

1-1-1997

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Recommended Citation

Gross, P. L., & Shapiro, S. I. (1997). Gross, P. L., & Shapiro, S. I. (1997). The Tao of photography: The Chuang-Tzu, unconstricted awareness, and conscious camerawork. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 16(1), 33–57.. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 16 (1). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol16/iss1/7>



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THE TAO OF PHOTOGRAPHY: THE *CHUANG-TZU*, UNCONSTRICTED AWARENESS, AND CONSCIOUS CAMERAWORK

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*The sage's mind in stillness is the mirror of Heaven and earth,
the glass of the ten thousand things.*

—The *Chuang-tzu*
(Watson, 1968, p. 142)

One of the major works representing early classical Taoist thought is a work known as the *Chuang-tzu*, a collection of texts most likely composed by several authors, between the latter half of the second century B.C.E. and the end of the second century B.C.E. (Mair, 1994). The *Chuang-tzu* is a vivid and evocative literary and psychoepistemic guide to Taoist wisdom, the obstacles to self-understanding and how to overcome them, and the characteristics of the Sage. In short, it is a manual for self-liberation and a work filled with psychological insights about the art of living. In addition to its wisdom, what distinguishes the *Chuang-tzu* as a literary work is its stylistic richness which includes myths, metaphors, paradoxes, anecdotes, and irreverent humor.

The *Chuang-tzu* maintains that self-liberation can be attained by freeing one's mind from the entanglement of the discriminatory mind, or Little Understanding, and allowing the emergence of Great Understanding, a receptive, noninterfering frame of mind. It is a very pragmatic work based on the premise that it is easier to change oneself than to change the world. As Watson (1987), a translator of the *Chuang-tzu*, explains:

Rather than seeking to remake the world, he [the author(s) of the *Chuang-tzu*] would free man from suffering by inducing him to shed the system of values that differentiates pleasure from pain, good from evil, and labels one desirable, the other undesirable. In effect, he would have the individual shuck off all dualistic modes of thinking and learn to achieve a kind of mystical identification with existence as a whole. (p. 467)

Many of the teaching stories that appear in the *Chuang-tzu* to illustrate the art of liberated living, or sagehood, are about craftspeople. Through these stories, the *Chuang-tzu* seems to equate liberated living with skillful living: the art of being sensitive and attuned to one's surroundings and effortlessly moving through the flow of life. Our interest in the practice of photography has also led us to notice the similarities between the teachings of the *Chuang-tzu* and the teachings of creative photographers (Gross & Shapiro, 1996).

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1992), for example, defines photography as placing "head, heart, and eye along the same line of sight" (p. 333). This definition suggests fresh perception and total presence while engaged in camerawork. We call this approach to photography *conscious camerawork*. Among the key features of conscious camerawork is the photographer's ability to free himself or herself from being subservient to the discriminatory mind (e.g., freeing oneself from stereotyped perception), and the ability to be receptive to the photographic environment so that things can be seen freshly. (See the Appendix for a compendium of passages related to conscious camerawork.)

One of the key ingredients for the practice of conscious camerawork is the photographer's ability to achieve a state of unconstricted awareness—a state of mind freed from conventional ways of seeing and thinking. Such a state is also a primary feature of liberated living in the *Chuang-tzu*, a state which allows the Taoist sage to “leap into the boundless and make it . . . home” (Watson, 1968, p. 49).

Unfortunately, there are many barriers to achieving a state of unconstricted awareness. One purpose of our study, therefore, is to explore those barriers: We believe, along with the *Chuang-tzu*, that becoming conscious of them is an important step toward liberating awareness: “He who knows he is a fool is not the biggest fool; he who knows he is confused is not in the worst confusion” (Watson, 1968, p. 139). The second purpose of our study is to explore the potential role of conscious camerawork in cultivating unconstricted awareness and facilitating taoistic vision.

CONSTRICTED AND UNCONSTRICTED AWARENESS

The *Chuang-tzu* depicts the unliberated life as hurried, even frantic—a life driven into perpetual busyness or the slavish following of routines. In the following parable, the *Chuang-tzu* illustrates the sad, relentless pace of the unliberated life, governed by busyness and mechanical living:

Once there was a man who was afraid of his shadow and who hated his footprints, and so he tried to get away from them by running. But the more he lifted his feet and put them down again, the more footprints he made. And no matter how fast he ran, his shadow never left him, and so, thinking that he was still going too slowly, he ran faster and faster without a stop until his strength gave out and he fell down dead. He didn't understand that by lolling in the shade he could have gotten rid of his shadow and by resting in quietude he could have put an end to his footprints. How could he have been so stupid! (Watson, 1968, p. 348)

The flight from conscious existence is provoked by a life choked by stubborn beliefs and unyielding goals—a life wherein awareness is so constricted that options for alternative lifestyles cannot be considered because they are not even recognized.

In photography, the unliberated photographer is usually described as a mindless imitator. The epitome of mindless photography can be observed daily at tourist sites all over the world. In *Mindfulness*, Langer (1989) recalls a lecture by the photographer, Joel Meyerowitz,¹ describing:

. . . the amateur photographers who flock to the Grand Canyon. Arriving at the rim of this famous landmark, they shuffle about, searching for a sign that says “shoot here.” With one pre-set image labeled GRAND CANYON in their minds, blinding them to what lies below, they search for the one and only “right” spot to stand. (p. 117)

Constricted by pre-set images, such photographers mechanically attempt to reproduce a rigid, preestablished vision, thereby forestalling the possibility of new discoveries. Their awareness is saturated with expectations which block the possibility of seeing the unexpected.

The unliberated life in the *Chuang-tzu* and the unliberated photographer can both be interpreted as depicting a state of *constricted awareness*. The awareness of the man afraid of his own shadow is constricted by an unquestioned belief about the threatening nature of his

shadow. The unliberated photographer's awareness is constricted by expectations and beliefs about "how things ought to look." But what is the source of these constricted, unliberated approaches to life and art?

The *Chuang-tzu* maintains that the root of the unliberated life is the discriminatory mind—a frame of mind that creates endless discriminations where none existed before. The unliberated life arises because the perceiver discriminates between himself or herself and the various elements which constitute the ongoing process of nature. By maintaining this sense of separation, the perceiver constantly evaluates phenomena perceived through subjective judgments of liking and disliking. The ongoing discrimination induces a sense of separateness between the perceiver and the perceived.

By constantly making such discriminatory judgments, the perceiver becomes subservient to the discriminatory mind—that is, a judgmental frame of mind, constantly rejecting what is disliked and attempting to possess or prolong what is liked. However, since both what is liked and what is disliked are inseparable elements of the whole of nature—which is in perpetual flux—to favor one element and reject another creates disharmony where none existed before. Partiality thereby creates disharmony.

When a person welcomes only the "attractive" part of nature and resists the "unattractive" part, he or she compartmentalizes nature into segments and sets them at odds with one another. Such a person, therefore, is constantly fighting against the dynamic, endlessly changing processes of nature—the Tao, whereas partiality does not exist in the ongoing process of nature which has a single undifferentiated integrity.

Thus, the discriminatory mind comes to obstruct harmonious interaction between the interconnected parts which form the primal and integral process of the whole of nature—ultimately sewing seeds of disharmony in place of unity. The discriminatory mind, therefore, is at the root of the unliberated life because of its propensity to entangle the individual in a narrow, "picky" frame of mind—a frame of mind which is no longer in accord with the flow of nature and the process of living. It is a frame of mind from which the essential dynamic unity of the universe—the Tao—cannot be apprehended, much less followed.

