Aisthesis

Firenze University Press
www.fupress.com/aisthesis

OPEN ACCESS

Citation: C. Abell, P. Atencia-Linares, D. McIver, L. Diarmuid Costello (2018) The New Theory of Photography: Critical Examination and Responses. *Aisthesis* 11(2): 207-234. doi: 10.13128/Aisthesis-22969

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Focus: On the new theory of photography

Catharine Abell, Paloma Atencia-Linares, Dominic McIver, Lopes Diarmuid Costello, *The New Theory of Photography: Critical Examination and Responses*

Abstract. Dominic McIver Lopes' *Four Arts of Photography* and Diarmuid Costello's *On Photography: A Philosophical Inquiry* examine the state of the art in analytic philosophy of photography and present a new approach to the study of the medium. As opposed to the orthodox and prevalent view, which emphasizes its epistemic capacities, the new theory reconsiders the nature of photography, and redirects focus towards the aesthetic potential of the medium. This symposium comprises two papers that critically examine central questions addressed in the two books, with responses by the two authors in defence of their respective positions.

Keywords. Photography, New Theory, Lopes, Costello.

OUT WITH THE OLD? THE NEW THEORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Abstract. Orthodox theories construe belief-independent feature tracking as essential to photography. This captures its epistemic import, but casts doubt on its aesthetic import by restricting photographers' role in shaping the photographic process. By contrast, new theories of photography construe the photographic process as distinctive only in using information recorded from a photographic event to produce a visual image. This allows significant latitude in how that information is used to produce a visual image, thus allowing photographers much greater influence in shaping that process. New theories therefore apparently better accommodate the aesthetic import of photography than their orthodox rivals. However, I argue that, if new theories are to capture what's distinctive about photography and to explain its epistemic import, they need to impose some restrictions on the ways in which information recorded from a photographic event is used to produce a visual image. I consider the form these restrictions should take, and their implications for explaining the epistemic import of photography.

Keywords. Photography, Information, Art, Knowledge.

Two books have recently been published which, together, suggest something of a sea change in philosophical conceptions of photography. These are Dominic Lopes's *Four Arts of Photography* (2016) and Diarmuid Costello's *On Photography* (2018). Although each differs in its specific foci and in the precise scope of its explanatory ambitions, both share the aim of reconciling an apparent conflict between the aesthetic and the epistemic roles commonly ascribed to photography and on doing so in such a way as to inform our understanding of the nature of photography. Moreover, both ultimately endorse similar conceptions of photography as the appropriate means of reconciling this conflict. This conception differs significantly from what has until now been the dominant philosophical conception.

As Lopes and Costello note, there is a problem implicit in contemporary thought about photography. On the one hand, we consider photography an art form. Implicit in this view is the conviction that photographs can manifest photographers' individual intentions and other mental states. On the other hand, however, we assign photography an important epistemic role, privileging photographs over drawings and other representations in a wide variety of contexts precisely because they seem immune to the influence of photographers' mental states. Both Lopes and Costello argue that what Costello terms the «orthodox» philosophical construal of photography lacks the resources to accommodate its status as an art and advocate an alternative to this orthodoxy which they take to be superior in its ability to do justice to photography as an art form. In what follows, I describe the current orthodoxy, explain how it engenders scepticism about the claim that photography is an art, outline both how Costello and Lopes respond to this scepticism and describe the philosophical theory they endorse as better capturing the nature of photography and its artistic import. Having done this, I assess the respective merits and demerits of their «new theory» of photography and its orthodox rival. I argue that, while in some respect the new theory is to be preferred, its current incarnations do not fulfil its advocates' explanatory ambitions.

1. The philosophical orthodoxy

The orthodox view foregrounds the explanation of the epistemic role of photography at the expense of that of its aesthetic or artistic role. According to the orthodox view, photographs, in comparison with other pictures, are particularly good sources of knowledge about the things they depict because they are produced by mechanical processes that are independent of photographers' beliefs, while drawings and other non-photographic pictures are produced by processes that essentially implicate their makers' beliefs. Photographs alone are therefore immune to inaccuracies that result from the false beliefs of their makers. In *On Photography*, Costello charts the long history of this view, showing how theorising about photography has been informed by a conviction

in its «non-human» dimension from the 1830s to the present day. His illuminating discussion reveals the role and influence of that conviction in the theories of early writers on photography such as Eastlake, Emerson, Stieglitz, Demachy, Evans, through to modernists such as Weston, Adams, Benjamin and Kracauer, on to their successors Cavell and Bazin, and ultimately to contemporary philosophers such as Scruton, Currie and Walton.

The contemporary incarnation of this conviction in the theories of Scruton and Walton construes photographs as pictorial representations which track the features of the things they depict independently of photographers' beliefs. Belief-independent feature tracking involves the counterfactual dependence of the appearance of a photograph on the appearance of the scene it depicts at the moment at which and from the point of view from which the photograph was taken. If the scene had been different, the resulting photograph too would have been different, and it would have been different quite independently of whether or not the differences in the scene made a difference to the photographer's beliefs. On this construal, paintings and drawings differ from photographs because, while they too often track the features of the things they depict, they do so only because their makers' beliefs change with the features of the things they depict.

A range of objections to the claim that photographs are belief-independent feature trackers are likely to spring immediately to the mind of those with even a scant knowledge of photography. For example, techniques such as dodging and burning can be used to produce photographs that do not track the features of the things they depict independently of their makers' beliefs. However, orthodox views deal with such apparent counterexamples by denying that these techniques are genuinely photographic. Rather, orthodox theorists claim, these techniques betray the influence of painting and other non-photographic depictive techniques on practices of making photographs. *Pure* photography eschews such techniques and, as a result, precludes the influence of beliefs.

While orthodox views accommodate the epistemic import we ascribe to photographs, they lead to scepticism about their status as art, on the plausible assumption that works of art must be capable of expressing the thoughts of the individual agents who produce them. If photographs track the features of the scenes, they depict independently of their makers' beliefs then they cannot express their makers' thoughts in virtue of how they depict what they depict. They may yet be capable of expressing their makers' thoughts insofar as their makers' choices of scenes to be photographed express their thoughts. In this case, however, the worry is that the resultant photographs express those thoughts merely in virtue of what they depict, not in virtue of the way in which they depict it, with the result that viewers' interest is not really in the photographs themselves, but solely in the things those photographs depict. Photographs themselves are merely means of accessing their subjects and, as such, are in principle dispensable.

The orthodox view therefore seems to support the view that there are no photographic works of art (that is, photographs that are art *considered as photographs*). Lopes lays out the sceptical argument for this conclusion as follows:

(S1) a pure photograph is an image that depicts only by belief-independent feature-tracking, and

(S2) if a pure photograph is an image that depicts only by belief-independent feature-tracking, then there can be no interest in it as a depictively expressed thought, but

(S3) an image is a representational art work only if there can be an interest in it as a depictively expressed thought,

(S4) so no pure photograph is a representational art work, but

(S5) photography is an art only if some pure photographs are representational art works,

(S6) so photography is not an art (Lopes [2016]: 17).

2. Photography is an art

That the orthodox construal of photography seems to lead to the denial that photography is an art form suggests a fundamental problem with

the orthodox construal. For, as Lopes and Costello both rightly insist, it is a datum that photography is an art, to which a look around any major art gallery will attest. So, what is wrong with it?

The sceptical argument just outlined appears to leave those who wish to defend the artistic status of photography with two options: either they can take issue with the assumption that art's value lies in its ability to express human thought, or they can take issue with the claim that photography essentially involves belief-independent feature tracking. As Costello notes, this second claim is open to challenge. Not every photograph tracks the features of the scene it depicts independently of the photographer's beliefs. He gives the example of Lee Friedlander's *Stems*, a series of photographs of flower stems in vases with shallow depth of field (Costello [2018]: 120-121). It is simply not the case that, had there been an extra stem at the back of a given photographed vase, the resultant photograph would correspondingly have been different since, given the depth of field, the photograph would have remained the same. The only way it would have differed would have been if Friedlander had noticed the extra stem and decided to render it visible in the resultant photograph by amending the depth of field accordingly. But in this case, the resultant photograph tracks the features of the scene only *because of* an alteration to Friedlander's beliefs and intentions. Moreover, in this case, our interest in Friedlander's photograph doesn't drop through to the vase photographed, since there is no guarantee that we would ourselves have noticed the extra stem had we seen the vase in the flesh.

Secondly, even if, *pace* Costello, photographs did track the features of their objects independently of photographers' beliefs, this fact wouldn't capture what is unique about them. As Lopes argues, belief-independent feature tracking isn't the exclusive domain of photography. Many, but not all, drawing processes involve belief-independent feature tracking. In drawing, as Lopes notes elsewhere, it is possible «to draw something, guided by the look of that thing, and to produce a recognizable aspect of it, without having a concept of it» (Lopes [1996]: 186).

Nevertheless, these problems with the orthodox view do little to help us to identify what *is* distinctive of photography, or to gain insight into the distinctive nature of the art form of photography. In *Four Arts of Photography*, Dominic Lopes sets out to identify the conditions under which photography constitutes an art, distinguishing (as his title suggests) four different arts of photography. He proposes to identify each of these arts by adopting a «method of isolation», treating the falsity of each of the substantive premises of the sceptic's argument, S1, S2, S3 and S5, as a guide to an art of photography (Lopes [2016]: 35).

Photographic art in the «classical tradition» reveals the falsity of S3, since it is a source of interest as representational art, despite its failure to depictively express photographers' thoughts. Our interest in such photographic art derives instead from its revealing the world to be a way that direct experience of the world does not reveal it to be.

