Graven images: photography after Heidegger, Lyotard and Deleuze.

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Opening

This chapter connects Heidegger's critique of identity and metaphysics with his later work on the question of technology to propose that photography, understood as an image making technology, provides a privileged point of entry into the question of ontological difference. The work of Lyotard and Deleuze, while not directly engaging with photography, seems to be pointing in this direction. My assertion is that the 'step back' out of metaphysics does not proceed by way of language (as Heidegger would have it) but by the way of the technical image. For this reason, photography is the visual counterpart of non-representational thinking. This paper argues that Heidegger's inability to exit metaphysics is tied to his failure to recognise that such a leap is accomplished by means of an automata, or technology that is capable of mimetic expression. The understanding of photography as the poetic expression of techne, implies that photography is the 'graven image' of the age of cybernetics and allows to suggest that a leap out of metaphysics is best performed not in the field of language but in the space of the technical image. This leap, if successful, might open a path towards philosophy that works with technical images instead, or alongside of language.

Representation and identity

Although he rarely discusses it directly, representation (*vorstellung*) is arguably one of the central issues for Heidegger's thought because the logic of representation is tied to the principle of identity and by implication to his critique of metaphysics. This argument unfolds in the following way: The history of Western philosophy is a history of forgetting that there cannot be a ground that is not externally given. Thought cannot withdraw from metaphysics because thought is expressed in language, and language represents. Because language represents, it neglects to inquire after the origin of representation, therefore placing representation as the ground of thought and in this way inaugurating transcendental metaphysics.[1]

The suggestion advanced below is that photography, understood as technology that makes legible images, is a privileged point of exit out of metaphysics because photography does not get entangled in the tendency of language to operate through the implicit acceptance of the logic of representation and for that reason it is free from the norms of metaphysical thinking. The attempt to demonstrate that photography can succeed in 'leaping out' of metaphysics where language fails is significantly complicated by the fact that photography is usually and for the most part identified with representation. This widespread acceptance of photography as the sine qua non of representation was largely overlooked by scholars, and I aim to demonstrate here that this results in a one sided and instrumental approach that tends to disregard the fact that in photography representation is both sustained and overcome precisely because the photograph is an *automata*, i.e. it is an image created not through the agency of human subjectivity but through an imitation of it. In what follows I argue that photography is on the one hand an analytic category that characterises contemporary culture as thoroughly representationalist while on the other hand suggesting a possibility of resistance to representation from within the same technical assemblage understood as a repetitive and reproductive process. In other words, photography is both a figure

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[1] For a detailed discussion of representation in Heidegger see: Colebrook, Claire. 1999. *Ethics and Representation: From Kant to Post-structuralism.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 55-92.

of representation and the means by which representation can be overcome. In effect, photography is both *identity* and *difference.*

We must pause here for a while to take stock of these four dovetailed terms: *representation*, *identity*, *metaphysics* and *technology*, in order to explore how they come to define and organise the *episteme* in the Western world and what is their purchase on photography as the image of philosophy that is yet to come.

First of all, *identity* of which Heidegger says 'The usual formulation of the principle of identity reads: A=A. The principle of identity is considered the highest principle of thought'.[2] Identity makes the world knowable because it affirms that 'Everything is what it is' (Leibniz), or that subjects are identified by their predicates: A cul-de-sac (subject) is 'a street or passage closed at one end' (predicate). The predicate is what permits the subject to subsist, no matter where in the world the aforementioned cul-de-sac is found, while providing a categorical test of its cul-de-sac-ness: if it is not closed at one end it does not qualify, therefore eliminating the possibility of contradictions. What gives the principle of identity its universal force is the little copula *is* that posits a necessary logical relation between the subject and predicate. In the formula 'A *is* A' the *is* guaranties the correspondence of the two parts of the equation. Here we come face to face with the forgotten origin of the principle of identity. For we have no way of guaranteeing the truth of this 'necessary logical relation'. We have just learned that subjects are known by their predicates, but how are we to learn what *is* means? We know which conditions must be meet for a street to be a cul-de-sac, but which conditions must be meet for *is* to be 'necessary logical relation'? It appears that for 'A is A' to be of any value, we must accept beforehand the truth of the *is.* The formula 'A is A' therefore functions as a kind of laboratory that analyses various statements about the world to establish if they are true or not. The statement '3+2 is 5' goes into the laboratory and the outcome is 'true'; the statement '3+3 is 5' goes into the laboratory and the outcome is 'false'. So far so good, but the caveat is that there is no, nor can there be, a laboratory in which we can place the formula 'A is A' itself to

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[2] Heidegger, Martin. *Identity and Difference.* Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York, Evanston, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 23.

