



Amusements and education of the body in Protestantism of Benjamin Franklin (1682-1791)

Divertimentos e educação do corpo no protestantismo de Benjamin Franklin (1682-1791)¹

Divertimientos y educación del cuerpo en el protestantismo de Benjamin Franklin (1682-1791)

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to comprehend the elements that characterized the posture of north American Protestantism regarding amusements and the education of the body. Although there are many works on Benjamin Franklin few have explored the relation of their contributions with a prescription on the use of free time and the education of the body. The sources were Pennsylvania legislations and the writings of Franklin. The analysis evidence that, if on one hand the laws constituted a set of interdictions regarding idleness and amusements, on the other hand Franklin's writings brought favorable mentions about activities such as chess and athletic practices, justifying based on a utilitarian moral.

Keywords: Protestant ethics. Amusements. Free time. America. History.

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Resumo

O artigo tem como objetivo compreender os elementos que caracterizaram a postura do protestantismo norte-americano em relação aos divertimentos e à educação do corpo. Apesar de existirem muitas obras sobre Benjamin Franklin poucas exploraram a relação das suas contribuições com uma prescrição sobre os divertimentos e educação do corpo. As fontes utilizadas foram legislações da Pensilvânia e os escritos de Franklin. As análises evidenciam que, se por um lado as leis constituíam um quadro de condenação da ociosidade e dos divertimentos, por outro, os escritos trazem observações favoráveis a atividades como o xadrez e práticas físicas, justificando estes divertimentos a partir de uma moral utilitarista.

Palavras Chaves: Ética protestante. Divertimentos. Tempo livre. América. História.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es comprender los elementos que caracterizaron la postura del protestantismo norteamericano respecto a las diversiones y a la educación del cuerpo. A pesar de existir varias obras sobre Benjamin Franklin, pocas han explorado la relación de sus contribuciones con una prescripción sobre divertimentos y educación del cuerpo. Las fuentes utilizadas fueron legislaciones de Pensilvania y los textos escritos por Franklin. Los análisis evidencian que si por un lado las leyes constituían un cuadro de condenación de la ociosidad y de los divertimentos, por otro los escritos traen observaciones favorables a actividades como ajedrez y prácticas físicas, justificándolos a partir de una moral utilitarista.

Palabras-clave: Ética protestante. Divertimientos. Tiempo libre. América. Historia.

Initial Considerations

The space that amusements took in colonial American society has already been the target of research by scholars such as Dulles (1965), Struna (1988) and Overman (2011). Generally speaking, the colonies were hostile environments due to the presence of wild animals, indigenous attacks, scarcity of products, distance from the European metropolis, unknown territory, among other factors (KARNAL, 2007), which made the use of amusements by Americans somewhat troubled.

Europeans who immigrated to North America, mostly English Puritans, sought to make colonial life prosperous and safe for the community. On this depended the conduct to be adopted by the citizens, which was determined by laws based on a strict religious morality of Protestant nature in most colonies (JABLE, 1974; OVERMAN, 2011). Amusements were not looked upon favorably by the first Protestants since the 17th century, mainly by the Calvinist branch (OVERMAN, 2011), because they believed that the life of any individual should be filled exclusively with labor and religious activities. Thus, having fun was understood as a sin, a way of alienating from the vocation that each believer was called to fulfill during their life as part of a spiritually assigned mission.²

These characteristics do not seem to have been different in the Pennsylvania colony, a community founded by Protestants in 1681 by Quaker William Penn, as Karnal (2007) reports. There are laws from the colonial period that show how morality was marked by restrictions on what was considered a bad use of spare time (JABLE, 1974; OVERMAN, 2011; AMSTEL, et. al. 2019). In this sense, the Protestant morality envisaged, both in labor and leisure, the individual's spiritual fulfillment. All time should be devoted to spiritual seclusion. Amusements did not seem to assist in the individual's redemption and did not indicate a form of contribution to the community either (DULLES, 1965; OVERMAN, 2011, AMSTEL, et. al. 2019). It becomes natural to think, therefore, that when Protestants legislated about the time spending in the colonies, they established reprimands to what was deemed an improper use of their free moments.

The activities in which people engaged during the colonial period included games of chance (cards, dice and boards), divination, target games (arrows, darts and shooting), hunting, fishing, races (on foot, in carriages or riding animals – bulls, horses, donkeys, etc.), leaping, bowling, billiards, as well as blood sports – practices that involved betting on dog, rooster and even bear fights. It is also worth noting the existence of dances and balls (AMSTEL et. al, 2019). For Struna (1988), this desire to curtail several of these activities came mainly from gentlemen – men usually from the upper class and better educated – and from part of the middle class. They had a preference for activities such as rowing, horseback riding and hiking (GEMS; BORISH; PFISTER, 2017), but could reject practices that were common to equivalent social classes in other countries. An example of this was the rejection of theaters in the colonial period of Philadelphia (MORGAN, 1966). In this sense, there are signs of not so clear criteria within the American colonial culture regarding the acceptance of certain amusements, something that requires analysis for understanding.

