

'THE BODY AS THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT': EDUCATION OF THE BODY IN BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S WORK (1732-1790)

'O CORPO COMO RESIDÊNCIA DO ESPÍRITO SANTO':
A EDUCAÇÃO DO CORPO NA OBRA DE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1732-1790)

'EL CUERPO COMO RESIDENCIA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO':
EDUCACIÓN DEL CUERPO EN LA OBRA DE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1732-1790)

Narayna Astra Van Amstel^{1*}, Evelise Amgarten Quitzau², Marcelo Moraes e Silva¹

¹Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, PR, Brasil. ²Universidad de la Republica Uruguay, UDELAR, Paysandú, Uruguay.

*Autor para correspondência. *E-mail*: narayana.astra@gmail.com

Abstract: Benjamin Franklin was an American thinker who became an iconic figure in the imagination of the people of the United States. This article presents his contributions to the education of the body. To this end, a research was carried out, having as sources Franklin's writings containing prescriptions referring to diet and physical exercises. The analysis of the sources showed that a morality of a religious nature shaped body care, presenting elements of quantification, individualization, training and moderation of habits, with an emphasis on the role of swimming as a useful and healthy activity. It was concluded that a Protestant morality influenced Franklin's view as to the education of the body by means of utilitarianism linked to asceticism as lifestyle.

Keywords: protestantism, education of the body, history of the body, health.

Resumo: Benjamin Franklin foi um pensador americano que se tornou figura emblemática do imaginário estadunidense. Neste artigo, apresentam-se suas contribuições relativas à educação do corpo. Para se alcançar o intento, realizou-se uma pesquisa, tendo-se como fontes os escritos de Franklin que abordaram prescrições em relação à dieta e exercícios físicos. Demonstrou-se, pela análise das fontes, que uma moral de cunho religioso moldou os cuidados do corpo, apresentando elementos de quantificação, individualização, treinamento e moderação dos hábitos, com ênfase no papel da natação como atividade útil e saudável. Concluiu-se que uma moral protestante influenciou a visão de Franklin em relação à educação do corpo, por meio do utilitarismo vinculado ao ascetismo como estilo de vida.

Palavras-chave: protestantismo, educação do corpo, história do corpo, saúde.

Resumen: Benjamin Franklin fue un pensador que se convirtió en figura emblemática del imaginario estadounidense. En este artículo se presenta una de las faces poco conocidas de este intelectual: sus contribuciones en el campo de la salud y la educación del cuerpo. En una sociedad protestante en vías de formación capitalista, Franklin fue un intelectual que concilió consejos prácticos de cuidados corporales con la moral religiosa norte-americana. Se utilizó como fuentes los escritos de Benjamin Franklin que abordan prescripciones relacionadas con la dieta y los ejercicios físicos. Se concluye que una moral protestante influenció la mirada de Franklin respecto a la salud y educación del cuerpo a través del utilitarismo y racionalismo vinculados al ascetismo como estilo de vida.

Palabras clave: protestantismo, educación del cuerpo, historia del cuerpo, salud.

INTRODUCTION

English colonies in North America were mainly populated by Puritans who came from Europe fleeing religious persecution. Settled down in the New World, they perpetuated values, traditions and customs, creating cultural elements that determined the way of life in colonial society. With regard to the body, research by different authors recognizes forms of regulation adopted by American Puritans as to matters such as work, amusements and moderation of physical urges (Struna, 1988, 1996; Overman, 2011; Hollinger, 2013; Karnal, 2017; Amstel, Marchi Júnior, Sonoda-Nunes & Moraes e Silva, 2019). The restrictions and regulations on the use of the body characterized a specific asceticism, widely described by Weber (2004), with a rejection of worldly pleasures, acceptance of pain inflicted by personal effort, and intense dedication to the work that each individual performed.

These conditions are pointed out by Weber (2004) as elements circumscribed to the context of the origin of capitalism, in such a way that the Protestant culture of the North American colonies is closely linked to the formation of the modern capitalist economy. Among the sources used to construct the analysis, Weber made extensive use of the texts written by Benjamin Franklin, pointed out as a representative figure of the Protestant morality¹. After all, the North American thinker, through his writings, gave practical moral advice that professed a new ethic that was manifesting, that of hard work, search for profit and rejection of amusements, elements that ended up impacting the realm of education of the body². These characteristics show that the intellectual had a specific way of understanding and practicing Protestantism, with information becoming more explicit as one understands how Franklin idealized an education of the body.

¹ Born on January 17, 1706, in Boston, and died on April 17, 1790, in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin filled his 84 years of life with various duties. From candle maker to influential politician in Philadelphia, Franklin worked as a printer (newspapers, almanacs, books and even paper money), inventor, civil servant, diplomat, ambassador, constitutional draftsman, writer, journalist, editor and colonial representative (Franklin, 1793; Roberts, 1991; Isaacson, 2015; Arch, 2020). As a scientist and inventor, he stood out mainly for making the first models of lightning rods, resulting from his research on storms, which is largely known for the stories of him flying kites in rainy nights infested with lightning (Mulford, 2019).

² The notion of body education formalized by Soares (2014) indicates that it is characterized by a progressive repression of bodily manifestations in what seems to be uncontrollable. For the author, educating the body means making it suitable for social life, in addition to referring to the process of inserting it into learning processes that seek to hide and erase a rebellious nature, bringing to light a pacified nature. This concept allows writing a history of education, or perhaps, in the words of Soares (2003), a history of multiple constraints, since it is in the body that a slow, intense, extensive, meticulous and obstinate work of constraints is inscribed. The author stresses that, to be displayed, the body needs to be educated. These pedagogical actions take multiple paths, giving rise to contradictory, ambiguous and tense practices.