With regard to the practice of photography, it becomes evident how the frame of mind of constricted awareness can impoverish a photographer's vision and art. Imprisoned by the biases of the discriminatory mind, the photographer's constricted awareness is unable to perceive the boundless visual richness of the world that lies beyond the projections and filters of one's mental constructs. As Sontag (1989) writes: "The habit of photographic seeing—of looking at reality as an array of potential photographs—creates estrangement from, rather than union with, nature" (p. 97). Only when the photographer can disentangle himself or herself from being subservient to the discriminatory mind can creative, unconstricted seeing emerge.

Let us examine in more detail the source of constricted awareness in the *Chuang-tzu*, for this work also claims that freedom from the unliberated life is readily at hand—that one can escape the relentless shadow simply by "lolling in the shade" and "resting in quietude." How so? The *Chuang-tzu* differentiates two types of understanding: "Great knowledge is free and easy. Petty knowledge picks holes" (Graham, 1969, p. 151). Watson's (1968) translation, equally expressive, reads: "Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy" (p. 37). "Cramped and busy" fits well with the description of the hectic, unliberated life we described earlier. Graham's translation—"petty knowledge picks holes"—also suggests a type of awareness that is constricted and antithetical to perceiving the world holistically. On the other hand, the phrase "free and easy," used by Graham to describe great knowledge, accentuates the idea that such knowledge does not constrain the person who has access to it.²

Thus, the ordinary mind's propensity to make discriminations is rooted in the frame of mind of Little Understanding and, although it is beneficial for survival purposes, it can easily become an autonomously functioning frame of mind for responding to all situations. The result is that perception and understanding generally become subservient to the discriminatory frame of mind, which thereby represses the potential for the awareness to operate receptively and holistically—that is within the framework of Great Understanding. From the perspective of the *Chuang-tzu*, however, one should be cautious not even to become entangled in the discrimination of siding with Great Understanding and casting away Little Understanding, for this, too, countenances a habit of distinction and can forestall liberation (i.e., unconstricted awareness). In the words of the *Chuang-tzu*, the Sage is one who *harmonizes* Great Understanding and Little Understanding:

In being one, he [the Sage or the True Man] was acting as a companion of Heaven. In not being one, he was acting as a companion of man. When man and Heaven do not defeat each other, then we may be said to have the True Man. (Watson, 1968, pp. 79-80)

In being a companion of both “Heaven and man,” the Sage embodies the harmonious coexistence for Great Understanding and Little Understanding.

A parallel to the two types of understanding described in the *Chuang-tzu* can also be found in the photography literature (e.g., Berner, 1975; Cartier-Bresson, 1952; Doeffinger, 1992; Marx, 1994; Patterson, 1979). Generally speaking, Little Understanding in camerawork represents the frame of mind which concentrates on techniques, sets goals, applies photographic rules, arranges a scene to fit a desired outcome, and attempts to gain total control over the subject. Great Understanding, on the other hand, corresponds to the photographer's ability to respond holistically and spontaneously to a scene without interfering with the subject. Ultimately, the liberated photographer, like the Sage in the *Chuang-tzu*, is a companion of both forms of understanding, for to develop one's artistic ability fully demands transcending techniques and returning to seeing, feeling, and responding holistically to a photographic opportunity.

In this last, holistic stage, the photographic skills acquired initially are now integrated into the photographer's ability to respond spontaneously to a situation, thereby increasing the likelihood of producing successful and artistic photographs. The transformation is analogous to the Zen saying:

When I knew nothing, mountains were mountains and trees just trees. When I learned more, mountains became much more than mountains and trees more than trees. Now that I have attained realization, mountains are just mountains again, and trees are trees. (Berner, 1975, p. 60)

Attaining realization or full mastery of a technical skill, however, does not mean rejecting Little Understanding. Rather, it means freedom from the belief that the discriminatory mind is a reliable, necessary, or exclusive guide to art and life. The creative artist, therefore, can still make use of Little Understanding but is not entangled by it. The ability to engage both modes of understanding harmoniously allows for a richer apprehension of life. Such is the view espoused by Marx (1994) in *Right Brain/Left Brain Photography*:

A split-second decision determines whether you capture a situation, as well as how well you capture it. You've already thought about your subject and know the reason why you've placed yourself in a particular situation. But once you are there, you must try to empty your mind of all thought in order

for you to be completely in the moment and receptive to your intuition and your surroundings. Simply react to them with uncluttered clarity. (p. 114)

Such clarity or unconstricted awareness may or may not be easy to achieve, depending on the presence and strength of psychological barriers to seeing.

OBSTACLES TO CONSCIOUS CAMERAWORK

There are many psychological barriers to accurate perception of the world, but we shall call attention here only to some that we feel are especially intrinsic to photographic practice.

Deficiency-motivations as described by Maslow

Many photographers have claimed that the need to control is the greatest barrier to seeing (e.g., Berner, 1975; Cartier-Bresson, 1992; Hoff, 1981; Loori, 1983a; Patterson, 1979). According to Maslow (1966), the need to control a situation rather than being receptive to it is often motivated by deficiency-motivations, which primarily relate to the psychological safety and security of the individual. Although Maslow recognizes the importance of safety for growth, he proposes that an individual motivated only by safety needs will not fully actualize his or her potential. He explains that when cognition is "primarily deficiency-motivated, it is more need-reductive, more homeostatic, more the relief of felt deficit. When behavior is more growth-motivated, it is less need-reductive and more a movement toward self-actualization and fuller humanness, more expressive, more selfless, more reality-centered" (Maslow, 1966, p. 22).³

Maslow's perspective on the topic of deficiency-motivations versus growth-motivations derives from Kurt Goldstein's work with brain-injured WWI soldiers whose mental capabilities had been severely reduced. Maslow explains that these soldiers attempted to retain their self-esteem and avoid anxiety-producing confrontation by psychologically narrowing their worlds. He suggests that people without brain-injury can display similar cognitive deficiencies if their motivations are deficient. An exploration of Maslow's deficiency-motivations could help us shed some light on how these motivations can constrict awareness. Maslow's (1966) list is rather extensive: from it we have selected out nine pathological motivations that appear to us most directly relevant to the practice of seeing with unconstricted awareness in the context of photography.

1. "The need to conform, to win approval, to be a member of the group—the inability to disagree, to be unpopular, to stand alone" (Maslow, 1966, p. 28).

This pathology characterizes the constricted photographer very well. Feininger (1974) depicts the conformist in the following passage:

In photography, it is he who is responsible for the majority of mindless photographs. He is the joiner, the imitator, the photographer who plays it safe. Such people have surrendered their individuality in exchange for approval, approval by the system, the organization, public opinion, their fellows at the photo club. They have succumbed to fads and trends, they are the in-people who belong to a group or school, and they look down on anybody who does not belong. (p. 136)

Feininger also explains why such a conformist attitude endangers artistic and personal growth:

Photographers who identify with special groups where everybody follows the same line of thought are deprived of the stimulating criticism and exchange of controversial ideas necessary for the intellectual and spiritual development of any human being. (p. 136)

The motivation to please others by conforming to preset-norms or group pressure not only prevents the exploration of new photographic avenues, it also constricts the photographer's awareness by limiting his or her seeing to visual patterns that have already been popularized by other photographers.

2. "Overrespect for authority, for the great man. . . . Becoming *only* a disciple, a loyal follower, ultimately a stooge, unable to be independent, unable to affirm himself" (Maslow, 1966, p. 28).