The photographic art Lopes calls «cast photography» reveals the falsity of S2. Cast photography involves two distinct levels of depiction. Cast photographs have both an object (the thing photographed) and a subject (something further that is represented in virtue of that thing's being photographed). They are able depictively to represent thoughts because, to represent a subject, they need not represent an object that represents that subject. Our interest in cast photographs therefore does not «drop through» to their objects.

«Lyric photography», Lopes argues, undermines S1 because many of its exemplars depict by *belief-dependent* feature tracking. On his characterisation, lyric photography thematizes the processes and procedures of photography by employing diverse forms of mark making to produce visual images from the photographic event. He discusses the particular example of Gerhard Richter's *Betty*, produced by projecting slide images projected onto canvas, tracing the outline of the projected image and then painting it in. Richter himself conceives of this process of making photographs by painting, rather than of producing paintings of or imitations of photographs. Lopes agrees. He says

Betty is literally a photograph – one completed by painting. Insofar as mark-making is done under the control of information recorded in the photographic event, it sidesteps the kind of subjectivity that overplays personal experience. At the same time, painting and traditional photographic printing stand shoulder to shoulder as methods for making marks. Neither is more photographic than the other, though they differ enough in their comportment and impact (Lopes [2016]: 90).

Earlier, he says «What makes an image a drawing is that its surface is marked by means of certain bodily movements. Drawing and photography are not mutually exclusive. Information from a photographic recording event might guide bodily movements to mark a surface. The resulting image is both a photograph and a drawing» (Lopes [2016]: 85).

Lopes's final art of photography, abstraction, undermines S5's denial of the existence of abstract photographic art. Abstract photographic works represent, but their representational character is not responsible for their status as art, since their depictive content is not the focus of our appreciative attention. Particular photographs may exhibit more than one of these four arts of photography, and thus there will be a variety of further, hybrid photographic arts. Nevertheless, by concentrating on these four photographic arts, Lopes hopes both to illuminate the conditions under which photographs are art and to show the error of the sceptic's argument.

3. The New Theory of Photography

One in the grip of the orthodox theory is most likely to take issue with the claim that lyric photography, of all these arts, is a genuinely photographic art. What are Lopes's grounds for claiming that it is purely *photographic*? Answering this question requires a positive account of what distinguishes photographs from paintings and drawings. Both Lopes's and Costello's accounts of the nature of photography draw on and develop a new theory of photography, suggested by the work of Patrick Maynard and Dawn Wilson (nee Phillips) (Maynard, Phillips). Maynard construes photography as a set of a mark-making technologies which harness the effects of light on various surfaces to enable sensitized surfaces to be marked through the action of light. Wilson teases out what is common among these technologies to provide an account of what distinguishes photography from the mark-making processes involved in painting and drawing. On her view, what is distinctive about the photographic process is that it involves a photographic event: an event in which the information carried by a light image is recorded and stored. A photographic event is not by itself sufficient to produce a photograph: this requires the information that is recorded and stored to be processed so as to produce a visual image.

Costello points out that, when thinking about photographs and photography, we tend to conceive of either one or the other entirely passively: either we conceive of photography solely as a means of producing photographs, or we think of photographs solely as the products of a process of photography (Costello [2018]: 8). The new theory characterises the process of photography actively, by appeal to its inclusion of a photographic event. On the new theory, only the photographic event is intrinsically photographic. In allowing the information recorded by a photographic event to be processed in of a variety of different ways so as to produce a visual image, the new theory emphasises the opportunities that photographers have to control their actions, in a way that depends on their beliefs, and displays skill and intelligence.

In doing so, the new theory provides an important corrective to the orthodox view, which often works with an impoverished and incorrect implicit conception of the process of producing photographs as one all of the important stages of which are completed the moment the shutter release button is pressed. However, whether or not the new theory establishes that lyric photographs such as Richter's are genuine instances of photographic art depends crucially on how it is further elaborated.

4. Restrictive or permissive?

Costello distinguishes restrictive from permissive versions of the new theory. Whether a variant of this approach is restrictive or permissive depends on what restrictions, if any, it places on the process whereby a visual image is formed from information recorded and stored in a photographic event. Restrictive versions of the new theory disagree with the traditional view's claim that all photographs involve belief independent feature tracking. However, they agree with tradition insofar as they take the processes whereby visual images are produced from the information recorded and stored during the photographic event to be such that photographs *typically* track the features of their objects independently of their makers' beliefs.

By contrast, permissive versions of the new theory place few if any constraints on the nature of these processes. Because, for new theories, the work of distinguishing photographic from non-photographic processes is done by the appeal to a photographic event, they can allow that the subsequent processes of image production may be indistinguishable from those involved in other image-making processes such as painting and drawing. The result is that photographs need not even typically be belief independent feature trackers. As Costello puts it, according to permissive new theories, «Belief-independent feature tracking does not parse between photography and painting, but between the automatic and non-automatic processes to be found in both» (Costello [2018]: 87).

It looks as if only permissive versions of the new theory construe lyric photography as a central photographic art form, since restrictive versions classify lyric photographs as atypical instances of photography. As one would therefore expect, Lopes's own version of the new theory is permissive. On his construal of what a photograph is: «A photograph is an image output by a mark-making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene» (Lopes [2016]: 81).

Stated in this way, his view is extremely permissive, because it places no restrictions whatever on the mark-making process that takes input from the electro-chemical event. Its permissiveness seems to be borne out by his subsequent discussion of Richter's *Betty* and his claim that it is a genuine photograph. On his view, a photograph might be completed by drawing (or painting), resulting in something which is both a photograph and a drawing (painting).

Costello, however, has some reservations about Lopes's version of the new theory. He asks us to consider the following case:

> *Using an opaque projector, Richter projects a photograph of Kölner Dom onto the surface of a canvas, traces its outlines, then sets about painting in the image. Almost finished, he begins «blurring» the likeness thereby created, by dragging solvent across its wet surface. Applying more and more solvent, but still not happy, he eventually resorts either to scraping away the image entirely or dragging fresh paint across the canvas with an outsized silkscreen blade. The resulting image is a largely monochromatic gray abstract with residual traces of other colours and some facture. How should we understand it: is it as a painting, a photograph, or both? In one obvious sense it is a painting: it is made by applying oils to a stretched linen support, and it can be placed within a lineage of abstraction and the monochrome. But it also implicates a photographic event in its causal history. Like Betty, it originates in a photographic event to which further imaging processes have been applied. So described, there is little to distinguish them conceptually. But if it is still a photograph, what is it a photograph of? Can it really be described as a photograph of Kölner Dom? (Costello [2018]: 94).*

Costello's implicit answer to this question is «no». However, on Lopes's account, the Kölner Dom is clearly a photograph. This is made clear by his claim that «The new theory of photography does not require that photographic processing preserve most, or much, information recorded in the photographic event» (Lopes [2016]: 123-124). Lopes's version of the new theory, Costello suggests, is too permissive. I agree. Costello suggests

making it less permissive by placing an experiential or appreciative condition on what suffices to count as a photograph of *x* (Costello [2018]: 95). As he elaborates this suggestion, it requires that, for Richter's imaginary painting to also be a photograph, viewers be able to see something that could be the cathedral in its surface. If its photographic genesis no longer bears on its appreciation in any way, he argues, the canvas is not a photograph but merely a monochrome painting.

It is in fact possible to distinguish two distinct suggestions in what Costello says here. The first is that we add an additional requirement to Lopes's theory that, for a mark-making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene to yield a photograph, it must recognisably (or potentially recognisably) depict that scene. The second is that we add an additional requirement to Lopes's theory that, for a mark-making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene to yield a photograph, the photographic genesis of the resultant visual image should bear on its appreciation.

I think we should reject the first of these suggestions but endorse something akin to the second. There are two reasons for which we should reject the first suggestion, which effectively ties something's being a photograph of some object or scene to its depicting that object or scene. Firstly, it is an advantage of new theories of photography that they divorce a visual image's being a photograph from its depicting the pro-photographic scene involved in its production. This enables them to accommodate abstract photography, as Lopes wants to do. (Wilson's version requires that photographs allow the viewer to learn about the nature of the photographic event, but she stops short of insisting that they do so by depicting it). New theories can hold that there is something abstract photographs are of, in the sense that there is something light reflected from which played a causal role in the generation of the resultant visual image. However, what makes them abstract, rather than representational, is that they do not depict the things they are of in this sense. Secondly, this first suggestion does not solve the problem with Lopes's account. Imagine that Richter engaged in the process that Costello describes, but then, faced with a largely monochromatic gray abstract became disheartened with the result and so retraced from memory the outlines of the Kölner Dom that had been projected onto the canvas and coloured them in, ending up with something very similar to the image he had before he started the blurring process. Is the resultant image a photograph? Surely not! However, Costello's first suggestion does nothing to preclude its being one.

Turning to the second suggestion, how then should we understand the requirement that the photographic genesis of the resultant visual image should bear on its appreciation? An idea of how we should construe it comes from Lopes's claim that «Only photographs are images that are made by a process that involves a photographic recording event. No other kind of image is defined as *conveying information from the recording event*» (Lopes [2016]: 98, emphasis mine). This quote suggests that Lopes is perhaps not so permissive as he elsewhere appears to be.