To better comprehend this, it becomes inviting to study a well-known figure in American history, Benjamin Franklin, a citizen of Philadelphia (capital of Pennsylvania), who wrote many texts throughout the 18th century that exposed his particular view of the use of free time and amusements. At first, he seems to share the Protestant opinion, being a fierce critic of

² Protestantism, started by Luther and deepened by Calvin, instituted, among other beliefs, the notion of a vocation for all its members (OVERMAN, 2011). In a different sense from Catholicism, which understood vocation as the call to priestly work, the Protestant interpreted that all believers should carry out the mission given to them by God through their own profession. The clerical figure was thus extinguished, and all members of the Protestant church should dedicate their lives to labor and spirituality. This results in a radical stance on work, which Max Weber (2004) points out as one of the social causes of modern capitalism.

the lazy, idle and bohemian. However, a deeper analysis indicates that Franklin devoted many favorable mentions to athletic practices and chess, amusements he found useful in different aspects. Being one of the most widely read authors in American history at the time (ISAACSON, 2015), it becomes interesting to analyze his work in order to understand these conflicting stances between good and bad amusements, as well as the ways of using spare time and the educational elements present in them.³

This article seeks precisely to confront the Protestant morality, represented in the colonial legislation, with the writings of Franklin, an individual who now seemed to be in line with the religious precepts of his community, now presented new ways of using free time based on a utilitarian stance. Thus, it sought to answer the following investigative question: How were the notions of amusements and education of the body present in Benjamin Franklin? In this sense, the general objective established for the research was: to understand the elements that characterized the stance of Protestantism on amusements and the education of the body in Benjamin Franklin's writings. In their turn, the specific objectives were: a) to analyze how the Protestant morality was illustrated in the legislation of the period regarding the control of amusements; b) to investigate how a utilitarian logic present in the Protestant morality affected the control of amusement practices and the pedagogical elements involved. c) to present the notions that Benjamin Franklin attributed to his writings on educational issues related to amusements.

Sources

This article founded its data on documental sources from books and laws selected to understand aspects of the American Protestant ethics from 1682 to 1791. The texts separated as sources for analysis were:

- 1) 'Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout': written in 1780 by Benjamin Franklin as a comic piece, in which the author finds himself in a dialogue with his gout disease, which afflicted him at the end of his life. The text portrays his distress about the time wasted on sedentary activities (including the chess he so much enjoyed) and which caused his deteriorated health condition.
- 2) 'The Morals of Chess': written by Benjamin Franklin and published in The Columbian Magazine in December 1786, it consists of an essay that presents the moral virtues that can be extracted from playing chess, and exposes the behaviors to be adopted by players during a match.
- 3) 'The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin': a writing of the main events in Franklin's life from his own autobiographical perspective, published in 1791.
- 4) 'Poor Richard's Almanack': one of Franklin's most famous publications, it consisted of annual editions filled with sayings, anecdotes and advice given by the author under the pseudonym of Richard Saunders. The date of each publication varies. The source

³ Born on January 17, 1706, in Boston, and deceased on April 17, 1790, in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin filled his 84 years of life with the most diverse tasks. From a candle maker at his father's firm to an influential politician in Philadelphia, Franklin worked as a printer (newspapers, almanacs, books and even banknotes), inventor, civil servant, diplomat, ambassador, constituent, writer, journalist, editor and colonial representative (FRANKLIN, 1791; ROBERTS, 1991; ISAACSON, 2015). As a scientist and inventor, he stood out mainly for the production of the first models of lightning rods, resulting from his research on storms, which are markedly known for the stories of flying kites in rainy nights infested with lightning.

used is a compilation of all volumes made in 1999 by Jon Craft. The original publications occurred from 1732 onwards, spanning different periods throughout the life of the North American intellectual.

5) 'Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania': a leaflet by Benjamin Franklin published in Philadelphia in 1749, on which he advocated differentiated education for the Pennsylvania colony. It highlights the inclusion of physical exercises as a curricular component, still in the 18th century.

6) 'The Great Law': published in 1682, it consists of an authentic constitution of laws for the Pennsylvania colony. It was referred to throughout the text as 'Blue Law'. This source is added to the research for contributing to the contextualization of the period about which Franklin wrote, representing the religious morality of the Puritans⁴.

Utilitarianism in Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was the child of a Calvinist education, bearing in mind that his family and the community in which he grew up had this religious orientation. However, for most of his life, he declared himself a deist (ISAACSON, 2015). It should be noted that it was not along the same lines as the European deists, remembered mainly in the figure of Diderot, but a Franklinian deism, so to speak, as he was essentially pragmatic and utilitarian in his belief about the divine. For Franklin, believing in the existence of a supreme entity attentive to humanity was something useful for society in general, since the virtues valued by this superior being would form the morality that would base life in community.⁵

Because classical deism believed that the higher entity did not care about human actions and relegated nature to the role of controlling divine creation (AQUINO, 2013), Franklin saw in this theology a presupposition for the emergence of a moral relativism that could be harmful to society (ISAACSON, 2015). At the same time, he did not agree with the Calvinism in which he was raised, which claimed a predestination of Grace being received by a few chosen ones, as this would imply the disqualification of good deeds, which Franklin so much believed to be the strength of religions, the utilitarian basis of belief (ISAACSON, 2015). It can be said that Franklin's deism, therefore, encompassed what he considered good (read useful) in classical deism, with some values of Calvinist puritanism, rejecting what he considered bad (read useless, non-practical) in the two theologies.