Similar to conformism, when photographers are too respectful of authority they limit themselves to preestablished rules and thereby relinquish opportunities for breakthroughs: When 35mm cameras were despised as reflecting amateurish characteristics, Cartier-Bresson chose one as his main tool and achieved legendary success with it, and, when color photography was not yet recognized as a valuable medium of artistic expression, Eliot Porter and Ernst Haas mined its possibilities with great success. Moreover, whereas most photographers comply with the "sacrosanct rule" of not shooting against the light, Sebastião Salgado has created his greatest work by repeatedly ignoring this rule.

3. "The ability to be only active, dominant, masterful, controlling, 'in charge,' 'masculine,' and the inability to be also noncontrolling, noninterfering, receptive" (Maslow, 1966, p. 27).

Such controlling attitudes, in the opinion of Robert Doisneau, decrease one's ability to "catch life." In the following passage, Doisneau (1992) describes the difference between controlling photographers and receptive ones:

The Americans who arrived in France after the Liberation. . . . had so much material. They couldn't work without having three flashes. But life passed them in front of their eyes. Naturally, they only photographed the "accepted" things. Whereas someone like Henri [Cartier-Bresson] understood very quickly that you have to have a small, quiet camera and that freedom helped him produce wonderful new pictures. (p. 90)

The ability to be noncontrolling is best described by Cartier-Bresson (1952) in the following passage from his seminal work, *The Decisive Moment*:

It is essential . . . to approach the subject on tiptoe—even if the subject is still-life. A velvet hand, a hawk's eye—these we should all have. It's no good jostling or elbowing. And no photographs taken with the aid of flashlight either, if only out of respect for the actual light—even when there isn't any of it. Unless a photographer observes such conditions as these, he may become an intolerably aggressive character. (unpaginated)

4. "Underrespect for authority. The need to fight authority. The inability to learn from one's elders or teachers" (Maslow, 1966, p. 28).

Photography is a visual, symbolic language whose vocabulary and grammar can be developed by studying classical masterpieces and by interacting with more advanced photographers or artists. Therefore, the ability to learn from one's elders or teachers may be critical in developing one's perceptual skills. Cartier-Bresson is a good example of a famous

contemporary photographer who was open to learning from his elders. As Kirstein and Newhall (1947) point out, he was an avid student of "the old masters of painting and of photography as a means of developing an appreciation of space and form" (p. 12).

5. "Knowledge and truth may be feared, and therefore avoided or distorted, for many reasons" (Maslow, 1966, p. 29).

Following Maslow's assertion, it is reasonable to suggest that some photographers could gain valuable insights by exploring their readiness to embrace life in its fullest, including less inviting subject matter such as suffering, violence, and death.

6. "Rubricizing, i.e., pathological categorizing as a flight from concrete experiencing and cognizing" (Maslow, 1966, p. 29).

In the following passage, Doisneau (1992) explains that as a photographer, his role is to challenge those involved in excessive rubricizing:

I am the village idiot who goes off to the forest and comes back with a bird in his hat and walks around everywhere saying, "Look and see what I've unearthed!" And this bird of an unknown species immediately bothers notable people simply because they don't know how to categorize it. They never saw that kind of bird before, so they say: "Yes, it's amusing. Now go play elsewhere and let us be, because we're talking about serious things." This is a bit like the photographer's role now. (p. 87)

The pathological need to categorize and label, as Frank (1973) explains, deprives us from fully experiencing life. In his words: "By these labels we recognize everything but no longer *see* anything. We know the labels on all the bottles, but never taste the wine" (p. 4). As a way to remove these "rubricizing barriers," the impressionist painter Claude Monet advocated that "to see we must forget the name of the thing we are looking at" (Patterson, 1979, p. 10).

7. "Intolerance of ambiguity: the inability to be comfortable with the vague, the mysterious, the not yet fully known" (Maslow, 1966, p. 27).

This pathology is similar to the preceding one in that it may also involve compulsive rubricizing as a way to avoid facing the vague or mysterious. Freeman Patterson (1979) suggests that, when confronting the unknown, one should use his or her imagination rather than labels. He thus advises students to visit galleries or libraries and explore pictures from a variety of media and use them as a tool to stimulate the imagination:

Don't ask for a verbal explanation of a visual puzzle. Resist the label! If you don't recognize the subject matter, make of it whatever you want. Use your imagination. Let your eyes roam over the shapes, colours, lines, and textures. Ask yourself what you like about the picture. Does it make you feel happy? Be willing to respond emotionally. (pp. 58-59)

Perhaps another way to transcend ambiguity is to meditate on Frank's (1973) statement: "The inexpressible is the only thing that it is worthwhile expressing" (p. 115).

8. "Dichotomizing compulsively; two-valued orientation; either-or; black or white" (Maslow, 1966, p. 29).

Such an attitude is often representative of photographers who never deviate from the "rules of composition." Ansel Adams took a rather radical approach to such a position by stating

that, "The so-called 'rules' of photographic composition are, in my opinion, invalid, irrelevant and immaterial" (Freeman, 1992, p. 32). Other photographers (e.g., Feininger, 1974; Patterson, 1979) prescribe a more flexible attitude suggesting that the rules of composition are worth studying yet one should be open to breaking them at any time.

9. "The need for novelty and the devaluation of the familiar. The inability to perceive a miracle if it is repeated one hundred times" (Maslow, 1966, p. 29).

To remedy this pathology, learning how to become more receptive seems to be an ideal solution.

As this brief survey suggests, deficiency-motivations, like expectations and beliefs can filter the way a photographer perceives the world and thereby constrict his or her field of awareness to what is already known.

The camera as a barrier

In addition to general motivational barriers just outlined, the camera itself can become a barrier to unconstricted awareness. Although the camera can be a valuable tool to unconstrict awareness by inviting the photographer to see his or her environment more directly and fully, it can also be the photographer's greatest enemy by constricting awareness to the photographic activity alone. If not used consciously, the camera may become a barrier to both photographic seeing and the photographer's ability to experience life in its fullest. As Freeman (1992) states: "Taken to extreme, personal photographs can become a substitute for experience" (p. 72). Ansel Adams (1992) suggests that some photographers may have come to mistakenly believe that their advanced and sophisticated photographic equipment could compensate for careful execution and clear perception: "It's a strange thing that as techniques develop the materials, the lenses, the cameras, get more accurate and perfect, the quality of perception and execution goes down, because they count on the machine to do it" (p. 336).

The camera can become a substitute for experiencing life fully in at least three ways:

(a) photography can become a search to convert experience into a souvenir; (b) aesthetic and technical concerns may limit the photographer's engagement with the subject; and (c) the camera may foreshorten the experience by clicking it away.

First, photographing can constrict the photographer's awareness by replacing the experience of the present moment with a snapshot to be experienced later. This type of constricted experience can be caricatured by the tourists who rush out of the bus, look for the sign that says, "Take picture from here," and hurry back on the bus that will take them to the next lookout. As Sontag (1989) explains: "A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it—by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir" (p. 9). If the tourists did not depend on their cameras to record their fleeting visual experiences they might feel the need to engage in the scene more fully.

Second, aesthetic and technical concerns may limit the photographer's engagement with the subject. When photographers become entangled in their desire to produce images that are aesthetically satisfying and technically acceptable, they may treat their subjects as mere objects whose purpose is only to satisfy their creative or professional needs. As Michael Freeman (1992) explains in *Achieving Photographic Style*:

A photojournalist quickly develops the habit of looking at any potentially interesting subject through the camera. Eventually, this becomes second nature, so that all visual experiences are treated as images, with part of the

photographer's attention always directed toward picture making. A practiced photographer tends to analyze any situation in terms of its picture possibilities.