Lopes endorses Dretske's notion of information carrying (Lopes [2016]: 95-96). On Dretske's view, the informational content of a signal is determined by the dependency relations it exhibits (Dretske [1981]). Two signals, one dependent on the other, carry the same information about some state of affairs or source on which each depends, so long as both carry the same amount of information about that source. The chain of signals linked by such dependency relations comprises a *communication system*, whose output carries information about its source in virtue of these dependency relations, which enable information to flow from one signal to the next in the chain. Every communication system depends on a *communication channel* over which information is carried. Any signal on the chain that makes up a communication system depends on factors other than the previous signal in the chain. For a communication channel to work effectively to carry information

about its source, the various signals that make it up must either generate only redundant information about the source or generate no relevant information.

A necessary condition for the photographic genesis of a visual image to bear on its appreciation is that it carries information from the recording event. However, as things stand, this requirement is insufficient. It explains why Costello's imaginary Richter example is not a photograph, but it does not explain why my revised Richter example is not. In this example, the visual image carries information from the recording event. It does so because there is a communication system linking the recording event, via the image originally projected on the canvas and then via Richter's memory, to the recreated image, such that Richter's recreated image carries information about the Kölner Dom.

This suggests that we need to further restrict how genuinely photographic processes must carry information about their photographic events. One obvious suggestion is that they must do so via belief-independent communication systems. This would yield a very restrictive version of the new theory (although it would be more permissive than the tradition theory in its ability to accommodate Friedlander's *Stems*). In any case, I think it is false. I am tempted to agree with Lopes that Richter's *Betty* is a photograph but want to resist any suggestion that my revised Kölner Dom example (call it *Kölner Dom*) is a photograph. What is the difference? It isn't that *Betty* is produced by belief-independent processes, but *Kölner Dom* is not. I find it most unlikely that *Betty* carries information about the person (Betty) whom it depicts belief independently. The process of tracing the outlines of the projected image may be belief independent, but that of selecting the colours of paint with which to fill it in surely is not (it involves judgements of the form «*this* part of the projected image is the same colour as *that* paint»). The difference is rather that Richter's memory is unlikely to function sufficiently effectively as a communication channel for information about the Kölner Dom. By contrast, despite its dependence on the artist's beliefs, the process of tracing the outlines of a projected image and colouring it in by matching the colours of the image to colours of paint is, in general, an effective channel for carrying information about the details of the visual appearances of things. I therefore propose modifying Lopes's account as follows:

> *a photograph is an image output by a mark-making process that carries information from an electrochemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene and does so through a communication channel of a type that is effective at carrying such information.*

The proposed modification appeals to types of communication channels rather than to individual communication channels because an individual communication channel's being effective at carrying information of the relevant kind does not suffice to make the image in question a photograph. Suppose that Richter himself has an extraordinarily good memory. It nevertheless seems false to say that his *Kölner Dom* is a photograph while an image produced in the same way by an artist with a poorer memory would not be.

There are further issues that need to be resolved if this modification is yield a satisfactory account of photography. Firstly, just how effective must a communication channel be to form part of a genuinely photographic process? Efficacy is to be measured in terms of the amount of information that must be successfully communicated (that must not be lost). Although it is critical to the plausibility of the proposal, it is not clear how to answer this question in a non-arbitrary way. However that question is answered, though, the modified account is likely to be more restrictive than Lopes's original, since communication channels that track features independently of beliefs are likely to be more effective information carriers than belief-dependent communication channels. The challenge, to the restrictive and the permissive new theorist alike, is to show that the required level of effectiveness can be specified in a way that accommodates the belief-dependence of at least some photographic mark making processes.

5. The epistemic import of photography

How does the new theorist, restrictive or permissive, propose to accommodate the epistemic importance of photographs? Lopes proposes to do so by appeal to social norms. He argues that different photographic practices are subject to different social norms which are more or less strict in ensuring that photographs convey information from the pro-photographic scene (Lopes [2016]: 110). This does not distinguish photography from other forms of image making. Just as some drawing practices (e.g. court room drawing) are subject to norms which reward accuracy and punish inaccuracy and thereby help ensure that court room drawing as a practice is an effective epistemic tool, so too are some photographic practices. Moreover, just as other drawing practices are subject to artistic norms which are not aimed at ensuring that drawings serve epistemic aims, so too some photographic practices are subject to social norms which serve artistic rather than epistemic aims. On this explanation, the social norms themselves play an important role in explaining the epistemic role some photography practices play. According to Lopes, those norms restrict the photographic practices at issue, ensuring belief-independent feature tracking (Lopes [2016]: 111). As with traditional theories, belief-independent feature tracking plays a role in explaining the epistemic importance of some photographic practices, on Lopes's view. The difference is that belief-independence isn't built into the nature of photography but imposed on it from the outside by social norms.

Costello worries whether belief-independent feature tracking should occupy even this more modest place in an explanation of photography's epistemic value. He notes that some mark-making practices, such as the digital manipulation of colour and other values in diagnostic, medical and astrological photography flout belief-independent feature tracking but that, in doing so, they may aid the extraction of the sought-after information, by making the presence of particular features easier to identify (Costello [2018]: 135). I agree. It is not necessary to appeal to belief-independent feature tracking, whether socially established or not, to explain the epistemic value of some photographic practices.

On my proposed modification of Lopes's account, all photographs carry information about the photographic events causally involved in their production and thus about the pro-photographic scenes information about which those events record. This is a fact about them quite independent of the social norms that govern them. While this is true of all photographs, not all photographs are equally epistemically valuable. We ascribe epistemic value to those photographs that meet two further conditions. Firstly, we value those photographs that carry information the pro-photographic scenes involved in their production in depictive form. Every photograph is an image, but not every photograph is a picture. Pictorially-conveyed information is useful to us because it is particularly easy to extract.

Secondly, we value those photographs that carry information about the pro-photographic scenes involved in their production through communication channels that *we recognise* as being effective at carrying such information. Any communication channel belongs to a variety of different types (e.g. one involving belief-dependent processes, one dependent on beliefs only about type identity of colours, one dependent only on Gerhard Richter's beliefs about type identity of colours). Communication channels of some of the types to which it belongs may be more effective at carrying information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene than others. Of course, none of this affects how effective the communication channel at issue actually is. However, the type to which it most saliently belongs affects how effective we take it to be and thus the epistemic import we attribute to it. Here, social norms do play an important role. Social norms of image production help determine the kinds of photographic processes that are employed and thus the types of processes that are salient to us. They are thus important in securing our recognition that a type of information carrying process is reliable (whether it involves belief-independent feature tracking or not) and thus in

leading us to trust photographs of certain kinds for epistemic purposes. However, those norms, *pace* Lopes, need not do so by imposing additional constraints that are actually responsible for their reliability.

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WHY GREY IS THE NEW BLACK

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Abstract. In his recent book *On Photography*, Diarmuid Costello raises two objections against the *restrictive* or *weak* version of the New Theory of Photography and recommends – albeit with some reservations – the radical New Theory proposed by Dominic Lopes in his *Four Arts of Photography.* In this paper, I respond to Costello's criticisms suggesting that, at least in two respects, the purported restrictive view might be more progressive – and preferable – than the radical one.

Keywords. Photography, New Theory, photographic processes, definition, photographic means.

In the last few years there has been a resurgence of the philosophical literature on photography. For decades, analytic philosophers of art focused on discussing, commenting and objecting what came to be the orthodox view on photography. A view that, drawing from the Gricean theory of communication and the causal theory of perception, distinguished sharply between pictures that meant naturally, i.e. photographs, and pictures that meant non-naturally, i.e. paintings, drawings and etchings. The essence of photography was taken to be its purported distinctive way of representing, i.e. by means of a causal and counterfactual relation with a real object or event that was independent of beliefs or intentional mental states of the photographer. And this essence was what, for many philosophers, defined the nature of photography and what distinguished it from other kinds of pictures. But new times have come. Or at least that is the promise. A *new wave* of philosophy of photography, what has been called *The New Theory,* is an attempt to change the terms of discussion, move on, and leave behind once and for all the old debates.

Now the new theory comes in two different velocities: there is a *first* (weaker and more conservative) wave, what Diarmuid Costello calls in his book, *On Photography,* «*the restrictive new*

theory» and a second, more daring and progressive tsunami: «*the radical new theory*» put forward and systematized by Dominic Lopes in his *Four Arts of Photography* and favored, with some reservations, by Costello as well.

In this paper, I will first provide a short introduction of the orthodox view – the view that both Costello and Lopes oppose to in their respective books – and then focus on some specific issues I find problematic. In particular, I will focus on two objections Costello raises against the weak version of the New theory and will try to persuade the reader that, in fact, when more carefully considered, the purported restrictive view is, at least in some respects, more progressive than the radical view. Of course, what is important is not so much if it is more progressive or not, but if it provides a better or more reasonable framework to understand the practice of photography. I claim that it does. In particular, I will argue (1) that some of the objections Costello raises against the restrictive version are issues that the view can actually accommodate. Moreover, contrary to what Costello claims, this view does not prescribe an implausible and restrictive notion of what counts as a photograph. In fact, it does not provide any definition of what a photograph is. And here it is where, I think, the view is more progressive and recommendable than the more radical version proposed by Lopes. (2) I will argue that we should dispense with trying to give an account of what counts as «a photograph» in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions however broad and unrestrictive they are – which is, I think, what the radical view does. After all, one of the marks of the New theory is to put the emphasis on *the photographic process* rather than on finding a *definition of what a photograph is.* Furthermore, (3) I will argue that the notion of «photographic means» or what is distinctive of photography that the purported restrictive view proposes is actually less *restrictive* than the one proposed by the *radical view.* The emphasis on the notion of *the photographic event* as the only phenomenon which is *distinctively* photographic is, I think, problematic and inaccurate. Also, it takes us back to the orthodox way of thinking about photography. It is true that the restrictive theory concedes various points to the orthodox account, but I think this should not discredit the view. Being radical is always an appealing option, but in some cases, as Aristotle recommends, the middle point is the most virtuous state. Or in more photographic terms, grey might well be the new black.