In this sense, the present article seeks to answer the following research question: how were the notions of health and education of the body present in the work of the North American thinker Benjamin Franklin? To this end, a historiographical research was conducted, having as primary sources the author's texts that indicated the existence of elements of an education of the body, represented by diets, exercises and moderation.

The sources selected for analysis were the following texts: 1) Poor Richard's almanack (1732); 2) Experiments and observations on electricity (1769 – more precisely the letter addressed to his friend Oliver Neave); 3) The art of swimming rendered easy; with directions to learners, (1790); 4) The autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (1793 – the first edition was published posthumously in 1791, under the care of his grandson William Franklin); and 5) The works of Benjamin Franklin: containing several political and historical tracts not included in any former edition (1844 edition – specifically the letter addressed to Mrs. Mary Stevenson regarding seawater, originally written in 1761). For analysis, a dialogue was established with the work of the French historian Georges Vigarello, for his contributions to the understanding of historical changes in processes concerning the uses of and the meanings attributed to the body, as well as to health practices, in the 18th century, when the North American intellectual wrote his works.

The research around Franklin's texts is justified for the following reasons: a) there is evidence, still underexplored, in studies from the area of history of health, pointing him as one of the North American pioneers in nutrition and physical education counseling. Diller (1909), for instance, highlights the active role of the intellectual in the construction of the first hospital, as well as of the first medical school, in the United States. Similarly, William Clifford Roberts, physician, former editor of the American Journal of Cardiology and author of several articles in the health field, stresses Franklin's importance in medicine for his numerous pieces of advice on nutrition and physical exercises (Roberts, 1991); b) the 18th century is seen as a period of several transformations in the health field, when new ideas began to circulate in the medical-scientific discourse (Vigarello, 1996, 1999; Corbin, 2016), and reading the works of the North American thinker can contribute to a better understanding of the context; and c) the American society at the time, especially the Pennsylvania colony, was predominantly faithful to the Protestant service, in which there was strong criticism of the so-called misuse of free time. In this way, there was a constant recrimination of amusements, both in bars and outdoors, as shown by Amstel et al. (2019). If bodily practices in general were restricted, it is relevant to know how Franklin adapted them to the religious medium of the context in which he lived. In this sense, it becomes paramount to understand the Protestant *ethos* in question.

FRANKLIN'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT: UTILITARIANISM AND PRAGMATISM IN THE FRANKLINIAN PROTESTANTISM

The first Protestants who arrived in the American colonies were in search of religious freedom, given the numerous conflicts they had had with Catholics and Anglicans in England. Moreover, it is also known that Puritan groups had been involved in deep conflicts over the control of amusements. The Anglican culture, favorable to games and leisure practices, would not conform to the Puritan morality that wanted to curtail non-religious activities (Hollinger, 2013; Karnal, 2017; Amstel et al., 2019).

In fact, it is known that one of the first laws enacted in the new American colonies involved the prohibition of some pastimes deemed immoral (Jable, 1974; Dulles, 1965; Overman, 2011; Amstel et al., 2019), including games of chance, blood sports³, billiards, bowling, card games, divination, etc. Even so, it is worth noting, as Overman (2011) indicates, that these moral disapprovals could encompass other activities, if they were linked to the pursuit of fun or worshipping laziness.

This view against having fun, in Protestantism, derived from a new work ethic, developed initially in the Calvinist sect and, later, extended in a generalized way to the capitalist culture (Weber, 2004). Because Protestantism abolished elements seen as 'magic' from the salvation process (just as the role of the Eucharist in Catholicism) and emphasized faith as a mechanism for redemption, an extension of this perception about reality in general gradually began. Weber (2004) would classify this process as 'disenchantment of the world', in which the Protestant eliminated supporting and supernatural mechanisms of salvation; without most of the sacraments, one had no means to know if they would be saved. In view of this, Calvinism began to interpret theologically that redemption would come through the material success of the devotees. In this sense, the more financially successful a Christian seemed to be, the greater the signs that they were predestined to be saved. This enabled the formation of a new work ethic, in which Protestants avoided spending money on anything superfluous and worked strictly. Thus, as pointed out by Weber (2004) and Overman (2011), amusements were something to be eliminated from society.

Franklin was immersed in these matters, as he had a Calvinist education, given that his family and the community in which he grew up shared this religious orientation. However, for most of his life, he declared himself a deist⁴ (Isaacson,

³ The term is used to refer to violent practices with animals, such as dog fights, cockfights, rodeos, bullfights, etc.

⁴ Deism, the fruit of the Enlightenment, originates 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 reason is the maximum attribute for confirming the existence of the divine, and that the experience of nature would indicate its presence. Its absence of rituals and traditions

2015), albeit in a Franklinian version, since the intellectual was pragmatic and utilitarian in his belief about the divine. In its turn, classical deism believed that God did not care about humankind and had left nature as the maintainer of the divine order (Aquino, 2013). Franklin saw in this theology a presupposition for the emergence of a moral relativism that could be harmful to society (Isaacson, 2015), since God, not caring about humankind, would be indifferent to whether human actions were good or bad. The North American thinker did not agree with this relativistic perception in the moral field.

It should also be noted that he did not fully corroborate with the Calvinist education he had received. The intellectual claimed that the predestination of receiving grace for a few chosen people, as Calvinism defended, was something to be contested, as it would imply the disqualification of ‘good deeds’, which Franklin believed to be the great advantage of the religions (Isaacson, 2015). In this sense, it can be said that his deistic view encompassed what he deemed good (useful) in classical deism, associated with some values of Calvinist puritanism, and disqualified what he deemed harmful (that is, useless, non-practical) in both theologies.

