



Educação & Realidade

ISSN: 0100-3143

ISSN: 2175-6236

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - Faculdade de Educação

Alves, Tabea Epp Kuster; Silva, Marcelo Moraes e
A Educação do Corpo nos Tratados de Esgrima do Século XVI
Educação & Realidade, vol. 48, 2023, pp. 1-19
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - Faculdade de Educação

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-6236121341vs01>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=317275135008>

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Education of the Body in 16th Century Fencing Treaties

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ABSTRACT – Education of the Body in 16th Century Fencing Treaties. The transformations resulting from the civilizing process of customs can be seen in different social spaces, including the historical trajectory of sports. In this sense, this article explores the processes of body education in 16th-century fencing treaties. During this period, the military sword fight became a more regulated confrontation, activating new bodily pedagogies. The analysis presented here indicates that the approximation of the royal court, the formation of cities, the increase in sensibility, and the emergence of firearms played an important role in the modification of fencing techniques and weapons and, consequently, in the entire process of educating the body.

Keywords: Civilization of Customs. Fencing Treaties. Body Education.

RESUMO – A Educação do Corpo nos Tratados de Esgrima do Século XVI. As transformações decorrentes do processo de civilização dos costumes podem ser visualizadas em diversos espaços sociais, inclusive na trajetória histórica das modalidades esportivas. Sendo assim, o presente artigo explora os processos de educação do corpo presentes nos tratados de esgrima do século XVI. Nesse período, a luta de espadas de uma prática bélica se transformou em um confronto mais regrado, ao qual novas pedagogias corporais foram acionadas. A análise aqui apresentada indica que a aproximação da corte real, a formação das cidades, o aumento da sensibilidade e o surgimento das armas de fogo tiveram um importante papel nas modificações das técnicas e armas de esgrima e, conseqüentemente, em todo processo de educação do corpo.

Palavras-chave: Civilização dos Costumes. Tratados de Esgrima. Educação do Corpo.

Introduction

The art of fence is undoubtedly a long one to master; nevertheless, it would be difficult to discover any swordsman of standing who regrets the time he has devoted to it; [...] (Castle, 1885, p. 223).

As stated in the excerpt, fencing is an art that takes time to be mastered because of its complex techniques. Due to its trajectory, it also takes a long period to fully apprehend its socio-historical aspect. Vaucelle (2004) suggests fencing is a practice with a rich and singular educational life.

Differently from other body practices, sword fighting did not start as an entertainment and/or game, but as warfare. Vaucelle (2004; 2009), Vigarello (2005), and García (2018) remember that the confrontation with swords was an activity present in the everyday lives of many European societies that only later, after the decline of duels, became entertainment. Only in the 19th century it got closer to the logic of modern sport. Fencing is a human activity transformed by the technological development of weapons, the increase of sensibility, by more specific handling techniques, and marked by a complex judicial system.

We must highlight that we do not aim to judge the history of fencing – after all, we cannot say that the transformations were an improvement over time. The changes emerged to attend to the logic and needs of each time and space, producing a specific type of body education.

The notion of body education, pointed out by Soares (2021), is marked by little traces, often discrete and barely visible but very eloquent. Body education is composed of details that come together, for example, pedagogical and medical texts, and, according to the author, appear in several fencing treaties.

We highlight that the educational processes, as shown by Revel (1986), Fumat (2000), Thomas (2003), Vigarello (2018), Capraro and Moraes e Silva (2021), and Soares (2021), are not exclusively restricted to the school space, being enacted in different individuals and institutions. Soares (2021) points out that the terms courtesy and civility were fundamental for this process of body education. Such notions are central, considering that they also manifest themselves, in a way, in the pedagogies and techniques present in the different fencing treaties produced in the 16th century, according to Vaucelle (2004; 2009) and Vigarello (2018).

Social changes are present in all aspects of individuals' lives, from their behavior and social relationships, up to their body practices (Elias, 1973; 1974; Chartier; Vigarello, 1982; Elias; Dunning, 1986; Vigarello, 2018; Loudcher, 2020; Soares, 2021). Therefore, the emergence and development of specific practices are not immune to these changes and are impregnated by countless elements of a process of body education. Thus, this article seeks to answer the following research question: what elements of body education are present in fencing treaties written in the 16th century?

The primary sources we used in this article were documents, mainly printed ones, divided into two books published in the 19th century and three fencing treaties written in the 16th century.

We used the book *Schools and Masters of Fence: from middle ages to the eighteen century*, by the Englishman Egerton Castle, published in 1885. It explores the pedagogization of the fencing trajectory through the creation of different European schools (French, Italian, Spanish, and English), analyzing the treaties of the most famous masters in each country and time, and delineating his work between the 15th century and the year 1800. The author believed that the need to describe the changes in handling bladed weapons should have some historical value. We can perceive this belief since the introduction of the book. We value the historicity of the book and its expressions – intentionally or not – referring to the social changes in this history.

