Foreword:

The following essay is a mission statement of HoPe - House of Photography For Everyone , project created by the former gallery Ilex Photo. Mission activity will be one of three pillars of the project, in addition to the principal activity - community participation in the creation of a photographic museum, and commercial activity. Part of HoPe's initiatives will be dedicated solely to the mission that we recognize as **promotion of photography as a new philosophy**. As creators, we would like to emphasize that in times of visual culture, the discussion about the use of photography for intellectual purposes should be in the spotlight. The thesis that human is subject to the gradual erosion of thought, as technology advances and text is replaced by images has strong foundations, but we believe that considering photography as a new philosophy can stop or even reverse this process. Photographic thinking, from the perspective of the creator and the recipient, not only sensitizes us to the surrounding reality, but above all allows us to subjectify reflections, which is critical in times of "Revolt of the masses". Photographers are the functionaries of humanity in the new age, so it should be imperative for photographic institutions to create the best conditions for them to exhibit content that challenges accepted paradigms. Photography, like nothing else, connects our "lifeworld", which we create for ourselves through individual thinking and experience, with the real world, universal for all, thus Photography best allows us to understand both these worlds, the relationship between them and our relationship to them. We believe that the actions we will undertake will allow us to refine photography in an intellectual context, and its appropriate use will allow us to unleash human creativity and find our own" self", autonomous and genuine. In addition to aesthetic values, we want photography to reflect on ethical values and allow to shape moral principles.

We do not know where our journey to the infinite world of photography will take us. We hope, that we will be able to find its external beauty: great artists who will delight connoisseurs with their works, compositions that will launch new styles, or pioneering visual solutions. First of all, however, we want to look inside photography, understand and expose its value in those areas where so far its potential has not been harnessed. Who knows if the school of the future will not teach photography, or whether important exhibitions will not determine a new cultural identity. However, the most important element of our mission will be to create a space for everyone to create the most individual relationship with photography, so that they can look deep into themselves through the photos. To paraphrase Victor Burgin:"let's not take pictures, let's create opportunities for interpretation." I begin this essay with a quote from Susan Sontag, who speaks of photographs as shadows of truth in Plato's cave. Today, especially on the way to the source of knowledge and understanding of the world, morality and ourselves, we need those shadows without which we know neither objects nor light.

Open your shutters, open your eyes, open your minds !

HoPe

Piotr Pronobis

PHOTOSOPHY

> Humankind lingers unregenerately in Plato's cave,
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> still reveling, its age-old habit, in mere images of truth
>
> Susan Sontag [1]

It is not easy to think of photography in intellectual terms, especially at a time when it is the book and paper that appears to be the last bastion of genuine wisdom. The widening gap between the mediocrity of the masses- the people of the image, and the high culture of the intellectual elite of the written text is a pressing problem and a difficult experience of the early twenty-first century. The popular saying that a picture is worth more than a thousand words is long gone, not only on a semantic level, but above all on an ethical level, ruined by the era of snappers and the selfie.

Many important things about photography itself have already been written by Susan Sontag in her collection of essays " On Photography". The experiential and artistic dimension, the role of photography in entertainment, reportage and interpretation, the emotional or even sexual experience. Briefly, the sense of photography in the world and of the world in photography: all this Sontag has captured in texts that for a reason have become iconic in the context of understanding photography. Sontag's pro-photography attitude, which shows it as medium between people and the world stands in opposition to the currently presented image of the photograph as a symbol of the civilisation disease. The photograph, in popular opinion, is a fast food of content, presenting the shallowing of human reflections as well as limiting of their depth and value. Already the 20th century philosopher Gabriel Marcel aptly assessed the critical state of humanity on an intellectual level, saying " We are living in a world which seems to be founded on a refusal to reflect". There is, however an important distinction between knowledge identified with intellectual prowess, and critical thinking, which is based on search and curiosity about the world. In sybaritic times, passionate when pleasures of life matter most, there are few tools that have the power to influence the thinking of an entire generation, especially on an ethical and identity level. It seems, therefore, that people-especially young, will not be inspired to change their thinking by a solution known from the past, because in some sense they feel that the "archaic" topoi do not apply to them and will not be present in their generation. On the other hand, people are willing to engage and invest in solving problems that affect them directly, or will affect them in the near future. The catastrophe of thinking is therefore worth comparing with the climate catastrophe and we shall defy with a tool that modernity has beloved and even elevated to the status of " hidden dictator" of our perception, taste or desires. The image has become the dictator and its omnipotence must be exercised so that the

