incentive, or at least the appearance of an incentive, for people to lie, embellish, and sensationalize the truth in order to receive the financial compensation on offer, which is a practice that would erode the public trust in journalists and their stories.

Photojournalists are no different in their need to record events without financial considerations altering those very events. The public want to trust that photographs have not been set up, or that photographic subjects are not acting for the camera by staging a performance only for the brief moments that the camera is present.

Thus, the photographs that appear in newspapers everyday are not obtained with the permission or payment of the subjects. For example, financiers, leaving courtrooms where they are on trial for fraud, are subject to being photographed as they exit their cars or walk down the street. Whether they approve of being photographed or not is dismissed in the public interest.

Similarly, the creation of art is usually considered to be outside the sphere of pecuniary and consensual considerations. This frees artists from the subjugation of market forces which might stifle the creative impulse. Consider Andy Warhol's famous neon images of soup cans, or the creation of some anti-monarchist work using an image of the queen. Nobody expects artists to reward financially all those whose images might be used in their art.

Some might wish to limit the applicability of these arguments to journalists and artists, because their photographs are justified for the sake of informing, and interpreting the world. However, there are those who wish to claim that tourists have no right to take these same kinds of photos because they, supposedly, are used merely for entertainment. But to deny that the same arguments apply to tourists seems unwarranted. While they may be non-professional artists, and amateur photojournalists, they differ only in a matter of degree, not in kind. Tourists are merely eliminating the artist/journalist middle-man by direct participation. Many tourists are guided, even if unconsciously, by the aesthetic of *reportage* photography, which has been described as the "art of blending documentary, reportage-style observations, with personal experience, perception, and anecdotal evidence" (Oximity, 2014). Since artistic values are of ultimate importance in the way that humans perceive themselves and the world, it should be given wide latitude, and while most tourists might not be sophisticated in their aesthetics, it is difficult to deny that their photographs too have some artistic or journalistic intentions.

A very interesting example of such journalistic photography is provided by M. Smith and R. Duffy. The Quiché people of Guatemala think it sacrilegious to take photographs inside the church of San Tomas in Chichecastenango, and 'No Foto' signs are clearly posted at the entrance. Photographs are easily available on the internet, however. While many people would be offended by the taking and sharing of these photographs, it is not simply a case of disrespect. There is a political history to the church that is inseparable from its religious symbolism. The history of that church starts with its construction by the conquistadores on a Quiché sacred site. The recent history of the church is inextricably associated with military politics, colonialism, and US foreign policy. At the entrance is an uplifting army slogan,

despite that "[...] this same army was recently responsible for the torture and extermination of tens of thousands of the local population" (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 37). The tourist photographer, then, is acting as journalist, documenting these historical, political contexts, and bringing them home to further discussion. Since there will always be political contexts to photographs, there will always be a kind of tourism that is like journalism in its ability to inform and enlighten, in contrast to being merely exploitive.

In addition to being exempt from demands for permission, tourists should also be exempt from pleas of money for pictures because such fees contribute to the creation of a market in human interaction. Is everything to be for sale? It has now become quite common in some places for people to request money whenever they find themselves in the viewfinder of a tourist with a camera. However, isn't this like someone asking for money in exchange for returning your smile as you pass them on the street? Complying with these requests distorts basic human social behaviour. It encourages the outlook that tourists be viewed as nothing more than consumers who must be made to pay for everything, including normal human interactions. If enough tourists do end up feeling obligated to pay for photographic privileges, we believe this will create the social harm of turning basic human interactions into market transactions.

Social harms can, paradoxically perhaps, negatively affect the public good even if no particular individuals are directly harmed. For example, it is often considered immoral to buy and sell human sperm and ova even though everyone involved is a consenting adult. No individuals are harmed in any of these practices. All the donors and recipients were consenting to procedures of which they were informed of the risks involved. Nonetheless, these practices might constitute a 'social harm' in the sense that a community that fosters such shallow values will be worse off. The Canadian Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies feared that if these practices become widespread, then that society would be one that treats life in terms of a commodity that buys and sells living beings (Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, 1997). The concept of social harm, apart from harm to individuals, is relevant for our concerns here because we would argue that the development of a market in normal human interactions is a bad thing, and photographing people should be regarded as a normal human interaction.