Regarding utilitarianism, Franklin was a philosopher who, in many ways, seemed to have prepared the philosophical terrain for this current of the American thought. The philosophical current of pragmatism officially originated with the thinkers William James and Charles Sanders Peirce at the end of the 19th century, and has as its most prominent name the philosopher John Dewey (SOUZA, 2010). However, Isaacson (2015) considers that the origins of this philosophical school lie in the contributions of Benjamin Franklin. More broadly, pragmatism essentially defends the idea that the production of any type of knowledge must be linked to a practical result. Utilitarianism, in its turn, according to Sandel (2015), is a line of thought that attributes to moral values the wellbeing of society

⁴ Just as mentioned at the time, as well as many other laws (JABLE, 1974). It is due to the type of paper on which they were published, in this case, bluish in color.

⁵ Deism, fruit of the Enlightenment, originated in the 17th century and consists of a religious philosophy that despises the supernatural, religious dogma and the idea of revealing religious texts. Most deists believe that human reason is the ultimate attribute for confirming the existence of the divine, in which the experience of nature would indicate its presence. Its absence of rituals and traditions in relation to the supernatural is the reason for its decline and gives strength to modern atheism to establish itself (VARTANIAN, 1949).

as a whole and of the parties involved, having a normative character. In this way, according to the author, an action will have its usefulness deducted from how much happiness it has produced for individuals. In this sense, Isaacson (2015) states that there is evidence of pragmatism and utilitarianism in Franklin's texts.

Virtues Infused in a Game – Control and Usefulness in Franklin's Amusements

Before pointing out Franklin's favorable statements to certain elements of physical culture, it is necessary to indicate first a possible contradiction in his writings regarding the act of having fun. Apparently, the author condemned time “wasted” on activities such as games, as shown in the text *Settling Down*, present in his biography (FRANKLIN, 1791). In said text, Franklin stated that he did not spend time in taverns, games and amusements: “Reading was the only amusement I allowed myself. I spent no time in taverns, games, or frolics of any kind” (FRANKLIN, 1791, p.81)⁶.

There was also advice given to the general population in ‘*Poor Richard Almanack*’ (FRANKLIN, 1732), when he argued that games were things that diminished health and ambition. There are several other passages in which he condemned amusements that, in his opinion, added nothing useful to the lives of individuals:

It would be thought a hard government that should tax its people one-tenth part of their time, to be employed in its services, but idleness taxes many of us much more, if we reckon all that is spent in absolute sloth, or doing of nothing, with that which is spent in idle employments or amusements, that amount to nothing.” Sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life (FRANKLIN, 1791, p. 136).

In another chapter of his biography, entitled *Early Life*, Franklin showed regret from his youthful period when he spent excessive time going to plays and other places of amusement, wasting the money he earned working:

I immediately got into work at Palmer's, then a famous printing-house in Bartholomew Close, and here I continued near a year. I was pretty diligent, but spent with Ralph a good deal of my earnings in going to plays and other places of amusement. We had together consumed all my pistoles. (...) This was another of the great errata of my life, which I should wish to correct if I were to live it over again (FRANKLIN, 1791, p. 63).

With so many criticisms of moments of idleness, Franklin may seem to reproach himself for spending time on amusements, preferring an ascetic life and without permission to feel pleasure. Reading seemed to be the only activity he tolerated as entertainment, but probably because it was useful for intellectual development. About the times that he claims to have attended amusement environments, he showed a deep regret.

Benjamin Franklin's stance was in line with the Protestant morality that prevailed in most of the American colonies of the period, in which Puritanism corresponded to the majority faith (WEBER, 2004; KARNAL, 2007; OVERMAN, 2011). The contempt for idleness and

⁶ Physical culture is a concept used by Kirk (1999) to refer to a set of practices aimed at maintaining, representing and regulating the body, being represented in three codified and institutionalized practices: sport, recreation and exercise. In the South American academic scenario, the concept has been operationalized recently, being divided into sport, amusements (in a broader sense, beyond mere physical recreations) and gymnastics (REGIANNI, 2016; FURTADO; QUITZAU; MORAES E SILVA, 2018; MORAES E SILVA; QUITZAU, 2018; MORAES E SILVA; QUITZAU; SOARES, 2018; SCHARAGRODSKY, 2014; 2017).

time spent on amusements in the Pennsylvania colony, where Franklin grew up, had its greatest representation in the 'Blue Law', a set of rules to be followed by all the inhabitants of the region in question. Jable (1974) classified them as a proposal made by legislative councils, organized by governor Quaker William Penn in 1680 and put into effect in 1682. There were law articles aimed directly at controlling amusement-related behaviors:

whosoever shall introduce into this province, or frequent such rude and riotous sports and practices as prizes, stage-plays, masques, revels, bull-baitings, and such like shall be regarded as peace breakers, to be fined at least twenty shillings or to suffer ten days imprisonment at hard labor. (PENNSYLVANIA, 1682, p. 4).

It should be noted here that the amusements considered 'disturbing' of the order were not only the practices considered violent, but also certain dances and activities deemed rude for the behavioral pattern of that time. Therefore, it was not just a civilizing trend in the sense of reducing aggression impulses and increasing the control of violence, as explained by Elias and Dunning (1992). There was a reference to 'rude' and 'riotous' sports, as well as to masques. In addition to the practices mentioned, the document continues with its restrictions: "(...) if any person be Convicted of playing Cards, Dice, Lotteries, or such like enticing, vain and evil Sports and Games, such person shall, for every such offence, pay five Shillings, or Suffer five Days Imprisonment (at hard labor) "(PENSILVÂNIA, 1682, p. 5).