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[1] Sontag, p.1

intellectual greenhouse effect does not deprive future generations of their sensitivity to truth, goodness and the meaning of life.

It is worth mentioning at the outset that it is a great disservice to photography to look at it exclusively in terms of art, and even more so in terms of " new art ". In the essay " The Dehumanisation of Art." from 1925, i.e. 100 years after the pioneering photograph " View from the Window at Le Gras", the eminent Spanish thinker Jose Ortega y Gasset defines a couple of " postulates" of the new art. According to the philosopher, it seeks dehumanisation, the avoidance of forms reflected in life, making the work of art solely a work of art, treating art as a play and nothing more, an attitude which is fundamentally ironic, avoidance of falsehood and meticulous execution of the work. He also goes on to mention the" lack of transcendent meaning of the new art."[2] . For Ortega y Gasset, art represents the perfect realisation of the difference between the masses and the elites that he has been drawing throughout his scholarly career. The new art is, due to the aforementioned characteristics, incomprehensible to all, so only a select, elite audience will be able to see its true beauty. It is therefore important to consider whether this break with mimesis in case of photography will allow it to harness its full potential on an intellectual level. There is a concern that photography of the visual effect: " I like" would dominate, due to the much greater accessibility, the philosophical photography " I am curious". I am not questioning here the artistic value of the photographs of the great masters like Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray or Mapplethorpe, the geniuses of fashion photography: Avedon, Penn, Newton or Horst, and many contemporary poets of the lens. They all deserve to be called artists on a par with the greatest of other, more traditionally appreciated fields of art. One, however must look for a unifying bond, and photography-art and photography-philosophy are linked by its fabulous metaphorical element. In the aforementioned essay, Ortega y Gasset says that metaphor is a tool of creation that God has left inside human[3] , and goes on to add that it also allows us to grasp and understand that which is beyond the perimeter of our conceptual capacities[4] . His apotheosis of metaphor is echoed by another eminent philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, who strongly links it to the concept of imagination, without which metaphor is impossible. The function of the imagination, writes Ricouer in " The Metaphorical Process ", is to show the way in which semantic innovation is not only schematised but also visualised[5] . Drawing parallels between imagination and photography is the starting point for the whole discussion about the role of photography in education, cognition and the key aspect that this text deals with, i.e. the philosophical approach to photography. Without imagination though, there is neither photography nor philosophy.

Czech philosopher Vilem Flusser, who was one of the first to write about a " philosophy of photography", presents the following thought in his book "Towards a Philosophy of Photography": "A philosophy of photography is necessary for the practice of photography to become fully conscious. And this is because from this practice a model for freedom in a post-industrial context emerges. A philosophy of photography must show that there is no place for human freedom within automatic, programmable cameras and, finally, it must show how it is nevertheless possible to create a suitable space for this freedom. The aim of the philosophy of photography is to reflect on this potential freedom - and thus to give meaning to life - in a world controlled by cameras, in the face of the

