MAN-MOTION

A photographic study
of the physical expression of man

An Honors Project

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From the time of Socrates' division of man into reason, emotion and appetite to the present day, man has made many attempts to define and understand himself. While many have tried to categorize man into parts, using various titles—body/soul, mind/heart, reason/emotion, etc.—others have looked on man as a unit, a whole where the parts overlap and one section cannot be distinguished from the rest.

Socrates put man's reason at the top of his list, finding it the best and most human (as opposed to animal) part of man. He did not discount the rest of man, but felt the mind should be in control. Since his time, the mind has increasingly reduced the survival necessity of physical labor and combat. Extending this historical development, many futurists picture a time to come when man's body, no longer needed, has atrophied as his brain's power and control have grown. It is a world of reason, logic and science.

If this is the course of the future, "human" will come to have a new meaning, incomprehensible to all men of earlier times. During recent history, the "brain" may have dominated on the surface, but the body, feelings and drives, has had an equal, if not more powerful role. A closer examination of history shows man to be incapable of interacting in a truly "rational" way, either in his personal or international relationships. That this condition should suddenly change, with reason taking firm control, is unlikely.
History, built on a timeline marked by wars and colored with romanticism, constantly points out reason's lack of control. Masked by logical rationale, wars actually supply men with much more than a chance to gain land or defend a cause, and until this is recognized and dealt with, wars will continue. Man can build weapons to disintegrate his enemy, but he cannot destroy the emotions that lead to the conflicts. And if he could, he would also probably lose other emotions that are vital to his personality.

Many paths into the future lie in front of man, and I believe futurists are wrong when they diagnose the decline of the body's labor as the beginning of the end of its influence, need and use. Man's body is too closely intertwined with the rest of his being for him to discard it without losing himself.

There is another interpretation of the mechanization of mankind. Whatever he may be, parts or a whole, his primary personal expression has not been through high-minded thought, but through physical action. While the mind has invented machines to reduce physical labor, there are other more important functions the body fulfills.

Studies of body language and encounter group experiences are only now beginning to show how much of man is expressed through his movements, facial expressions, and physical contacts with others, and how much this side of man effects and is affected by man's thoughts. Man's use of the machinery he has built is not a drift away from body expression, but rather a way of increasing his strength, expression and effect.

While his physical labor may be decreasing, man's physical expression, as well as physical feedback, is still very much a
part of his being, gaining additional modes but not diminishing. The '60s youth rebellion of anti-materialism, free love, "tripping," etc. in part was a desperate attempt to regain the physical aspects of life diminished by the post World War II movement towards logical, intellectual living.

The mind's importance seems to have reached its crest on this pendulum swing however, the body has endured and people are starting to reassert its dignity. Man is beginning to realize again that he cannot deny emotion and appetite, and is starting to understand and learn to use this side of himself positively instead of fighting to destroy it. He is beginning to learn from his body, devalorifying science.

Man does not live by reason alone. Some people prefer the direct use of the body for self-expression, going into a physical hobby or profession such as athletics or dance. Others participate vicariously through the performers for this facet and put their personal energy into other modes of expression, be it driving a car, building a skyscraper, a bridge or a sandcastle, dancing, making music, or drumming to the radio.

Man has long done this, but the onslaught of the deified scientific age devalued its meaning. It seems man is taking a mental step backwards after facing the bomb and the computer, and is now searching for a new direction and attitude.

Consciously or not, each person uses his body in countless ways to express himself and draw needed emotional and mental "food" from others. Regardless of how man views himself, his use and need for physical input and output is an indispensable expression of his humanity. Man would lose much more than he
would gain if it were removed. We are still much closer to the "animal" than the futuristic "brain being" and we must admit and even be proud of that if we are to progress on the road to self-understanding.

The following photographic essay is a brief study of current man's expression of himself, through his own movement and through the machinery he builds and guides. To completely illustrate the theme of man's need for physical expression, either photographically or through written research, would be an endless task. It is both very simple and very complex, forming part of the base of our being and coloring our whole world.

While researching I found little written on this subject. Everything related, yet nothing really hit the heart of the theme. It seems something so basic cannot be fully expressed in words, only vaguely felt.

I hope this foreward has at least conveyed some of the thought behind this project, but photography has a universal language all its own, and can say it much better. My view of man is capsulated in this portfolio.