Another work used was the book *Die Fechtkunst im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert* written by the German Gustav Hergsell, published in 1896. The author, as well as Castle, analyzed fencing treatises. However, its time frame restricts the works to those published in the 15th and 16th centuries. In his book, there are descriptions of several treatises published in this period, from which he takes details and techniques he considered essential to establish the bases of fencing at this time.

We highlight that these two authors, when analyzing the treaties, do so in a moment when fencing was in the process of sportivization, to the point of being, according to Ottogalli-Mazzacavallo and Terret (2010), one of the modalities included in the program of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. We also stress that in this period, as pointed out by García (2018), duels had been forbidden and fencing techniques were being developed to be used in friendly organized combats.

We also analyzed original fencing treaties. Though the authors commented on them, these works were used to understand the elements of body education during the process of establishing fencing. As there are many treaties, we selected three out of those commented on by Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896), which the authors considered important at their time, showing fencing characteristics, technical issues, and fencers' expected behavior with several elements of body education.

Thus, the first treat selected was that of Achille Marozzo, entitled *Opera Nova*, written in 1536. Hergsell (1896) considers the Italian master as the first one to publish a pedagogical work on fencing. Castle (1885) wrote that Marozzo was known as the most outstanding teacher of the old school of handling weapons, stating that the movements described were the most typical ones in the 16th century.

The second treaty was by Camillo Agrippa, published in 1553, called *Trattato di Scientia d'Arme, com um Dialogo di filosofia, di Camillo Agrippa, Milanese*. As can be seen in the tiles, the author, an architect, mathematician, and engineer sought in his work to base the movements and positions through mathematical calculations and geometric fig-

ures, aiming, according to Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896), to elevate fencing to a type of science.

Finally, the last treaty used was by the French master Henri de Saint Didier (1573): *Traicté contenant les secrets du premier livre sur l'espée seule, mère de tout les armes*. Vaucelle (2004; 2009) highlights that the French consider this book the first fencing treaty essentially French, considering that, until that moment in 1953, there were few traces of French masters and publications. The Italian influence is strong in this work. However, the publication became famous in Paris, becoming a landmark for the beginning of what has been conventionally called the French fencing school.

The Decline of Middle Age: the emergence of new types of behavior

It has often been said that a history of the sword would be a history of humanity, since the latter has ever been a chain of struggles between nations and men ultimately decided by violence. Similarly, it will be found that the changes in the modes of fencing at different periods correspond in a general way to the changes in manners (Castle, 1885, p. 4).

In a way, Castle's (1885) excerpt connects the history of fencing with the civilizing process of manners, presented by Elias (1973; 1974; 1975). This approximation can be established when Castle comments about the violence used in combat between nations and individuals. This is seen more strongly when the author approaches sword-fight changes and that, in a way, they follow the changes in manners.

When using Elias's reflections and corroborating Castle in the statement that to write about fencing one does not necessarily need to go much beyond the 15th century, there is a common historical starting point: the end of the Middle Ages. Another similarity is that both authors are limited to Europe, mainly France and Germany (Elias) and, besides these countries, England, Italy, and Spain (Castle). Elias (1973) states that the term civility emerges in France and the civilizing process of manner is clear in this country. He also compares France's history and sociological relations with those in Germany. Castle does the same by highlighting that the causes for the development of modern face took place mainly in the four European countries above.

As Elias (1973) pointed out, during the Middle Ages, the lands were ruled by the nobility of feudal knights. Conflicts were constant between the lords and the between them and their subjects. The sword was one of the primary weapons used in these conflicts. The knights dressed in armor fought with big heavy weapons, striking them with brute force to save their lives.

Castle (1885) indicates that, in this period, the sword was predominantly an attack weapon: the defense was up to the armor. However, the author also indicates that, at this moment, a concern emerged with

the technical aspects of handling the sword, considering that the bourgeois, who did not have armors, could develop other forms to escape the enemy blows. However, the author also indicates that at this moment emerged a concern with the technical aspects of sword maneuvering, considering that the bourgeois, who did not have armor, needed to develop other ways to escape the opponent's blows. For these individuals, the sword was also a defense weapon. Besides this, they usually held a *buckler* (a small shield) and counted on their agility to dodge the opponent's attacks. Castle (1885, p. 13-14) indicates this difference in the technical elements in the following excerpt:

The issue of a personal combat between the knights was determined, in a great measure, by the resistance of their armour and, ultimately, by their power of endurance. But a fight between two villains, armed only with clubs, or with sword and buckler, necessarily admitted of a far greater display of skill.