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[2] Ortega, p.186
[3] Ortega, p.203
[4] Ibid, p.203
[5] Ricouer, p.276

accidental necessity of death"[6] . Flusser's words warn of the pitfalls of the digital age, but also emphasise the " dictatorial" status of the image, which can both give people freedom and take it away. Defining oneself towards photography thus has a critical value for people in relation to the construction of their own identity: as we are not ourselves when we are not free. A very important source of reflections on the philosophical approach to photography, is also the contemporary book edited by Scott Walden " Photography and Philosophy. Essays on the Pencil of Nature". The editor of the volume of essays himself writes about the philosophy of photography in the context of the relationship between the photograph's objective mirroring of reality and the authenticity of the viewer's experience: " [...] it is the intentional aspects of our mental states that are directly involved in this marriage with truth, it will be natural to focus on the relationship between the process of perceiving a photograph and the resulting intentional mental states"[7] . Walden lays the foundation for presenting the relationship between photography and authentic morality, born-after all, of natural, instinctive behaviour, rather than acquired social contracts. Therefore, in conjunction with Flusser's considerations, emerges a role of photography in generating a higher degree of attention to the essentials, the voice of nature and the encounter of the self. For photography cannot be inauthentic, representing an encounter between the authentic thought of human and its existing mirror in the world. The problem of this encounter can only be the context, for if we photograph something that has strong connotations of our experience, it can be an obstacle for 'digging in' further and finding ourselves in the photograph, rather than the derivative - that is, the experience. As if in response to this doubt, Walter Benjamin in " A Little History of Photography", admits: " When Photography takes itself out of its context, when it frees itself from its physiognomic, political and scientific background, it becomes creative"[8] The German philosopher's reflection completes the triangle of considerations: in addition to its role in shaping morality and and authenticity, there is also an educational function, i.e. accessing the sources of one's own creativity. All these functions of photography are only possible if we reflect on photography beforehand, if we really approach photography in the category of genuine reflection, which is the condition of a true life, conscious and fully lived. However, it is not my aim to analyse the numerous conjunctions where photography can cross with various philosophical issues. For in today's age of visual culture, it constitutes a 'superpoint' that is tangential to most possible axes. One could write similar essays on various philosophical or psychological subjects: photography and the fight against loneliness, photography as an answer to epigonism, photography as a modern solution in psychotherapy, etc. The essence of photography, like the essence of philosophy, should be taking an intellectual risk. However, where a given risk will lead man depends not so much on photography as on man. For it is only in the face of photography that human is so humanised, experiencing reality and his very own relationship to it to the same degree.

Speaking of the philosophy of photography in the context of its relation to the triangle of issues central to this thesis, i.e. identity and moral formation at the base and the search for the depth of one's own creativity at the opposite apex, it should be noted that these are not abstract or experimental concepts in photography. In the past, there have already been initiatives that sought to shift the centre of gravity of photography from its artistic side to the question, which binds all these issues- that is the human in the photographic process. The most significant from the point of view of these considerations is the Subjective Photography movement, founded in 1951 on the initiative of Professor Otto Steinert. Although Steinert himself described the movement as "Humanised and individual photography", more indicative of the essence of Subjective Photography is, as outlined by

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[6] Flusser, p.70
[7] Walden, p.113
[8] Benjamin, p.526