In view of the moral materialized in the Blue Law, the Philadelphia context in which Franklin was inserted was that of a very rigid moral towards games of chance, dances, violent practices, balls and drinking. The moral of the period indicated that the prescribed medicine was that of deprivation of liberty under forced labor, capable of reeducating the transgressive body for life in society. Idleness, so rejected by the local morality, was also evident in Franklin's thinking. He considered that time was precious and should not be wasted on useless practices, just for fun and/or personal satisfaction. One of his letters, written in 1732, listed a series of individuals who exhibit useless, undesirable and morally condemnable behavior:

I have several times in your paper seen reflections upon us women for idleness and extravagance, but I do not remember to have once seen such animadversions upon the men. If we were disposed to be censorious we could furnish you with instances enough; I might mention Mr. Billiard, who loses more than he earns at the green table, and would have been in jail long since had it not been for his industrious wife. Mr. Hustlecap, who every market day at least, and often all day long, leaves his business for rattling of half pence in a certain alley; or Mr. Finikin, who has seven different suits of fine clothes and wears a change every day, while his wife and children sit at home half naked; Mr. Crownhim, always dreaming of the checkerboard, and who cares not how the world goes with his family so he does but get the game; Mr. Totherpot the tavern haunter, Mr. Bookish the everlasting reader, Mr. Tweedledum and several others, who are mighty diligent at any thing besides their proper business (FRANKLIN, 1844, p. 538).⁷

⁷ Franklin is likely referring to the Shove Half Penny game, a very popular amusement, apparently, in English pubs between the 15th and 19th centuries (THE ONLINE GUIDE TO TRADITIONAL GAMES, 2019). It seems to be a competition that involved precision in throwing coins on a wooden board, on which they should fall in certain spaces that resulted in different scores. The winner collected all the coins thrown by him and his opponents. One can assume that, at least at the time Benjamin Franklin was writing, it was considered a game of chance and should, by the tone of the writing, be something morally condemnable.

Regarding this passage, it should be noted that the names used by Franklin are satires, puns and/or simple word play. For instance, the pseudonym that signs the analyzed letter was that of Celia Single. Such a procedure was a constant in the Franklinian writing, since when he wrote in newspapers in Pennsylvania, he frequently signed with the pseudonym Silence Dogood (ISAACSON, 2015). In the excerpt above, there are several names that originally intended to satirize, such as Mr. Billiard, the tavern haunter Totherpot, and Mr. Bookish. However, the main point of the reproduced passage is the influence of Protestant morality in Benjamin Franklin's statements. This deprivation of amusements, which also translates into asceticism, is configured as a Protestant "virtue", as noted by Overman (2011). Asceticism also seemed to commune with another virtue useful to Protestantism, the moral of time control. Benjamin Franklin, more than once, mentioned time as something to lose or gain. In 'Poor Richard's Almanack' (1732), one of his first teachings was that time is money, that is, something that could be undertaken, invested, but that if misused became the instrument of condemnation of the individual in society.

Despite openly condemning some amusements, Franklin seemed to have no problems with other practices, such as chess and swimming. This is due to the fact that he did not see them as mere games, but serious activities. This process of inserting seriousness into playful elements has already been extensively explored by authors such as Huizinga (2000), Guttman (2004) and Overman (2011) and seems to be strongly associated with the processes of greater rationalization of game practices and amusements that occurred in secularized societies. Characteristics such as rationalization and control permeated, from the Franklinian perspective, activities such as chess and physical practices, and could have the potential to explain why they are not activities deemed useless in their morality, as the sources to be explored later will evidence. Above all, there was a constant defense of utilitarian justifications for such activities.

Utilitarianism would be the sine qua non within the game justification process in the period in question. The usefulness of games was initially justified as a means for recovering the physical vigor spent on labor. However, there was a wide network of prohibitions, as amusements that were violent in nature, gambling, dancing and the like were not allowed. These points were observed even by Max Weber (2004, p. 152) in his studies on Protestant ethics:

the Puritans upheld their decisive characteristic, the principle of ascetic conduct. For otherwise the Puritan aversion to sport, even for the Quakers, was by no means simply one of principle. Sport was accepted if it served a rational purpose, that of recreation necessary for physical efficiency. But as a means for the spontaneous expression of undisciplined impulses, it was under suspicion; and in so far as it became purely a means of enjoyment, or awakened pride, raw instincts or the irrational gambling instinct, it was of course strictly condemned. Impulsive enjoyment of life, which leads away both from work in a calling and from religion, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism, whether in the form of seigneurial sports, or the enjoyment of the dance-hall or the public-house of the common man.

Based on Weber's analysis, it is possible to see that it was not enough for an activity to be practiced by wealthy classes. The "fine sports" played by the rich were not necessarily something that would be morally accepted by American Protestants. The amusements had to be necessarily linked to an action motivated by rational and utilitarian purposes. The

elements of rationalism and utilitarianism become even more evident when one looks upon chess from Franklin's perspective. There are texts in which he condemns this amusement, and others in which he glorifies it.