Isaacson (2015) highlights that Franklin was a philosopher who ended up preparing the philosophical terrain of North American utilitarianism. Souza (2010) notes that the current of pragmatism originated officially with the thinkers William James and Charles Sanders Peirce at the end of the 19th century, and has as the most prominent name the philosopher John Dewey. More broadly, it can be said that pragmatism defends the idea that any sort of knowledge must be tied to a practical result. In its turn, utilitarianism, as Sandel (2012) argues, is a line of thought that assigns moral values to collective wellbeing and to the wellbeing of the parties involved, having a normative character. Thus, 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 strong evidence of pragmatism and utilitarianism in Franklin’s texts, which ended up having repercussions on his way of understanding the education of the body.

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH SWIMMING – THE VALUE OF SWIMMING FOR FRANKLIN

Franklin, living in a community that did not look favorably on individuals who wasted time enjoying useless activities, perceived the need to justify pastimes in a utilitarian manner, making them virtuous and respectable. In one of his texts, the author classified swimming as “[...] a healthy and delightful amusement”. (Franklin,

concerning the supernatural is the reason for its decline and helped modern atheism to be founded (Vartanian, 1949).

1790, p. 3). It should be noted here, as pointed out by Vigarello (1996, 1999), Muñoz (2008), Pelayo (2010) and Corbin (2016), that the act of bathing was changing its status in the 18th century. The scientific mentality of the period, even with greater acceptance of the bathing practice, believed that water penetrated the body through the pores, which allowed water to act on the organism. Vigarello (1996, 1999) and Corbin (2016) also stress that fears as to various plagues and diseases disappeared in mid 1700s, but the authors indicate that the act of bathing was still subject to a series of interdictions and much caution. For these reasons, bathing remained for almost the entire 18th and 19th centuries as a practice restricted to the wealthiest classes.

However, Vigarello (1996, 1999) and Corbin (2016) point out that a broad process of transformation of sensitivities concerning baths was carried out as of the 18th century, and one of the measures was to select the periods of the year in which they could happen. Vigarello (1996) recalls that, in the second half of the 18th century, in France, baths were not recommended in winter, with spring and summer being the most favorable seasons for them to be taken. In addition, he states that river bathing, up until then treated as an isolated amusement, came to be perceived, in the second half of the 18th century as a tool for health. It became an ascetic practice, both morally and physically, as the hardening of the body in cold water sought to mobilize energy and affirm its solidity. Vigarello (1996, p. 139) shows this by referencing Franklin himself:

Yet another different example is the passion with which Benjamin Franklin spoke of river baths or tonic immersions, in which he regularly indulged as of 1760. An important testimony, certainly, as Franklin insists on a real craze, just as he insists on a practice of substitution. Nothing equates to the virtues of a cold bath, but the shock it produces can take shape, shake the body. It may even violate certain constitutions.

Swimming, for Franklin, was in tune with the scientific and medical logics circulating in the European context of the 18th century, pointed out by Vigarello (1996, 1999) and Corbin (2016). So much so that the North American thinker recommended swimming for the warm seasons, an activity that, if done for up to 2 hours, would help clean the pores, prevent diarrhea, in addition to providing a good night's sleep due to the tiredness it caused (Franklin, 1790). This organic perspective was fully aligned with the notion of exercise exposed by Vigarello (2008a, p. 303, author's emphasis): "[...] physical movement would help evacuate the internal 'parts', expelling the humors whose stagnation would be a danger". The French historian indicates that, since the 16th century, there was evidence of the presence of discourses stating that exercises helped improve the functioning of the internal activities of the organism:

Swimming has an advantage over simple bathing, as the strong and repeated movements made to overcome the resistance of water are much more favorable to make it penetrate internally and make the muscle activity of all body parts more flexible, to allow secretion and make excretions easier and more favorable, in short, to apply the seal of health on the best constitutions (Vigarello, 1996, p. 141).

As an example of these bodily enhancements, Vigarello (1996, 1999, 2008a) mentions the matter of evacuation and how diarrheas would represent the weakness of excrement-expelling channels. Exercising would intervene by helping preserve, strengthen and control liquid expulsion. In this regard, it is important to stress that exercise as a remedy for diarrhea was in line with Franklin's ideals of repudiation of medicines for a healthier life, in which exercise would be a natural self-medication option for this disease, that is, it became an important element for improving the organic dimension.

However, it is worth highlighting that swimming would not be the only remedy that Franklin would prescribe for diarrhea:

It is certain that much swimming is the means of stopping a diarrhea and even of producing a constipation. With respect to those 'who do not know how to swim, or 'who are affected' with a diarrhea at a season which does not permit them to use that exercise, a warm bath, by cleansing and purifying the skin, is found 'very salutary, and often effects a radical cure. I speak from my own experience, frequently repeated, and that of others to whom I have recommended this (Franklin, 1790, p. 4).

It becomes imperative to highlight the confused perceptions of what caused diarrhea. The excerpt does not establish a relationship with the ingestion of a certain harmful substance, the lack of a necessary one, or even a condition caused by internal organic factors. The writing imposes that the skin would be the gateway to evil (Vigarello, 1996; 1999; Corbin, 2010; 2016). The cause of diarrheas was enigmatic, linked to the imagery of diseases that entered through the skin surface or, as in Franklin's own speech, through the pores.

It is clear that the importance given to exercising was not yet consolidated. When an individual had their physical practice precluded, they could replace it with passive activities, as long as they had similar efficacy, according to the empirical knowledge of the period. With regard to the pores, for which Franklin recommended the cleansing provided by swimming, the notion of the humors contained in the body was defended. Their stagnation would be harmful to health; therefore, their exudation and movement were necessary. The pores would have potential, through the skin surface, to remove the physical evil contained in the flesh; however, it is

noteworthy that the pores, for Franklin, were not only ways of exit, but also of entry, and a filter of substances.