Paradoxically, then, while photography increases sensitivity to the visual aspect of life, it can also desensitize the photographer to other feelings. It is not even difficult to reach a stage, with prolific shooting, where the photographer has to wait for the developed film in order to see the events clearly. (p. 71)

Freeman (1992) also provides a revealing example of how being overly eager to capture important events on film may alienate the photographer from life:

George Rodger, a highly regarded English freelance photographer of the Second World War, was one of the first to enter Belsen concentration camp with Allied troops in 1945. He began work immediately, taking pictures of the bodies, treating the occasion as a source of pictures rather than reacting to the horror around him. When he realized what he was doing, he decided that his days as a war photographer should end. (p. 71)

When photographers are driven only by producing pictures rather than connecting themselves to the world, they are mainly functioning within the framework of Little Understanding. Since unconstricted awareness requires a receptive state of mind, photographers overly concerned with productivity may forfeit opportunities to expand their awareness for apprehending the world.

Third, the camera may shorten the experience by clicking it away. Even when a photographer is fully experiencing a scene through the viewfinder, the action of taking the picture may abruptly end this "unitive" experience. Berner (1975) refers to this interruption as "the click that kills," and offers a valuable suggestion to avoid this "occupational hazard":

When making a picture, the sound of the shutter can 'click off' the scene. One immediately turns to look for the next thing to shoot. To avoid killing what you behold, *linger* on it. Not merely saving the view for posterity, but *savoring* it in the now is the only antidote to this subtle occupational hazard. (p. 80)

In summary, when the photographic act becomes a search to convert experience into a souvenir, when aesthetic and technical concerns have priority over experiencing the subject, or when the click of the camera "kills" the unitive experience between photographer and subject, the camera becomes a barrier to unconstricted awareness rather than an aid. In surrendering full experience of the moment to the camera, the photographer waives the benefits of engaging the receptive mode or Great Understanding—i.e., the ability to feel and respond spontaneously and holistically to a photographic opportunity.

Overstimulation and visual aesthetic biases

Two remaining barriers to the photographer's ability to be fully attune to a scene should also be noted: overstimulation and visual aesthetic biases.

Overstimulation can be of two types. An individual can either be overstimulated by a surrounding abundance of stimuli (e.g., a hot, noisy, crowded, and fishy smelling marketplace) or by the intensity of a particular stimuli (e.g., a very attractive face). In the following passage, Patterson (1979) discusses how overstimulation of the first type may constrict awareness:

We are so bombarded with visual and other stimuli that we must block out most of them in order to cope. Instead of seeing everything, we select a few stimuli and organize these. Then, once we have achieved order in our lives, we stick with the realities we have established. We seldom try to rediscover the possible value of ignored stimuli, and are reluctant to do so as long as the old ones still seem to be working. We develop a tunnel vision, which gives us a clear view of the rut ahead of us, but prevents us from seeing the world around us. (p. 10)

A second type of overstimulation is caused by the intensity of a particular stimuli. As Feininger (1974) explains: "Experience has shown that the more fascinating the subject, the less observant the photographer" (p. 132). He describes a session on nude photography in which students were so absorbed by the model that they ignored the background—the pictures awkwardly included other students, lightstands, electric wires, the blackboard, and even the teacher. Feininger humorously concludes that "the subsequent criticism of the accomplished work understandably left most of the participants with very red faces" (p. 132).

To remedy this problem within the context of photography, Feininger urges students to recognize the difference between seeing with the eyes and seeing with a camera:

The eyes, under the direction of the brain, are selective, consciously noticing only those aspects of reality in which the person is interested, and paying no attention to the rest. In contrast, the camera, being a machine, sees objectively, noticing and recording on film everything within the angle of view of the lens, the important as well as the superfluous and the aesthetically disastrous. Therefore, the photographer must consciously observe every aspect of the scene before he fixes it irrevocably on film—while there is still time for making changes. (p. 132)

Visual aesthetic biases can also deprive a photographer of seeing critical elements in a scene. For example, if a photographer always produces images that are dominated by lines and texture, this may reflect that the photographer is not very aware of pattern, shape or color in the photographic environment. By discovering personal biases in their perception, photographers can become more able to expand their visual awareness thereby enriching both their pictures and their experiences.⁴

Although a photographer may be pleased with his or her aesthetic biases (which can be used as a marker for a personal style), by ignoring other visual aspects the photographer may never discover the existence of other gratifying ways of apprehending the world. In Berner's (1975) words: "For the photographer, visual biases can be used to develop a personal style, but they can also represent a subtle trap for the creative artist, just as any habit can limit consciousness" (p. 17).⁵

Our overview does not include every possible barrier to unconstricted awareness, but we hope it has provided some insight into the nature of prevalent barriers and their constricting effect on both the art of photography and the art of living. The ability to identify and recognize such barriers is a significant step toward the liberation of awareness and the emergence of creative photography and the art of living.

CONSCIOUS CAMERAWORK

So far we have outlined and compared the unliberated life as described in the *Chuang-tzu* with the unliberated photographer and described some of the barriers to liberated seeing and photographic artistry. We proposed that both arenas share a similar nemesis—constricted

awareness—which is grounded in the discriminatory mind—what the *Chuang-tzu* calls Little Understanding—and its propensity to entangle and encapsulate the individual in a narrow, picky frame of mind. In contrast, the *Chuang-tzu* also describes another mode of knowing—Great Understanding—that is, receptive or unconstricted awareness. Being overly dependent upon or attached to Little Understanding (i.e., being entangled in the discriminatory mind) is a major barrier to one's ability to evoke Great Understanding. Ultimately, the solution to overcome this state of unliberation resides in an individual's ability to free himself or herself from being entangled in Little Understanding and to harmonize both Little Understanding and Great Understanding.

We have noticed that the characteristics of conscious camerawork (e.g., receptivity and freedom from stereotyped perception) so closely resemble the following description of mindfulness meditation by Goleman (1988), that one could replace the word "mindfulness" with "conscious camerawork" and have a quite suitable definition of conscious camerawork as well:

Mindfulness entails breaking through stereotyped perception. Our natural tendency is to become habituated to the world around us, no longer to notice the familiar. We also substitute abstract names or preconceptions for the raw evidence of our senses. In mindfulness, the meditator methodically faces the bare facts of his experience, seeing each event as though occurring for the first time. He does this by continuous attention to the first phase of perception, when his mind is *receptive* rather than reactive. (p. 20)

The resemblance between mindfulness and the practice of conscious camerawork suggests that they could be either complementary or even alternative practices.⁶ Such an idea seems to have already gained the attention of a few psychologists and spiritual teachers who have used photography as a teaching device to evoke unconstricted awareness independently of professional photographic objectives.

Hayward (1995), education director of Shambhala Training International, for example, provides the following description akin to the experience of unconstricted awareness: "When you take photographs, just before you click the shutter, your mind is empty and open, just seeing without words" (p. 27). An example from psychology can be found in Maslow's (1996) recently published posthumous writings, which includes a list of suggested exercises to enter the "Being-Realm": one exercise is to "use the artist's or photographer's trick of seeing the object *in itself*" (p. 76). Maslow argues that by framing the object, one cuts it away from its surroundings, and therefore, from one's "preconceptions, expectations and theories of how it *should* look" (p. 76). The following exercises suggested by Maslow (1996) to unconstrict awareness and thereby enter the "being-realm" can also be found, in various forms, in books teaching photographic creativity:

Enlarge the object. Or, squint at it so you see only general outlines. Or, gaze at it from unexpected angles, such as upside down. Look at the object reflected in a mirror. Put it in unexpected backgrounds, in out-of-the-ordinary juxtapositions, or through unusual color filters. Gaze at it for a very long time. Gaze while free-associating or daydreaming. (p. 76)

Another example of using conscious camerawork as a path to unconstricted awareness is provided by Looi (1983b), a Zen teacher and photographer, who uses photography as a path within a Zen Buddhist context: "The art of mindful photography approaches photography as a life practice, involved not only with the artist's seeing and photographing, but with all aspects of daily living, so that the practice of mindful photography becomes a Way" (p. 6).