The Morals of Chess in a Tight Spot – The Paradox of Good and Evil Exposed in an Amusement

Regarding an analysis of chess, Benjamin Franklin's writings on this game are few, but may have been very influential in the United States in the 19th century. Reading the text 'The Morals of Chess', it is possible to observe that Franklin defended the thesis that said game in no way would be a mere amusement, listing three great virtues that should be cultivated by those who wanted to dedicate themselves to it: foresight, circumspection and caution.⁸

Foresight revealed itself as the capacity by which the consequences of the acts were taken into account in the matter of futurity. Such a matter is evident in the following quote: "If I move this piece, what will be the advantages or disadvantages of my new situation?" (FRANKLIN, 1786, p. 19). The second one was that of circumspection, since Franklin stated that, by looking at the board and the opponent's moves, it was possible to learn to better observe and consider the perspectives and circumstances of things (FRANKLIN, 1786). Finally, the third skill to be developed would be that of caution, since the rules of chess requires that the player moves the piece once they touch it and prevents that, once the displacement occurs, the movement is changed to another one that pleases them more. Thus, Franklin argued that this game taught the virtue of acting carefully and patiently (FRANKLIN, 1786).

When identifying the three great virtues taught by chess, Benjamin Franklin instilled in it a practical utility in line with his utilitarian philosophy. The game portrayed herein helped Franklin in his goals to be achieved, that is, to form a more cautious, observant and visionary individual, attributes that he considered good and that were also valued in the period. One can also ponder that the addition of moral virtues to a game is the result of a rationalizing process of justification for an activity in which Franklin liked to engage. In order not to be morally condemned by his fellow men, the North American thinker pointed out virtues in the game of chess that would allow it to be transformed into a useful activity capable of yielding good fruits, thus being something worthy to take his spare time.

Besides these three main virtues that chess provided, the Franklinian thought assigns to this game the ability of not being discouraged in the face of seemingly bad situations, the possibility of always looking for resources and hoping for favorable changes (FRANKLIN, 1786). Here is a new insertion of virtuous categories in a game, in line with the 'virtues' of rationalism and goal setting identified and commented upon by Overman (2011).

Moreover, Franklin advocated that respect for the various conducts in the course of matches would make the chess player a better individual. If it is possible to observe in the North American thinker the act of attributing to a hobby such as chess the possibility of awakening, in the human condition, values essential to character formation, it is worth questioning whether Franklin was one of the pioneers of the future movements of muscular Christianity of the century 19th century, which saw in sports the pedagogical and flowering potential of the characteristics desired by a Christian. Additionally, it is important to

⁸ It becomes complex to measure the importance of short texts by a famous writer for the history of chess and the spread of this game overseas. However, in 1999, the World Chess Hall of Fame awarded Franklin a place of honor for his contributions in spreading the game, not only in the US, but also because The Morals of Chess was the first chess book published in Russia, in 1791. (WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME, 2018). In addition, the president of the United States Chess Federation, in 2001-2003, John McCray, dedicated an article in which he presents all of Franklin's contributions to the implementation of this sport in America. According to the Federation's data, Franklin's name was the first to be traced back as a chess player in the USA, in a passage from his biography, of 1733.

emphasize that the act of respecting conducts was a form of self-control, in the sense adopted by Elias (2001), and whoever did not follow the rules of the game would be considered an uncivilized and uncontrolled individual. New evidence of utilitarian justification for chess as acceptable amusement: a powerful tool for civility and self-control, the mark of a broad process of education of the body, as taught by Soares (2014).⁹

Furthermore, it should be noted that chess is an intellectual game. The French historian Georges Vigarello (2008, p. 353), when addressing the games that were usually the target of moral criticism, perceives the distinction of three types:

The first is the one in which the main part has to do with the spirit or the skill, just as chess, checkers, pelota. The second consists solely of chance, such as dice, cards (...) The third, which is mixed, depends partly on skill and partly on chance, such as tag, trump(card game), backgammon.

In the sense exposed by the French historian, it is evident that chess, being a game of 'spirit', of intellectual ability, would be easily accepted by society's moral judgment. However, it could not be a type of chess that involved fruitless pleasure and gambling, that was uncontrolled and/or had any other characteristic that could destroy its capacity to produce the desired virtues. Furthermore, it is worth stressing that Benjamin Franklin was not favorable to another board game of an intellectual nature, checkers, as already shown in the previously cited text by his journalistic pseudonym Celia Single (FRANKLIN, 1844). Thus, it is noteworthy that the attribution of positive values by the American intellectual was not extended to other amusements similar to chess.

The second part of the text 'The Morals of Chess' presents the civilized conducts and virtues that should be followed by players:

If your adversary is long in playing, you ought not to hurry him, or express any uneasiness at his delay; you should not sing, nor whistle, nor make a tapping with your feet on the floor, or with your fingers on the table, nor do anything that may distract his attention: for all these things displease, and they do not prove your skill in playing, but your craftiness and your rudeness. (FRANKLIN, 1786, p. 22).

The self-control of the body while playing chess is evident in such a passage. The contributions of Elias (2001), who analyzed the civility manuals of pre-modern Europe and observed that the education on desirable customs and behaviors precisely assumed the existence of a crude and uncivilized society that lacked such teachings, allow inferring the same for the case of Benjamin Franklin. If the intellectual prescribed that one should not sing, whistle, tap with their feet on the floor or perform any other unwanted behavior, it is possible to assume that this happened when individuals played chess. Unpleasant attitudes, undesirable behaviors by bodies not yet educated, which denoted a lack of civility and should be avoided at all costs. It was necessary to render pedagogical the act of playing chess, filling it with more regulated and controlled customs that respected the opponent and managed to keep the body behaved, no matter how much the hours demanded from the body the will to move. Thus, through an amusement like chess, it would be possible to educate the body, controlling it, as evidenced by Vigarello (2008), when exploring the context of the 18th century in Europe.