The author suggests that the most complex form of sword combat was practiced by the Middle-Age bourgeoisie, a time in which the battling artifact was used as a weapon for attack and defense, thus leading to the need for more agile movements. From Castle's perspective, this greater mobility approximates it with modern fencing. However, Castle (1885, p. 5) points out that "The rough untutored fighting of the Middle Ages represented faithfully the reign of brute force in social life as well as in politics [...]", i.e., the physical power and strength overlapped ability or dexterity.

Nonetheless, new ways of living and behaving were about to emerge in European society (Elias, 1973; Revel, 1986; Thomas, 2003). The search for more power and wealth, and the territorial disputes made feudal lords enter into war against each other. As Elias (1975), Duby (1984), and Le Goff (1991) indicated, throughout time, the lands were divided under the power of a few lords, and the disputes would continue until one of them could keep his rule over a great area and be named king, establishing a type of central command. This greater centralization included a military authority and a taxation power. Another meaningful element in this period, as the authors point out, was that the individuals started losing their lands and seeking other spaces, creating the first modern cities.

Therefore, at the end of the Middle Age, as pointed out by Revel (1986), Courtine and Haroche (1988), Le Goff (1991), Le Goff and Truong (2003), Thomas (2003), and Vigarello (2005; 2018), new habits gained shape. Different feelings and sensibilities emerged more intensely, while emotions were gradually more controlled. Elias (1973), when analyzing this period, indicates that the society was in transition and this question reverberated in good manners, stressing that something different was underway, mainly regarding greater emotional control.

To Elias (1973), this historical moment belongs to a phase in which the old nobility of feudal knights was declining while a new aristocracy

in the absolutist courts was under construction. The warriors were becoming courtiers, using the words of the German sociologist. This new court aimed to adopt more refined behaviors. Thus, habits considered rude were softened, and a life of gracious appearances became increasingly more valued, as pointed out by Revel (1986), Courtine and Haroche (1988), Thomas (2003), Vigarello (2014; 2018), and Soares (2021).

The small circles on the French court were the first to adopt those new habits (Revel, 1986; Courtine; Haroche, 1988; Thomas, 2003). According to Elias (1973), this process expanded later because society, as a whole, started to allow the progressive spread of these modified emotions. The hierarchical structure was unified, allowing trends to be dictated by a small aristocratic group and disseminated as a model for other social segments.

Revel (1986), Le Goff (1991), Courtine and Haroche (1988), Thomas (2003), Le Goff and Truong (2004), Vigarello (2014; 2018), and Soares (2021) consider this transition slow – after all, the new types of behavior were not adopted immediately. At this moment, the individuals started, little by little, to notice each other more, and as the court had a more strict social hierarchy, lower social segments started to imitate the behavior of those on the top.

We should highlight that, as well as Revel (1986) and Fumat (2000), a critical treaty of civility was published in 1530, written by Erasmus of Rotterdam, entitled *De Pueris*. Revel (1986) stresses that, at a time when catholic unity was breaking away and absolutism was not yet materialized, part of the court society and knights questioned the hierarchies established in the Middle Age. This way, a common language was necessary. Soares (2021) points out that the pedagogical text formulated by Erasmus meets these expectations, becoming an essential landmark in body education at this period.

Elias (1973) appropriates Erasmus's work as a research source about behaviors, exemplifying his whole theory of civilization of manners. It shows that Erasmus of Rotterdam's guide to civility and courtesy significantly marked the transformation of behaviors, despite not being full of new and original ideas.

Furthermore, we need to highlight that other civility treaties, such as *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528) from Baltasar Castiglione, and *Galateo* (1558), from Giovanni della Casa, were also written to dictate how society, mainly nobility, could behave in that period (Shrank, 2019; Soares, 2021). The sensibility became increasingly considered compared to the brutality, and rusticity individuals lived in other historical moments. Elias (1973) argues that a sense of what should or not be done to shock or offend other individuals was emerging, creating a much more restricted and interdependent system regarding manners.

Elias (1973) states that sensibility can be seen in the most diverse sphere of Renaissance society. Vigarello (2005) and Linklater and Menel (2010) suggest that this period witnessed the improvement and development of fire weapons. According to Castle (1885) and Hergsell

(1896), it was at this moment that the history of modern fencing started and all its involved pedagogical processes. However, how do sensibility and restraint of emotions influence this history? After all, the logic behind manner and civility manuals are also materialized in body education present in the first fencing treatises.