establish if it is true or not. The story of science is therefore a story of a laboratory that operates on unknown premises. In other words the principle of identity is a 'black box' of which we are unable to say whether it provides true or false answers. Reflecting on this problem in *The Principle of Identity*, Heidegger summarises the situation like this:

> Everywhere, wherever and however we are related to beings of every kind, we find identity making its claim on us. If this claim were not made […] there would then also not be any science. For if science could not be sure in advance of the identity of its object in each case, it could not be what it is. […] Thus, what is successful and fruitful about scientific knowledge is everywhere based on something useless.[3]

So on the one hand, without identity there would not be any science, because there would be no criterion to tell true and false statements apart; nor, on the other hand is it possible to verify that the law of identity itself is true because identity is the verification principle, and unless one is Baron Münchausen, one cannot pull himself up by his own bootstraps. Science that starts from the principle of identity is culpable of positing a ground without however providing the means with which this ground can be accounted for, and is therefore yet another form of religious thought that develops on the basis of transcendental principles, or as Heidegger succinctly puts it:

> Why is science theology? Answer: because science is the systematic development of knowledge, the Being of beings knows itself as this knowledge, and thus it is in truth.[4]

Metaphysics. What we habitually call 'objective knowledge' appears, at the last count, as nothing more than wishful thinking, for the principle of identity, whose explicit purpose is to rid knowledge of ambiguity and paradox, is exposed as both ambiguous and paradoxical. But it gets worse, as the principle of identity dominates not only scientific thought but also metaphysics which is supposed to keep science in check by studying the fundamental nature of knowledge. But rather than being the guardian of science, metaphysics is

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[3] Heidegger, Identity and Difference, 26-7.

[4] ibid. 54.

guilty of sleeping on the job, as it internalised the language of scientific reasoning, accepted 'A is A' as the expression of the grounding of being in logic and is therefore complicit in the mediation of existence through *logos*. The tendency of philosophy to accept the principle of identity as its own foundation finds its fullest expression in German Idealism and culminates in Hegel's famous statement that 'What is rational is real and what is real is rational'.[5] Here the principle of identity, as the decisive expression of rationality, is officially elevated to the status of ultimate reality. Against Hegel's identification of reality with *logos*, and by implication with thought, Heidegger maintains that philosophy must free itself from the principle of identity by exposing the foundations of the principle of identity itself. This however is easier said then done, as 'A is A' is the ground of thinking. What is needed is a 'step back out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics' or in other words, Heidegger wants to get beyond the '*is*' in 'A *is* A', to a place of mutual belonging between the subject and the predicate. The task of philosophy is to uncover the *ontological difference* that got buried under the principle of identity.[6]

    Representation. When rational discourse (backed up, as we saw by science and metaphysics) is considered as the only legitimate form of knowledge capable of overcoming illusions, correcting errors and avoiding contradictions, representation is pressed into service as the *de facto* dominant mode by which the world can be known. Representation marks a break with older forms of knowledge in which divine revelation, the bible or mysticism were the sources of truth. For in representation knowledge is not given from above, it is not received from outside by means of god, sorcery, faith or myth, rather knowledge is arrived at empirically through representing the world by means of rational reasoning. 5 is represented as 2+3, and this is so not because that is what the bible says, but because it can be rationally verified. For this reason representation is the threshold of modernity. As Heidegger puts it 'The essence of the modern age can be seen in the fact that man frees himself from

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[5] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 2005. *Philosophy of Right.* Trans. S. W. Dyde Mineloa, N.Y.: Dover Publications, xix.

[6] Heidegger, Identity and Difference, 52.

the bonds of the Middle Ages in freeing himself to himself'[7]. It is precisely because in the modern age man sees himself as autonomous that representation comes to be the guarantor of truth. To be a human being in this age means to be a subject for whom the world is represented as a picture, and true knowledge is guarantied by the correspondence between images and entities in the world. However, for Heidegger representation – as a mode of knowledge that privileges rationality – is taking its bearings from the same *logos* as the principle of identity itself. Representation shares with metaphysical thinking the forgetting of the ground on which it stands, but while the principle of identity and metaphysics determine the development of science and philosophy respectively, representation plays a greater role in the development of art and technology.