⁹ According to Watson, Weir and Friend (2005), muscular Christianity, formulated in the 19th century, essentially defended the idea that participation in oriented sports activities could contribute to molding one's character and to the learning of values, oftentimes praising characteristics of masculine vigor, desirable to the youth of that period.

In the opposite sense to the one hitherto portrayed, near the end of his life, in the year 1780, Franklin published a humorous text called 'Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout'. In this piece of work, the thinker is the protagonist of the play, who suffers from an aggravation of the gout disease (caused by eating excesses and lack of physical exercise) and talks to the personification of the disease, trying to understand why his body reached that state. The disease ends up showing that Franklin, during his sedentary life, cherished amusements that were not physically active.

But what is your practice after dinner? Walking in the beautiful gardens of those friends with whom you have dined would be the choice of men of sense; yours is to be fixed down to chess, where you are found engaged for two or three hours! This is your perpetual recreation, which is the least eligible of any for a sedentary man, because, instead of accelerating the motion of the fluids, the rigid attention it requires helps to retard the circulation and obstruct internal secretions (FRANKLIN, 1780, n.p.).

Following his analysis, the North American intellectual portrayed in a dramatization how his sloppy behavior ended up affecting his health: "Franklin: - What have I done to deserve these cruel sufferings? Gout: - Many things; you have ate and drank too freely, and too much indulged those legs of yours in their indolence" (FRANKLIN, 1780, n.p.). In the eighteenth century, in Europe, the habit of excessively eating and drinking was already seen as an uncivilized, uncontrolled behavior, as reported by Vigarello (2008) and Quellier (2011). At the end of the play, Benjamin Franklin promised "(...) never more to play at chess, but to take exercise daily and live temperately" (FRANKLIN, 1780, n.p.). At that moment, it seems that the American thinker no longer saw virtues in chess, but it is evident that he wrote this due to the circumstances of the suffering derived from his illness, not erasing the importance of his writings on the values of chess.

However, an important and interesting analysis can be done about this play. Chess, being an intellectual game and, therefore, non-physical in nature, was shown as a sedentary activity. As Vigarello (2008) points out, the notions of physical exercise and its relationship with health were already being constituted since the 16th century in Europe and ended up permeating equally the period in which Benjamin Franklin was inserted. The health lost would be the result of an imbalance, and the only culprit would be the individual who allowed his bodily dimension to reach such a state of degradation. The supernatural causes of diseases were gradually eliminated, while the origins and consequences of the latter were rationalized.

Franklin, as a thinker in that period, also advocated prevention as the best medicine to avoid diseases such as gout. He found himself to be the only culprit for his own condition in old age, the result of a lifestyle that permeated his entire existence. These are more rationalized, organic notions of health, which already allow for associations between habits of the body and their effects on one's system. Still, Benjamin Franklin did not suggest that intense activities should be used for fighting his gout disease. Walking with friends after meals would suffice. Exercise is justified from the perspective of utilitarianism, as it is a tool to fight a sedentary lifestyle.

It is also noteworthy that the space for exercising would not yet require specific environments for physical enhancement. Walks with friends would be enough, that is, probably light in intensity, which would allow a conversation during the effort. Again, Franklin's notes seem to be ruled by the logic highlighted by Vigarello (2008, p. 374) on the French context:

Hygienic exercise should be simple, routine; a walk, a route. Hence its ever-possible application, its commonly accessible version. Exercise does not yet need time or special spaces (...) The goal of a healthy exercise is limited to the agitation of moods, its universe is limited to the everyday space.

Reading Franklin's writing on chess evidences the concept of 'confused aversion' pointed out by Vigarello (2008), or the paradoxes of acceptance/rejection of games and amusements, just as exposed by Overman (2011). Chess would be useful, as it developed virtues and skills. At the same time, it was perceived as bad, since it was a sedentary practice, taking up time for activities that would be good for the sick body that lacked physical exercise. The one who praised the game as something useful is the same who demonized it in a different moment.

The Body that Learns Through Movement - Pedagogical Concerns in Benjamin Franklin

In Benjamin Franklin's texts, there is a clear proposal for the education of the body, which would go from a pedagogy to self-control. An action that went far beyond simply respecting the rules and good behaviors within the game of chess. Such a premise was also recurrent in the sayings formulated by the thinker, always indicating self-control as a useful virtue: "Caesar did not merit the triumphal car more than he that conquers himself" (FRANKLIN, 1732, p. 20); "(...) Let thy vices die before thee." (FRANKLIN, 1732, p. 21). The mastery of the most animalistic instincts in the individual, the denial of the pleasures of the flesh, self-control in the face of the most primitive impulses, a whole notion of civility of customs was building during the period in which Franklin lived, and ended up being materialized in his writings. Everything related to the body came to be seen from the perspective of usefulness as opposed to uselessness.