James Hugunin, its comparison to Sartre's existential phenomenology, expressed through the words "(subjective photography) emphasised how one subjectively intends and constitutes his "lifeworld"[9] . Steinert himself stressed "the constituting power of the gaze, and the importance of authenticity: a creative, personal individuality opposed to inauthenticity, "bad faith" or mauvaise foi in Sartre's terminology". Marking the superior role of the photographer towards the photographed subject, not only through technical and positional possibilities, but above all by giving value and principles to the photograph, is fundamental to understanding the role of photography in shaping one's self. When talking about the existential shaping of the self, one encounters the theme of transience, inherent in both existentialism and photography. Roland Barthes in " Camera Lucida" writes: " ... that rather terrible thing which is there in every photography: the return of the dead"[10] . The French philosopher goes to the heart of the existentialism of photography, directing attention to the transience of human represented by the transience of photographs. The photograph reflects what will no longer return in one's life, permanent creation and search for oneself on the basis of the changes occurring outside. The photograph is not in itself the answer to the question of our existence and the meaning of our life, but it is an important impulse in valuable thinking relating to the deepest matters. A derivative of Subjective Photography could therefore be Existential Photography, profiled under the search for existential meaning, thus above all questioning one-dimensionality and looking for transcendence. As early as 1964, Karl Pawek, editor of the German magazine Stern, organised a photographic exhibition „What is Man" . The topics covered: " Man against Man", " Partner of the Machine", " Childhood" or " Everyone tries to win his life" show how the key themes of human existence can be approached directly through the semantics of the photographs. But even more relevant, in a holistic context, is the foreword to this exhibition, written by the Nobel Laureate for Literature, Heinrich Boll. " The significance of this exhibition could lie in arousing interest for the methods of photographing. Is it to grasp, expose, denounce, or is the camera the eye of Big Brother, or is there a man behind the lens whose humanisation has already begun, who respects secrets when he proceeds to reveal what is mysterious"[11]. The German writer asks an important question about the humanity and morality of the photographer in his subjectification of the photograph, but also indirectly about what kind of photography touches the ethical sphere of the viewer, whether he is sensitive to an image that is true in its realism but false in the shallowness of its intention. Jacques Lacan , the eminent French psychoanalyst, defined the role of the gaze as follows: "The gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which I am photo-graphed"[12]. In Lacanian theory, the 'self' is constituted precisely by the gaze and not, as with Descartes, by thought. From Lacan's thought, Elizabeth Howie in her doctoral thesis " Photography's Courtly Desires" draws a parallel, shedding new light on the aspect that binds together the identity and moral role of photography. Howie marks the relationship between photography and " courtly love", which Lacan explains as a love that is based on the impossibility of its fulfilment, but at the same time one that is thus the greatest desire and the highest form of sublimation. It is the sublimation- the transference of love to creativity that 'transforms the impossible into the forbidden' which is critical to understanding the meaning of this comparison. Photography, like courtly love, „is driven by the desire"[13] and lust for the subconsciously impossible and is thus the perfect tool for sublimation. This 'courtly' element of photography, as it were, answers the question: Why should we gaze at photographs ? The perfect synthesis of presence and absence not only makes us grow in "desire", but also allows to understand it in practice and relate it to concrete things, and finally translate it into

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[9] Hugunin, p.147
[10] Barthes, p.14
[11] Boll, p.-
[12] Lacan, p.50
[13] Howie, p.249

action. These actions however, are often the illusion of finding a loss. Francois Soulages in " The Aesthetics of Photography" writes: " On the one hand, we would like to believe that through it (the photograph) a subject, an object, an action, a past, a moment, etc., will be found; on the other hand, we should realise that it will never return them"[14] . While photographing and seeing a photograph, we should have the feeling of being closest to our true desires and wishes, so when-if not while communing with a photograph-we will come to reflect on the values intertwined with them. The problem of photography on a moral level is the teleological trap, i.e. the orientation of the photograph to its desirability or the effect it is intended to produce, and this is most often encapsulated within the frame of artistic value or documentary value. If, however, there would be a room for value within this arrangement , the main objective will not be to render beauty or the realism of events, but the idea of goodness and benevolence, which will become the basis for Empathic Photography, an important aspect of which would be to direct technical progress towards restoring humanity to people, rather than - as has been the case so far - depriving of it.