1. The orthodox view and the development of the New Theory

Broadly construed, the trademark of the orthodox view in the analytic philosophy of photography is the radical, ontological, distinction it makes between photography and other pictorial representations, as well as the emphasis it puts on the epistemic advantages and phenomenological differences of the former in comparison to the latter. In fact, as Costello and Lopes carefully explain in their books, the so-called contemporary orthodoxy is a systematized version of ideas in circulation since the origins of photography. It reflects the intuition, present in the writing of theorists such as Eastman, Stieglitz, Emerson, Bazin, Barthes, or Cavell among others, that photographic images are intrinsically connected with *the real.* This connection, moreover, according to the orthodoxy, has to do with the automatism and the mechanic nature of the photographic device.

In its more modern and philosophical formulation, the central idea is that photographs are a case of natural meaning – á lá Grice – while other pictorial representations are cases of non-natural meaning (Walton [1984]; Currie [1990]). What defines a photographic image is a «natural», merely causal and counterfactual, connection not mediated by the mind or beliefs of an agent, between a real object and a photosensitive material. Obtaining other pictorial representations, by contrast, necessarily requires the mediation of an intentional agent (Scruton [1981]; Walton [1984]; Currie [1990]). This merely causal connection with the object is what determines the subject of the representation, and it is ultimately what defines what a photograph is. For the vast major-

ity of philosophers that follow this line of thought, all this results in an epistemic advantage of photographs with respect to other images: the causal relation guarantees that photographs are reliable *belief-independent feature trackers* of objects and scenes of the world. Now, for the more radical wing of the orthodoxy – what Costello calls *the skeptics* – this specifically photographic form of representation has three consequences. First, it entails that images that are not the product of this unmediated, mere causal relation, are not *pure* photographs. That is, any intentional intervention brings images closer to paintings (Scruton [1981]).[1] Second, this conception of photography sets limits to the artistic capacity of the medium, for the artistic capacity of a medium requires intentional agency to instill a thought in the image (Scruton [1981]; Hopkins [2010]). Finally, it prevents photographs from representing fictional entities by purely photographic means. Because, obviously, what does not exist cannot causally interact with a photosensitive surface (Scruton [1981]; Currie [2008]; Friday [1997]; Cavedon-Taylor [2010]).

This is the tradition against which the New theory reacts. If the emphasis of the orthodoxy was to define the nature of photography in radical opposition to other pictorial types by means of an epistemic framework, the New theory – especially in its more radical version – downplays the purported epistemic advantages of photography and aims at highlighting the artistic potential of the medium.[2] This, in turn, places photography – both epistemically and artistically – in a continuum with other forms of pictorial representation.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, the New theory developed in two stages. The motivation behind the first wave of the new theory was mainly to challenge the orthodox view regarding what counts as a *photographic representation* or what counts as representing photographically or by *photographic means*.

In what proved to be a very influential paper, Dawn Wilson (nee Phillips) challenged the idea that a causal relation in and of itself could determine *the subject* of a photograph, or what a photograph represents or depicts, thereby attacking one of the main tenets of the orthodox theory. If we claim, Wilson argued, that

> *the photographic relation is merely causal, then we would not find ourselves wondering how to explain any relation between the photograph and its «subject». This would be the same mistake as thinking that a line of debris washed up on a beach stands in a relation to a subject: namely the tide […]. Insofar as a photograph has a subject, then the subject is not determined solely by the causal relation (Phillips [2009]: 330-31).*

Knowledge of the causal process, Wilson argues, grants us insight into the medium of a photograph, rather than its subject-matter. But the causal process of photography is much more complex than what the orthodox theory takes it to be, and that is what we have to understand if we want to make sense of «the peculiarly distinctive nature of photography». What distinguishes photographs from other pictorial kinds, Wilson further claims, is their distinctive causal history which she characterizes thus:

1. a light image is formed, using objects and light sources in an ordinary state of affairs;

2. a photographic event occurs – no photograph yet exists;

3. the information recorded and stored undergoes a process to create a visual image (the photograph) or several such images;

[1] Scruton holds that if a photographer proceeds «to paint things in and out, retouch, alter or pasticher as he pleases […] the photographer becomes a painter» (Scruton [1981]: 593).

[2] This emphasis on the artistic potential of photography is stressed in both Lopes' and Costello's books, but it might be more evident in Lopes' *Four Arts of Photography*. As its title suggests one of the aims – if not the main aim – of Lopes's book is to account for various ways in which photography may become art. In fact, he uses the skeptical argument against the artistic capacity of photography as a methodological tool to explain different ways in which, contrary to the skeptic, photography can be artistically valuable. For an overview and a short critical review of Lopes' book see Atencia-Linares (2018a). For a short summary and critical analysis of Costello's book see Atencia-Linares (2018b).

4. the appearance of the photograph leads the viewer to learn about the photographic event.

While the orthodoxy seems to reduce the nature of the photographic image to what Wilson calls the *photographic event* – which they characterize in merely causal terms – Wilson, following Patrick Maynard (2005), emphasizes the fact that, at this stage of the process, there is, strictly speaking, no image. To obtain a proper photographic image, Wilson holds, further processes are required, and these processes typically involve intentional agency.

This more nuanced and less reductivist characterization of the photographic process, motivated other theorists to extend this line of investigation.

I, for example, drawing on Wilson's characterization of the photographic process, challenged the traditional idea of what counts as representation by *photographic means* in order to argue against the purported limitation of photography when it comes to represent fictional entities (Atencia-Linares [2012]).[3] Against the orthodox idea that a representation by purely photographic means consists of a belief-independent feature-tracking causal relation, I proposed that what is specific to photography is the exploitation, control and manipulation of light and its effects *at every stage of the process* and not only at the moment of the shot. Following this line of thought, the proposal is to understand the notion of representation by strictly photographic means in this way:

> *Photographic means: any action or technique performed or taking place during the production of an image, including the stages of transduction and storing, that consists solely in the exploitation, manipulation, or control of the incidence of light onto, and its interaction with, a photosensitive material (Atencia-Linares [2012]: 22)*[4].

The exploitation, manipulation and control of the incidence of light onto the photosensitive surface can occur automatically and thereby without any intentional mediation. Moreover, given the technology of a vast majority photographic devices it is possible that this is typically the case – and here I make a concession to the orthodoxy. However, this description in no way excludes the possibility of an intentional mediation. What is specific to photography is the production of images by means of the incidence of light, not the automatism or the independence of mental states in production of the image. This, I argue, helps us see why photographs can indeed represent *ficta* by strictly photographic means: in many occasions photographers can manipulate and control the incidence of light to obtain non-realistic images.[5]

2. WNT: too restrictive?

The first wave of the New Theory laid the groundwork for a new line of investigation: the essence of photography is not a form of representation in virtue of a belief-independent causal relation and a photograph is not necessarily the consequence of such causal *natural* relation. The photographic *process* is more complex and involves more than the shot of a camera. Moreover, the purported photographic means are more related to the exposure, control and manipulation of light than to a notion of natural causation.

Nonetheless, Diarmuid Costello argues in his book that, although the animus of this first wave of the new theory was on the right track, the proposals are still too restrictive. In particular, Costello claims that my view of what should be considered *strictly photographic* is too limited: «Atencia-Linares's definition only recognizes a subset of such processes as strictly photographic. By singling out the control of light's interaction with photosensitive materials it rules in some, but not

[3] The motivation of this paper, as I will explain below, was not to propose a definition of photography. Rather, the purpose of the paper was to give an account of what it is to represent by photographic means.

[4] *Transduction* here means the process of transforming the latent information registered after the photographic event into one or many patent images.

[5] Since the argument of how or why photographs can represent *ficta* by photographic means is not relevant for the current discussion, I do not include a detailed explanation. To expand on this, see Atencia-Linares (2012).

all, of the things that photographers typically do in the darkroom» (Costello [2018]: 85).

Also, according to Costello, from this notion of what counts as *strictly photographic* follows a definition of the nature of photography that is too prescriptive and inadequate.

> *Such prohibitions distinguish what is photographic from what is not in arbitrary ways. [...] Is the photographer obliged to take the more circuitous route, should they want their work to count as pure? It is hard to see why they should. From where would such prohibitions or prescriptions derive their normative force? It is not for philosophy, but first order practice and its criticism, to determine what counts as a photograph (Costello [2018]: 86-87).*

Partly for these reasons, Costello argues, the radical version of the New Theory (RNT) is a better choice.

In what follows, I will discuss in more detail the two objections Costello raises against the WNT. Then, in the following section, I will develop some important aspects of the RNT to assess whether it is in fact, as Costello claims, a better option.

Let me now examine the first objection, namely, the idea that the definition of what counts as strictly photographic according for the WNT excludes as photographic various processes that are frequently used in current photographic practice.

Costello's objection consists of a series of cases that involve techniques commonly used in photographic practice that, according to Costello, are excluded as *strictly photographic* in my proposal. I will cite these cases and give some answers.

