

A CORRECTIVE SYSTEM OF EXERCISING

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September 26th - November 15th, 2015

“A corrective system of exercising” is an allusion to the book by Joseph Pilates, first published in 1934 under the title “Your Health: A Corrective System Of Exercising That Revolutionizes The Entire Field Of Physical Education”. In it, he develops the doctrine of fitness he defined as “contrology”, which aims to restore the integrity of a physical form away from the corrupting effects of the modern way of life. It focuses on self-control and the use of custom designed instruments that provide for a contained method of improvement, an economical balance of effort and the resulting effects. Pilates’ discipline reached its utmost popularity in the midst of a bursting postcapitalism that finds its core in the individual as its operation center. Through the appearance of desire, the body becomes the first form of governability and a platform for this powerful machinery to expand.

The attention to oneself as a disordered body, as well as the focus on self-realization and management in an efficient way become a permanent obligation for the contemporary subject, and a form of labor. Producing an image of this constantly updated body is essential to the contemporary demand and it becomes an institutionalized practice.

Under this light, athletics appears as an emblematic field of this conjunction: it only operates under the logic of success and everything else is a collateral contingency, a means to an end. The ethic of effort and sacrifice is revealed in the equation by which there is no achievement without pain, and such a process requires a rigid discipline and self-command. The practice of ascetism, *aksexis*, was not the renouncing of the self but the process of a progressive consideration of subjectivity and it consisted of exercises in which the subject places himself to verify if he can overcome them. While *meditatio* was the exercise of imaginary experience in thought, *gymnasia* was the training in a real situation. Thus, *gymnasia* includes a long tradition of physical privation, sexual abstinence and rituals of purification¹. The specific devices developed by Pilates embodied the paradox of a larger apparatus of torment; his instruments often resemble those used for torturing but aim to serve the purpose of empowering the individual with the control of his own body by achieving excellence of shape and purity of form.

Detached from its original context, the exercising of *aksexis* has survived to the present day as a certain understanding of the body and the mind as one same thing in the doctrine of individualism, in a superficial mixture of spiritual believes and scientific positions which induce practices such as Pilates’ to be widely acclaimed.

Alby Álamo’s research develops as an observation of the way our desires are shaped in the common ground of phenomenon like the glorification the athletic life, the duty of self-projection and the status of the celebrity as a paradigm of global success. His work deals with the resulting production of images and the question of how they are reorganized and assumed.