Empathic Photography is the photography of emotions and the photography of conscience. If we accept the Heideggerian concept of " world picture", where the world and all existence is subjected to modern man at his " disposal", photography and the camera become a tool for taming the world, also on an emotional level. That assumptions explain the prosaic connection between photography and the emotions that photographs evoke in people, i.e. sentiment, empathy, longing, compassion, as well as at the other end: disgust, antipathy, repulsion or envy. This seemingly banal observation, however, leads to an issue whose seed was outlined by Susan Sontag, already quoted here. "To photograph is to appropriate a thing photographed,"[15] she writes, again overriding the photographer's role as owner, not just of the photo-effect, but of the frame itself. She explains that " Even when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience"[16]. It is hard to find a more ethically indifferent value than conscience. Also taste, assuming that what we like gives us pleasure and is characterised by positive emotions, is linked to moral judgement. "At the core of morality lies emotion", says philosopher Jesse Prinz. The assumption of influencing the psyche of the viewer is also to some extent explained by the idea of " punctum" proposed by Roland Barthes in Camera Lucida. " Punctum - denotes a certain germ of pain inherent in dealing with an individual photograph - a small prick of consciousness resulting from noticing something specifically eye-catching, ambiguous, shocking[17]. Empathic Photography, then, would be one in which the creator is aware of the existence of a punctum which, although subjective and not universal, contains within itself the realisation of the idea of goodness. The establishment of an invisible, emotional dialogue, between the creator and the viewer, appearing in the punctum is, in a sense, the modus vivendi of Empathic Photography. The ethical truth of photography therefore does not appear in what emotions the image shows, nor even what emotions it evokes, but what emotions it subjectively changes in us.

Duane Michels, the iconic American photographer said that photographs " should provoke and not say what is already known." The subjectivity of photography also questions its status quo, which in turn is linked to taking intellectual risk, essential in education and the development of creativity. According to Latin etymology, " educere" means to take out: to take out human's potential, individuality and authenticity, which is exactly what Steinert's movement was intended to do.

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[14] Soulages p.7
[15] Sontag, p.174
[16] Ibid 176
[17] Czartoryska, p.93

Discussions about photography in the context of education, however, should be given a direction, i.e. to justify its presence in education as a mission , rather than approach photography as a medium that improves or undermines the quality of teaching or learning. The aforementioned Jose Ortega y Gasset writes that education is about understanding what are " beliefs" and what are " ideas", and places emphasis on the role of education in developing " beliefs", i.e. instinctive rather than acquired solutions, as the only authentic basis of each person, without understanding of which one will lead " vita minima". Ortegian beliefs are twinned to Walden's " intentional mental states," which photography brings out through Punctum. On the other hand, Max Horkheimer, the legendary philosopher of the Frankfurt School, writes in "The Issues of Academic Education" in 1952: " As teachers, we have a duty to insist tirelessly on cognition, so that it bursts the limitation of the detail and directs thought to change the status quo."[18] We need to ensure that the intellect is not only used to strengthen qualifications or eristic prowess, but, above all, to be the basis for the functioning of empathetic mind, responsible for the formation of moral attitudes. Starting from such assumptions, the power of photography in reaching one's own identity and putting up or straightening one's moral backbone, discussed earlier, also becomes its power in education. Added to this is another aspect that is crucial in the influence of photography on formative thinking, i.e. not one that adapts a person to an existing convention, individual schemes, but one's own, which allows the child to acquire, change, or reverse reflections. Photography, namely, as one of the very few disciplines, is not marked by the notorious child-adult split in modern education, the deconstruction of which John Dewey actively sought. Looking at a text written by an average 9- or 10-year-old, one can see that in terms of choice of vocabulary, syntax, depth of argument, etc., the text is far from academic standards, while a photograph taken by the same child - apart from technical elements, may already be a complete and final form of expression. Roland Barthes says that in photography it is the amateur who is closer to the " noeme" than the professional, that it is the amateur who in the purity of his intention to render something that will not return, touches the core and essence of photography. If a photographer asks himself the question "why I am curious about this," he is not yet a professional photographer, but he is already a full-fledged thinker and will sooner arrive through observation and photography at the questions that matter most. The question "why am I curious about this" and the resulting expression of this curiosity through observation of the world is very emblematic of children. For them, the camera becomes an apparatus , a tool of Observational Photography, for which naive interest and childlike inquisitiveness becomes the highest value. Looking at the role in photography in the intellectual formation and education of children, it is also worth considering whether photography can save the progressive agony of the written text. The question should be raised about the possibility of " seeing" the text through photography i.e. not only understanding it on a semantic level, but also on a subjective level. This connects with Wittgenstein's theory that " (there is) unbridgeable gap between what can be expressed in language and what can only be expressed in non-verbal ways." The established primacy of the text over the image is being rapidly transformed, not so much because the text has lost and the image has gained. In addition to the biologically determined issues of concentration and sensory perception, a significant issue is the growing demand of the individual. In a text, Ortega y Gasset writes, it is impossible to understand it in its entirety. "It is only possible with a great effort to extract a more or less important portion of what the text has tried to say, communicate, make known, but there will always remain an „ illegible residue"[19]. The text exposes, divides into knowledge and ignorance, while photography divides into certainty and supposition, which is much more suitable for people-especially young , who are sooner pushed to think by curiosity and the desire to discover, rather than the imperative to acquire factual