The Control of emotions and the Processes of Body Education: influences in the consolidation of modern fencing

Among the several activities he used to exemplify the changes in the perspective about the body and its manifestations, Vigarello (2005) states that the sword art was one that better represented the evolution of the expected physical qualities, as well as the body movements in the European context since the end of the Middle Ages. The French historian argues about the systematization of this art during the post-Renaissance period. A wish to geometrize fencing strongly imposed itself, profoundly changing the learning and different body pedagogies.

Vigarello (2005) used Castle's (1885) work to analyze fencing as a research source. In this sense, it is no surprise that the French historian and the English author indicate that, despite the origin of fencing as a sport, it was influenced by sword combats. Fencing has also emerged as the result of a very particular paradox: the development of fire weapons.

Vigarello (2005) points out that the armor, which before protected the person from heavy sword blows, was no longer useful because it could not stop the projectiles shot by fire weapons. The French author reminds us that in the beginning, these weapons did not fully substitute the swords, which continued to be frequently used. However, they needed to be adapted to a new way of fighting and social reality.

As Vigarello (2005) pointed out, swords started to be used in close-range individual combats and, as armors were no longer used, specific physical abilities, such as speed and agility, became more valued. Thus, the swords became lighter and thinner, as they should be easier to maneuver, as indicated by Castle (1885, p. 5) in the following excerpt:

Later on, after the Renaissance, when life was taken more easily, the depressing armour was discarded in the private walks of life. The discovery of a greater variety of interests and pleasures induced men to lead a more active existence, and they began to walk where before they had ridden in state, reduced the dimensions of their ancestor's sword, and, as the harness of war was now only worn in the camps, came to rely on their agility and cunning to make up for the scantier protection of cloak or hand buckler.

While Vigarello (2005) corroborates in his analysis a more technical look than Castle (1885) when relating the use of fire weapons with the beginning of modern fencing, Elias (1974) brought a perspective that significantly advances this point. For the German sociologist, the devel-

opment of fire weapons and the relative abandonment of armors, in a way, displaced the social balance that previously favored the warrior nobility. Previously recruited in the higher layers, the armies started to be constricted mainly to the less privileged. According to the author, shooting guns, such as crossbows, were usually instruments used by peasants and non-noble troops. Therefore, lower social segments used fire weapons more efficiently.

However, Elias (1974) highlights that a new aristocracy was under construction in court. As the princes no longer needed the nobles for wars, the latter could no longer use this dependency to be favored, leading them to get closer to royalty, living closer to the surroundings or even in the castles of the sovereigns. Therefore, as García (2018) suggests, the increasing proximity of the individuals also increased personal conflicts, which were often solved through duels.

Elias (1974) also highlights that the nobles raised in their parents' properties needed to get used to life in court, more refined, diversified, and rich in relations, demanding stronger emotional control. Regarding this issue, Castle (1885) indicates that where there is a higher self-control, there is a greater probability of tensions and conflicts. Therefore, the English author highlights that many duels started to take place in several European courts.

Another point raised by Elias (1974) is that court nobility sought a way to distinguish itself, and the use of swords and the practice of duels could have been one of these distinct ways. Mainly the members of the aristocracy carried weapons and had fencing classes. In these senses, some authors, like Vaucelle (2004; 2009), Vigarello (2005), Drévilion (2011), and García (2018), corroborate the 19th-century analysis of Castle (1885), which considered duels common in European noble circles.

To improve their techniques of sword maneuvering, the court members started to hire commoners as fencing masters. These masters had experience in teaching how to handle weapons and founded their schools, as they had a more technical relationship with the sword since they had no armor. We can see this issue in the following excerpt by Castle (1885, p. 15): "When 'Knightly' habits disappeared and were replaced by 'cavalier' manners, the 'gentleman' took his lesson in arms from some plebeian fighting-master". At first, using this Castle's citation seems reductant after the previous statement. Nonetheless, besides confirming this transition, the English author calls attention to the behavioral change, when writing about the period before the Renaissance or the formation of court society, and about the time after this establishment. In his text, Castle (1885) uses the term *knightly* to refer to the noble knights, the nobles who lived in their lands and had their days marked by fights and wars on horses, dressed in armor, and holding their weapons. The word, though referring to nobility, is substituted by the terms *cavalier* or *gentleman* that, after this transition, were words that imprinted a time in which nobility was characterized by more re-

fined, courteous, and civilized gestures embedded, as suggested by Vigarello (2005; 2018) and Soares (2021), by a refined body education.

Vigarello (2005), when discussing equestrian ballet, points out the same substitution on the terms raised by Castle, citing them in French, showing the transformation from *chevalier* to *cavalier*. For the French historian, the horse and its *chevalier* represented the war power and was, in a way, the materialization of vigor and strength. For this reason, these individuals should be submitted to a rigorous body education, presenting, since then, more elegant and regulated movements. In Elias's (1974) work, there is also a change in rhetoric. When discussing the French context, the German sociologist indicates that the court society established around the figure of the king started to be called *seigneurs* and *grands seigneurs*. The royal effigy itself stopped being called *le roi chevalier* to become an aristocratic sovereign.

