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SPIRIT - MIND - BODY HARMONY HUMAN AESTHETIC AND FUNCTIONAL IDEAL

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Abstract

This article investigates the integrative paradigm "spirit-mind-body" from the perspective of the Pilates method, proposing a philosophical and practical reconstruction of the concepts of health and human functionality. Starting from the tension between classical mind and body dualism and the emergence of a modern holistic approach, this study analyzes the connection between bodily expression, physical functionality, and mental state in the context of the evolution of physical education, somatic culture, and neuroscience.

The benefits of Pilates as a mind-body intervention are highlighted, emphasising postural control, conscious breathing, movement re-education, and supporting optimal functionality and body aesthetics. In parallel, it emphasises the role of physical education as a pillar of public health and the need to integrate it into national prevention and rehabilitation strategies.

The article supports the recognition of the Pilates method as an educational, therapeutic and cultural tool, capable of stimulating bodily autonomy and psychophysiological balance in a society marked by sedentarism, digitalisation and postural imbalance.

Keywords: Pilates, breathing, body harmony, functional rehabilitation, public health, holism, dualism, sports philosophy, physical education, neuroscience

Introduction

"The greatest resource is above all the perfect state of the body!" wrote Marguerite Yourcenar (1951), the first woman to be received by the French Academy, reproducing the Hadrian memoirs. Was the emperor ignoring the role of the mind one of the most sophisticated spirits of antiquity? No way! Emperor Hadrian was one of those who helped spread Greek culture and civilization in the Empire, which formed the basis of Western European civilization and culture.

From astronomy or physics to the legal sciences, and from philosophy to politics or sport, **mind-body** or **matter-spirit** dualism has occupied human thought for millennia, and the debate continues as heated today. An...ad hoc dualism, I would dare to identify the action-reaction mechanism in the process of assimilating new knowledge during vocational training. A process that, through conditioning or reinterpretation, provides new valences and new research directions for the information previously stored in our minds.

The sacred *dualism* "**Healthy mind in a healthy body**", a precept that the furious Juvenal, who was angry at the shortcomings of Roman society, sent to the future world through his satires, today incorporates sport in general and implicitly Pilates philosophy. However, the completeness of the holistic approach, Because "*the whole is more than the sum of its parts*", as the philosopher of philosophers, Aristotle, warned thousands of years ago. Humans act and react, think, plan, design, and condition their well-being as individuals in harmony between mind and body. Further, by the sacred harmony of the mind-body-spirit triangle, concerned with the optimal and aesthetic functionality of the body, we are aware that maintaining a harmonious balance is part of good health in all its aspects. Such a perspective is also reinforced in the coaching literature, where a holistic framework is promoted, going beyond the limits of traditional humanistic psychology (Mallett & Rynne, 2010).

Even politicians, actors, and orators undergo intense training to complete their speeches and public roles with the semantics of mimicry and movements coordinated by the brain. Worked and managed through long exercises of decision and mind control, then executed to achieve the desired effects with the help of posture and/or gestures. In these professions, conditioning by an optimal holistic chain becomes alpha and omega for success. Professions for which mere control of facial muscles makes the difference between resounding success and crushing failure in espionage, politics, and acting. (Ellsworth, 2009). This dynamic interplay between body and expression is also examined in therapeutic contexts, particularly within studies published in a dedicated journal on artistic therapies (The Arts in Psychotherapy, 1981).

Man's ability "to project mentally and to express adequately and suggestively in a given situation an idea or a state of mind" inspired us to reproduce here the example provided by Radu Beligan, one of the great Romanian actors (Neacșu, 1971). He recounted how, during rehearsals, Victor Ion Popa (a writer, a versatile man of letters) "taught us how to translate the hesitations or flickers of intelligence (...) or through an undefined gesture, the undefined expression of a state of mind (...). Once he showed us 98 possibilities of suggesting an attitude just from the way you sit on the chair" (Radu Beligan - "Insomniac's note" - 2008).

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What do these things tell us? That... although no one is perfect, we can make progress and change for the better on the premise of seeking the right information and making choices that suit us. In general, our allies were sports movements. Part of the credit for increasing life expectancy by more than three decades in just a century is due to public health and organised medicine, and to the implementation of physical discipline in the mechanisms of everyday life.

Unfortunately, the absence of information in the public arena and the neglect and ignorance of this branch of education by the state structures responsible for public health are a reality. Public policies and programmes in this direction are lacking. It is practiced only in a few urban centres and very small social groups.

Economically strong countries (e.g. Australia) where statutory institutions have considered Pilates on the list of free health insurance.

In our country, there is neither a coherent strategy among institutions, nor sufficient information on the subject. Public health can be a powerful ally in strong economies. The potential of the labour force can be improved by intelligently and profitably directing the workforce towards the right jobs. After careful observation by a specialist who analyzes the peculiarities and potential of the individual, the body and mind alike.