Franklin believed, for instance, that exposure to water allowed one to deal with thirst by absorbing liquid through the pores; he even thought that, while someone was floating in salt water, their skin could filter the salt and allow the water to enter their organism, keeping their body hydrated, a concept closely linked to the studies on pores that were being conducted in that period, as pointed out by Vigarello (1996; 1999; 2008a) and Corbin (2010, 2016). Franklin tested his own body in the water, supported on the idea of the pores for his findings, as indicated in a letter written in 1761:

I have often observed myself that however thirsty I may have been before going into the water to swim, I am never long so in the water. These imbibing pores, however, are very fine, perhaps fine enough in filtering to separate salt from water; [...] for though I have soaked (by swimming, when a boy) several hours in the day for several days successively in salt-water, I never found my blood and juices salted by that means [...] it's remarkable that the flesh of sea fish, though bred in salt water, it's not salt (Franklin, 1844, p. 233).

It is highlighted, once again, how swimming for Franklin did not seem to be an amusement that was lazy, harmful to his salvation and inconsistent with the pragmatic life defended by the Protestant morality. On the contrary, the several hours he spent swimming gave him a fruitful object of scientific analysis, by which he questioned the reasons for the body to have a sensation of reduced thirst in the aquatic environment. In this sense, his writings constantly provided readers with practical advice, as shown in a letter addressed to a friend: “[...] I imagine that if people at sea distressed by thirst when their fresh water is unfortunately spent would make bathing tubs of their empty water casks and filling them with sea water sit in them an hour or two each day they might be greatly relieved” (Franklin, 1844, p. 233).

Observations referring to the body were contextually inserted in a long temporality that, as Vigarello (1999; 2008a) and Gleyse (2018) indicate, has undertaken, since the Renaissance, an expansion of knowledge about the various systems that made up the organism. These views were linked to different fields in a still emerging form of modern science, in which the knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology, physiology and so many other areas were still confused with each other and, oftentimes, organized and grouped into the same area of knowledge. Vigarello (1999; 2018) recalls that, being freer for scientific exploration, new cartographies of the body were written by scientists, contesting old ideas and making new hypotheses available for consideration by their peers.

Franklin's rationalized exercise required a quantification of time for its efficiency: 2 hours and no more. It becomes important to underscore that there is no explanation for this number other than the intellectual's own practical experience; however, the need to control the length of physical practices was already beginning to be noticed, something close to what Vigarello (1995, 2008a, 2018) called ciphering, that is, the rational determination of the use of time in bodily practices that would consolidate in the 19th century.

Another element to be highlighted in Franklin's thinking about swimming was the utilitarianism manifested in the activity, suitable for warm days, as well as its positive impact on sleep quality. New evidence of rationalization and utilitarianism in exercises is found in the North American thinker's work, which clearly corroborate the premises of the Protestant ethic and their role in controlling the body, as pointed out by Overman (2011) and Amstel et al., (2019).

The importance that he gave to overcoming fear while learning how to swim is also stressed: "The first thing that must be learned, is to divest oneself of all fear; and then, if you follow the Instructions given in this little work, and practice them frequently, you will soon attain the pleasant Art of Swimming, which, once obtained can never forget" (Franklin, 1790, p. 5).

Swimming, therefore, took on its need for constant practice. The internalization of movement resulted from repetition, and it is possible to establish a first relationship, though very rudimentary, with the act of training in the sense exposed by Vigarello (2008b). Franklin approaches, but does not cross the concept of training, since the goal of improving a specific physical valence did not yet exist, a fact that, as pointed out by Vigarello (1995, 2008b), would only be systematized in more detail at the end of the 19th century and, above all, in the first decades of the 20th century. The frequency of swimming to which the American thinker referred seemed to be more associated with overcoming fears and with a broader education of movement, so that one never forgot how to swim again.

Franklin's relationship with swimming, including the act of 'showing off' using a body skill, is an outstanding element in his biography, especially in the narration of experiences in which, under the eyes of his friends, Franklin would throw himself in a river to show off his aquatic abilities. Traveling around England with friends, at a certain moment inside the boat, he undressed and jumped into the river: "In our return, at the request of the company, whose curiosity Wygate had excited, I stripped and leaped into the river, and swam from near Chelsea to Blackfairs; performing in the way many feats of activity, both upon and under the water, that surprised and pleased those to whom they were novelties". (Franklin, 1793, p. 60).

The process of hierarchizing swimming as an elegant and useful activity, therefore, may have had its origin in Court societies, but the phenomenon of its

expansion was not limited to the courtly life (Vigarello, 1996). The new pedagogical approach prescribed by Franklin was carried out with swimming as an object. Specifically on this subject, the intellectual states:

[...] I wish all men were taught to do in their youth; they would on many occurrences be the safer for having that skill, and on many more the happier, as free from painful apprehensions of danger, to say nothing of the enjoyment is so delightful and wholesome as exercise. Soldiers particularly should, me thinks, all be taught to swim; it might be of frequent use either in surprising an enemy, or saving themselves. And if I had now boys to educate, I should prefer those schools [...] where an opportunity was afforded for acquiring so advantageous an art, which, once learned, is never forgotten (Franklin, 1790, p. 9)

For Franklin, swimming would be an activity worthy of praise, with no vices that came to his mind for him to tell his readers. Furthermore, it should be a practice taught in schools for boys, as well as to servicemen, that is, swimming should be inserted in a broad pedagogical device, just as what seventeenth-century France was already doing (Terret, 1994; Vigarello, 1996; 2008; Pelayo, 2010), a country with which Franklin had close contact due to his diplomatic actions (Isaacson, 2015).