What is it about photography that makes people believe that it is not merely an ordinary human transaction like smiling or conversing? We believe that ideas of property rights seem to come more easily to mind in the case of photography than in these other transactions. Our ideas of property and ownership are still influenced by those of 17th century English philosopher John Locke, who argued that ownership of something is derived from one's mixing their labour with that something, thereby adding surplus value (Locke, 1980). Photographers take this concept for granted. If we use our own imagination, free will and creative impulse to frame a photo, then the image created becomes our property because it is the product of our own labour. This explains the need for photo-credits even when pictures hardly differ from many others.

In Locke's (1980) theory, of course, it is assumed that the thing is un-owned to begin with. With images of people, however, it might be thought that they are already owned by those from whom they derive. Those who want payment for being photographed are assuming that they already have ownership of their own image, and that the tourist photographer is somehow taking it. However, this is a misunderstanding of language. Images are not things that are cast off from individuals like light rays emanating from their persons. They are not things that can be owned by an individual. Rather, they are created in the camera, much like the sounds of trees falling (Berkeley, 1710). The photographer is assuming, correctly, that an image is being created where none existed before and, therefore, it is the property of the photographer.

Furthermore, the ownership of one's image is problematic since photographs are not simply

factual objects but, rather, are social constructions whose meaning involves social convention and mutually agreed meanings (Azoulay, 2005). The image cannot be owned by the subject then, because the very meaning of the image is a matter of social agreement.

It seems that if photography does wrong someone, then that wrong would come about by how the photograph was used. If an image is used maliciously, to humiliate, or deliberately embarrass, then it can be used to wrong someone. However, the wrong is derived from the behavior of the user, and not from the medium of photography itself.

3. Cameras are not a neutral medium

In the second category of criticisms are issues that arise from the medium itself, regardless of how it is used. Cameras are not a neutral medium through which to communicate reality. Instead, there are certain characteristics of photography that are inherent to the medium, regardless of its use for profit, entertainment or news. Susan Sontag, in her modern classic On Photography, articulates at least three criticisms of photography that are representative of our concerns here because they arise from the medium itself and not merely the behaviour of its user. She notes that photography can objectify the people being photographed; that photography is a power-relation of domination between the photographer and the photographed; and that the act of photography can be alienating and inauthentic for the photographer. In short, photography is said to be inherently an intrusive, degrading and inauthentic activity. But is this so?

"There is something predatory in the act of taking a picture [...]", she writes, "[...] to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed" (Sontag, 1977, p. 14). Photography supposedly 'commodifies' people by distorting their identity in order that they can be possessed.

To photograph someone is to somehow objectify them, and thus turn them into a metaphorical trophy which the tourist collects. Like all trophy-hunting, the idea is about ownership and possession. "A trophy [...]", writes Aldo Leopold in a discussion about hunting, "[...] is a certificate. It attests that its owner has [...] exercised skill, persistence, or discrimination in the age-old feat of [...] reducing-to-possession." (Leopold, 1966, p. 284). The subjects of the photographs then, in this trophy analogy, become commodities to be collected by the tourist in what Urry calls acts of 'visual consumption' (1992, p. 174).

The picturesque town of St. Jacobs Ontario is the centre of economic activity for a thriving community of Mennonite farmers. Horse-drawn buggies regularly pass in and out of town and tourists flock to take photographs of these people devoted to simple living. Not only are the tourist photographers violating the wishes of the Mennonites, but the photographers are treating their subjects like a mere part of the scenery in some anthropological zoo; that is, they treat them like objects rather than subjects.