Case I:

> *Imagine a photographer who wants to inhibit the exposure of some part of an image while printing. If she does this by cutting a paper mask to occlude that area of the negative or uses some kind of baffle (including her hands) to shield the relevant area of the unexposed paper («dodging»), this will count as making an image by strictly photographic means, as both are means of controlling the interaction of light with a photosensitive material. But if a more expedient or accurate way to achieve the same result were to paint an opaque masking agent onto the negative's emulsion it is not clear that this would also count (Costello [2018]: 85-86).*

If I understand it correctly, the idea that Costello suggests is that the application of the masking agent would keep a particular section of the image from the action of developing chemicals, thereby not allowing that section of the latent image to become visible.[6] If this is the case, there is no reason why this would not count as *photographic means* in my account. This could be described as a process that controls *the interaction* – or the effect – of light with the photosensitive material *during the process of transduction*. After all, what the photographer is doing is preventing whatever effect the action of light would have had on the silver halides had the chemicals been able to interact with them. The fact that the mask is applied by *painting* over the emulsion does not change the fact what the photographer is doing is controlling the action of light – after all, it is preventing it from having a visible effect. There are, of course, cases of drawing over images that would indeed be ruled out as strictly photographic in this account, but these are cases where the process of painting do not play any role in the manipulation or the interaction of light with the photosensitive material.

Let us consider the second case.

Case II:

> *Another entirely standard means of achieving the same result [namely, inhibiting the exposure of some part of an image while printing] that would be ruled out on this account is selectively developing the surface of the print by holding some area of it in (or out) of the developer during development. This will be ruled out because it does not «consist solely in the*

[6] Masking agents are products that are applied on the photographic paper or print while it is under the action of chemicals to avoid that those chemicals interact with a specific part of the surface. Then they are washed out and removed.

exploitation, manipulation, or control of the incidence of light onto, and its interaction with, a photosensitive material», despite involving the control of something equally fundamental to photography, the processes through which the chemical reaction of silver halides to light becomes visible (Costello [2018]: 86).

It seems to me, that here we can give a similar argument to the one offered in response to the first case. This example is meant to show that «selectively developing the surface of the print by holding some area of it in (or out) of the developer during development» is not considered photographic on my account. But I think it is indeed, and more or less for the same reason: by not allowing part of the surface of the print to be in contact with the developer (chemical), what the photographer is doing is blocking the effect the light would have had on the silver halides (now turned into metallic silver) had the chemicals been able to interact with them.

What about the third case?

Case III:

[I]f a photographer allows light to pass through her hands so as to expose a particular area of a print for longer («burning in») this counts as strictly photographic means. But if a more expedient or accurate way to achieve the same result were to rub that area of the print vigorously with cotton bud during development, so as to speed up the developer's action (by raising the local temperature of the print's surface), that would not» (Costello [2018]: 86).

Again, this case objects that rubbing certain areas of the print with a cotton bud during development, so as to speed up the developer's action (by raising the local temperature of the print's surface), would not count as strictly photographic on the account. But again, I do not see why this is the case. The developer is a «reducing» agent with the ability to identify crystals that have been exposed to light. Raising the temperature during the developing process is a way to speed up the process of «reducing» those exposed crystals (normally) in order to increase the contrast or density of the exposed areas of the image. Another way to describe this could be to say that such process is a way of controlling the way in which the effect of the exposure of light on the photosensitive surface would ultimately end up looking. Clearly, what the photographer is doing here is not controlling directly how the beam of light exposes the photosensitive surface, but the action of light onto the photosensitive surface does not end up with the exposure; it has further effects that can be controlled in different ways. What the photographer is doing here, I think, is controlling the ulterior effects of this light exposure and this, I think, perfectly counts as an «interaction of light with the photosensitive surface». How the light interacts with the photosensitive material depends, partly, on how the chemicals that allow the latent image to become visible are used and manipulated.

It seems to me, then, that Costello's examples are not entirely convincing to show that the idea of *strictly photographic means* I proposed excludes many processed used frequently by photographers. It is true, however, that there are certain processes or techniques that are indeed excluded if we follow such definition, and some of these processes are frequent in the practice of photography. This is something that I clearly acknowledge in her paper (Atencia-Linares [2012]: 21). But this does not, in anyway, entail that using these techniques would disqualify an image from being a photograph or even a *pure photograph*. Nothing in this account entails that, if an image is not made by purely photographic means, it is thereby not a photograph or less of a photograph. Neither it commits its advocates to saying, as Costello suggests in his second objection, that photographers who decide to use non-photographic means are becoming painters.

The purpose of defining what counts as *strictly photographic means* in the way I proposed was only intended to show, against the orthodox view, that a photographer could produce *if she so chooses* a representation of a fictional entity *by purely photographic means,* not that she *should do so* if she wants her image to count as a photograph. In other words, this view is descriptive and not prescriptive. Describing what counts as (representing

by) *photographic means* is a separate and different issue from proposing what counts as a photograph. There is no implication from one thing to the other. After all, there might be images that combine representations done by photographic and non-photographic means that still count as a photograph. Also, there can be other images that do so as well, but that does not make sense to categorize as photographs. From the WNT, or at least from my view, does not follow any definition of what counts as a photograph. In fact, as I will argue in the next section, I think that a serious problem of the RNT is that it tries to extrapolate a notion of what a photograph is from the idea of how the photographic process works.

3. Lopes' Radical New Theory and its conception of photography

More radical views such as Dominic Lopes's also reject the reductionism of the orthodox theory and endorse the idea that in order to understand photography we should take seriously the photographic process as described by Wilson. Now, after revising the various stages of the photographic process Lopes provides what he claims to be the definition of *the photograph* according to (his version of) the new theory:

> *What is a photograph? The new theory answers: a photograph is an image that is the product of a photographic process, which includes a photographic event plus processes for making marked surfaces. Stated in full:*
> *A photograph is an image output by a mark-making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene (Lopes [2016]: 81).*

Or as Costello paraphrases the idea:

> *[A]n item is a photograph if and only if it is an image that is a product of a photographic process, where a photographic process includes (1) a photographic event as well as (2) processes for the production of images (Costello [2018]: 88).*

The motivation behind this new definition is to account for the fact that, even when photography originates in the register of a light image, there are various ulterior processes that may take place in the production of a photograph that are or might be shared with the production of other types of images. But the fact that these ulterior processes are involved does not prevent that an image is still considered a photograph.

An advantage that this definition is supposed to provide is that it is sufficiently open so as to count as photographs controversial cases such as Gerhard Richter's photo-paintings. Richter's photo-paintings are what would otherwise be called photorealistic paintings – a type of image made with paint that try to mimic the hyperrealist phenomenology of photographs. Richter however, explicitly claims that he prefers to consider them photographs himself considers photographs (Richter [1995]: 73). This case might be controversial, but if one takes Richter's words at face value it will certainly speak up for Lopes' view. Now the problem with this definition is that it would count as photographs cases that neither their authors nor the critical practices would be willing to categorize as such. Moreover, in many cases it would make little sense to consider them photographs. Costello provides one telling example illustrating this point: the case of an imaginary photo-painting *of* the Kölner Dom:

> *Richter projects a photograph of Kölner Dom onto the surface of a canvas, traces its outlines, then sets about painting in the image. Almost finished, he begins «blurring» the likeness thereby created, by dragging solvent across its wet surface. Applying more and more solvent, but still not happy, he eventually resorts either to scraping away the image entirely or dragging fresh paint across the canvas with an outsized silk-screen blade. The resulting image is a largely monochromatic gray abstract with residual traces of other colours and some facture (Costello [2018]: 94).*

The idea is that this hypothetical image is originated in a photographic event, but, would we be willing to call this *a photograph*? And more importantly, would it make sense to call it so? The

emphasis on the hypothetical fact that the picture originated in a photographic event and the datum that it is a *fictional* Richter picture, could lean us toward a more accepting stance towards Lopes' view – we could perhaps claim that the photographic origins play a central role in appreciation of the picture and, if Richter himself were willing to call such picture a photograph maybe there is a good reason for doing so. However, there are other non-imaginary, actual cases that I think render this definition much more implausible. Here are some.

Most photo-realist paintings take photographs as their source. In these cases, conditions 1 and 2 of Lopes' definition are met. However, in the vast majority of the cases (i) their authors are willing to call their pictures paintings, (ii) the critical practices consider them as belonging to a subcategory or a style of painting and (iv) it makes much sense – in these cases – to appreciate them as paintings than as photographs.

In fact, nowadays, many realist and not-so-realist paintings and drawings (such as portraits, landscapes, etc.) also take photographs as their source; unlike photo-realist paintings, these pictures do not aim to mimic the phenomenology of photography, but they use photographs as a source because it is more convenient to use a photograph than to spend endless hours in front of a sitter or outdoors subject to the inclemencies of the weather. When these are the cases in point, would the fact that the process of production of these images involves a photographic event in their origin qualify them as photographs? That seems to me to be a very revisionist move to make.

The following example makes more evident how puzzling the definition could turn out to be. If we strictly follow the definition, if I take a photocopy of, say, a book or a handout and make some doodles on the margins, that would also meet both conditions. The photocopy involves, as a matter of fact, a photographic event and the doodles on the margin count as a type of process of image-production. But would a regular handout used in class count in any relevant sense as a photograph? Maybe in some especial case it could turn out to be so – say, if a given *provocateur* conceptual author, in a spirit similar to Richter insists that her *artistic* handout *is a photograph*. But it seems to me that the definition predicts that *any handout* should be considered a photograph. This, however, strikes me as very implausible, if only because it would not make much sense to appreciate it in the same category as other photographs.

Considering all these cases, it seems to me that the criticism that Costello directed to my view is better directed to Lopes' more radical version of the new theory that he seems to favour: «It is not for philosophy, but first order practice and its criticism, *to determine what counts as a photograph*» (Costello [2018]: 86-87).