The suggestions by Hayward, Maslow, and Loori that conscious camerawork can help unconstrict one's awareness fit some of our own observations on teaching, where we have used the practice of conscious camerawork to help students experience unconstricted awareness, spontaneity, and seeing the sacred in the ordinary. Informal reports from our students have also indicated that a greater appreciation of life was experienced during the practice of conscious camerawork and also spilling over to other daily activities.

Is it possible, then, that conscious camerawork could be used to train mindfulness? Although the present study and a few others (e.g., Berner 1975; Patterson, 1979) suggest that the practice of conscious camerawork could, by itself, be an integral path to inner liberation, to our knowledge, except for Loori (1983a, 1983b, 1984), such a path has not been formally taken up yet. Let us therefore explore how such a practice could contribute to the practice of mindfulness.⁷

Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). Such a definition fits with the practice of conscious camerawork which involves paying attention through a camera, nonjudgmentally, purposefully, and in the present moment. Kabat-Zinn (1994) explains that mindfulness is simple to practice but not necessarily easy: "Mindfulness requires effort and discipline for the simple reason that the forces that work against our being mindful, namely, our habitual unawareness and automaticity, are exceedingly tenacious" (p. 8). The goal of mindfulness practice, therefore, is to replace our habitual unawareness by another habit, the habit of paying attention.⁸

Following Kabat-Zinn's description, the practice of mindfulness, especially in the beginning, can be experienced as a conflict between two forces: the will (effort and discipline) to remain conscious or aware pitted against the habit of unawareness. To facilitate the practice of mindfulness, an individual might engage in an activity that either reinforces the will to be conscious or reduces the habit of unawareness.

Camerawork practice⁹ has the potential to do both: It fortifies the photographer's will to remain alert because of the motivation to capture an exceptional moment on film, and it helps to reduce the habit of unawareness because the camera can only capture an image in the here-and-now, thereby compelling the photographer to remain in tune with the present, moment by moment. As Cartier-Bresson (1973) explains, life is fluid and "sometimes the pictures disappear and there is nothing you can do. You can't tell the person, 'Oh, please smile again. Do that gesture again.' Life is once, forever" (p. 74).¹⁰ Camerawork practice, therefore, can motivate, even necessitate, a person to remain conscious and aware, to pay attention all the time.

One may not even have to be actively involved in taking pictures to train the habit of awareness. Simply the act of carrying a camera around throughout the day can in itself suffice at times to keep one's awareness open. Just having the tool available to capture an outstanding moment any time can motivate an individual to remain alert, and thereby can slowly replace the habit of unawareness by the habit of awareness (i.e., unconstricted awareness). (Artistry aside, once the habit of paying attention has replaced the habit of unawareness, the camera can be forgotten.)

The practice of paying attention through camerawork, that is, mindfulness or the ability to cultivate unconstricted awareness, does not only entail becoming attuned to one's environment (i.e., photographic subjects). Conscious camerawork also involves sensing, feeling, and thinking. The photographer must not only be aware of the subjects, but also aware of his or her thoughts, emotions, and senses, and how they affect his or her photographic vision. As Ralph Hattersley suggests: "Photographers [should] observe themselves as observers and in

that way come to understand why they see the way they do” (Doeffinger, 1992, p. 18). It is also important to be aware of one’s physical posture to prevent unwanted “camera shake,” especially when photographing without a tripod. In short, conscious camerawork involves a complete physical, emotional, and mental awareness so that the photographer does not become entangled in barriers to unconstricted awareness.

UNCONSTRICTED AWARENESS AND THE ART OF SEEING

Maslow (1966) once said: “If you want to see the world, it is obviously sensible to be as good a seer as you can make yourself” (p. 48). How can one unrestrict awareness and become a better seer?

Unconstricted awareness can be evoked either through the practice of conscious camerawork or directly through freeing oneself from being subservient to the discriminatory mind. Both approaches to seeing “things new” or freshly—constructing new realities, or, engaging life with unconstricted awareness—provide the seer with a richer and deeper picture of the world. One approach provides different perspectives on seeing the world, the other provides a new way to experience the world, for example, through becoming taoistically attuned to the ceaseless manifestations of the flow of life. The two approaches to seeing things freshly can help create new visions and induce new levels of realities to be experienced without trapping the seer in any particular vision or reality.

Let us first explore the art of seeing things freshly through the art of constructing new realities and then through the art of seeing taoistically.

Seeing things anew: Constructing new realities

Edward Weston (Doeffinger, 1992) said: “Anything that excites me for any reason, I will photograph: not searching for unusual subject matter, but making the commonplace unusual” (p. 22).

In the 20th century—in large part because of photography—our awareness of the multidimensionality of the world has increased at a striking pace. Photojournalism, nature photography, and scientific imaging (with its use of sophisticated instruments such as telescopes, scanning electron microscopes, magnetic resonance imaging, CAT scans, PET scans, X-rays, ultrasound, radioisotope tracers, lasers, and DNA sequencers) have produced images that have helped us expand awareness of our universe into hitherto unimaginable dimensions. The outcome of these diverse photographic explorations has led to significant social, political, cultural, scientific, and technological reforms (Goldberg, 1993). But most importantly, for psychology, the creation of these new levels of realities have further demonstrated what the consciousness disciplines and the perennial philosophies have proclaimed for centuries: Our ordinary seeing is limited, and our conventional, consensus of reality is just one possible version of the world among many.¹¹

Although, on the one hand, the process of constructing a limited, consensual reality may have some advantages in coping with the complex process of existence (e.g., organizing and classifying stimuli facilitates remembering, comprehending, and communicating), on the other hand, becoming attached to one particular reality may prevent or diminish psychological growth, creativity, and the ability to interact harmoniously with the world.

Ernst Haas (1992) once said: “I am not interested in shooting new things—I am interested to see things new” (p. 17). What does it mean to see things new? In photography, the separation of the world into mental categories can prevent a photographer from seeing things freshly and

creatively. To free oneself from the trap of seeing the world through stereotypes, one can learn to see subjects in a new way. One approach to see things new is to create a new vision of an ordinary subject by viewing it, for example, from many different angles, magnifications, and types of lighting—in short, actively engaging in the creation of new visual realities. Or, as Doeffinger (1992) suggests: “Instead of seeing the horseness of a horse, you might see it as a landscape—the prairie of its back rising into a mountainous neck. Or you may see it as a temple supported with four slender columns” (p. 18).¹²

We have emphasized the importance of unconstricted awareness for achieving artistry in photography because when a photographer’s mind is saturated with expectations, photographic rules, or bits and pieces of information (i.e., Little Understanding), the capacity for seeing things freshly is likely to be diminished. The expectations or rules become a confining framework through which the world is perceived.