There are two main ways by which photographic representation differs from representation in language. First, in photography representation is not camouflaged, but it is the very surface of the image. In other words, Heidegger says that in language 'the little word 'is' appears 'everywhere', yet it does not 'appear expressly' – i.e. representation is usually hidden behind forms of expression such as logic, rhetoric, metaphor and poetics[8]. On the other hand, in photography representation is explicit: it comes to the eye alongside the content of the photographic image, the very surface of the photograph is representational. Second, in language representation is concealed behind the intonation and the voice of the enunciator. Words – whether spoken or written – are always uttered by someone, which means that the notion of the speaking subject (present or absent) is inseparable from an utterance. In photography however the image is the outcome of a technical process. If technology is understood through Heidegger as *poēsis* it seems plausible that the 'voice' of photography is that of technology itself, rather than of a speaking subject. Even if for the time being it remains an open question whether the 'voice' of

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[7] Heidegger, Martin. 1977. The age of the world picture. In *The Question Concerning Technology*. Trans. William Lovitt New York: Harper and Row. 128

[8] Heidegger, Identity and Difference, 73.

technology can be heard in the content of the image, or if this technology undermines and dissolves the distinction between content and form.[9]

Technology. In the first instance, the common way of thinking about technology (for example in disputes for and against technological determinism) is to define it as a field of human activity; the application of scientific knowledge for the construction of practical tools. However, Heidegger says that while this understanding is no doubt correct, it fails to account for the ontological significance of technology. For technology is not only instruments, machines and processes but a particular way of grasping the world, of getting to grips with that which is out-there: 'Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing'.[10] This statement is of course entirely in line with Heidegger's previously explored strategy to excavate the primordial, pre-conceptual ground of Western science, philosophy and art. In coming to deal with presupposed ground of identity, metaphysics and representation Heidegger seeks in each case to uncover the original question that has to be necessarily forgotten for the ground to appear as solid foundation of thought. Science and metaphysics seek to ground the world in the principle of identity, determining in advance the shape of things to come. But, according to Heidegger, this grounding prevents one from asking the more fundamental question about the pre-ontological character of representation itself:

> [T]he step back out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics is the step out of technology and technological description and interpretation of the age, into the essence of modern technology which is still to be thought.[11]

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[9] This understanding of poesis as an overcoming of form-content dualism is drawing on Benjamin's notion of 'the poetized' as the expressive and pre-subjective essence of a poem. In '*Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin*' he says: 'As a category of aesthetic investigation, the poetized differs decisively from the form-content model by preserving within itself the fundamental aesthetic unity of form and content. Instead of separating them, it distinctively stamps in itself their immanent, necessary connection.' Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Vol. 1. 1913 - 1926.* Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, 19.

[10] Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays.* Trans. William Lovitt New York : Harper and Row, 12.

[11] Heidegger, Identity and Difference, 52

Technology is therefore a specific way of getting to the truth of being. Rethinking technology as the poetic essence of the age allows Heidegger to move away from the formula 'truth = representation' to a form of truth that is discovered in the creative processes of making, fetching and gathering. Human world is made through technology that acquires the status of the original oneness in which thinking and being are simultaneously held apart and together in the event of mutual appropriation. Central to this manoeuvre is the understanding of truth not as a logical certainty but as a form of *revealing*. Technology is *revealing* because it replaces the principle of identity with a process of creating, constructing and building, uncovering a deeper bond between humans and their world. However, this togetherness should not be understood as consistency, resemblance or similarity for all of the above require a prior condition of arbitration by human subjectivity, and in any case judgements of resemblance can only be conducted in the broad daylight, under the auspice of a logical procedure. In rejecting representation, Heidegger posits technology as the way by which the human being acquires a sense of identity through the process of acting in the world. For Heidegger, the self is formed in and through technology, because acting and creating in the world is the condition of being human.

> The person is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object […]Essentially the person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially *not* an object. Any psychical Objectification of acts, and hence any way of taking them as something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization. A person is in any case given as a performer of intentional acts which are bound together by the unity of a meaning.' [12]

Therefore Heidegger says that it is wrong to assume that one is using technology to achieve certain goals, rather, one *becomes* through technology and it is this becoming that constitutes what we later name 'identity', 'ego', 'subjectivity' or 'sovereignty'.[13] Technology in Heidegger's sense is pre-

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[12] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Edward Robinson and John Macquarrie (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 73, (§4).

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking,* trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 23-5, 38.

subjective, necessarily phenomenological relation that is capable of revealing the original difference between beings and being.

Photography and difference

In the final paragraphs of *The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics* Heidegger concludes that despite the efforts made by philosophy to critique metaphysical thinking, representation and subjectivity, there is an inherent difficulty in attempting to do so from within philosophical discourse because Western languages are built on the verb *to be*, and therefore are already imbued with the spirit of metaphysics:

> It must remain an open question whether the nature of Western languages is in itself marked with the exclusive brand of metaphysics, and thus marked permanently by onto-theo-logic, or whether these languages offer other possibilities of utterance–and that means at the same time of telling silence. […] The little word "is," which speaks everywhere in our language, and tells of Being even where It does not appear expressly, contains the whole destiny of Being […].[14]