With regard to Franklin's observations on swimming, it is worth noting that he invented, during his youth, hand paddles and flippers that helped one swim faster (Isaacson, 2015)⁵. The Franklinian creations show a search for rationalization and greater efficacy in the act of swimming on the part of the North American intellectual. Franklin reported in his writings how he observed the mechanics of ankle movements in the performance of his swim. He pointed out that, in order to cross great distances, he varied his swim using prone and supine positions in an attempt to avoid fatigue (Franklin, 1790). More rationalized and corrective movements are observed here, which are applied to circumstances that demand a certain efficacy. Evidence of bodily action 'performance' unfolds, and speed and technique would take a prominent position in the device being installed in the second half of the 18th century, as Vigarello (2018) underscores.

A letter from Franklin addressed to Oliver Neave (Franklin, 1769) shows the former arguing that his friend's advanced age could not be an excuse for him not wanting to learn how to swim. The risk of falling from a boat would justify the need to be able to swim to the shore, or to float until someone came to rescue him. Franklin continues the letter indicating the procedures for learning how to insert the body into the water, floating techniques, how to use the lungs for body support while floating, in addition to the movements to be made with the arms and legs. He

⁵ These inventions later led him to be included in the International Swim Hall of Fame [ISHOF] (2019).

also suggested exercises for making a beginner used to swimming, such as throwing an egg into clear, deep water, so that the apprentice dives to retrieve it.

However, Franklin made it clear that all these tips, which could be used by anyone who accidentally found themselves in a large body of water, at the risk of drowning, should not be applied without being safely practiced first. Therefore, the North American intellectual advocated that all individuals should learn how to swim in their youth, thus avoiding future risks (Franklin, 1790). There is a concern about applying a pedagogy to the movements, by means of exercises that would facilitate their assimilation.

The close relationship between Franklin's propositions and the mentality of the period becomes even more evident when the intellectual explores health-related matters. It was at that moment that a broad process of education of the body became evident in his work.

VIRTUOUS DIET AND FIGHT AGAINST SINFUL EXCESSES: THE BALANCED AND HEALTHY BODY

“He that lives carnally, won't live eternally” (Franklin, 1732, p. 5).

The epigraph above, taken from an almanac of advice for a better life, Poor Richard's almanack, represents Franklin's thinking regarding body care. The excerpt makes evident the condemnation of pleasurable attitudes, showing a notion of body intertwined with a Protestant religiosity of the period, which required a very specific body model and needed to undergo a broad education process.

Isaacson (2015) states that Franklin used many maxims from Poor Richard's almanack (1732) to provide medical, nutrition and general-health advice, and that, not surprisingly, he later received honorary doctoral degrees from institutions such as Oxford and St. Andrews. Benjamin Franklin understood body control as a tool for the proliferation of an individual's virtues, in such a way that the rejection of one's thirst for pleasure would gradually civilize customs. These prescriptions would be one of the main goals of the body education process that the North American thinker deemed fundamental.

The Franklinian thinking advocated in favor of a certain body model and, for this to be effected, a new education of the body needed to be systematized. Teachings that were more practical than theoretical were needed. It is worth remembering that Franklin found himself in a context in which the progress of society was no longer understood as something determined only by the virtues of the aristocratic class and/or rulers, but something that should be conquered routinely by all the individuals who made up a society.

For Franklin, virtues could only flourish if one fought their thirst for pleasure, and focused on self-control as well as on personal fulfillment. It was about a Protestant/North American reinterpretation of stoicism, as rational dominion over the body was valued as a paramount element of a virtuous education. To this end, Franklin (1732) emphasized that a healthy condition was a goal to be achieved, as a sick body would prevent the practice of vocation and the embodiment of Protestant virtues.

That said, Poor Richard's almanack, from 1732, is used for analysis. The authorship belongs to a pseudonym of Franklin, who wrote the anecdotes, sayings and pieces of advice, calling himself 'Richard Saunders'. The American thinker initially advised: "Eat to live, and not live to eat" (Franklin, 1732, p. 3). The passage evidences a notion of austerity, of gluttony control, which was repeated in other pieces of advice, such as "[...] To lengthen thy Life, lessen thy meals [...]" (Franklin, 1732, p. 4). Still in the same sense, he wrote another maxim: "[...] A fat kitchen, a lean will [...]" (Franklin, 1732, p. 4). In its turn, the phrase "[...] Many dishes, many diseases [...]" associated eating with the occurrence of diseases caused by excess on the table (Franklin, 1732, p. 6).

With regard to eating, there is clear evidence of the materialization of the Protestant morality in Franklin's thinking. Quellier (2011), analyzing the Puritan gastronomy, evidences that it was born out of a reaction to the fasts done by Catholics, a practice seen as hypocritical by Protestants. The author recalls, for instance, that, still in the 16th century, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus strongly condemned the abstinence practice of Catholics during Lent. Quellier (2011) also points out that the criticisms regarding the eating habits of Catholics were also made by important Protestant figures such as Luther and Calvin. The author summarizes what this form of Protestant eating would be:

Protestant fasting is above all the embodiment of a table that is sober and without excess, it is synonymous with moderation and temperance. For Protestants, the true meaning of fasting is a constant practice of sobriety that does not forcefully exclude the flesh, and without any excess, any voluptuousness and any lust of the flesh (Quellier, 2011, p. 82).

The Protestant morality valued moderation and temperance when eating, after all, what was desired was sobriety and the refusal to nourish oneself with exquisite delicacies. This mentality was very present in Franklin's work and became one of the elements addressed by the thinker when he gave advice for the proper education of the body.