Taoistic vision

Aside from actively constructing alternative realities as a path to seeing things freshly, one can also quit the constructive process altogether and start seeing things freshly by simply seeing with unconstricted awareness—for in the perspective of the *Chuang-tzu*, Great Understanding stands ready to emerge as soon as Little Understanding no longer obscures it:

The eye that is penetrating sees clearly, the ear that is penetrating hears clearly, the nose that is penetrating distinguishes odors, the mouth that is penetrating distinguishes flavors, the mind that is penetrating has understanding, and the understanding that is penetrating has virtue. In all things, the Way does not want to be obstructed, for if there is obstruction, there is choking; if the choking does not cease, there is disorder; and disorder harms the life of all creatures. (Watson, 1968, p. 300)

Ultimately, the ability to create or see new realities in a state of unconstricted awareness can provide taoistic insights into the flowing nature of existence—its ceaseless manifestations. Perhaps the ultimate attainment in the art of seeing is to apprehend the Tao in action—that is, to deeply recognize and experience the continuous transformation of the universe. Such apperception goes beyond seeing a person or an object with freshness (i.e., uncluttered by the discriminatory mind), but also seeing them as entities commonly and collectively engaged in the unending transformation of life. In the words of the *Chuang-tzu*:

The ten thousand things are really one. We look on some as beautiful because they are rare or unearthly; we look on others as ugly because they are foul and rotten. But the foul and rotten may turn into the rare and unearthly, and the rare and unearthly may turn into the foul and rotten. So it is said, You have only to comprehend the one breath that is the world. The sage never ceases to value oneness. (Watson, 1968, p. 236)

To apprehend and appreciate the Tao in action, the seer must be free from the subservience of the discriminatory mind so that he or she can be receptive to many levels of reality at once without being trapped in any particular one. When such a state of awareness is secured, the percipient can *see beyond seeing*, that is, not only see things according to their shapes, textures, and colors but also in their taoistic essence.

The ability to see and experience the ceaseless transformation of life in everything is also of preeminent importance for the art of living in general. The narrowing effects of Little Understanding can prevent harmonious interaction with the process of life. Failing to see into and experience the ongoing transforming nature of life—which includes self, the environment,

and other people—an individual may also fail to recognize their fundamental inseparability and attempt to unrealistically control them.

The position that controlling or fixing oneself, others, or nature can generate more harm than good is keenly exposed in Gerald May's (1977) book, *Simply Sane: Stop Fixing Yourself and Start Really Living*. Although not using the term "Taoism" per se, May takes a very taoistic position with regard to the dynamics of self-development, psychotherapy, and psychological self-healing. He inveighs against becoming fixated on a model of fixing and the urge it engenders to become hopelessly involved in an endless series of psychological fixes. May further suggests that there is a basic conflict between a learned need to fix and the voice of sanity "which seems to be telling us to allow ourselves to be what we are, fully, dynamically and without any great extra meddling" (p. 90). The inner struggle generated by the desire to control can only be resolved by "giving up the struggle to master one's self" (p. 90).

The *Chuang-tzu* states: "Perfect action is the abandonment of action" (Watson, 1968, p. 247). From the perspective of the *Chuang-tzu*, the attempt to purposefully and willfully control others, the self, or the environment without a clear appreciation of the process of the flow of existence will most likely result in failure. And, in photography, for example, concerned photographers have hoped to bring about changes in the minds of people by depicting life's atrocities with their photographs. Unfortunately, as Sontag (1989) points out, their forced attempts in bringing compassion to the world have not only often failed, but worse, they have achieved the opposite results by deadening people's conscience:

The same law holds for evil as for pornography. The shock of photographed atrocities wears off with repeated viewings, just as the surprise and bemusement felt the first time one sees a pornographic movie wear off after one sees a few more In these last decades, "concerned" photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it. (pp. 20-21)

Failing to understand the workings of the human psyche in a taoistic perspective, well-intentioned, concerned photographers have often failed to achieve even humanitarian goals. The *Chuang-tzu* derides people who work hard at trying to change other peoples' minds: "Chasing after the ten thousand things, never turning back, he was like one who tries to shout an echo into silence or to prove that form can outrun shadow. How sad!" (Watson, 1968, p. 377).

But is the pursuit of change actually an undesirable goal, or is it an overattachment to goal-directed behavior that is undesirable? To succeed in the realm of action, the *Chuang-tzu* advocates the evocation of Great Understanding¹³ (i.e., unconstricted awareness), because when one clearly sees a problem in its manifold branches, the solution comes naturally and effortlessly. In short, when the barriers to unconstricted awareness are dismantled, when ignorance about the fundamental unity of life and its incessant transformations is dissolved, a natural path to growth and harmony emerges.

UNCONSTRICTED AWARENESS AND THE ART OF LIVING

*The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror—going after nothing,
welcoming nothing, responding but not storing.*

—The *Chuang-tzu*
(Watson, 1968, p. 97)

The impact of unconstricted awareness on artistry in photography also has broader implications for the art of living—for the photographer and the nonphotographer alike. From

the perspective of the *Chuang-tzu*, in essence, every individual is naturally liberated, naturally set forth in harmony with life. But individuals are prone to getting caught in the webs of Little Understanding. The art of living, therefore is not to strive to improve oneself, but to free oneself from the entanglement of the discriminatory mind. Once this freedom is in effect, the conventional meaning of life is transformed: The "meaning" of life is no longer directed toward achieving something but simply experiencing the process or flow of life.¹⁴ As Looi (1983b) has said:

Seeing is perception with the original, unconditioned eye. It is a state of consciousness in which separation of photographer/subject, audience/image dissolves; in which a reality beyond words and concepts opens up, whose "point" or "meaning" is the direct experience itself. (p. 6)

Lin Yutang (1937) suggests in *The Importance of Living* that artistic practices are most rewarding when they are purposeless:

Much as I appreciate all forms of immortal creative work, whether in painting, architecture or literature, I think the spirit of true art can become more general and permeate society only when a lot of people are enjoying art as a pastime, without any hope of achieving immortality. (p. 366)

Is it possible for the art of living to be purposelessly artistic for all of us? In the *Chuang-tzu*, and in the work and writings of some photographer-artists, we have an inspiring vision that being attuned to the ever-present flow of life—with unconstricted awareness—can indeed be life's greatest reward:

Taking photographs . . . is a way of shouting, or freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one's own originality. It is a way of life.

—Henri Cartier-Bresson (1976, p. 8)

Joy, anger, grief, delight, worry, regret, fickleness, inflexibility, modesty, willfulness, candor, insolence—music from empty holes, mushrooms springing up in dampness, day and night replacing each other before us, and no one knows where they sprout from. Let it be! Let it be!

—The *Chuang-tzu*
(Watson, 1968, pp. 37-38)

APPENDIX

Conscious Camerawork and the Art of Seeing: A Compendium

Seeing, in the finest and broadest sense, means using your senses, your intellect, and your emotions. It means encountering your subject matter with your whole being. It means looking beyond the labels of things and discovering the remarkable world around you.

—Freeman Patterson (1979, p. 7)

To photograph is to hold one's breath, when all faculties converge to capture fleeting reality. It's at that precise moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy.

—Henri Cartier-Bresson (1992, p. 333)

Watching as things arrange themselves in the changing light, the photographer with unobstructed vision sees them as they are. Appropriate images appear without struggle, moving with the flow of light like leaves in a stream, to be immediately reflected in a mind unclouded by preconceived ideas.

—Benjamin Hoff (1981, p. 83)

Suddenly, in the midst of peak moments of joyous discrimination, everything unique begins to look like everything else, as the journey of conscious vision completes the cycle, from seeing the tiniest particulars to the embracement of the All.

With this enlightening “shock of recognition” comes the pure energy of Being. The appearances of the world implode into one great Sameness in the vibration of Eternal Being known in the awakening eye.