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[18] Horkheimer, p.-
[19] Ortega p.1

knowledge. The last aspect that also completes the consideration of the role of photography in education comes out of the question that Sir Ken Robinson, educator and leader in creativity and education areas, often asked: Who wins in the current system of public education ? Who succeeds because of it, not in spite of it. Robinson says that future academic professors win, i.e. masters of the left hemisphere of the brain, focused, analytical, with a good memory. It is therefore worth asking the twin question: who loses the most ? Looking at what is taught in schools and how it is evaluated, the conclusion is simple. The losers are people with a tendency to make mistakes. But isn't making mistakes crucial in the formative process and most importantly- in realizing one's talents ? Thanks to photography, the concept of error is changing. Apart from technical issues i.e. exposure, frame, focus etc. error as such does not exist, it is impossible to take a photo " not in accordance with the assumptions", since the basic assumption is to render a subjective, personal view of a given frame or moment. Introducing photography, especially Observational Photography into education could challenge the notion of " learning according to the answer key," which kills creativity the most, but also take away the fear of error that the system is currently feeding children with. "If there was a proper representation, I wouldn't be photographing,"[20] says Claude Maillard, a French psychoanalyst , showing that in photography a creative person feels all his creativity, and a conventional person, his limitations.

The conclusion cementing the thoughts of this essay is worth starting with a quote from British photographer Fay Godwin. " The more I am aware of why I am taking a particular photograph, the less interesting it is. The bridge that photography builds between glimpses of consciousness and understanding is the same bridge that identity crosses on the way between imagination and authenticity , morality on the way between desire and value and creativity on the way between observation and idea. Just as the essence of philosophy, according to Jaspers, is not to posses the truth, but to seek the truth , the essence of photography is to find oneself on this bridge, not to pass it. The very attempt to take man out of his comfort zone, out of misconceptions and wrong " systematization" of the world is an ongoing mission, the success of which in new times requires new tools. While philosophy cherished wisdom through thought, today photography should cherish wisdom through the gaze. The role of photography, however, must not overlap too much with that of philosophy, nor attempt to replace it per se, because most philosophical considerations would be impossible or incomplete to express through image. Photography as a new philosophy should therefore emphasize the 3 elements discussed in this essay, which could develop 3 new categories of photography. To date, they do not function as such in photographic terminology, although perhaps they should, since the development of the field also depends on questioning its previous assumptions . Existential Photography, Empathic Photography and Observational Photography. Each of them touches the zone that is moved most deeply by the gaze. Existential Photography reflects on the nature of human and the nature of the world, the question it asks overarchingly is: why am I taking a given photo and why am I taking it here. Empathic photography, through the lens of morality, asks what I feel when I take a given photo and whether it can affect someone. Observational photography, on the other hand, doesn't ask questions, it just observes, patiently casting our childlike imagination and Ortegian " beliefs" to find its thread with reality. More than categories and new terminology, however, the philosophy of the new times needs a pragmatic tool: a camera, even on a phone, in whose icon we should see a chance for change. A change from contentment with mere images of truth to an effort to find it. In the twenty-first century, this is a

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[20] Maillard, p.14

difficult task, for photography is not a philosophy, only sometimes it becomes. In the age of the snappers, therefore, to be a photographer is a moral principle.

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