The Latin term *Principiis obsta*, an expression that can be understood more literally as "[...] reject evil soon at the very beginning [...]", opens one of the chapters

of the almanac (Franklin, 1732, p. 6). Just as weeds should be removed before they take root in the plant, the various types of evil that afflict an individual should be fought early in life. Here are indications of the valuation of a body education process, since a prevention-oriented health, deeply related to the European medicine of the 18th century, was beginning to stand out.

Franklin's work was attuned to the mentality that existed in the 18th century. He systematically presented reflections upon health, such as, for instance, in the indications of control at the table: "Cheese and salt meat, should be sparingly eat" (Franklin, 1732, p. 5). "I saw few die of hunger, of eating 100000" (Franklin, 1732, p. 16). The insertion of Franklin into the thinking of the period was such that he also did not refrain himself from mocking the individual who "[...] moderate fare and abstinence much prizes in public, but in private gormandizes" (Franklin, 1732, p. 12). After all, the thinking of the period indicated, as pointed out by Vigarello (1999) and Quellier (2011), that it was not enough to be civilized and controlled in public; one needed to incorporate a new body education, in which good customs should permeate all realms of life, including the most private moments.

This aspect strongly materializes in another phrase written by Franklin: "Against diseases here, the strongest fence, is the defensive virtue, abstinence" (Franklin, 1732, p. 33). The universal panacea, the cure for all ills, was found precisely in the absence of something, that is, in the abstinence of it. An empty body by one's own will became the most virtuous one, as it was a rational manifestation aimed at maintaining health. This required self-control, which, in its turn, should not apply only to a specific group of individuals, and the same can be said about the monastic advice given to ascetic priests of the medieval period. Franklin's lessons were pieces of advice applied to all members of his community who wished to make some progress (material and spiritual) in their lives. Reflecting upon the body, its habits and its health seemed to be inserted in a bourgeois context in which Franklin mobilized values and virtues that could extract from the individual a maximum performance for a successful life.

Still on health and food, Franklin expressed other prescriptive opinions. For instance, the phrase "Three good meals a day is bad living" (Franklin, 1732, p. 19) was in line with the practical and daily life of the scientist from Pennsylvania, who, according to Isaacson (2015), used to eat bread and water for much of his life, even though he had enough wealth to eat hearty meals. Franklin declared in his biography that he was a vegetarian⁶ for many years so that he could afford to buy

⁶ The vegetarianism practiced by Franklin shows that the thinker was an individual attuned to the discourses of his time. Vigarello (1999), when referring to the theme of the strengthening of bodies at the end of the 18th century, indicates that plant foods presented a new form in that period. The author highlights that vegetarianism in the 18th century came to be seen as a symbol of broader and deeper change. It was the confirmation of a new representation of nature, the hope that alternatives to urban dilemmas would be found in it and that a spark of strength would derive from it.

books, an indulgence rationally imposed on his own body for pragmatic purposes, since he wanted more books to feed his soul than food to satisfy his body.

Another passage by the thinker that clearly presents the sayings circulating in the period is the phrase “[...] Eat few suppers, and you'll need few medicines” (Franklin, 1732, p. 32). The opposition to the use of medicines as a way of curing diseases is something that will be found later in the work *Emile, or On Education*, published by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1762. According to the Genevan philosopher, the need to strengthen the body was closely linked to the need to control it, thus preventing it from weakening the soul: “[...] the weaker the body, the more it commands; the stronger it is, the better it obeys” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 31). For Rousseau, a society in which individuals had feeble bodies – and, therefore, feeble souls – was a fertile ground for the development of an ‘art which does more harm to man’: medicine. Medicine would be “[...] the amusement of the idle and unemployed, who do not know what to do with their time, and so spend it in taking care of themselves” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 31).

In the Franklinitan thinking, prior to the Rousseauian publication, remedies represented the crutch that no individual should carry and, if they followed the preventive advice for body control in *Poor Richard's almanack*, such issues would be minimized in practical life. In this way, individuals would be less susceptible to having their health deteriorated and would be more useful to their community. Indeed, for the notion of Franklinitan body, medication was not necessarily a bad thing, but what was condemnable was the need for its use to be due to the neglect of the individual who did not take care of themselves, who did not exercise properly, the one who slept and ate too much, that is, lived a life marked by excesses.

All this self-control in relation to food was linked to the spiritual concepts that Franklin experienced in Christianity: “No wonder Tom grows fat, th'unwieldy sinner, makes his whole life but one continual dinner” (Franklin, 1732, p. 26). However, it is noteworthy that Franklin did not preach a total rejection of food, since his criticisms lied in excess, exaggeration and abundance: “[...] It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright” (Franklin, 1732, p. 26). The logic he presented valued some temperance, by which eating should have a pragmatic purpose and never be a mere source of pleasure. The exercise of virtues in a balanced manner did not allow one to lose control, just as it did not tolerate lack. In this sense, overeating and fasting were two sides of the same coin and should be elements to be rooted out in a body pedagogy that valued health.

This temperance in eating was seen by Franklin as an art of prevention: “Eat and drink such an exact quantity as the constitution of thy body allows of in reference to the services of the mind” (Franklin, 1732, p. 33). In this sense, it can be said that the notions of abstinence, marked in the medieval period by the mortification of the flesh proclaimed by the fasts of Catholic monks (Le Goff & Truong, 2004; Quellier, 2011), did not present a sense of diet in Franklin. The body

should consume what was convenient for it, but it should be governed by customs and, above all, by a broad process of rationalization, as pointed out by another maxim: “The exact quantity and quality being found out, is to be kept to constantly” (Franklin, 1732, p. 33).