—Jeff Berner (1975, p. 124)

I work to attain a “state of heart,” a gentle space offering inspirational substance that could purify one’s vision. Photography, like music, must be born in the unmanifest world of spirit.

—Paul Caponigro (1989, p. 102)

Finally, there is that moment we are truly visionary. There, everything works tremendously well. But all this is only a part of that great game that puts us into a trance, into a state of receptivity. This trance doesn’t last long, however, because life always calls you back to its commands. There are always contingencies. But somehow, despite it all, the effect does last. I think it could be classed as a feeling. For me it is a kind of “religion of looking.”

—Robert Doisneau (1992, p. 80)

I am teaching seeing, not photography. The whole emphasis is on the expansion of the seeing process and learning to bring in what is going on in the body, to become aware of it and to reach a consciousness of it. Conscious photography, then, is being aware of one’s body while making, or looking at, photographs.

—Minor White (1992, p. 284)

When you begin viewing the world through a camera lens, your senses sharpen as your mind and eyes are forced to focus on people and things never before noticed or thought about. I discovered that even if I didn’t always take a picture, the simple act of carrying a camera and searching for something to photograph greatly sharpened my powers of observation and allowed me to experience much more of life.

—Kent Reno (1994, p. 38)

People often ask me how I came upon the idea of creating this work: seeing, observing, and thinking—and the question is answered.

—August Sander (1989, p. 56)

It is part of the photographer's job to see more intensely than most people do. He must have and keep in him something of the receptiveness of the child who looks at the world for the first time or of the traveller who enters a strange country. Most photographers would feel a certain embarrassment in admitting publicly that they carried within them a sense of wonder, yet without it they would not produce the work they do, whatever their particular field. It is the gift of seeing the life around them clearly and vividly, as something that is exciting in its own right.

—Bill Brandt (1989, p. 60)

The business of making a photograph may be said in simple terms to consist of three elements: the objective world (whose permanent condition is change and disorder), the sheet of paper on which the picture will be realized, and the experience which brings them together The experience itself may be described as one of total absorption in the object.

—Aaron Siskind (1989, p. 72)

I try to begin working with no preconceived ideas. Each click of the shutter suggests an emotional and visual involvement and contains the potential of establishing greater rapport with some quintessential aspect of the subject and my feelings toward it, both conscious and preconscious.

—Jerry N. Uelsmann (1989, p. 114)

For the camera, the creative moment is brief—a compelling, ephemeral collision of event and artist. Extreme awareness combined with unobtrusiveness becomes the context the photographer must work within.

—Ken Ruth (1993, p. 46)

I have particularly noticed moments of fresh perception during an afternoon of taking photographs. A photograph can capture the feeling at the moment of experiencing something, just as it is, but first you must open your mind and see: the afternoon sun glancing off a bright yellow-green moss-covered rock in the middle of a clearing in the pine forest; a long horizontal bulbous cloud, dark with rain, yet brilliantly lit underneath by the evening sun; white mist over the bay, through which the faint outline of an island, a boat, and a lone seagull suggests something out of nothing; a pile of steaming cow dung surrounded by yellow dandelions. In order to capture these moments you look not only at the objects themselves, but also at the light shining around and within them. Then, putting the camera down and looking at the ordinary world, suddenly it too seems bright and vibrant.

—Jeremy Hayward (1995, p. 27)

Even the simplest thing is as important as the things we consider important. I consider a fallen leaf as important as the Grand Canyon. It's all important; it's all connected. One couldn't be without the other.

—Ruth Bernhard (Conrad, 1994, p. 31)

I realize now that everything in the natural world, including the most familiar subjects, is imbued with a certain amount of the incomprehensible. By exploring the natural landscape in search of these delicate enigmas, I have begun my own journey into the unknown world.

—Steve Mulligan, (1994, p. 38)

The reason I photograph is to experience the beauty of Nature, of wild places. I explore the essential elements of rock and tree, of cloud and rushing water, to discover the magic and mystery of the landscape.

—William Neill (1995, p. 70)

Is not photography to us a means of imparting our intense excitement and love for certain aspects of life? And is not the recognition of the miracle of the ordinary, the everyday, our passion? I remember once, years ago now, trying to put into words my growing feelings about photography. I tried to describe the act of photographing as direct vision to an aspect of life that might otherwise pass unnoticed. Ours is the antipode of spot news photography—we are not interested in the unusual, but in the usual seen unusually.

—Beaumont Newhall (1993, p. 122)

How wonderful it is to see beauty in what is superficially ugly! How rich nature is! Stieglitz's grass, seen as only Stieglitz can! And the supreme triumph of the interpretive over the documentary—the clouds. Look, says Stieglitz, look at the heavens! All of life is there, if you will but look! Look around you and marvel!

—Beaumont Newhall (1993, pp. 122-123)

The most enduring triumph of photography has been its aptitude for discovering beauty in the humble, the inane, the decrepit. At the very least, the real has a pathos. And that pathos is—beauty.

—Susan Sontag (1989, p. 102)

One of the magical things about photography is the transformation that takes place when you photograph something. Something that inherently has very little going for it, in terms of interest you take in it, can become infinitely more interesting when rendered as a photograph.

—Grant Mudford (Rodriguez, 1993, p. 43)

In photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject. The little, human detail can become a leitmotiv.

—Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952, unpaginated)

Worlds within worlds. Closeup photography enables you to journey great distances, yet at the same time see the perfection of the commonplace and discover life's underlying harmony and order. Seeing the smallest dewdrop, you can stand in awe of perfection.

—John Shaw (1991, p. 33)

When I photograph, I don't have anything in mind except the photograph. I don't think in terms of magazines, books, or promotions. I photograph for the love and the excitement.

—Brett Weston (1989, p. 76)

The emotion is one of great humility—and great interior power, of being one with the world. It is an encounter of the immediacy of visual perception and the quiet serenity of ancient sages. . . . It is a feeling with which I have associated the harbinger of the Tao, perhaps even the herald of God himself.

—George Dewolfe (1995, p. 3)

The intensity of seeing fully at the moment of exposure is what captured my heart about photography.

—Michael Smith (1992, p. 36)

I am not looking for anything. I'm just looking—trying to have as full an experience as possible. The point is to have a full experience—the photograph is just a bonus.

—Michael Smith (1992, p. 36)

As far as I am concerned, taking photographs is a means of understanding which cannot be separated from other means of visual expression. It is a way of shouting, of freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one's own originality. It is a way of life.

—Henri Cartier-Bresson (1976, p. 8)

Taking pictures is savoring life every hundredth of a second.

—Marc Riboud (1994, p. 71)

I am not interested in shooting new things—I am interested to see things new.

—Ernst Haas (1992, p. 17)

Some events last just a short time. They are here today and gone long before tomorrow is even a conscious thought. Change and variation seem to be the only constants in life. You can't take the time to look at something twice; you'll have already missed it. The late night has faded, and the lark has finished its song.

—John Shaw (1991, p. 103)

A camera is only an intermediary between us and a new us. To repeat: we must be as receptive and ready as our equipment.

—Robert Leverant (1971, unpaginated)

Actually it's quite true that he's [Cartier-Bresson] not waiting for anyone since he's not made any appointment, but the very fact that he's adopting this ultra-receptive posture means that by this he wants to help chance along, how should I say, to put himself in a state of grace with chance, so that something might happen, so that some one might drop in.

—André Breton (Cartier-Bresson, 1976, unpaginated)

Photography is the ideal medium in which to challenge assumptions, because of all art forms, it is one people most expect to represent reality. . . . The creative photographer grapples with these expectations, shaping or altering reality by the way he or she approaches a subject.

