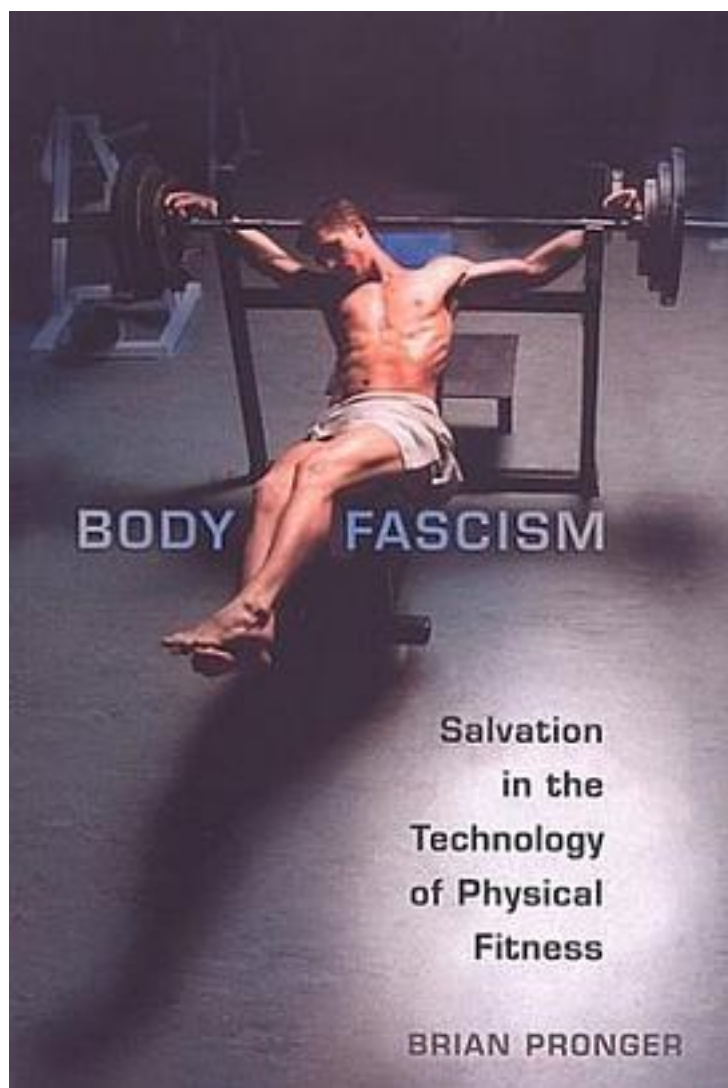


Body Fascism



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著者:Pronger, Brian

出版者:Univ of Toronto Pr

出版时间:2002-11

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780802084804

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, the physically fit body became the ideal of modern western societies. Images of lean, sculpted men and women dominate the cultural landscape and are now ubiquitous on billboards, in magazines, film, television, and video. Science and popular culture are profoundly mixed in the contemporary scene, and have lead to a host of exercising and dieting technologies that will make actual bodies fit the taught, muscular ideal. Many people desire this body and the attractiveness, health, longevity, and personal security that it represents. But, as Brian Pronger argues, this approach transforms more than the body's functions and contours; it diminishes its transcendent power, compelling it conform to a profoundly limited imagination of what the body can do. Calling upon an impressive array of philosophers and other writers who have been critical of modern techno-scientific approaches to life, Pronger pries open the texts that form the technology of physical fitness in order to consider what they try to produce. Body Fascism views technology not simply as a tool for other projects, but as a project itself, producing its own realities that Pronger argues are ultimately nihilistic. Indeed, he says there are disquieting parallels between what technology has done to the environment and what it is doing to the body. Exploring fascinating intersections between postmodern Western and Zen approaches to life, he develops a theory of the body and of science and technology that shows how the body's energy is vulnerable to insidious forms of exploitation as well as harbouring the potential for transcendence. The sheer scope of this book make it unique in the discipline and it will be of great interest not only to scholars of the body, society, science and technology, but also to those who are personally drawn to modern technologies of physical fitness.

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