It is clear that austerity and control were remembered at all times. A virtuous individual should be constant and unshakable. “Excess in all other things whatever, as well as in meat and drink, is also to be avoided” (Franklin, 1732, p. 33), even though, depending on age and illness, Franklin suggested different quantities, that is, there was already a greater individualization of advice and prescriptions. What was good for one person could be bad for someone else: “For that ‘which is too much for a flegmatick man, is not sufficient for a cholerick” (Franklin, 1732, p. 33). “A greater quantity of some things may be eaten than of others, some being of lighter digestion than others” (Franklin, 1732, p. 34). However, it is important to recall that all this food regulation cannot deviate from the recommendations regarding a spiritual need to fight sins: “The difficulty lies, in finding out an exact measure; but eat for necessity, not pleasure, for lust knows not where necessity ends” (Franklin, 1732, p. 34).

On said note, it is worth drawing attention to the desire for accurate measurement, the result of the rationalization proclaimed by the mentality of the period, something that was also held dear by Protestants. Vigarello (2008a, p. 465), when exploring the emergence of the rationalization ideology in its relationship with the bodily realm, a characteristic that was already in the process of formation during the 18th century, points out interesting elements: “[...] the growing prestige of the physical sciences has awakened [...] the need to measure the operations of the body machine”. The French historian indicates that, as of the second half of the 17th century, the first calculations elaborated for an individual’s weight and meal quantification began to appear.

One of the chapters in Franklin’s almanac, called ‘Rules of Health and long Life, and to preserve from Malignant Fevers, and Sickness in general’, applies even more particular notions of diet for preserving health. In the search for an exact quantification, the author wished to give even more precise and individualized advice – “Youth, age, and sick require a different quantity [...]” – as to how much one should eat and drink (Franklin, 1732, p. 33). The Protestant obsession with quantifying the different aspects of everyday life, as discussed by Overman (2011) and Amstel et al., (2019), was manifested in Franklin’s thinking:

The Difficulty lies in finding out an exact Measure; but eat for Necessity, not Pleasure, for Lust knows not where Necessity ends. [...] If thou eatest so much as makes thee unfit for Study, or other Business, thou exceedest the due Measure [...] If thou art dull and heavy after Meat, it’s a sign thou hast

exceeded the due Measure; for Meat and Drink ought to refresh the Body, and make it chearful, and not to dull and oppress it (Franklin, 1732, p. 34).

The ideal dosage of meals was a constant in the Franklinian view, which also ended up going beyond issues relating to food, suggesting and prescribing physical exercises:

Use now and then a little Exercise a quarter of an Hour before Meals, as to swing a Weight, or swing your Arms about with a small Weight in each Hand; to leap, or the like, for that stirs the Muscles of the Breast. A temperate Diet arms the Body against all external Accidents; so that they are not so easily hurt by Heat, Cold or Labour; if they at any time should be prejudiced, they are more easily cured, either of Wounds, Dislocations or Bruises (Franklin, 1732, p. 34).

Vigarello (2018), when exploring the 18th century mentality in France, stresses that the ways of using the body, in that period, were still quite confusing and lacked a detailed specificity, deriving from a greater rationalization process. In this sense, it was not absurd to think that jumping could serve to agitate the pectoral muscles. This also seemed to be linked to better digestion, when analyzed in the context of Franklin's writing, although the physiological correlation today is totally foreign to that reported by the North American thinker. But what is most extracted from the source is the following occurrence: exercising is justified when it is done for one to make better use of a moderate meal. Engaging in any activity that favors health became something valid, fair and good in more than one aspect, and should be present in the process of educating the North Americans' body.

In addition to the matter of quantification, Franklin's view was also aimed at illnesses, so much so that some of them were portrayed in his writings: "Drink water, put the money in your pocket, and leave the dry-bellyache in the punchbowl" (Franklin, 1732, p. 9). A disease caused by the consumption of rum, 'dry bellyache' was very common in the seventeenth-century United States (Stokes & Bell, 1942); it was caused by the presence of lead in the process of making that alcoholic beverage.

In this regard, when it comes to the act of drinking, Franklin again shows himself as a thinker tied to a Protestant morality by condemning the consumption of alcohol. The body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit does not tolerate the bottled sin of wine. Here is a thinker attuned to the morality of his time, after all, as Vigarello (1999) points out, sensitivity to scourges was no longer represented in the old epidemics. New diseases and different preventions, in which the habit of drinking came to be condemned for its effects on health. The maintenance of the

body would depend on the individual's inner strength in the face of the temptations of alcohol.

Quellier (2011, p. 125) notes that, for Protestants, the act of getting drunk was the true sin of gluttony. Alcohol was dangerous, as it would lead the individual to lose their reason and engage in countless vices: "Drunkenness is seen as a setback, a grotesque and obscene spectacle of a body without reason, which has lost its sense of limits, moderation and behavior; in a word, decency. Through drunkenness, man loses his dignity".

The process of rationalizing customs of Protestantism, linked to the religious morality and its 'evangelizing' mission, did not allow one to be in places where individuals tended to lose control. These issues were a constant in Franklin's writings, as shown in a small poem that the author wrote condemning amusements in bars:

He that for sake of Drink neglects his Trade,
 And spends each Night in Taverns till 'tis late,
 And rises when the Sun is four hours high,
 And ne'er regards his starving Family;
 God in his Mercy may do much to save him,
 But, woe to the poor Wife, whose Lot it is to have him. (Franklin, 1732, p. 9)

The Franklinian morality did not tolerate pleasures getting in the way of work and practical life, as "Happy that nation [...] whose history is not diverting" (Franklin, 1732, p. 26). Benjamin Franklin advocated that suffering was moralizing, and fun was degrading, so it should be avoided at all costs.