—Keith A. Boas (1981, p. 10)

We look at the world and see what we have learned to believe is there. We have been conditioned to expect. . . . But, as photographers, we must learn to relax our beliefs.

—Aaron Siskind (Keith A. Boas, 1981, p. 10)

Photographs can also challenge our assumptions of the world by making unexpected connections. A photographer can bring together seemingly unrelated ideas, objects, or events in a way that leads to a new conception.

—Keith A. Boas (1981, p. 12)

There is nothing else in the universe and there is all the time in the universe to take it.

—Robert Leverant (1971, unpaginated)

Seeing is perception with the original, unconditioned eye. It is a state of consciousness in which separation of photographer/subject, audience/image dissolves; in which a reality beyond words and concepts opens up, whose "point" or "meaning" is the direct experience itself.

—John D. Loori (1983b, p. 6)

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NOTES

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1. To distinguish photographers from other sources, when a photographer's name first appears in the text, we include the first name.

2. Maslow (1971) appears to make a distinction similar to that of the *Chuang-tzu's* between Great Understanding and Little Understanding when he proposes the concepts of "Deficiency-cognition" and "Being-cognition." One distinction Maslow makes is that D-cognition (Deficiency-cognition) can be described as a way of thinking that separates, dissects, and pulls things apart. In contrast, B-cognition (Being-cognition) is characterized as a form of thinking in which dichotomies, polarities, or conflicts are harmonized. Second, in B-cognition things are seen as a whole, complete and self-sufficient, whereas in D-cognition they are seen as parts, incomplete, and not self-sufficient. A third distinction is that in B-cognition, things are perceived as if they had no reference to the needs of the perceiver, whereas in D-cognition things are seen as either useful or not useful. A fourth distinction is that B-cognition is self-forgetful, whereas D-cognition is ego-centered. Moreover, Maslow explicitly describes B-cognition as "taoistic," in the same sense that it does not interfere with nature's way. In D-

cognition, however, the perceiver is actively shaping and organizing the world. Finally, in B-cognition the world and the self are often perceived as “amusing, playful, comic, funny, absurd, and laughable,” whereas in D-cognition humor is lacking (except for hostile humor) (Maslow, 1971, pp. 263-264).

3. To illustrate what he meant by growth-motivations, Maslow (1966) borrowed Taoist concepts such as receptivity, selflessness, spontaneity, and noninterference.

4. Bryan Peterson (1988) proposes the following exercise to become aware of potential visual biases:

First, gather seventy-five of your pictures, preferably without people in them. Set them aside, take a sheet of typing paper, and draw six columns on it. At the top of each column list one of the following: line, shape, form, texture, pattern, and color. Now begin looking at your pictures, one by one, with a critical eye. Carefully study each one, and make a check mark in the column that best describes the element(s) that dominate the composition. After you’ve looked through all seventy five, note which columns have the most check marks. . . . Which columns have the least check marks? (p. 47)

5. For the photographer interested in exploring new ways of seeing, Peterson (1988) suggests—as a follow-up exercise to the one quoted above in note 4—to note the elements that scored the lowest (the neglected elements), grab a camera and “head out the door with the goal of identifying and isolating these design components” (p. 47).

6. Combining meditation and art to enhance one another is sometimes a practice in Zen Buddhism (Holmes & Horioka, 1973).

7. What may have motivated Loori to adopt conscious camerawork as a path to mindfulness was his experience during a photography workshop with Minor White in which he experienced what he calls “absolute samādhi” (Forman, 1994, p. 41).

8. The concept of training the habit of paying attention comes from William James’ theory of habits in which he emphasizes the importance of teaching activities to students which form “habits that develop the capacity of attention” (Fadiman & Frager, 1994, p. 300).

9. Although the practice of conscious camerawork can be beneficial in evoking unconstricted awareness as pointed out earlier, it can also generate its own barriers to unconstricted awareness such as clicking the experience away or becoming overly involved with technical or aesthetic concerns.

10. Even when the person is a willing subject, asking for a reenactment often leads to an unsuccessful picture. The point is illustrated in the following description by John Loengard (1987) of a photographic session with Brassai:

My lens is only a few inches from the face of the photographer Brassai. My fingers are around the barrel, focusing. His hand comes up, and he mimics my motion. Quick as a flash—click, click, click. I tell him that was terrific. Marvelous. Can you do it again? I’d come to the end of the roll of film. I wasn’t sure I had the picture. I change film. He repeats the gesture. We try for a whole roll, but something is missing.

When I look at the contact sheet I see I got the picture on that first exposure. Great! Then when we went back, trying to repeat or improve on

it, the psychology is missing. That first time it was his idea, his action, his desire to make a comment. There's tension in the muscles of the eye and fingers. When we repeat it, it's my idea. He is trying to be helpful, but he's just following instructions. Different muscles are working. They don't have tension. (p. 148)

11. Apart from photography, the ability to create new visions without being overly attached to any one of them may foster healthful psychological growth. This is one of the core assumptions of cognitive therapy which emphasizes the importance of mental constructs for psychological health (e.g., Beck, 1967, 1976; Burns, 1980; Ellis, 1962, 1971, 1974; Kelly, 1955). Cognitive therapy theorists usually believe that symptoms such as depression, for example, are partly caused by distorted seeing and thinking which may include seeing and remembering only one's negative experiences; seeing the world in "black and white" (e.g., not achieving perfection is equated with total failure); or magnifying problems—not seeing the "larger picture." From the general perspective of cognitive therapy, the ability to translate one's self-defeating construct of the self and the world into a self-enhancing construct is a key to psychological health.

We note that in helping clients reconstruct their world, cognitive therapists sometimes use similar expressions to those of photographers. Among these expressions (in addition to those above) are: "reframing the problem," "bringing the problem into focus," "getting a new perspective on life," "getting a wider perspective on things," and "seeing the problem in a new light." Photography could well be incorporated into psychotherapeutic practice as a means to recognize the constructive and malleable nature of personal constructs.

12. The multiplicity of realities is also a pivotal relativistic proposition of theories of modernism and postmodernism. In psychospiritual texts, the emphasis upon multiple realities is often used as a way of pointing to the desirability of attaining a "higher realm" or a "higher state of consciousness." The *Chuang-tzu* certainly uses various devices to poke holes into the allegiance to a fixed reality, and although clearly advocating sagehood as the most desirable state of mind, nevertheless appears to advocate more of an acceptance of the flow of all existence or realities rather than actively seeking to achieve a "higher" state of consciousness per se.

13. The evocation of Great Understanding in the *Chuang-tzu* can be compared to May's (1977) advocacy of "giving up," that is, by relinquishing subservience to the discriminatory mind, one allows the emergence of Great Understanding.

14. Photographers who engage in the practice of conscious camerawork have also reported experiencing heightened awareness through their work which also appears to enrich their lives (Berner, 1975; Brandt, 1989; Cartier-Bresson, 1992; Doisneau, 1992). The link between experiencing a meaningful life and the ability to experience heightened states of awareness has also been discussed by Maslow (1980) in his theory of meta-needs. When an individual fails to fulfill the meta-needs (e.g., needs for esthetic fulfillment and transcendence), he or she may experience metapathologies (e.g., existential depression or even suicide). Recognizing the importance of heightened states of awareness for experiencing meaning in life, Maslow spent much of his career studying them, including the peak and the plateau experience, two terms he coined (Maslow, 1971). One of Maslow's (1970) most striking conclusions for the art of living is that the meaning of life need not necessarily be found in a goal: some experiences in life can simply be self-meaningful.