People resent being treated like mere cultural artifacts that are part of the scenery, and being seen "as they never see themselves" (Sontag, 1977, p. 14). When someone takes a photo of *A Cornish Fisherman* or *A Native American Indian*, they are reducing that person to a stereotypical identity that is not necessarily how the subject self-identifies. Urry describes this type of gaze as a "collection of signs" rather than literal seeing (Urry 1992, p. 172). This supposedly denies the subjects of their integrity by reifying them into categories. It detaches an identity by abstracting it from its unique individuality. Basically, the problem stems from the fact that people see themselves, and identify themselves, from the point of view of their inner mental life (their goals, wishes and desires), while the photographer can only see them in terms of their physical appearance and social setting. This is unethical, writes Cohen, in step

with Sontag's argument, because "by ignoring the feelings of your involuntary models, you reduce them to the status of mere things, like rocks or clouds shot by a nature photographer" (Cohen, 2002, p. 16).

Photographs of shanty towns along the train tracks outside of Yogjakarta, and street beggars lying in tattered clothing in Piccadilly Circus are sure-fire ways to trigger an emotional response in a viewer. This does a disservice to the subject, though, because it represents them in ways that they would not represent themselves. It romanticizes poverty, and it invites the viewer to be what U2 rock-star Bono has called "a tourist in other people's tragedies" (Bono, 2002). Perhaps, according to this line of thinking, photographing people really is inherently unethical since it objectifies the subject. Azoulay (2005, pp. 38-44) refers to this as "the conquest of the world as a picture" since photography "[...] rudely and violently fixes anyone and anything as an image".

While it may be so that the camera can do no more than capture an objective appearance of someone while their internal, subjective life remains forever elusive, it is not an argument that counts particularly against photography because this is a problem that is inescapable for all human relations! Sartre argued that all 'gazes' suffer from the same problem (Detmer, 2008). Sartre was a famous existentialist who used to spend his days in the Café Flore in Paris, where tourists now flock to take pictures of where he once sat. Following Descartes, he believed that our bodies and minds are two different kinds of things. While our bodies are merely physical objects like any other, our conscious minds are nonphysical streams of consciousness. This leads to problems when attempting to interact with other people since one can never have access to the mind of another. All one can ever perceive are the physical manifestations of other people's bodies and actions. Even their words give us only momentary glimpses of their inner subjective identities which observers then freeze into unchanging objects.

Photographs might indeed represent persons as cultural objects, or as icons of their 'public role' as they appear in the eyes of others rather than as they really are. This will happen because the gaze of the photographer cannot help but objectify the subject. However, this is the case whether the camera is there or not. The camera just makes it obvious.

Human (1990) argues that this is true of places as well as people. He writes that "[...] photography selectively extracts from this multifaceted expression and reduces it to a series of icons. This distorts the identity and trivializes the place and contributes to the consuming nature of tourism" (Human, 1990, p. 80). But so too, according to Sartre, does the gaze of your lover reduce you to an object of possessive desire. It is a problem that is universal and inescapable. Thus, Sontag's (1977) first argument, that photographers reduce their subjects to objects in order to possess them, does not count particularly against photography. Photography merely makes us more conscious of a relation that is inescapable, and not peculiar to this tourist activity.

Sontag's (1977) second point is that photography is "a tool of power" (p. 8). "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power." (Sontag, 1977, p. 4). Perhaps the photographer – photographed relation is a clear case of taking something without giving back in return. Photographers can just aim, shoot and shove off without even acknowledging that anything has passed between them and their subjects. The anonymity of the photographer helps define the power relationship. As almost anyone who has taken photographs can attest, there is something about the camera that gives its operator the illusion of a right to gaze on whatever comes into focus, and the boldness to do so. Sontag (1977, p. 11) calls this "peremptory rights – to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on". This also implies a "complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting […] including […] another person's pain or misfortune" (Sontag, 1977, p. 12). Thus, one can photograph slums, shanty-towns, beggars, and religious ceremonies without

actually getting involved or relating with the subjects in any way. The photographer assumes the privileged position of a neutral stance with the implication that one need not interfere, help, or get involved since the photographer is merely documenting and not participating.