With regard to the theme of body and pain, the author continues in the same line of argument: "Pain wastes the body, pleasures the understanding" (Franklin, 1732, p. 12). This relationship with pain, somewhat stoic and ascetic, was manifested at all times in the North American intellectual's thinking. "Deny Self for Self's sake" (Franklin, 1732, p. 12), an expression that evidenced his lack of commitment to the desires of the body and that valued a metaphysics of individual salvation. Pleasures were repeatedly the target of criticism in his work, since self-control represented the summit of the rationalization of the body. This greater control over the body machine operated by reason was clearly manifested in other passages: "Nothing brings more pain than too much pleasure" (Franklin, 1732, p. 20); "Fly pleasures, and they'll follow you" (Franklin, 1732, p. 20). It denotes a constant struggle to keep oneself away from pleasures, always resisting the

temptations of the flesh, it was a body that was educated in the glorification of pain and in the rejection of pleasures.

In short, an 'evangelizing' mission is noticed, referring to a body education based on utilitarianism, a fundamental element in Franklin's thinking, as he did not deny his religiosity as something associated with what he advocated:

A sober diet makes a man die without pain; it maintains the senses in vigour; it mitigates the 'violence of passions and affections. It preserves the memory, it helps the understanding, it allays the heat of lust; it brings a man to a consideration of his latter end; it makes the body a fit tabernacle for the lord to dwell in; which makes us happy in this world, and eternally happy in the world to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour (Franklin, 1732, p. 35).

The passage allows establishing a direct and strong relationship with the phenomenon of muscular Christianity⁷ discussed by Watson, Weir and Friend (2005), Baker (2009), Putney (2009), Overman (2011) and Gems, Borish & Pfister (2017), that would later consolidate in the nineteenth-century United States, and that would significantly contribute to forming a sporting *ethos* in North American lands. The Christian body, when controlled, free from passions and violent impulses, manifested the space to house the trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it would then be a living tabernacle for the Christian's experience of faith. A healthy body became the earthly abode of the divine. It was in this sense that Protestants needed to deprive themselves of what was bad for them, but in a proper proportion, as they should not go hungry or thirsty, but only satisfy their natural need. Anything beyond that would be considered sin, lust, damnation and, therefore, a lack of control that would lead to loss of salvation. The healthy body takes on this struggle, forged in Protestant values.

CONCLUSIONS

This article highlighted the role of Benjamin Franklin in prescriptions concerning health and body education. The Protestant morality, by considering all elements of life as possible tools for the condemnation or salvation of the spirit,

7 When addressing the phenomenon known as muscular Christianity, Watson, Weir and Friend (2005) point out its manifestations in English and American territories, which would have potential to explain the acceptance of sports by mostly Protestant societies, as it is the case of the USA. The authors classify muscular Christianity as a movement, started in Great Britain in the second half of the 19th century, that sought to intertwine Christian religious ideals with a physical culture that valued masculinity, health, morality and patriotism. Therefore, they saw in bodily practices values that could be usefully applied to practical life.

could not exclude what was done with the body with regard to eating and hygienic care. Controlling how much one ate and drank, as well as how much one slept, was a regulation that, before the emergence of Protestantism, seemed to be very well established in the monastic medium. In his texts, Franklin advocated that this control should extend to the entire population. Although the texts did not show a disconnection from his religious principles, it became evident, from reading the sources, that being healthy would not only be a requirement for saving the spirit, but an imperative condition for being a successful individual; it was a true 'evangelizing' mission to be carried out.

Franklin seems to lead this movement of assigning values to bodily practices in the North American context, being one of the first to do this with activities such as swimming. Measuring Franklin's potential with regard to body education in the course of North American historical events is a task of greater proportions compared to those intended by the objectives of this text. McKenzie (1936) went so far as to claim that Benjamin Franklin would be the 'American father of Physical Education', in a clear allusion to him belonging to the select group of politicians known as the founding fathers of the United States of America (Isaacson, 2015; Karnal, 2017). Freeman (2013) emphasized Franklin's importance in establishing swimming, in a context in which it was still a very strange and somewhat unpopular activity.

Even so, it can be seen in the present text, from reading the sources and in line with the analysis of Georges Vigarello's work, that the Franklinian discourse was in deep connection with elements derived from the rationality developed at the time. Several elements of rationalism were under construction, but still largely regulated by Christian values specific to Protestantism. The ways of using the body could be well regarded if they were useful for the aggrandizement of the human being, meeting purposes that were high and deemed civilized. In the Protestant morality, pleasure had to be veiled, undeclared and subject to a greater purpose; the education of the bodies in Franklin's work was therefore tied to this context.

Thus, these findings allow shaping a broader rationalization process that will trigger, among other possibilities, the formation of an American sporting *ethos*, in which the presence of a body education as a prominent factor in culture will be even more remarkable. In this sense, after reading and analytically interpreting the sources in question, it can be concluded that Benjamin Franklin's work in the Pennsylvania colony during the 18th century was closely linked with the early stages of sporting and hygiene values that would be emphasized in the United States of America at the end of the 19th century.

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NARAYANA ASTRA VAN AMSTEL: Undergraduate degree in Physical Education – Federal Technological University of Paraná [*Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná*] (UTFPR); Master in Physical Education (UFPR); PhD student in Sociology (UFPR).

E-mail: narayana.astra@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8707-2423>

EVELISE AMGARTEN QUITZAU: Master in Physical Education – UNICAMP; PhD in Education – UNICAMP; Professor at the University of the Republic – Uruguay.

E-mail: eveliseaq@yahoo.com.br
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9789-6488>

MARCELO MORAES E SILVA: Master in Education – UFPR; PhD in Education – UNICAMP; Professor at the Department of Physical Education – UFPR; Professor in the Education Graduate Program (Line of research: History and Historiography of Education) and in the Physical Education Graduate Program (Line of research – Sociocultural aspects of sports and leisure).

E-mail: marcelomoraes@ufpr.br
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6640-7952>

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0669-1661>

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