In the remainder of this paper I will suggest that while it is true that language itself is imbued with the spirit of metaphysics, image-making technology is able to offer a way out of this impasse. Photography is the case in point, because it is a technical process that makes legible images that might just bridge the gap between the rational process of mechanical inscription by light and poetic expression. For Heidegger, as we have seen, technology is a mode of revealing: it allows access to deeper truth that is not accessible to representational thinking. But this truth is concealed because technology presents itself as means to an end, and its essence remains forgotten and hidden from view. In what follows I wish to argue that photography is not only a technology that makes images, but also the way by which technology inscribes itself into an image, and for that reason it is capable of making technology visible, allowing one to challenge the hegemony of representational paradigms and suggesting a possibility of a 'step back out of metaphysics' into the essence

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[14] Heidegger, Identity and Difference, 73.

of modern technology. This is not to strip photography of its value as correspondence, but to allow correspondence itself to acquire cohesion and to appear as both the 'nothing' and 'something' that together situate photography both within and beyond representation. One could say that photographic exposure overcomes the principle of identity (and therefore of representation) because it is the technique that harnesses the power of indeterminacy, of contingency and of repetition to establish a meaningful surface that is both present and intangible.

As Heidegger pointed out, key metaphysical concepts such as 'subjectivity', 'identity' and 'representation' are also the key onto-theo-logical principles by which language operates, which means that at the precise moment when philosophy attempts to perform an autopsy on one of these concepts, by the very fact of doing so it is forced into a representational mode that becomes the basis of the examination.[15] For this reason Heidegger argues that while there is a fundamental divergence within thought that allows it to study itself, this divergence also ensures the impossibility of any thorough self-perception and radical self-examination, as any explicit attempt to examine representation or subjectivity is coming up against the implicit reliance of language on representation as its modus operandi. Heidegger further complicates the possibility of self-analysis by suggesting that this inability of language to represent representation to itself is also connected with the forming of subjectivity, which means that as soon as one posits oneself against representation to examine it, one is already taken over by representation to an extent that no radical examination is possible.[16] The subject, the 'I' that attempts to catch representation is itself formed by the process of representation.[17] Therefore, it seems that representation and subjectivity are destined to remain the black hole of Western philosophy because, as Judovitz says: 'we must rely

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[15] Identity and Difference, 73.

[16] This criticism of subjectivity and representation gets is fullest development in Heidegger's work on Kant. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics.* See also Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays.*

[17] This is particularly clear in "The Age of the World Picture", Ibid., 115-155.

on the language of metaphysics, on its form, logic and implicit postulations, precisely at the moment when we seek to contest them.'[18]

Yet, despite the entrapment of the subject by representation, Heidegger tentatively suggests that the possibility of questioning metaphysics 'must remain an open question'. The roadmap for this questioning is spelled out thus: 'The ground itself needs to be properly accounted for by that for which it accounts, that is, by the causation through the supremely original matter–and that is the cause as *causa sui.*'[19] The challenge therefore is to think the cause of philosophy, its non-philosophical beginning, as and origin that Heidegger ironically names 'the god of philosophy': 'Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.' Getting out of metaphysics requires no less than abandoning the self-referential, self-causing way of thinking that is taking for granted what it is trying to prove. Accomplishing this task necessitates a 'step back… out of metaphysics'.[20] In what follows it will be suggested that stepping out of metaphysics into the *causa sui* of thought, requires the technology of stepping out of the visual into the forbidden territory of the graven image that lies beyond representation. This step out of the visual opens a window onto the unexplored realm of the photographic exposure, conceived here as the visual expression of the philosophical concept of difference. [21]

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[18] Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes,* 3. Heidegger's ultimate failure to 'get out of metaphysics' is further discussed by Golding: 'Heidegger's analysis still required a kind of ground (ontic) to knowledge; that is, a kind of "groundless ground", he was still brought face-to-face with the (quasi-) mystical onto-theo-logic Godhead haze itself. Toward the last of his days, a very disgruntled Heidegger claimed it was impossible, all things considered (and he had considered all things) to jump from the proverbial metaphysical ship.' Johnny Golding, *"Conversion on the Road to Damascus: Minority Report on Art," In Gest: Laboratory of Synthesis. #1.* Ed. Robert Garnett and Andrew Hunt (London: BookWorks in collaboration with Kingston University, 2010)

[19] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 72.

[20] 'What is the origin of the onto-theological essential constitution of metaphysics? To accept this kind of question means to accomplish the step back' Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 56.

[21] Ibid., 72. Deleuze names the non-philosophical origin of philosophy as *Image of Thought* see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 164-213.