I think the move from emphasizing the question «*what is a photograph?*» to «*what is photography?*» that inspired the new theory in the first place, was a right move to make, but going back to the question of *what is a photograph?* and responding it with straitjacketed necessary and sufficient conditions is more a regress than a progress.

Maybe, as philosophers, the only liberal account that we could give regarding what it is for an image to be a photograph would be one that puts the weight of classification on practices of appreciation. Developing such a view is beyond the scope of this presentation but one sketchy suggestion could be to follow the lines of Kendall Walton's *categories of art* (1970). Being a photograph, the account could claim, in Waltonian spirit, is tantamount to belonging to a category of art, namely, «the category of photographs» – where categories of art are ways of classifying works in ways that affect our appreciation of them. Membership in the category of «photography», as in most categories, would not be determined by necessary and sufficient conditions, but rather by a cluster of non-essential criteria that include not only (standard, contra-standard and variable) features internal to the work, but also things such as the category in which the artist intended the work to be appreciated, or in which the artist's contemporaries would have placed it, and the category in which the work is better appreciated.

Given that the practice of photography is an established one, it would not be too difficult to determine which properties tend to be present in images we typically classify as photographs, or that typically lead us to classify them as such (standard properties) and which are those that rarely appear in images we call photographs or tend to disqualify them from such category (contra-standard properties). Among the standard properties one could count things such as being a two-dimensional pictorial representation with a peculiar realistic phenomenology (similar to that of a mirror, or in which we perceive subjects and scenes as concrete particulars)[7] being made preponderantly by «photographic means» (in the relevant sense), lack a three-dimensional textured surface, etc. Among its contra-standard features, one could count the following: presenting a significant number of non-photographic techniques such as the use of paint, ink or marks that are not created by the action of light; lack a realistic phenomenology, present texture in the surface, etc. These features, however, would not provide the last word regarding classification as authorial intentions, practices of classification and optimal categorization would also play a significant role.

At any rate, the point I was trying to make is that, although Lopes' RNT tries to provide a more liberal view of what counts as a photograph, it ends up being equally prescriptive and misleading than the orthodox theory. While the orthodox theory excluded many actual photographs from the category for considering them closer to paintings, the RNT conceives of as photographs things that clearly fall, and are better appreciated, in other categories.

4. Photographic means

There is another aspect in which Lopes' RTN tries to depart from the Orthodox view and, I think, ends up being paradoxically very close to it. One of the main objections that the NT raised again the orthodoxy was that the latter was reductionist regarding what counts as *photographic*. However, even when the NT makes it clear that the photographic process is far more complex than the orthodoxy has it, the RNT ends up also being reductionist by putting most of the weight onto one stage of the process: the *photographic event;* a stage, moreover, which I argue is ill-conceived.

According to the RNT, the photographic process is multi-staged, but the photographic event – the recording of the light image – is the only one that can be considered strictly photographic.

> *All four stages of the photographic process are essential to making a photograph, but only one is fundamentally unique to photography [...] Only the photographic event is intrinsically photographic (Lopes [2016]: 81).*

Notice that the account of (strictly) *photographic means* that derives from this view is far more restrictive than the one provided by the WNT:

(RNT) *Photographic means:* any action or technique performed or taking place during the *recording of the information of the light image on a storage medium.*

(WNT) *Photographic means*: any action or technique performed or taking place during the production of an image, including the stages of exposure, transduction and storing, that consists solely in the exploitation, manipulation, or control of the incidence of light onto, and its interaction with, a photosensitive material.[8]

In the light of this comparison it seems that the RNT is more restrictive than the WNT. So, again, it seems to me that the objection Costello raised against the WNT is better placed against the RNT: Why should we rule out other processes that are typically done in the darkroom (at stages different from the photographic event) as *strictly photographic*?

[7] See Atencia-Linares (2013), chapter 3.

[8] Notice that both accounts admit that other processes that are ruled out are also part of the practice of photography. So, there is no difference along these lines.

Lopes' answer is that other processes that take place at other stages are not unique to photography. But this answer, I think, rests on an equivocation: Lopes' seems to be equating «what is unique to photography» to «what is intrinsically photographic». But these are not equivalent: something can be intrinsically photographic – for example, in virtue of the exploitation, manipulation or control of light – and not be unique to photography. After all, works in other media can introduce photographic elements or employ photographic techniques. In fact, if one does not count everything that originates in a photographic event as a photograph, as Lopes' does, one would not be led to think that the photographic event is *unique to photography*.

Now, why do I think we should include other processes that take place at other stages of photography as *intrinsically photographic?* Well, for similar reasons I adduced in response to Costello's objections: because some of these processes are part and parcel of what makes it possible for the light to have the effect it has onto the photosensitive material in the way it does. It is possible that the chemical used as developer has other uses unrelated to turning latent (light) images into patent ones – and thereby one cannot say that the action of that chemical is unique to photography. However, when the process is indeed used in photography and it plays a constitutive role in the particular effect the light has onto a photosensitive material, the process is indeed intrinsic to the production of the image and thereby would count as photographic. Put more generally, there are mark-making processes that are used in other media different from photography and thereby are not unique to it, but when they are used in the photographic process *and* they play a constitutive role in how the action of light affects the photosensitive surface, they can indeed count as *intrinsically photographic*.

5. Conclusion

If what I have said so far is sound, Costello's objections to the (purported) restrictive or weak version of the new theory cannot only be answered by this account, but also, they seem to be better suited as objections to Lopes's radical version of the new theory that Costello prefers. To summarize, Costello's objections against the WNT where two: (i) that the notion of photographic means the WNT provides is too restrictive because it rules out as photographic many techniques photographers typically perform in the darkroom (in particular his cases concerned the manipulation of chemicals which are essential to the photographic processes); (ii) that the WNT prescribes an idea of what counts as a photograph that lacks normative force. After all, «it is not for philosophy, but first order practice and its criticism, *to determine what counts as a photograph*».

Against these objections, my answer was that they do not affect the version of the WNT that Costello criticizes. On the one hand, I fully agree with the view that certain actions involving the manipulation of chemicals should count as photographic. Also, I think they do so in my account: manipulating the chemicals sometimes amounts to controlling the interaction the effect of light has with the photosensitive surface. The action of light does not end with the exposure; it has further effects that can be controlled in subsequent stages of the process. On the other hand, the account does not prescribe an idea of what counts as a photograph. A notion of what counts of *photographic means* does not entail a notion of *what counts as a photograph*. The notion of *photographic means* does not entail a notion of what counts as a photograph. Furthermore, I argued that the objections are better suited for the RNT. After all, it provides an indeed restrictive notion of photographic means – one that explicitly does not count most actions performed in the darkroom as *intrinsically* photographic. Moreover, it does indeed prescribe an idea of photography that also lacks normative force: why should we give up current classification of, say, *all* photo-realist paintings as paintings and classify them as photographs instead? If this is the case, why should we prefer the radical view? There might be ulterior reasons to do so, but these don't seem to be the ones.

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GO SOCIAL: REPLIES TO CATHARINE ABELL AND PALOMA ATENCIA-LINARES

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Abstract. In *Four Arts of Photography*, Lopes argues that photography is any mark-making processes that takes input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene. This paper addresses concerns that the account is too permissive by stressing that there is more to photographic art than being a photograph: the photographic arts are social practices constituted by norms that govern how the technology is used. The intuitions that seem to raise concerns about Lopes's account are not intuitions about photography; they are intuitions about photographic art. The paper also concedes that epistemically-oriented photographic practices should be understood more broadly than they are in *Four Arts of Photography*.

Keywords. Photography, drawing, information, art, knowledge.

Catharine Abell and Paloma Atencia-Linares follow Diarmuid Costello (2018) in contrasting «permissive» and «restrictive» theories of photography, but theories permit nothing and restrict nothing, for they aim to explain and illuminate, to shed light on a phenomenon, which they often leave undisturbed. The 'new' theory of photography defended in *Four Arts of Photography* is not some kind of metaphysical bouncer.

Three gestures shape the book's approach. First, shifting away from the focus, in most analytic aesthetics, on photography's epistemic powers, the book gives priority to photography's artistic and aesthetic power. Second, the book follows a «social turn» in thinking about the arts: there are four (or more) arts of photography because the one medium is accommodated within several artistic practices, which are social practices. Third, the method of the book is not to model intuitions about what counts as a photograph, or as photography; its method is second-order. Abell and Atencia-Linares write eloquently about the first gesture, but a few more words about the second and third will set the stage to allay their concerns about the book's «permissiveness».

The idea that there are several arts of photography applies a general framework for crafting theories of the arts (Lopes [2014]: chapters 7 and 8; Lopes [2018b]: chapter 6). According to this framework, any art form involves a means of making which is constituted as a medium by being subject to norms of evaluation. Since norms constitute social practices, the arts are social practices. A theory of photography is therefore a theory of a technology, a means of making, while a theory of a photographic art explains how the technology figures in normatively-governed, socially embedded acts of appreciation.

Much philosophy is first order in the sense that the philosopher theorises about some phenomenon with which they are personally familiar, their familiarity often being expressed as «intuitions». Some philosophy is second-order in the sense that the philosopher theorises about a phenomenon as it is represented in the hypotheses and explanations of empirical scholars. Hence some metaphysicians craft theories of time to model their intuitions about time, but philosophers of science usually craft theories of time as it figures in the hypotheses and explanations of physics. More aesthetics should be like philosophy of science: it should treat artistic and aesthetic phenomena as ones that figure in the hypotheses and explanations of the behavioural and social sciences (Lopes [2018a]).