In the transition from the 16th to the 17th century, we can see that the sword was losing its war character. However, as Vaucelle (2004; 2009) and García (2018) pointed out the sword continued to be used in private combats, in the king's personal guard, in matches and tournaments, and the increasingly more common duels in European society at the time. After all, as stated by Drévillon (2011), the 17th-century knights did not automatically become stoic warriors: they were still men with passions, made of flesh and bone but who, simultaneously, should submit themselves to the values of courtesy and civility. The sword games fascinated the member of the nobility, and, as indicated by Vigarello (2005), this attraction emerged from the power emanated from such activity. In a way, the aristocracy channeled their emotions in these sword games, controlled their wish for violence, and highlighted all their power. However, these events needed to follow some rules of civility, and violence needed to be controlled and ruled.

Vigarello (2005) highlights that in the 16th century, the games started to be not only a dispute of force and violence but also a moment in which ability, dexterity, and elegance in sword maneuvering needed to be shown through the mastery of specific techniques. According to the French historian, an individual should incorporate such abilities through a particular body pedagogy.

Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896) stress that to answer the need of nobles to fight in matches and duels, several masters specialized in the teaching of sword maneuvering and fencing art. Therefore, fencing schools opened, and some treaties were written describing guards, movements, combat strategies, and rules to guide the duels. According to Vaucelle (2004; 2009) and Drévillon (2011), fencing became an art increasingly ruled by rational principles. We used the elements in three fencing treaties published in the 16th century to show these precepts.

For the Improvement of Techniques: the creation of a feeling of self

Before the 16th century, some fencing treaties had been written. However, according to Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896) there were few details about them. The authors remind us that, in this sport's history, there are contradictions about who and where these first treaties were written. Hergsell (1896) affirms that, as they were the greatest manufacturers of swords and started the *rapiera* fights, the Spanish believe they started modern fencing. However, the Italians believe that the first known manual was written and formulated in Italian and written in Italian, thus proving the country's hegemony in sword fighting.

Another element that suggests Italy's primacy is that most treaties written in the 16th century originated in the Italian peninsula, revealing a tradition of masters who, according to Hergsell (1896, p. 18) probably existed since before the 16th century: "It would certainly be no surprise to say that there were fencing schools in Italy before the year 1500¹ [...]". As we cannot access these treaties, and we do not even know if they were published, we will not discuss whether modern fencing started in Spain or Italy. However, we brought from the texts some traces of the characteristics and behaviors that portray the transformation of manners and the processes of body education.

Hergsell (1896) indicates that, during the 16th century, people still fought with a sword in one hand while carrying on the other a dagger and/or a type of shield, which could be a large one and cover a significant part of the body, or a smaller one. We should highlight that these smaller instruments were used for defense and attack. The author reminds us that the technical act of defending oneself was not much appreciated in that period, because it was considered a cowardly action. The most praised element was to replicate an attack with another offensive action. According to Hergsell (1896), it was considered correct to disarm the opponent, then violently fall over him and kill him.

Still, the new manners, as highlighted by Elias (1973), Vigarello (2014), and Loudcher (2020), made individuals more sensitive to violence and such social changes also started to be shown in sword conflicts. The following citation by Hergsell (1896, p. 45) exemplifies this question well: "These fights, in which disarming and use of brute force and cunning seem justified, were halted by the finesse of manners at the end of the 16th century²". In this excerpt, we can see that the 18th-century viewpoint portrayed the brutality of combat in the early 16th century as undesirable. In this sense, we can glimpse a change in the perception of violence when Hergsell mentions that it would be softened through the tenderness of manners that had emerged in European society in the late 16th century.

Regarding the 16th century, Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896) point out the fencing treaties by Achille Marozzo, Camillo Agrippa, and Henri Saint Didier, as among the most important ones in the period. Achille

Marozzo, considered the father of Italian fencing, published a manual in 1536 entitled *Opera Nova*. As Castle (1885, p. 33) highlights, because Italy was subdivided into several independent states, before Marozzo there were many practice associations of weapon maneuvering, each with a different master, and constant conflicts emerged among them: “Nothing could be less conducive to improvement, and accordingly, until Marozzo’s days, when Italy took the lead on matters of fencing, the Italian schools could not boast of any great superiority”.

Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896) highlight that Marozzo was from Bologna and kept a fencing school in Venice. According to the authors, he was a pioneer in the systematization of teaching sword maneuvering materialized in his treaty. The organization of his knowledge about fencing and the illustrations in his works indicates the transition from an old sword fighting to a more modern one, in which more courteous and civilized behaviors were stressed. Castle (1885, p. 35) indicates some elements: “It would be perhaps wiser to consider him as the greatest teacher of the old school, the rough and undisciplined swordsmanship of which depended as much on dash and violence and sudden inspiration as on carefully cultivated skill”.

In Marozzo’s treatizes, cutting weapons were predominant, and few thrusting movements were taught. The only thrusting blows suggested were those to the face, notably to the eyes: “This attack could come from the time of knightly fights, in which the aim was to hit the opponent’s visor [...]” (Hergsell, 1896, p. 84). The sword was long and double-edged, generally paired with a *buckler* (small shield), a dagger, and a cape.

Figure 1 refers to an image taken from Marozzo’s work and shows a fencer with objects used to complement sword fighting. He holds a *buckler* in one of his hands, and on the waist, we can see a dagger. In this iconographic source, we can also perceive the robustness of the sword used. It had a broad and long blade and a hilt not adapted for complex movement but favored the execution of cutting blows.

Figure 1 – Sword and *Buckler*

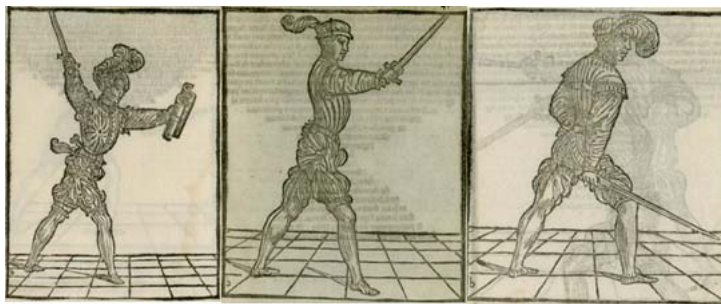


Source: Marozzo (1536, p. 25).

As previously stated, defense was not valued. Therefore, the guards still needed to have the current concept, i.e., the position in which the fencer's body is ready to attack and defend. The guards suggested by Marozzo were all positions that privileged the attack: "[...] they are merely a collection of attitudes, each of which is merely the preliminary to one or two attacks" (Castle, 1885, p. 37). We should highlight that Marozzo's (1536) treaty described twelve guards used in different sequences, depending on each combat situation. Such positions worked as feints, techniques that, according to Hergsell (1896), later became an important technical concept for the fencing universe in the 19th century.

Figure 2 represents three guards in the treaty. The positions help us to see the little value given to the defense, with positions that expose the body with little concern for protection. It is also possible to observe a slight body inclination forward, with the weight on the right leg, clearly indicating a posture that values offensive actions.

Figure 2 –Marozzo Positions



Source: Marozzo (1536, p. 35, 43 e 45).

Hergsell's (1896) analysis of Marozzo's work shows that 16th-century fencing was not very developed – an attribution of value given by the 18th-century author – and, for this reason, the defense was even less explored. Though the word *parada* [parry] appears several times in the manual of the Italian master, the conception of it at the time was different from today. The defense happened mostly in two ways: the first through the movement of the legs backward or sideways, and the second was attacking the opponent's blade to, then, hit.

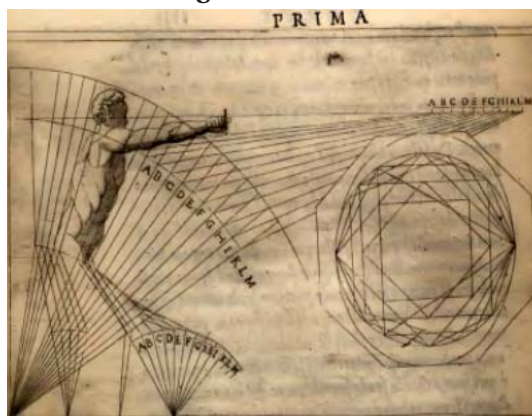
The second treaty analyzed was written by Camillo Agrippa and published in 1553. In his manual, the Italian architect and engineer presents, with geometric explanations, the four guards that would be the bases for executing an attack. To Castle (1885), Agrippa's work was original and advanced for fencing in his time because the questions he raised were only accepted later. He was not a master of arms but an amateur practitioner who wished to explain and demystify some techniques of weapon maneuvering through science.

An important point raised by Agrippa was that masters did not need to teach many guards. According to him, such positions limited

fencers in their actions and, therefore, summarized them into only four positions, from which all attack actions could start, saving time and energy. Despite its advanced view, in Castle's and Hergsell's opinions, Agrippa's guards did not have the definition they would have in the 19th century when there would be basic positions from which the fencer would be able to attack or defend. At the same time, they were only of-fensive until then.