The event of exposure

The crossing of the metaphysical threshold and the clearing of an alternative path for thought is fraught with difficulties, for as Heidegger says, metaphysics are ingrained in modern technology which permeates all aspects of life and thought.[22] But even if this difficulty is somehow overcome, there remains the additional problem that 'Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking.'[23] Stepping out of metaphysics therefore requires an altogether different way of doing philosophy, one that will not be bound to subjectivity and representation to the same extent as Western languages. Following Heidegger, several philosophers attempted to exit metaphysical thought and establish direct contact with the 'thought of the outside' (Foucault). Lyotard brands this escape route as the post-modern sublime, which 'puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself'.[24] Lyotard approaches the sublime not as an image but as an event, an encounter with something immeasurable and pre-rational in which subjectivity is dissolved. Neither language nor visual representation can encompass these moments of the total dissolution of identity, which for Lyotard makes the sublime into a political problem, for it raises the question of accounting for the non-identical, minoritarian, culturally or politically unrepresented.[25] Deleuze names it as 'difference in itself' – a strange remainder that cannot be thought at all because it cannot be thought through with representational categories:

> [D]ifference in itself appears to exclude any relation between different and different which would allow it to be thought. It seems that it can become thinkable only when tamed–in other words, when subject to the four iron collars of representation: identity in

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[22] 'No one can know whether and when and where and how this step of thinking will develop into a proper (needed in appropriation) path and way and road-building. Instead, the rule of metaphysics may rather entrench itself, in the shape of modern technology with its developments rushing along boundlessly.' Ibid., 72.

[23] Ibid., 73.

[24] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* 81

[25] The political implications of the non- representational are developed by Lyotard in relation to questions of law and language-based schemas in *The Differend*, and in relation to the politics of the other in *Heidegger and 'the Jews'*.

the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception.'[26]

Heidegger's diagnosis of the metaphysical malaise is the 'oblivion of the difference as such': in metaphysical thought difference is subsumed under the copula 'is' (as in 'A is A') and the remedy is to think this forgotten and untamed difference not as an opposition to identity (for an opposition is still part of the same logic of representation) but as the arrival of presence that 'assigns the difference of Being and beings to perdurance as the approach to their essence'.[27] The relation of being and beings must not be understood as identity but as the movement towards the primordial conditions that make identity possible. Heidegger names this wild and unexplored terrain 'perdurance'.

> We attain to the nearness of the historic only in that sudden moment of a recall in thinking. … [this] holds true above all also for our attempt in the step back out of the oblivion of the difference as such, to think this difference as the perdurance of unconcealing overcoming and of self-keeping arrival.'[28]

As Gillian Rose explains: "'perdurance'… captures the idea of perfect duration, is a felicitous but strange translation of *austag* which means 'arrangement' or 'settlement' in the litigious sense of settling something in court."[29] The requirement therefore is to think the relation of being and beings outside the linearity of chronological time as a kind of perfect duration that is not strictly temporal relation but a spatio-temporal event the holds being and beings apart as well as bringing them together. This highly complex notion of time can be perhaps understood as the 'now' - not in the sense of the present instant, or the orgiastic immediacy of religious ecstasy, but as the 'now' that marks the occurrence of an event, of something that happens. As Lyotard explains: 'An event, and occurrence – what Martin Heidegger called *ein Ereignis* – is infinitely simple, but this simplicity can only be approached

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[26] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 330

[27] Ibid., 67.

[28] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 67. See supra 3.7, *Perdurance, Heidegger's move beyond dialectics.*

[29] Gillian Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-structuralism and Law.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 78.

through a state of privation.'[30] The event of perdurance dismantles the principle of identity because in it the subject and the object are held simultaneously together and apart. Deleuze explains it thus:

> 'Lightening, for example, distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as through it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It is as if the ground rose to the surface without ceasing to be ground.'[31]

It seems that Deleuze found a way of grasping the 'perdurance of unconcealing overcoming and of self-keeping arrival'[32] as the moment of exposure that creates an event through a flash of lightning. It is possible that unknown to himself Heidegger opened a way for philosophy to move into a sphere where meaning is established purely through perdurance understood as exposure.

To think about photography from the perspective of exposure will require the re-evaluation of the photographic '*is*' as the factical correspondence between an image and the thing represented. Following Heidegger's methodology, it requires suggesting that the verisimilitude and the credibility of the photographic image conceals an 'event of appropriation' in which the photographic is released from its everydayness, and difference – rather than identity – is able to rise to the surface. In other words, what is not considered by histories and theories of photography is the very fact that representation can be posited as the ground of correspondence between and image and a thing. Instead of thinking of the photographic image as something 'given' to perception, a 'step out' of the *is* of representation betokens that there is an unseen image lurking beneath the visible in the photograph. This in turn can suggest that the photographic exposure is the specific image of the unity of technology and poesis in visual culture. Understood in this way, photography is no longer following the Platonic distinction between *eikōn* (image) and *eidos* (true reality) that dominated art history for two millennia. Understood as exposure, an image is not solely the subject of 'viewing', but rather it now reveals the essential

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[30] Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader,* 197.