However, the information should reach the public and institutions, be known and understood; otherwise, it would suffer the fate of...encrypted texts. Because paraphrasing Hegel (1996), not reaching the public would be equal to.... *"To put the laws up high, as Dionysus the tyrant did, so that no one can read them, or to hide them in cipher texts so that no one can understand them, is one and the same injustice."*

Those addressing the public need to consider three categories of hypothetically interested individuals.

1. Those who are not connected by their activities and concerns, but want to know!
2. Those who have already started the physical preparation process.
3. Those who have already advanced but want to deepen, understand, and go further.

The public should be given sufficient information to process in their own minds when looking for solutions to decide which therapeutic technique suits them.

The importance of physical education on a larger social scale must be explained at the institutional level as well as at the level of understanding of a critical mass. Ignorance coupled with scepticism is exacerbated by the avalanche invasion of a chaotic, self-regulated industry that generally infiltrates almost every aspect of human life. From health to stock market investments, from divorce to sleep quality or sports. *"We're in danger of relying on life coaches for everything!"* It is worth noting that sociologists should remark. So ubiquitous are these coaches that they have become unavoidable; even for those who do not seek them out, one analyst caustically observes.

Linked to dualism, we risk forming a "pair" between words and bodies in the communication process. It is interesting to note the conclusions of experts in the science of communication about the importance of the meaning of gestures and body control in conveying a verbal message. They say that only 7% of verbal communication is effective; the remaining 90% is communicated through gestures, postural attitude, and breathing, which emphasises, emphasises, and gives force to a particular word, to the end of a sentence, and even gives power to a syllable. We linked this information to the importance of conveying public information regarding the use of sports in everything related to the optimal use of human resources (speech, attitude, posture, breathing, etc.). We would add a significant incident on the effectiveness of the optimal formula when the body and mind act.. in tandem. As an example from the world of politics seen across the planet, *"The Telegraph"* news paper analysed Trump at a space rocket launch in an **unfamiliar** environment. Trump, who normally, through strong, even ostentatiously expressed gestures, shakes the hands of world leaders until he unbalances their position, watched the rocket launch intimidated and unsteady, ("like a fish out of water" one journalist mischievously noted), anxiously reaching into his pockets, not knowing what to do with his hands, expressing anxiety and awkwardness. Emotion caused him to forget to use of his mind. At the opposite pole, the safe mind-body equation worked at the inauguration ceremony as the 47th American president. Familiar environment! When absolute control of gestures, facial expressions and body language work coordinate with the mind's decisions (Smith, 2024)..

The human mind, as the precursor of every human gesture, seemed to me not only emphasised but also praised in the following comparison: Bees and men also build hexagons. Perfect hexagons! The difference in achieving this perfection is that man first projects them in his mind, whereas the bee imprints them into its genetic code.

The optimal functioning of the human organism involves the equally optimal maintenance of all body components through choices made by the mind. It is known that organs that are constantly unused are neglected. The organism no longer wastes energy with it, eventually leading to weakening of the whole. Many studies have observed muscle atrophy while immobilising an arm to repair a broken bone. Good circulation strengthens a muscle so that it supports a joint, a limb, a strong spine in its perfect verticality, etc.

In his search for the most appropriate movements or attitudes, Joseph Pilates was careful to observe and analyse the movements that animals naturally perform (Gurtner, 2013; Ellsworth, 2009). They perform perfectly, because the entire animal kingdom has a genetic program from which it cannot deviate. Man no longer has this, but he has the analytical and selective decision-making power of the mind. With this in mind, he analyses, selects, and opts. All movements have the same value; however, not all are suitable for everyone. They are conditioned by a specific diagnosis of the subject's general condition based on the intention to engage in therapy. Therefore, this approach should be *both* analytical and

systematic. This raises essential questions about the tension between genetic determinism and human decision-making, a concept addressed through the lens of gene-centered evolution (Dawkins, 2013).

The **8 principles** that make up and define the essence of Pilates condition, and support each other as parts of a whole are breathing, control, concentration, centring, precision, fluidity, isolation, and routine (or order) (Wells et al., 2012).

These principles are conditioned by subordinating themselves to an integrative synthesis conceived by Joseph Pilates and adapted to... the vertical biped that is Man, with his spin exposed to the effort of supporting his own weight and exposed to the difficulty of the work he does, assaulted by sedentarism and more recently - differently, but dangerously - assaulted by digitised work.

We stopped using one of the principles of: **breathing**.

Scientists are just beginning to understand the links between breathing and the mind: *Can you breathe stress?* They wonder! Neuroscientists are paying close attention to the force by which a carefully directed, correct breath rides oxygen through all parts of the human body, including "His Majesty's Brain." Seemingly trivial, the act may call for a breathing "coach" when a dysfunction is identified in the individual's breathing pattern.