The American intellectual would always remind one that the individual capable of self-control would command others: "Observe all men, thyself most" (FRANKLIN, 1732, p. 27). This self-control would be boosted and reinforced by social life. Overman (2011) emphasizes that the watchful eyes among Protestant communities would be associated with the creation of New Jerusalem on Earth itself. The author stresses that, if the necessary changes, both individual and collective, were not made, society would not be saved and could lead the individual who entered it to a collective damnation. In this sense, for Franklin, looking at oneself and others was a collective process towards salvation of both the individual and the community. It was necessary that the individual had self-control, but was also often reminded to follow such conducts due to the watchful eyes of the dominant morality.

This, of course, required a broad process of education of the body, which would be simpler to learn during youth. That is why, for children, Franklin defended: "Let thy child's first lesson be obedience, and the second will be what thou wilt" (FRANKLIN, 1732, p. 24). The mentality of the period advocated that the child was an imperfect and incomplete being (VIGARELLO, 2008). Thus, Franklin believed that the control of the child body would facilitate the educational process, which would be much more arduous if performed in adulthood. Such notions already permeated writings such as that of John Locke¹⁰, an author with whom Benjamin Franklin was very familiar (ISAACSON, 2015), as well as the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau¹¹

Although the sources listed do not make it clear if the North American intellectual was a reader of Rousseau, his constant defenses to the Native American peoples against oppression by the colonial metropolis can be an indication of assimilation of the concepts of "good savage" that permeate the thinker's entire work. Other indications of his approach

¹⁰ John Locke (1632-1704) was an English philosopher who defended a State of limited powers and governed by a constitution, respecting natural rights and denying theories of divine right. His works influenced the independence of the English colonies in America, as well as part of the French Revolution (SCRUTON, 2007).

¹¹ Jean Jacques-Rousseau (1712-1778), born in Switzerland, was an important writer and philosopher of the period in France, known for writings such as "The Social Contract" and "Emile". His name is usually associated with the currents of Enlightenment and Romanticism. For him, the corruption of the individual resided in the institutions that human beings themselves manufacture, and their liberation would happen with education through nature, since the latter would be free from human action (SCRUTON, 2007).

to the Rousseauian work were the constant references to nature and the use of various bodily practices in this context. As Isaacson (2015) points out, Franklin was a close friend of David Hume, and the latter, in his turn, was very close to Rousseau (having even received him at his residence). Nonetheless, it is merely a matter of speculation whether or not the American thinker was influenced by a philosopher so well known in the eighteenth-century France. However, in this sense, there is a certain proximity between Franklin, Locke and Rousseau in defending an education of children's bodies¹².

Still with respect to education of the bodies as something useful for individual development, one cannot ignore a pamphlet written by Benjamin Franklin in 1749. 'Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania' is a short text dedicated to the governors of the American state. For the thinker, Pennsylvania had been colonized by individuals who had received a good education in Europe, but the time constraints caused by the tasks of erecting a colonial structure did not allow them to properly adjust the local education. To remedy this, Franklin prescribed some elements: "That we may obtain the Advantages arising from an Increase of Knowledge, and prevent as much as may be the mischievous Consequences that would attend a general Ignorance among us, the following Hints are offered towards forming a Plan for the Education of the Youth of Pennsylvania, viz." (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 1).

Lack of knowledge, according to his notes, would create problems that would afflict a society built without the presence of a more formalized education. In this sense, this issue became an object of consideration for Benjamin Franklin. The only way out would be to create a space to accommodate these young and still ignorant bodies in a given physical space. This place should be regulated, hierarchized and institutionalized: "That some persons of leisure and public spirit apply for a charter, by which they may be incorporated, with power to erect an academy for the education of youth, to govern the same, provide masters, make rules, receive donations, purchase lands, and to add to their number" (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 1).

Benjamin Franklin indicated that this Academy should be close to nature, but be built in a controlled, sanitary and non-wild environment: "That a house be provided for the academy, if not in the town not many miles from it; the situation high and dry, and, if it may be, not far from a river, having a garden, orchard, meadow, and a field or two." (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 3). In the following pages, Franklin would discern what knowledge and content should be explored in that institution. The recommendation to use elements that would later constitute the discourse of physical culture is evident:

That to keep them in health, and to strengthen and render active their bodies, they be frequently exercised in running, leaping, wrestling, and swimming. That they have peculiar Habits to distinguish them from other Youth, if the Academy be in or near the Town; for this, among other Reasons, that their Behavior may be the better observed. (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 3)¹³.

The first analysis that could be undertaken about this passage is precisely about these practices: leaping, swimming, wrestling and running, but not in a free manner. They should aim at strengthening, providing health, rendering active the bodies that perform such acts. In the confrontation with the Pennsylvanian Protestant morality, mere uncontrolled amusements, disconnected from practical utility, would not be tolerated. Franklin, in agreement, proposed useful activities for a rational purpose. Vigarello (2008, p. 352), when analyzing the French context, evidences some of these control elements:

¹² David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish philosopher markedly known for his profound skepticism and his defense of empiricism, in strong opposition to Cartesian rationalism. Still, due to his skeptical nature, it is complex to associate Hume with a determined school of thought, so much so that he was often used as a reference for argumentative supports by both conservatives and liberals (SCRUTON, 2007).