The photographer, it might be said, also implicitly adopts a condescending attitude merely by the choices made of what to photograph. To find certain subjects quaint, exotic, or picturesque is to identify them as different, and making distinctions like this is the first step in hierarchical thinking, as some might argue. Feminists have called this 'the logic of domination' (Warren, 1990), and the idea is central to Said's (1978) famous essay on 'Orientalism'. Once we have identified a distinction, one ca not help but make judgements about which group is 'better' or 'worse'. This is why one can photograph 'the poor' or 'the foreign' and find these subjects to be beautiful, because one knows that somehow one is 'above it' and will not be affected by it. The photographer becomes like an anthropologist who visits a culture, collecting information without divulging his or her purposes in doing so, and then returns home without ever sharing the information collected. Such old-school anthropology is not practiced anymore for precisely the same concerns about power-relations raised by Sontag (1977) about photography.

However, the mere presence of the tourist himself or herself makes much the same statement to those who know full well that the cost of your airfare alone is more than they might make in a lifetime. Sitting at fine restaurants, casually refilling wallets from bottomless ATMs, and obliviousness to one's own wealth, can all breed resentment in those who actually reside in these places but cannot afford to participate in the activities that they watch tourists perform. Once again, the complaint against photography has too wide a target, and can gain no particular traction against photography itself.

One way of responding to the concerns raised so far, is to suggest that while photographers, by their choice of medium, cannot avoid objectifying their subjects, or setting up unequal power dynamics, they can be 'forgiven' for this activity simply by removing the anonymity between them and their subjects. Perhaps, these Pollyannas suggest, photographers should simply ask for permission before taking photographs. Strike up a conversation, or interact in some way before taking photographs, they suggest, and this will transform the detachment of a stranger into the more respectful treatment of an acquaintance. However, it is surely an absurd expectation that photographers seek prior permission. First, this is a practical impossibility in many cases such as a public scene with multitudes of people. How could one ask the fishermen busy working on their boat for permission before capturing them mending their nets? Second, this naive suggestion completely overlooks the aesthetic criteria demanded by art and journalism. As argued above, most photographers consider themselves to be artists in some way. Capturing spontaneous moments is the key to this sensibility. Asking permission takes time, and often the moment can be lost by a moment's delay. People change under the gaze of the camera. They stiffen, they become self-conscious, they smile, and they pose. Perhaps they would prefer it if they had time to fix their hair. A huge proportion of the world's most famous photographs – in newspapers, on postcards, in art books – would not exist if such permission had been required. The need for permission would make impossible many of the most well-known photographs in existence, and it is incompatible with the *reportage* philosophy of photography that guides the aesthetic of most photographers, even lowly tourists.

There will always be some subjects that will be offended, but this does not automatically mean that the photographer is doing anything wrong. People are very easily offended! Perhaps it is a matter of politeness to ask permission. Perhaps one will cause some discomfort in the subjects, and oneself, so as a matter of practical self-interest, it might be unwise to set up discomforting relations with those one meets. But politeness is not equivalent to morality. For the act of photography to be unethical in

some way, there would have to be some causal link between it and some unjustified wrong. This causal link has not been established. Besides, there is no need to assume beforehand that someone will get offended.

Interestingly, the idea that tourist photographers are intrusive, rude, objectifying and possessive might actually be a self-reflexive projection of self-loathing by the photographers themselves. Gillespie (2006) has described this phenomenon in what he refers to as the 'reverse gaze'. When the subject of a photograph reverses the gaze of the photographer by staring, or sneering, or looking mortified, then, for that instant, the dynamics of the relationship between them is reversed as well. Thus, the photographer is now the one objectified. The gaze is a 'mutual gaze', writes Maoz (2006). "The gaze does not belong to the tourists only. Everybody gazes at everybody." (Maoz, 2006, p. 225)

The particular identity label of a 'typical tourist' is especially undesirable and so photographers often go to great lengths to avoid the reverse gaze so as not to be reminded that they are tourists. For example, they use telephoto lenses that can focus on their subjects from an unnoticed location; or they 'shoot from the hip' – a technique of surreptitiously photographing without holding the camera up to the eye and, thus, not drawing attention to the act.

Gillespie (2006) describes a situation he witnessed in Ladakh, India, where tourists had gathered to see traditional dancing and singing. There were cameras pointed at the dancers, as would be expected. However, there were also tourist cameras pointed at the local people who were merely there to watch the dance, and were not part of the official spectacle. Still, other cameras were pointed at the tourists watching the people who were watching the dance.