In *Four Arts*, second-order method powers the social turn. The book advocates a theory of photography that characterizes a means of making that figures in normatively-governed acts of appreciation. To get at the norms, each of the four arts of photography is introduced through detailed case studies of specific photographs as they are understood in the writings art historians. Art historical writing obviously does not determine what photography is (see Costello [2018]: 86-87). The assumption is merely that implicit in the writings of art historians are norms of evaluation that manifest a social practice. We can therefore theorise about the arts of photography as they figure

in these writings. By corollary, there is not much point in fretting over our intuitions about imaginary cases – cases that have no social reality.

Concerns about permissiveness generate counterexamples to the new theory and its embrace of lyric photography, especially Gerhardt Richter's *Betty*. Ironically, *Betty* is not a paradigm of lyric photography in the book. More central cases are Richard Mosse's war photographs in infrared film, Catharine Yass's darkroom trickery in her Royal Sovereign Light series, and Thomas Ruff's monumental blow ups of 72 dpi porn jpegs (Lopes [2016]: 91-94). Philosophers on a quest to test intuitions will make a bee line for *Betty*, passing by the practice of lyric photography as we see it in the writings of critics and historians.

At any rate, it is Mosse, Yass, and Ruff who motivate the proposal that «(NT) a photograph is an image output by a mark-making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene» (Lopes [2016]: 81).

Think of (NT) as stipulating that a photograph is any product of such a four-stage process. All four stages are intrinsically photographic in the sense that they jointly constitute the process. At the same time, the pro-photographic scene, light image, and mark-making stages are not intrinsically photographic in the sense that they count as photographic only by standing in relation to the photographic event. The beauty of the move is that any mark-marking process counts as photographic as long it is stands in the right relation to a photographic event.

Atencia-Linares argues that (NT) counts photocopies as photographs, but we do not consider them as photographs, so (NT) is false. This says more about us than it says about photography. I invite you to visit your local copy shop, place your hand on the glass, hit the green button, and inspect the result. Need it be said that the machine is made up of parts that are analogues of your digital photography setup: a lens, a CCD, a computer to process image data, and a printer?

What about photorealist paintings made by meticulously copying snapshots? Atencia-Linares remarks that we appreciate them as paintings rather than photographs. I say we appreciate them as paintings and as photographs – as painted marks capturing information from a photographic event. After all, we fail to appreciate them as photorealistic until we take account of their snapshot origins. The norms of the practice of photorealism give the photographic process appreciative relevance. (NT) explains how photorealism is not ordinary painting: photorealistic paintings are essentially products of photographic processes.

Photorealist practice contrasts with the practice of a painter like Cézanne, who used photographs as painting aids. A Cézanne is a photograph in the utterly innocuous sense that it is a product of a photographic process. Here the process is a means of making, not a medium, because no norms of Cézanne's practice give the photographic process appreciative relevance. (A painting is also a product of an evaporation process, and that is not appreciatively relevant either).

Return to Richter. He paints the Kölner Dom then blurs away all traces of the original scene. Is it a photograph, according to (NT)? Rephrase: does it suffice to make a photograph that there be a photographic event in the causal history of an image? Inputs and outputs are not just causes; they are stages of information processing. Few systems for processing information are lossless, and loss is a matter of degree. Technically, if there some modicum of information transfer, we have a photograph. When it comes to art and aesthetics, amount of information is irrelevant. What matters is whether the image is one to be appreciated as a product of a photographic process within which information is processed.

Here we can learn from Abell's clever twist on Costello's conundrum. Imagine that, disheartened by the «largely monochromatic grey abstract», Richter «retraced from memory the outlines of the Kölner Dom that had been projected onto the canvas, and coloured them in, ending up with something very similar to the image he had before he started the blurring process». According to (NT), the image is a photograph: it is a product of a photographic process, one that includes

information processing. Should you experience an affront to your intuitions, I prescribe an error theory: your intuitions concern photographic art and you mistakenly identify the art form with a means of making. To see this, imagine a practice. Erasing paintings based on photographs and retracing them from memory is now a thing. All the young hotshots are doing it, while evoking 1930 surrealist games and those heavy 1960s screeds about the death of the artist. The Unerasure show arrives at MoMA. Would you be subject to any appreciative norms predicated on how the works in the show were made using photographic processes? Now, do not introspect an answer! Norms are social facts. We would have to look into the practice as it is understood in the hypotheses and explanations of the best empirical scholarship.

All contributors to this symposium agree that there exist some items that are products of the four stage process described in (NT). I call them «photographs», but it does not matter what we call them; what matters is that they exist and that they are relevant to appreciation. I add only that a good reading of history and criticism supports the proposition that there is a set of artistic practices that share in common their having norms that make it relevant to appreciation that images are products of the four stage process. The process is an artistic medium.

Before closing, Abell is exactly right to insist that not all epistemic practices function to supply knowledge. *Four Arts* proposes that epistemic practices of photography have norms that «restrict the photographic process in order to ensure belief-independent feature-tracking» (2016: 111). The proposal misses the diversity of epistemic tasks we have to perform. A better – more permissive! – idea is that some photographic practices comprise norms that govern how photographic equipment is designed, manufactured, and then used to serve any of our epistemic needs (see 2016: 109). Abell spells out the details in a very promising way.

Theories are not metaphysical bouncers, and they are not dialectical bouncers either. A new theory should not seek to have the last word: a fresh approach to a phenomenon should invite just the kind of further reflection and refinement that we get from Abell, Atencia-Linares, and Costello.

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WHITHER PHOTOGRAPHY THEORY: REPLIES TO ABELL AND ATENCIA-LINARES

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Abstract. In *On Photography* Costello traces the roots of current conceptions of photography back to the formulations of its earliest pioneers, and shows that contemporary philosophical reflection on photography is an increasingly refined formalization of intuitions that have been around since its invention, and by now permeate folk wisdom. Those intuitions are false in key respects. Costello's reply considers the present state of debate, concluding that work remains to be done before New Theory can claim to have bested Orthodoxy. In particular, while New Theory does better in accounting for photography's aesthetic capacities; the challenge remains to do as well with its alleged epistemic privilege. For this reason, New Theorists should cease worrying about Skeptical Orthodoxy, and direct their energies to Non-Skeptical Orthodoxy, which represents a much stiffer challenge. It also notes that despite New Theory's attention to the photographic process, this remains incomplete in at least one important respect as currently described.

Keywords. Photography, orthodoxy, New Theory, aesthetic, epistemic, agency.

One of my goals in *On Photography* was to show just how pervasive a certain way of thinking about photography is; that it not only dominates thinking about photography today but has done so since its origins. A simple explanation for this would be that is true, but this is not the explanation I offer. I call the view «Orthodox Theory»: like other orthodoxies, it involves adherence to certain *idées fixes*. Given that I take it to be false, I need to offer some explanation where existing theory has gone wrong. I try to do so in the latter half of the book, drawing on a still developing «New Theory» of photography.

But first I trace the lineage of Orthodox Theory from photography's pioneers through to the present day (Costello [2017]). It is grounded in a set of foundational intuitions about the nature of photography. These originate in Henry Fox-Talbot and Louis Daguerre's characterisations of photography as «nature depicting itself through the agency of light». Differences of vocabulary aside, philosophical orthodoxy about photography is a formalization of these same intuitions which now also pervade folk theory. When contemporary philosophers maintain that photography is at bottom an automated process in which a mechanical apparatus produces images that depend causally and counterfactually on the scenes depicted in such a way as to bypass the beliefs and other mental states of the photographer, they build in a functionally equivalent *non-agential* explanation for the generation of photographs. For Daguerre and Talbot it is nature, for Scruton and Currie it is causal mechanism; but for neither is it human beings. Contrast this to how the paintings are typically thought to come into being.

From Daguerre and Fox-Talbot right through to Scruton and Currie one finds the same thought recurring: *photography can be pure, or photography can be art, but it cannot be both.* If this trade off is accepted, it follows that when photography is art this must be for reasons other than it being photography. Otherwise pure photography could also be art; but this is precisely what accepting the trade off concedes cannot be the case.

The same pattern of thought underlies the oft-noted tension between photography's epistemic and aesthetic capacities. Pure photography is epistemically privileged: because it brackets the mental states of the photographer, it is not subject to various forms of human fallibility; conversely, for photography to be of aesthetic interest, it needs to leverage just those mental states in such a way that they can underwrite our appreciative interest in the resulting image. Upshot: photography can be aesthetically interesting or epistemically privileged, but it cannot be both.

But this is only half the story: for one of the most salient fault lines within Orthodoxy concerns the implications of distinct versions for photography's standing as art. This is something that New Theorists might be more attentive to than they have. Call these «Skeptical» and «Non-Skeptical» Orthodoxy, respectively. For Scruton, photographs are *invisible*; they are windows through

which one sees the world. For this reason, whatever interest one takes in the photograph is an interest that one could have taken in the scene seen directly. For Walton, photographs are *transparent* but not invisible: one sees the world by seeing the photograph, and this allows one to take an interest in the scene – as it appears through its photograph – that one could not have taken in the same scene seen directly (see Lopes [2003]: 433-438).

Where New Theorists depart from Orthodoxy, Skeptical and Non-Skeptical alike, is in their understanding of how photographs come into being. This is what makes New Theory new. Recording information by exposing a light sensitive surface is necessary, but it is not sufficient for the production of photographs because, absent further stages of image-processing and rendering, no visible image can be produced. Since no one denies that photographs may be visually appreciated, any stage required to generate such an image must be internal to photography proper. These stages may, but *need not*, be automated. Once this is clarified, it is apparent that photographers can invest their agency anywhere along the chain of processes necessary to produce an image and that intervention still count as strictly photographic.