Everything that is alive **breathes**, but only a man can educate his respiratory system to perfection, bringing the body's functionality closer to optimum. And the brain!

In support of the brain, an organ of so much concern today when life expectancy is increasing and the degenerative 'sunset' of the mind is increasingly being questioned, come some studies that bring news on **breathing**. Can breathing also control mood? A study recently published in November 2024 in *Nature Neuroscience* showed that breathing can be added to the list of factors that influence mental health. An experiment showed that correctly directed breathing could suppress anxious behaviour in mice (Nature Neuroscience, 2024).

Scientists give hope. A meta-analysis published in the *Scientific Report* completed the results of 12 PCRs with over 700 participants. In 2023, Stanford University researchers published a study in *Cell Reports Medicine*: Can breathing control mood? Their answers were encouraging. (Knol et al., 2024).

Confirmation also originates from life. Ethiopian-born Dutch athlete Sifan Hassan, a three-time Olympic champion, confessed in a TV interview after winning gold in the gruelling Paris 2024 marathon that she had a moment on the last leg when she thought she was going to collapse. She activated, with the help of her mind, that cleverly managed breath, and managed not only to finish the course but also to win gold, setting a new Olympic record.

The twenty-first century has been challenged to ethically resolve the conflictual knots generated by sports of gender, sex, difficulty, and risk. Occasionally, the consequences are significant. It is not only at the personal level of the athlete, but also socially. It is to the ancient Greeks that we owe not only the Olympics, but also the ethical demands of sports. After Ancient Rome brought Greek civilisation and culture to Western Europe, there were centuries, followed by millennia, in which attitudes and practices were formed to harmonise physical education with moral rectitude. However, as a cultural model, it has evolved from one country to another over the centuries. Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries more so, and Latin and Eastern European countries less so. This aligns with the view that sport serves not only a physical function but also embodies ethical and philosophical dimensions rooted in its practice (Kretchmar, 1994).

Modern society is responding to this uncomfortable reality by reviving concepts that have faded over the centuries.

It should be noted that the Greek ideal of health and beauty was closely watched and nurtured not only by the art world, but also by the world of politicians who saw it that youth-boys only, of course, except in Sparta, where girls were trained equally with boys, after the first years of studying grammar and music, took up intensive sports, physical education, wrestling, and gymnastics (Sheldrake, 2007; McNamee & Morgan, 2015).

Today, the hype, the rush for performance in sports competitions "has robbed them of their beauty", wrote Dave Sheinin in the 5 March issue of the Washington Post, examining the dynamics of sporting aesthetics.

Not financing or defining - at least for us - in the absence of information, is not a good ally. While the economic benefits of health to society and the economy in general are factors to be considered, they are just as compelling as the benefits to individuals.

Conclusions

Beyond achieving individual well-being, it maximises the potential of the workforce in society.

The experience and outcomes of other countries' health policies can influence decisions in lagging countries. In Australia, for example, interest in the benefits of sports has led the government to debate whether Pilates should come under the umbrella of free health insurance.

In our country, the press has been late in catching up, but it has caught up and is carefully exploring the attitudes towards the physical culture of children and adolescents.

The Republica platform publishes a documentary about insufficient institutional involvement in physical education in schools and in families where it is still fashionable to exempt children from sports lessons. In contrast, the author, a teacher from Arad, cites the positive example of Austria, where school-age children had to pass several physical exercise tests (balancing on a balance beam, jumping rope, tumbling) in order to be admitted to the first grade.



Simple, proportionate to the child's age, but essential for his or her academic and social development. The physical body must adapt to different information environments such as the mind. Exaggeration and ugliness lurk a stone's throw away. The whirlwind of advertisements and the unfiltered industry of speculative images are difficult to face without the censorship of education.

From the Greece Olympiads, the unrivalled Aristotle bequeathed us critical thinking and taught us to ask questions. perhaps most importantly, they **learned** to ask questions. (Sheldrake, 2007; McNamee & Morgan, 2015). The answers are given to us by our teachers, and they help us to unravel the unknowns that we try, through study, to put into practice. Mindful of our cultural heritage, we recover all that we have received and are attentive to the ambitions of the 21st century. It has been said that "*since Aristotle and Archimedes, the sciences have been in a standstill*". The UN recently picked up the gauntlet and designated 2025 as the - **Year of Quantum Science and Technology**.

The dreamers hope, encouraged by ever-more daring research, that science will at some point be able to prevent or correct damage through repair mechanisms inserted into the embryo. While material and financial resources are limited, man's boundless curiosity and anxiety of deciphering the infinite mean that the adventure of knowledge knows no bounds!

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