With all these acts of framing going on, Gillespie (2006) was interested in analysing what happens when a photographer gets trapped in the reverse gaze. He supposes that what might be happening in the reverse gaze is that the photographer must be imagining what it is like to be in the shoes of his subject. It must feel awful to be treated like merely an object in the scene, so the imagining goes. From the perspective of the Ladakh people who are there merely as spectators, being photographed as part of the spectacle must feel like an invasion of privacy. By sympathetically imagining the perspective of those being photographed, the photographer can see how their own behaviour is exploitative or voyeuristic, and these results in their own embarrassment.

However, Gillespie (2006) claims that this is not the correct interpretation of events in this case. The problem here is the false belief that one can understand the perspective of another person. He claims that the imagined scenario in this case is all wrong because the Ladakh people actually enjoy being photographed. They take it as a sign of respect that a tourist finds their culture and their dress worthy of photographing. They are proud to be contributing to the tourist industry which brings prosperity to their villages. The imagined perspective of the Ladakh people, then, was completely inaccurate.

It is not possible, argues Gillespie (2006), to take the perspective of another, because there will be all kinds of unimagined contextual details of which the tourist is unaware. This kind of 'imagining what it is like to be them' is not possible. All one could ever accomplish by this exercise of taking the other's perspective, is a hall-of-mirrors-type reflection of how one thinks that they think. What must be happening then, argues Gillespie (2006), is that when someone tries to imagine the perspective of someone from an unfamiliar culture, all they are really doing is projecting their own perspective onto the other. Thus, if the tourist photographer caught in the reverse gaze feels ashamed, then it is because of the low opinion that they themselves have of tourists with cameras (and this would include themselves), and is not an accurate reflection of how the Ladakh people actually feel. "The reverse gaze is in fact a part of the tourists' own gaze turned on itself" (Gillespie, 2006, p. 358).

And tourists loathe being thought of as tourists, observes Gillespie (2006, p. 354): "It is difficult to

understate the extent to which tourists [...] are critical of other tourists". They almost always try to disassociate themselves from that label by adopting an alternate identity. Travelers, for example, distinguish themselves from tourists because they might stay longer, or learn a bit of the language, and live without the comforts of their homeland. 'Post-modern' tourists distinguish themselves because, supposedly, unlike the typical tourists, they are consciously aware that they are not having authentic experiences and so engage in self-conscious mockery.

These distinctions are hollow and ineffective, however, and the reverse gaze reminds them of this. The reverse gaze catches the tourist in the inescapable practical contradictions that arise when one tries to pretend that they are not in fact a tourist. It reveals not the critical view of those being photographed, but the self-loathing of the tourists themselves.

If it is the tourists scorn for other tourists that is the root of the problem, then perhaps one should learn to love oneself and other tourists. The solution is to embrace the tourist identity, empathise with other tourists, rather than scorn them or attempt to differentiate oneself from them.

The third criticism we selected from Sontag's (1977) essays is that the act of photography can alienate the photographer and prevent an authentic travel experience. While walking along the south bank of the Thames River in London one fall evening, we reached a point with a classic view of Big Ben and the parliament buildings where countless pictures have been taken over many years. Stencilled in capital letters on the cement base of a streetlamp in front of us was the graffiti message 'THIS IS NOT A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY'. We smiled because this was exactly how we were looking at things. In front of us was one of the most recognizable views on earth, and our first instinct was to put a camera between us and this vista in order to take a photo. What the graffiti was challenging us to do instead was to soak up the experience, to process it rather than possess it to be 'in the moment' of experience completely, rather than try to preserve it for some later memory spark where we will try to re-live, in muted images, what we failed to fully experience in the first place.

Postman (1993) makes a similar point in 'Technopoly', when he describes the invention of writing. Writing was to be a wonderful aid to memory, enthused the technology-boosters of the day. And so it was, in a sense. But it would also destroy memory rather than improve it. No longer was there any need to develop one's memory in the first place, because such effort was no longer required to preserve knowledge. And so, the oral culture of long story telling, with the use of rhymes and associated images as memory-triggers, passed away.