[31] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 36.

[32] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 67.

origin of difference as the ground of representation. It also suggests that the *poiēsis* of photography is directly linked to exposure as the repeatable and unrepresentable action in which image and being belong together. Significantly, the recording of an exposure on photographic film results not in a visible image, as usually thought, but in an invisible latent image that remains unseen until the film is being chemically processed[33]. In the context of photography, the 'step out of metaphysics' can be specifically and concretely located in the notion of the latent image: the invisible image left on the light-sensitive surface by exposure.

> No impression can be seen, not even the slightest beginning of the picture, And yet the picture already exists there in all its perfection, but in a perfectly invisible state…'[34]

The invisible (latent) state of the photographic image is generally overlooked in photographic theory, it is its blind spot. [35] however it is an indication that exposure pushes material perception beyond itself, into its origin as difference. By uncovering a pre-representational element of the photograph, the latent image allows to leap out of the '*is*' of representation towards an event of appropriation. The latent image permits to rethink photography as a step-back out of the visual image into the event of difference that underwrites representation. However, in order to establish photography as fractal and mimetic surface, it is not enough to say that the latent image precedes representation, because the chronological relationship of 'before and after' is

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[33] In digital photography, data is processed algorithmically rather then chemically, but the basic principle of the raw image being unknowable until it is processed still holds. See Rubinstein, Daniel, and Katrina Sluis. "The Digital Image in Photographic Culture; Algorithmic Photography and the Crisis of Representation." In *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture.* 2nd Edition ed. Edited by Martin Lister. London: Routledge, September 1, 2013 22-41.

[34] Michel Frizot, *New History of Photography*, trans. Susan Bennett, Liz Clegg, John Crook and Caroline Higgitt (Paris: Könemann, 1998), 61

[35] As a rule, the latent image is mentioned very briefly in histories of photography, often in the context of Henry Fox Talbot' discovery of the calotype process. Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present.* (New York: Museum of Modern Art. Boston. 1982), Beaumont Newhall, *Latent Image: The Discovery of Photography.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), Vered Maimon, "Displaced Origins: William Henry Fox Talbot's the Pencil of Nature," *History of Photography* 32, no. 4 (2008): 314-325. Frizot, *New History of Photography.*

itself a form of causality. What is required is to show that the latent image reconfigures photography's relationship with time.

If the latent image is considered as the *is* of photography, it suggests that there are two temporal registers involved in the production of the image: the first register is the chronological time in which the image is marked by its connection to past events or situations. It is the biological time of living bodies and ticking clocks in which the image carries a time-stamp of the past that marks its place along the straight line that stretches between the past and the future. The second temporal register, it is the time of the photographic exposure in which invisible to the eye image subsists in perfect stillness. This is the time of the event, the 'now' which is outside of representation, (the event that must be bracketed out by representation in order to constitute itself). It is the present that is constantly divided into past and future and is outside linear time, immeasurable and inhuman.

In *Logic of Sense* Deleuze describes these two temporal series as Chronos and Aion:

> 'Inside Chronos, the present is in some manner corporeal. […] The present measures out the action of bodies and causes among themselves. […] [Aion is] [t]he pure and measureless becoming of qualities threatens the order of qualified bodies from within. Bodies have lost their measure and are now but simulacra. The past and the future, as unleashed forces, take their revenge, in one and the same abyss which threatens the present and everything that exists.'[36]

These two regimes of temporality appear for the first time in Nietzsche's *Thus spoke Zarathustra* where the time of Aion is linked to the eternal return:

> 'See this moment!' I continued. "From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane stretches *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?' […] And this slow spider that creeps in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway

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[36] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* 186-7.

whispering together, whispering of eternal things–must not all of us have been here before?'[37]

Two regimes of the image therefore: the visible image which is, as Deleuze says, 'The present measures out the action of bodies and causes among themselves' or in other words a monstration, an eruption, a revolution.[38] And the invisible, intangible exposure, which is motionless, where nothing ever happens, time of stasis and of surfaces without depth. The exposure is the fusion of subject and object that erases the distinction between them, it is the 'now' that is neither form, nor content, but it is not without duration. The duration of the exposure is the holding together and keeping apart of beings and being. It is pre-individual because it is located in the temporal space of the event, before the emergence of subjectivity and the concomitant distinction between subject and object.[39]

According to this non-dialectical understanding of photography as exposure, the visible photographic image is not opposed to, or separate from that which is invisible and absent, rather, the visible and the invisible are co-present in the realm of the technological unfolding in which what is coming to presence is the event of non-chronological, immeasurable time. It is precisely because photography is generally considered as the technology that archives (chronological) time that it has a privileged relationship with the 'event of appropriation' (*Ereignis*) in which the ontological, non-chronological time is revealing itself as independent from past, present and future. The difference between the image of photography and the event of photography is therefore connected with a conception of time: The photographic image, by force of its technology presupposes the existence of reality outside itself and of a past of

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[37] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None.* Ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126. See also Heidegger, *Nietzsche; The Eternal Recurrence of the Same,* 37-44.