On figure 3, we can why 18th-century authors were admired by Agrippa's (1553) treaty, considering that it revealed an approximation of fencing with the scientific universe.

Figure 3 – Prima



Source: Agrippa (1553, n.p.).

In the image, some lines show the transformation of the robust and rude sword fights into geometrized fencing, closer to the molds suggested by Vigarello (2005). As this characteristic was not present in most previous treaties and will only be found again in the following centuries, we can say that this knowledge was not yet disseminated and materialized. However, it points out the paths fencing would take.

The last analyzed treaty is by Saint Didier, published in 1573, describing various principles that, in a sense, presented similarities with the Italian manuals. The French master, similarly to Agrippa, presented a reduced number of guards, showing only three positions. Hergsell (1896) explains that Saint Didier's manual used a sequence of blows and defenses between the master and students, describing the attack and how the student should defend or counter-attack. Several displacements were also explained by the geometric shapes the feet should take during its execution, corroborating, in a way, with what Agrippa said. As raised by Vigarello (2005), the geometrization of fencing gains more shape.

As stated by Castle (1885) and Vaucelle (2004; 2009), one of the reasons for the treaty's success was the high number of duels in France during this time. At this moment, the idea that learning to fence with a

master was unworthy had already disappeared. Castle (1885) mentions that, in the second half of the 16th century, the number of private duels extraordinarily increased so that, in 180 years, France lost around 40,000 noblemen. For a time, the nobility sought these classes with Italian masters. Nonetheless, when Saint Didier's (1573) treaty emerged, one could see that the French masters were absorbing the knowledge of this area and developing their school.

Saint Didier's (1573) treaty also shows ways to disarm the opponent, as this was a way to win the duel and remove his dignity, and, often, his life. Figure 4 shows a disarming and indicates the sword (in this case, the *estocade*) commonly used by the French. It was approximately one meter long, with a flat, straight, two-edged blade. This sword represents the transition from heavy brute weapons used in previous periods into lighter and thinner artifacts, the *rapiera* and a *small sword*, which emphasized the tip and the agility rather than the blade cut and the force.

Figure 4 – Saint Didier's disarming



Source: Castle (1885, p. 60).

These characteristics – offensive guards, cutting weapons, still large and robust, the emphasis on the attack, considering defense a cowardly attitude, disarming techniques, and the veiled forms aimed to kill – show that brutality still dominated the combats.

We should highlight, however, that the treaties analyzed described several rules that should be followed in a duel, showing that the body should be controlled and that the fighters' elegance, courtesy, civility, and nobility should be prioritized, as can be seen in Hergsell's (1896, p. 89) following except analyzing Marozzo's work: "The art of fencing, which can be considered a serious science, demands the utmost calm, which should be incentivized in all students⁴⁷". Hergsell, when referring to the author of *Opera Nova*, shows that, even in combat, calmness should be kept, demanding a mastery over emotions, i.e., individuals should have a body education that privileged self-control and mastery over oneself.

This body education is materialized in Marozzo's (1536) treaty, mainly when the Italian master writes about how to teach other masters to teach. The practitioners should only fight after knowing all the bases of fencing, and, for their protection, they should always exercise them with more experienced fencers. These procedures highlight all the pedagogical dimensions that started to be established in the fencing universe. After all, if "[...] one of them is inferior, you should not give much importance to the blows taken but consider the progress of the lesson as a learning⁵" (Hergsell, 1896, p. 88). A position also shared by Castle (1885, p. 43):

The masters of the sixteenth century had already found out the truth of a principle which is not sufficiently regarded in our days, namely, that to become a proficient swordsman, a fencer should not attach too much importance to hits received in practice, and never show temper, but rather take his mishap as a lesson, and learn to prevent its recurrence in good style.

Compared to old fencing and gladiator fighting Hergsell raises when pointing out the causes for the emergency of modern fencing in Italy, the combats with rules and rehearsed movement could be considered courteous and civilized, despite the geometrization, in the terms used by Vigarello (2005). The control of violence would still be more systematized in the following centuries. About fencing in the 16th century, Hergsell (1896, p. 49) comments that: "[...] a close examination of these treaties tell us that, despite the scientific phases, the fencer relied more on physical force and agility, more on the inspiration of the moment, than on the established principles⁶".

Despite the differences between 16th-century fencing and its sporting variation regarding the use of more contained and delicate movements, several changes took place at the end of the 18th century. In the words of Hergsell (1896, p. 45) previously used: "These fights, in which disarming and use of brute force and cunning seem justified, were halted by the finesse of manners at the end of the 16th century⁷". We can see that, in this period, the finesse and sensibility will substitute several manners considered brutal and violent and that, in his words, the "[...] art of fencing took on a character of the court⁸" (Hergsell, 1896, p. 49), i.e., sword fighting started to demand another type of body education, more courteous and civilized.