The particular status of these physical games, their freedom, their scrutiny, inevitably provoke an endless confrontation with authority: opposition from excess and embarrassment, from effervescence and power (...) Mistrust falls on turbulence, perhaps even on the supposed immorality an activity deemed too free. Hence the tendency to regulate it, but also to inflect it and, sometimes, to suppress it. Therefore, the history of these games is the history of circumscribing and demarcating them. It is, in a broader sense, the history of an insensitive control exercised over bodies: a surveillance supposedly capable of better containing, in the end, violence and passions. It is also, so to speak, the development of practices not shared between the sexes or social groups, a very concrete way of confirming distances or distinctions through the body.

It is evident, therefore, that Benjamin Franklin ended up wanting to develop a strong and active youth that would carry out activities that distinguished them from those that did not attend the Academy. "That they have peculiar habits to distinguish them from other youth (...) that their behavior may be the better observed." (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 3). Strong evidence that, for the American intellectual, running, leaping, wrestling and swimming were practices that had the potential to inculcate behaviors favorable to the formation of a more civilized society and, for this reason, should be part of the process for educating the body of the American youth.

Health would be an indispensable element of analysis. The elements of physical culture that Franklin proposed to compose the Academy's syllabus had a sanitary and, in a sense, hygienist function. Again, Franklin was attuned to the discourses circulating in Europe in the 18th century. Vigarello (2008, p. 367), when researching the French context, exposes an important question that can be related to the points addressed by the Franklinian thought:

it is impossible to ignore the voluntarily sanitary aspect of exercise, this practice from which the author expects an effect on the body: consolidated health, reinforced organs. Not that every player is sensitive to this expectation: the result is too far away to be an attraction of the game. It is sufficiently recognized, however, to always found a certainty, that of a gain in vigor and health obtained by repeated movement.

In addition to the health aspect, it is worth remembering that the medieval period saw 'playing with the body' as a synonym for fun, impulse of the flesh, pleasure and remembrance of sin (VIGARELLO, 2008). Overman (2011) indicates that the Protestant view did not tolerate such habits and customs, breaking with the medievalist logic. Amusements should be practices oriented to prepare the body for a concrete goal, producing solid moral rewards. Even so, it is emphasized that repudiating certain games and valuing others, oftentimes without clearly demarcating what will distinguish the benefits of one from the harms of the other, would be what Vigarello (2008) calls 'confused aversion'. As noted earlier, there were more prohibitions than prescriptions as to using the body for amusement in the Protestant morality. Franklin seems to try to remedy such 'confusion' by establishing goals, utilities, ends that justify pleasure, if any, since the individual would be inserted in a controlled, regulated and civilized activity, serving a desired purpose.

One might also think that such practices present in the Academy had the function of distracting or 'discharging' the body from the routine of studies, but it would be a tremendous mistake to limit them to that. Franklin made it clear that all content (and assuming that the latter included swimming, running, leaping and wrestling) would be

useful and indispensable for a greater process of body education: “As to their Studies, it would be well if they could be taught every Thing that is useful (...) But art is long and their time is short. It is therefore propos'd that they learn those Things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental.” (FRANKLIN, 1749, p. 5).

It is worth remembering that such indication by Benjamin Franklin for the practices at the Academy highlighted the matter of strength. For Vigarello (2008), strength in the 18th century was seen as a unifying factor. It was a specific organic resource hidden in the muscles and nerves. The young person who entered the pedagogical process of the Franklinian Academy would be subject to the work of developing such a bodily characteristic. A civilized and educated youth would be useful for the formation of the society desired by Franklin. Within the Protestant morality in which the thinker was inserted, it was necessary that all programmed activities were oriented to a practical result. From this derived his educational contributions to the formation of the University of Pennsylvania in 1740.

Final Considerations

The period between 1682 and 1791, according to the sources studied and the authors herein consulted, rejected amusements and the misuse of spare time. The body was the target of interdictions by the laws in force in the English colony of Pennsylvania, result of a rigid Protestant morality that only looked favorably upon professional work and the cultivation of faith. Given this perspective, Benjamin Franklin swam against some aspects of the preponderant Protestant morality, and presented in his writings the justification of certain amusements, considered civilized, controlled and useful.

Enhancing Pennsylvania youth through bodily education was considered a preparation for the betterment of the entire community, as young people would grow up in the way that Franklin found the most useful, practical and virtuous. In view of the thinker's contributions in relation to chess, as well as the physical practices encompassing a pedagogical purpose, his attempt to control such activities and the body that practices them stands out. A fact that evidences that the intellectual was inserted in the logic that permeated the mentality of that time. Franklin presented himself as an individual who allows one to actually understand how the social relations that involved the body, games and amusements materialized in a North American Protestant culture.

The North American thinker, with his originality and pioneering spirit, was an individual not far from the context in which he wrote, quite the contrary. It was precisely because he was inserted in that community that was so religious and adverse to physical practices and amusements that Franklin noticed the possibility of justifying, in a utilitarian manner, the activities he enjoyed and which he deemed important for the development of the nation he wanted to build.

It is worth stressing that, at the end of Franklin's life, the text about his gout disease condemned the time spent on chess, a sedentary activity. However, after the condemnation of an amusement, another one is then presented: the walks, useful for the prevention and recovery of a health deteriorated by his sedentary lifestyle and uncontrolled eating. It is evident that the utilitarian logic and a powerful pedagogical discourse are manifested in all the sources portrayed in this article. The Protestant morality guided the rationalization processes concerning the control of amusement practices, always justifying them for a greater purpose. Having fun then gradually became something acceptable in the North American Protestantism.

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