[38] 'The image is what takes the thing out of its simple presence and brings it to pres-ence, to *praes-entia*, to being-out-in-front-of-itself, turned toward the outside […] Thus the image is, essentially,"monstrative" or "monstrant." Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 21.

[39] Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language.* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 117.

which it is an image. The photographic event, on the other hand, is the reality of technology itself as the revealing and concealing the way by which the actual reveals itself as the exposure of mechanical reproduction.

Graven image: Heidegger and *Yahweh*

Heidegger suggests that the step out of metaphysics necessitates an event of presence and owning (*Ereignis*) that knows no chronological time because it is an instance of perfect duration: a direct, unmediated relation of Being and beings. Gillian Rose drily comments:

> 'It seems that unknown to himself, Heidegger has brought us into the orbit of Biblical Hebrew; a language which has imperfect and perfect tenses but no past, present and future tenses, and which has no possessive verb 'to have'; a language of the kind into which Heidegger attempts to transcribe German.'[40]

Rose points out the similarities between perdurance as 'the highest most significant event of all / a giving of presence that prevails in the present, in the past and in the future…'[41] and *Yahweh* (the god of Israel in the Hebrew Bible): 'In the Hebrew *Yahweh* speaks in the imperfect tense which announces His Perdurance: His presence in the future and past as well as present.'[42]

Rose further clarifies what exactly Heidegger is taking from the Jewish religion: 'Heidegger seems to give us *Yahweh* without *Torah*: the event seems to include advent and redemption, presence and owning…'[43] However, Rose leaves out what is perhaps the most significant attribute of *Yahweh* for the understanding of perdurance: the ban on depicting the god of Israel in an image.

> Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.[44]

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[40] Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism,* 78.

[41] Heidegger, 'Time and Being', Quoted in Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism,* 78-79n8.

[42] Ibid., 79.

[43] Ibid., 80.

[44] Exodus 20:3-4 (King James Bible)

It is significant that in these verses the ban on representing god follows immediately after the ban on having other gods and can be understood as a separate prohibition: It is forbidden to worship other gods and it is forbidden to make images of god. [45] The two main justifications for the Hebraic ban on representation help to clarify the relevance of representation to the question of perdurance. The first is concerned with the use of predicates to describe god. Statements such as 'god exists' or 'god is one' create an impression of an object to which different predicates can apply, which contradicts the idea of god's unity.[46] Similarly, for Heidegger, the true nature of being understood as perdurance cannot be represented through predication:

> Someone wants to buy fruit in a store. He asks for fruit. He is offered apples and pears, he is offered peaches, cherries, grapes. But he rejects all that is offered. He absolutely wants to have fruit. What was offered to him in every instance *is* fruit and yet, it turns out, fruit cannot be bought. It is still infinitely more impossible to represent 'Being' as the general characteristic of beings.[47]

The second aspect of the ban on representation concerns the relationship of perdurance to time. According to Maimonides, who uses the Aristotelian definition of time as dependent on motion, the concept of time does not apply to god.[48] The ban on representation is therefore not only the assertion of the invisibility of god, but it is meant to determine the absolute otherness of god and the essential categorical difference between god and all other forms of being.[49]

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[45] Moshe Halbertal, and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, trans. Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 37. As Halbertal and Margalit indicate, the claim that god has no image is one of the foundations of the neo-Aristotelian teaching of Maimonides, however there are other traditions within Judaism, particularly the rabbinic tradition and the cabala that contain literary descriptions of god. Ibid., 46-47.

[46] Ibid., 58.

[47] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 66.

[48] 'It is quite clear that there is no relation between God and time or space. For time is an accident connected with motion, in so far as the latter includes the relation of anteriority and posteriority … and since motion is one of the conditions to which only material bodies are subject, and God is immaterial, there can be no relation between him and time.' Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed.* 2 ed., trans. Michael Friedlander (London: Forgotten Books, 1904), (I,LII). See also Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry,* 58.

[49] Ibid., 59.