While clearly sympathetic to New Theory, *On Photography* suggests several requirements that New Theory must meet for it to be considered a genuine advance on Orthodoxy, and raises various challenges for existing versions of New Theory.

The first requirement is that New Theory not secure photography's aesthetic capacity on any basis that would render its epistemic capacities mysterious. These are central to our understanding of photography and its uses; as Orthodoxy's strong suit, any solution that renders these opaque would be a step backwards. This is also the reason that Walton presents a much stiffer challenge to New Theory than Scruton, and one that the majority of New Theorists have seemed curiously reluctant to address as yet. This is because Walton's general theory of depiction gives him a way to account for photography's aesthetic capacities consistent with an Orthodox set of assumptions about the nature of photography (Costello [2018]: chapter 3). That is, his theory already has (or at least claims to have) a way of accounting for both, rather than one at the expense of the other. Even a philosopher as attuned to the epistemic aspects of photography as Catharine Abell seems to miss this here (Abell [2010]). This marginalization of Walton remains a blind spot in recent debate.

The second requirement is that New Theory is yet to be new or resolute enough in its understanding of photographic agency. For while it has had much to say about what takes place downstream of the photographic event – and this represents a genuine advance on Orthodoxy in enriching our understanding of the photographic process – it cannot be assumed without argument that only what happens downstream of that event is relevant to understanding photography. For example: is it as obvious as New Theorists have so far maintained that photographs *originate* in photographic events? What about conception, previsualisation and the like? Can the photographic process be exhaustively explained without them? (Costello [2017]: 448-450) Granted: none may turn out, once unpacked, to be unique to photography, but when they become part of a photographic process, are they not co-constitutive of the resulting image nonetheless?

So far as existing versions of New Theory are concerned, I distinguish a «Restrictive» and a «Permissive» strand, associated with the work of Paloma Atencia-Linares and Dominic McIver Lopes. I argue that the former rules out aspects of the photographic process that it should rule in, and that the latter rules in images that it should rule out. So much for my claims in the book: Lopes, Atencia-Linares and Abell reply to some of them here.

Lopes has provided two definitions of a photograph in his recent writings:

> *(Def 1): An item is a photograph if and only if it is an image that is a product of a photographic process, where a photographic process includes (i) a photographic event as well as (ii) processes for the production of images (Lopes [2012]: 115).*
> *(Def 2): a photograph is an image output by a mark-*

making process taking input from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene (Lopes [2016]: 81).

I take it that the latter, more recent definition is to be preferred because it makes the fact that photographic events comprise *recording of information* from a light image explicit. Abell recognizes the centrality of this and its implications for how permissive (or otherwise) Lopes's account really is. But note that, on both definitions, there are constraints on neither: i) the media through which such an image need be rendered for it to count as a photograph, nor ii) how much information from the light image need be preserved, so long as; (a) it implicates a photographic event in its causal history and (b) there is, as Lopes puts it here, «some modicum of information transfer» from that event.[9] *Prima facie*, this is a very permissive theory indeed.

Given such a permissive conception, the challenge for New Theory will be to explain photography's epistemic advantage rather than its aesthetic interest. Lopes's proposal is to «go social»*:* explain different uses of photography in terms of the social practices these uses subtend, and the constraints these place on how it is conducted within them. One might even call it sociological: certain institutional contexts (such as forensic, legal and press) work to ensure the preservation of belief independent feature tracking, though this is neither unique nor intrinsic to photography. Other media often track features independently of belief, and many photographs do not. Though, as Abell agrees, *flouting* belief-independent feature tracking may sometimes aid our epistemic enquiries, by making it easier to isolate and extract the sought after information. This is often true in medical imaging and astrophotography.

On Abell's account, for an image's photographic origins to bear on its appreciation need not entail that it track features independently of belief, but that it carry information from the recording event *by means of an effective communication channel*. Abell takes this to be true of Richter's *Betty*, which involves more or less mechanically tracing a projected outline, various skills of hand and eye co-ordination, and a process of colour matching, but not her modified *Kölner Dom*. Because we take images generated in certain ways but not others to belong to effective communication channels, only some kinds of image are salient for us as information-carriers. Given this, Abell proposes the following amendment to Lopes's account:

(Def 2*): a photograph is an image output by a mark-making process that carries information from an electro-chemical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene *and does so through a communication channel that is effective at carrying such information.*

Abell describes her proposal as «fairly permissive». It is designed to show that appeal to belief independent feature tracking – even understood as institutionally enforced rather than intrinsic – is unnecessary. Photographs are epistemically privileged in virtue of i) carrying information in ii) an easily extractable depictive form iii) via a communication channel we recognise as effective. Belief independent feature tracking, natural counterfactual dependence and the like fall away, unless they can be shown to be necessary to an effective communication channel. Though «fairly permissive», this does not look like a proposal that Lopes can take over without being more restrictive than he presently wants to be about what may count as a photograph.

Paloma Atencia-Linares takes issue with the arguments of *On Photography* more directly, in particular my criticisms of Restrictive New Theory (RNT). For all the heat these seem to have generated, my criticism was in fact quite simple: RNT, I maintain, unwittingly neglects the wet side of analogue photography, by focusing exclusively on the role of light. (Analogous arguments might be made for the software side of digital photography.) Atencia-Linares believes I have mistaken the commitments of her position:

[9] See above Lopes's essay *Go Social: Replies to Catharine Abell and Paloma Atencia-Linares.*

> *Photographic means: any action or technique performed or taking place during the production of an image, including the stages of transduction and storing, that consists solely in the exploitation, manipulation, or control of the incidence of light onto, and its interaction with, a photosensitive material (Atencia-Linares [2012]: 22).*

As she presents it here, her account always covered the kinds of (putative) counter-examples I raise against it, because all can be seen as ways of exploiting, controlling or manipulating the effect that the incidence of light on a light sensitive surface *would have had* absent the action in question. I confess that it is not entirely clear to me whether this is indeed what Atencia-Linares originally had in mind. That is, I remain unsure whether she has shifted ground somewhat in light of my criticisms, or simply made the implications of her original position clear. Be that as it may – as presented here – I am happy to concede that my criticisms may arise from missing the full range of what «transduction» was supposed to cover in Atencia-Linares's account.

That said, if this is what Atencia-Linares had in mind, it may open up a different kind of worry: that the account avoids the charge of restrictiveness by being too accommodating. The question is whether there is *anything* that cannot be redescribed in such a way as «exploiting, manipulating or controlling» the effect that the incidence of light *would have had*, absent the intervention in question. The range of actions and processes that can be counterfactually considered in relation to their effect on the incidence of light seems potentially limitless. What about turning off the lights or waiting for a shadow to fall across the subject before taking a photograph, or using some kind of mirror or reflector to dazzle the camera? How about failing to remove the lens cap? Should both – commission and omission – count? If so, what prevents the notion of photographic means at stake becoming uninformative – merely trivially true?

In the course of defending RNT, Atencia-Linares claims that Permissive New Theory (PNT) is in fact more restrictive, by virtue of restricting what is «intrinsically photographic» to the photographic event. The charge of restrictiveness thus rebounds to the detriment of PNT. This is an interesting and provocative claim. But it suggests, as does Lopes's response to it here, that we all agree on the substantive issue; that it is the *whole process*, including what photographers do in the darkroom or at the monitor, in the studio or on location, together with whatever tools or technologies they employ, that our philosophical theories of photography should be in the business of capturing. One may go astray not only by generalizing from a narrow set of examples, but from a partial account of the process. Thus, I cite Garry Winogrand's posthumous processed images in the book as an example of the difficulties that may arise from individuating photographs solely on the basis of photographic events.

A couple of clarifications about what I do and do not maintain in closing: I do not endorse PNT over RNT. What I endorse is the animating spirit and motivation of New Theory as a whole, which I see as a welcome corrective to some of the more evident shortcomings of Orthodoxy, while raising worries about both its extant formulations to date. Atencia-Linares and I agree, for example, that what is most productive about New Theory is its reorientation from photographic product to process inspired by the work of Patrick Maynard.

Re-characterising what I term «Restrictive» and «Permissive» (a descriptive distinction) as «Conservative» versus «Radical», projects an evaluative dimension onto what I wrote that is not there. I simply see the two as letting more or less through, and even Atencia-Linares does not dispute this. As to which is to be preferred, I think the jury remains out. Hence, I raise criticism for both. My considered view is that New Theory still has considerable work to do before it can genuinely claim to have bested Orthodoxy. For this reason, I marvel at the amount of ink that continues to be spilt on Skeptical Orthodoxy. To my mind this is too easy a target. Non-Skeptical Orthodoxy remains the position against which New Theory needs to demonstrate its merits.

Let me conclude on a note of agreement: despite our different commitments, Abell, Atencia-Linares, Lopes and I agree that practices and/or norms of appreciation remain ineliminable to theories of photography. This comes out especially clearly in Lopes's reply to Abell's witty (and marvellously titled) twist on the Kölner Dom case. But it is equally apparent in Atencia-Linares's appeal to Walton's on «categories» of art, and the role that the salience (or otherwise) of diverse media as communication channels plays in Abell's account. Though we develop the thought in different ways, all of us believe not only that background beliefs about photographic aetiology condition how we understand (and so appreciate) what we are looking at when what we're looking at is a photograph, but that this should be captured in our theories of photography. This is a timely reminder of the importance of background beliefs (re. categories, art forms, image kinds and the like) for the appreciation of photography and appreciation more generally.

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