So too, one may analogize, does the invention of photographs prevent one from the need to gaze long at an image to fix it in one's memory. One need no longer linger in front of awe-inspiring structures, or saturate oneself in the atmosphere of a crowed public square, or wait at the edge of the ocean long enough for the feeling of the sublime to come over them. One's first reaction is often to let the camera mediate their experience.

The act of photography also frames the experience in time by telling the tourist that he or she can now move on. The travel photo is an act of completing the tourist experience, to prove that it was had. Gray (1987), in his comic and compelling monologue 'Swimming to Cambodia', describes how he always sought perfect moments when traveling, and how he needed them in order to know when his adventure was over and that he could return home. Sometimes this would take weeks of waiting and exploring and expanding his outlook on life. We, photographers, luckily, need wait no longer, for the camera provides a substitute for this function. We are speaking ironically, of course, for Sontag's (1977) point is that such a cheap substitution cannot provide an authentic experience. Sontag (1977) thought that photography for many tourists was merely a way to easily digest travel experiences rather than attempt the more difficult work of having some kind of authentic reaction. She writes that:

> The very activity of taking pictures is soothing, and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel. Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture (Sontag, 1977, pp. 9-10).

This is not an authentic way to react since it gives the photographer a false sense of participation. The photographer, Sontag (1977) argues, has the illusion of actively participating and yet, in truth, remains a passive voyeur.

Franck (1993) makes the same critical observation. "Tourists [...]", he writes, attacking the stereotype, are found around the world "cameras at the ready. [...] They stand shooting their salvos at what they have hardly time to look at, let alone see. They store the potshots quickly into little black boxes to take home to show at the office as proof of their breathless peregrinations." (pp. 105-107).

Both Sontag (1977) and Franck (1993) are urging that the tourist take a more active role in their experiences. Taking photographs is a way of 'refusing experience, Sontag (1977) notes. Taking a photograph is a form of selection, and this filtering of experience through photography has led to a transformation of the way we actually experience the world. Rather than having an authentic experience, most of us have become addicted to images to the point where "having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it" (Sontag, 1977, p. 24). Urry (1992) has also commented on "the fundamentally visual nature of the tourist experience" (p. 172). The point of much tourism now, it seems, is to seek out beautiful views. This is sad, because such a limited experience could be had without leaving home.

What is an authentic experience then? It seems like the requirements might be too hard to live up to. We are not sure if it possible to experience things without 'distorting their identity', but restoring participation is a promising suggestion. Franck (1993), for example, urges that "the seeing always takes precedence over the sights" (p. 126). What he means by 'seeing' is a careful attention to detail. He recommends sketching as a way of focusing the attention and of escaping routinized perception. Photographers can do this, too, of course. Attention is what is important; attention is what transforms perception into art. Photographers can, and do, avoid the alienation of which Sontag (1977) warns, through creativity and originality. One needs to keep an open mind with no preconceived ideas of how things are supposed to look. An authentic or meaningful activity involves a person in the continual process of discovery of one's self, whereas 'photo-opportunity-thinking' keeps a distance between the self and the experience. There is no chance for interaction with the world, no chance to challenge one's take on the world, no chance to reconstruct one's self after the experience.

4. Conclusion

The concept of self-identity has been a connecting thread through these arguments. Photography supposedly 'commodifies' and objectifies its subjects by representing them in ways where the photographer is in control of identity-construction rather than the subject controlling their own image and identity. Photography is, supposedly, an alienating activity because it provides a barrier which shields the photographer from more authentic experiences. Moreover, photography is, supposedly, a shameful activity because the tourists themselves have a poor self-concept of their own role as tourists. The remedy to all of these, of course, is to embrace the tourist identity, and emphasize its artistic and journalistic elements, and to strive for authentic experience. Being conscious of the dangers raised by the critics is enough to avoid them. One needs not be ashamed to call one's tourist snapshots art. We propose the following slogan: Tourist photographers! Take back the light!

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