The ban on graven images seems to be connected to the perfect and transitive presence that is outside of time and constitutes the event of all events. Heidegger's notion of perdurance is therefore related not only to the presencing of Jehovah – as Gillian Rose suggests – but also to the ban on representation and the general iconoclasm of the Judaic tradition. It follows that Perdurance is a leap out of visual representation into the essence of visual representation: 'The step out of metaphysics is the step out of technology and technological description … into the *essence* of modern technology…'[50] While Gillian Rose asserts that the step out of metaphysics takes Heidegger into Biblical Hebrew, it is the assertion of this paper that this leap does not go far enough, as all languages – including Hebrew and German – are misleading and limited in the description of perdurance because they necessarily evoke the speaking subject. In any case, there are two reasons for the unsuitability of language for the task of capturing perdurance. First the syntactic structure of language creates a duality between subject and predicate which makes it unsuitable to talk about oneness.[51] The second is that language that is used for the description of familiar reality is unsuitable for the description of the absolute other.[52] The normative linguistic categories of predication and existence do not apply to perdurance.[53] For that reason, the leap advocated on these pages is from the orbit of language into the orbit of photography. However, photography must be understood not as a homogenous entity but as a constellation of recursive and self-replicating exposures.

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[50] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 52.

[51] cf. 'It is impossible to represent in language anything that 'contradicts logic' as it is in geometry to represent by its co-ordinates a figure that contradicts the laws of space, or to give the co-ordinates of a point that does not exist.' Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, trans. Brian McGuinness and David Pears (London: New York: Routledge, 2001), 13 (3.032)

[52] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry,* 59. In *What is Called Thinking* Heidegger suggests that overcoming the tendency of language to privilege logic can be achieved through poetry. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?,* 3-18. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze emphasises the importance of paradoxes and portmanteau as a way of setting up new forms of rationality. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* 3-6, 7-15. see also: Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language.*

[53] 'The difference of being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is the perdurance (Austrag) of the two in *unconcealing keeping in concealment*'. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference,* 65.

Conclusion: is thought photographic?

Photography, therefore, is not only images. It is also a process of self-replicating cloning that is recursive, plural and proliferating. A reflection on photography requires us to question not only the correspondence between images and objects but also to ask how photography stands in relation to the age of information technology, genetic cloning and nuclear physics.[54] The multitude of forms that photography continues to assume in contemporary life suggests that we are not dealing with one image system among many, but with the basic semantic unit of visual communication everywhere.[55] Historically, photography was invented during the 19th century and is therefore welded to the dominant ideology of capitalist production. But ontologically, photography introduces an image into the midst of thought, bringing within it not only representational verisimilitude but also the pre-representational event of difference. Thinking of photography as exposure allows to free it from the dogmas associated with the principle of identity.

Photography is inseparable from the age of technology as lightning is inseparable from the sky. It is the first art of the information age (not in a chronological but logical sense) because despite its assurance of frontal resemblance photography also creates an image of life in general. While classical representation operates (as we saw) by isolating the subject of study from its surroundings, photography reaches across boundaries, disciplines and discourses. The principle of identity is A=A, but the principle of photography understood as endlessly repeated exposure exposure is A+A+A…+A. The repetitive, reproductive process that we encounter time and again in the photograph helps us realise that all processes in nature are connected through flows of energy and matter. Through this recursive movement of dissemination and reproduction photography manifests itself not only as a representation but also as an event that is outside of the distinctions between subject and object. To

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[54] On photography and the discovery of the molecule of DNA see Philosophy of Photography 4(2), (forthcoming).

[55] '[T]he photographic is not best understood as a particular art; it is currently the dominant form of the image in general. ' Osborne, Peter. "Infinite Exchange: The Social Ontology of the Photographic Image." *Philosophy of Photography* 1, no. 1 (2010): 59-68.

ask about photography as exposure is to explore the foundations of the deep rooted belief that representation is effortless and universal. For Heidegger and later for Deleuze this belief is not only limiting, it is also ultimately life denying because it assumes that there is an independently given reality of which representation is a faithful copy.

Thinking that can do justice to the 'information age' cannot itself be detached from Photography. Just as during the previous, 'industrial age' machines replaced physical labour not by replicating human metabolism and muscle tissue but by utilising different sources of energy (petroleum) and different processes (internal combustion), the new machines that we refer to as 'computers' do not operate with the categories of human logic such as form versus content, synthesis or dialectical reasoning. And just as the industrial age not only replaced human labour with the labour of a machine but also radically reconfigured human society, so the age of the computer not only replaces the work of the brain with the work of the machine but also reconfigures human society by implanting on it elements of computational logic such as multiplicity, simultaneity, self-replication and undecidability. The significance of photography is in part at least due to the way it allows us to understand information society not as it is represented in language, but as it is figured by the mechanically produced visual image.

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