Final remarks

The civilization process of manners is not the cause of social transformations but their visible consequence. Disputes for territories until one group dominated broad lands, the exponential expansion of cities, a more significant division of functions and works, and the curialization of knights, among other transformations, raised the need to create new behaviors and manners considered to be more civilized.

Sword fighting was among the different human activities affected by the process of civilization of manners. The changes in fencing were not a relation of cause-effect with the process of civilization of manners. However, this process can be clearly seen in the history of sword fighting. Throughout this article, we pointed out several relations between the establishment of modern fencing with the so-called civilization of manners and its processes of body education.

Under the 18th-century perspectives represented here in Castle's and Hergsell's works, we can perceive how the brutal fight with large and long swords that aimed to exhaust the opponent on the battle field, as he had an armor and shield for protection, takes a new shape since the end of the Middle Age. Since the curialization of medieval knights, they could behave as noble knights and get closer to the king's court. Thus, their daily sword activities adapted to the demands of court society.

The sword maneuvering became more geometrized and conformed to the duels, and lighter and more delicate weapons substituted the heavy swords. Therefore, for the success of individual combats, some techniques needed to be developed and taught by the fencing master. Physical characteristics, such as agility and speed, were valued, and the thrusts were included in several forms to attack the opponents. Hence, a new educational process started to be demanded, making new pedagogies related to sword maneuvering emerge.

As they lived in a time when fencing was under a sportivization process, in which defense techniques had already been improved, a ruled and organized fight to be arbitrated was being established, Castle (1885) and Hergsell (1896) evidenced the lack of these elements in the 16th- century treaties. For the 18th-century authors, the attack guards and displacements were still seen as brutal actions. In their turn, the characteristics similar to the combats of its time were considered advanced. Amidst this, Castle (1885) states that we should not compare the 19th-century techniques with those of the 16th century, considering them better or worse but simply as techniques transformed by the need of each time.

The several technological innovations, mainly those related to the development of fire weapons, ended up eliminating the use of heavy and resistant armors, thus, in a way, removing the centrality of the sword as a war weapon. However, the sensibility increase towards violence, the government's monopoly of force, and the civilization of manners significantly contributed to transforming a brutal fight into a geometrized and elegant practice that demanded new pedagogies for the processes of body education. Such elements were vital to later syntonize with the logic of modern sport. However, such questions are body (hi)stories to be problematized in future studies.

Translated by Viviane Ramos

Received January 4, 2022

Accepted July 13, 2022

Notes

- 1 In the original: *Es sollte uns durchaus nicht Wunder nehmen, wenn berichtet wird, dass bereits vor dem Jahre 1500 es in Italien Fechtschulen gab [...]* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 18).
- 2 In the original: *Diesen Kämpfen, bei welchen der stete Gebrauch der Entwaffnung, der Anwendung von roher Gewalt, sowie der der List berechtigt erscheint, wurde durch die Höflichkeit der Sitten gegen Ende des XVI. Jahrhunderts Einhalt gethan* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 45).
- 3 In the original: *Dieser Angriff dürfte aus der Zeit der ritterlichen Kämpfe stammen, bei welchen getrachtet wurde, das Visier des Gegners zu treffen, [...]* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 84).
- 4 In the original: *Die Fechtkunst, die, was wohl zu überlegen ist, eine ernste Wissenschaft ist, erfordert die grösste Ruhe, man muss dieselbe bei allen Schülern fordern* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 89).
- 5 In the original: *Ist man unterlegen, so soll man den erhaltenen Hiebe keineswegs eine grosse Wichtigkeit beilegen, vielmehr den Gang der Lection, als Schulung betrachten* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 88).
- 6 In the original: *Eine genaue Prüfung dieser Abhandlungen belehrt uns jedoch, dass trotz der wissenschaftlichen Sentenzen man sich mehr auf die körperliche Kraft und Gewandheit, sowie die Eingebung des Augenblickes, als auf festgestellte Grundsätze verliess* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 49).
- 7 In the original: *Diesen Kämpfen, bei welchen der stete Gebrauch der Entwaffnung, der Anwendung von roher Gewalt, sowie der der List berechtigt erscheint, wurde durch die Höflichkeit der Sitten gegen Ende des XVI. Jahrhunderts Einhalt gethan* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 45).
- 8 In the original: *Die Fechtkunst nahm den Charakter des Höfischen an* (Hergsell, 1896, p. 49).

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