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Review article

Las concepciones morales de José Martí acerca de la Educación Física, el Deporte y la Recreación

The moral conceptions of José Martí about Physical Education, Sports and Recreation

As concepções morais de José Martí sobre Educação Física, Esportes e Recreação

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: José Martí, Cuba's national hero, has bequeathed various progressive perspectives over time, including in sports, a lesser-known facet of his prolific journalistic and literary work. It is known that he practiced a single specialty: chess; but in his chronicles he demonstrated knowledge of long-distance running, American football, billiards, boxing, horse riding, fencing, hunting, bullfighting and skating, among others.

Objective: To deepen the moral conceptions of the National Hero of Cuba about sports and Physical Education.



Materials and methods: to carry out this study, a bibliographic review of the complete works of José Martí was developed, referring to the North American scenes where Martí's chronicles about sports and Physical Education are collected to a greater extent.

Results: The topic that is addressed by his interest transcends the borders of his time and is inserted in the project of the ideas that sustain the Cuban revolution, that sport is a right of the people; This article is dedicated to this, to highlight the opinions expressed by José Martí on sports, Physical Education and Recreation, being a critic of these from the moral point of view.

Conclusions: José Martí developed an arsenal of ideas that constitute a high contribution to the development of sport and Physical Education. In journalism, the teacher had one of the most accurate views on the practice of sport.

Keywords: Sport; Physical education; Moral conceptions.

RESUMEN

Introducción: José Martí, héroe nacional de Cuba, ha legado con el paso del tiempo, diversas ópticas progresistas, inclusive en el deporte, una faceta menos conocida en su fecunda labor periodística y literaria. Se conoce que practicó una sola especialidad: el ajedrez; pero en sus crónicas demostró conocimientos sobre carreras de fondo, fútbol americano, billar, boxeo, equitación, esgrima, caza, corridas de toros y patinaje, entre otros.

Objetivo: Profundizar en las concepciones morales del Héroe Nacional de Cuba acerca del deporte y la Educación Física.

Materiales y métodos: Para llevar a cabo este estudio se desarrolló una revisión bibliográfica de las obras completas de José Martí, referidas a las escenas norteamericanas donde se recoge en mayor medida las crónicas martianas acerca del deporte y la Educación Física.

Resultados: El tema que se aborda por su interés trasciende las fronteras de su época y se inserta en el proyecto de las ideas que sustentan a la revolución cubana, de que el deporte es un derecho del pueblo; a ello va dedicado el presente artículo, a resaltar las opiniones que vertió José Martí sobre el deporte, la Educación Física y la Recreación, siendo un crítico de estos desde el punto de vista moral.

Conclusiones: José Martí elaboró un arsenal de ideas que constituyen un alto aporte al desarrollo del deporte y la Educación Física. En el periodismo el maestro tuvo una de las visiones más certeras sobre la práctica del deporte.

Palabras clave: Deporte; Educación Física; Concepciones morales.

SÍNTESE

Introdução: José Martí, o herói nacional de Cuba, legou com o passar do tempo, várias visões progressistas, inclusive no esporte, uma faceta menos conhecida de sua prolífica obra jornalística e literária. Sabe-se que ele praticou apenas uma especialidade: xadrez; mas em suas crônicas ele demonstrou seus conhecimentos de corrida de longa distância, futebol americano, bilhar, boxe, equitação, esgrima, caça, toureio e patinação, entre outros.

Objetivo: Estudar em profundidade as concepções morais do Herói Nacional de Cuba sobre esporte e Educação Física.

Método: a fim de realizar este estudo, foi realizada uma revisão bibliográfica dos



trabalhos completos de José Martí, referindo-se às cenas norte-americanas onde as crônicas de Martí sobre esporte e Educação Física são coletadas em maior escala.

Resultados: O assunto tratado por seu interesse transcende as fronteiras de seu tempo e está inserido no projeto das idéias que sustentam a revolução cubana, que o esporte é um direito do povo; é a isso que este artigo é dedicado, para destacar as opiniões que José Martí expressou sobre esporte, Educação Física e Recreação, sendo um crítico destes do ponto de vista moral.

Conclusões: José Martí elaborou um arsenal de idéias que constituem uma grande contribuição para o desenvolvimento do esporte e da Educação Física. No jornalismo, o professor tinha uma das visões mais precisas sobre a prática do esporte.

Palavras-chave: Esporte; Educação Física; Conceitos morais.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the country, a great effort is being made to study and disseminate the revolutionary thought and action of José Martí Pérez. On the sphere of sport and Physical Education and the treatment of these by José Martí, several works have been written that reflect how, despite being in the preparations for the next revolutionary contest, he always knew how to reflect in his writings, the different competitions, already be it boxing, baseball, regattas, horse racing, American football, fencing, among others.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue studying his thought. In this effort, we start from the conviction that educating the new and future generations of Cubans in the example of José Martí is a common responsibility of all our people. The study of the work of Martí according to (Suárez, Rodríguez, 2017).

The theme linked to Martí and sport has been treated in studies in Cuba, where there are works that address it from the journalistic point of view, which as such reflects sports activities and other activities that distort the essence of true sport, by dehumanizing it and turning it into mercantilism.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to deepen the moral conceptions of the National Hero of Cuba about sports and Physical Education, being a necessity in the current conditions to consult his work and the legacy he left for present and future generations of athletes.

Due to the fact that this work deals with a personality as relevant in history as José Martí was, it has had to resort to bibliographical references from primary sources and classical authors. However, it is also important to highlight that research was consulted that from the histrionic and intersectoral point of view also highlighted the life and work of the Cuban national hero (Prieto, 2018; Peña, Naranjo, 2018; Vega, 2018; Delgado *et al.*, 2019; Monal, 2019; Varona, 2020; Arias, 2020; Núñez, 2021).

DEVELOPMENT

The topic that is addressed, by its interest, transcends the borders of its time and is inserted in the project of the ideas that sustain the Cuban revolution, that sport is a right of the people, this article is dedicated to it, to highlight the opinions expressed by José



Martí on sports, Physical Education and recreation, being a critic of these from the moral point of view.

As pointed out [Roig de Leuchsenring 1997](#),

"From the very beginning of his revolutionary work, since he understood that his life's immediate mission was to rekindle, first the sparks that were still burning among the ashes of Zanjón and then give new dimensions to the combat" (pp.6-7).

From these trenches, the fiery verb of José Martí gave great importance to the practice of sport.

He pointed out ([Pérez JM, 1975, p.367](#)) that "nothing strengthens as much as the exercise of force".

In the chronicles he wrote in different newspapers throughout the 1980s, his criteria on boxers, skaters, walkers, gymnasts, fencers, baseball players, admirable for their tenacity and skill, can be found.

As pointed out ([Torres, 2020](#)),

"In his journalistic chronicles, Martí dedicated several reflections to the subject of sport, which are of great interest and relevance in our days, because they are full of human, ethical and professional values, which constitute pillars on which it is based, in our opinion, not only the training of our athletes, coaches and the rest of the professionals in the activity, but also includes all sectors of the population. These ideas are part of the state policy towards the full realization of man in the Cuban socialist society materializing in the slogan "The right sport of the people."

For Martí, education should freely and fully develop the aptitudes and faculties of man. He attached great importance to the development of Physical Education.

In one of his articles published in La América, New York in March 1883, The gym in the house said:

"In these times of spiritual anxiety, it is urgent to strengthen the body that has to maintain it. In cities especially, where the air is heavy and miasmatic; work, excessive; pleasure, violent; and the causes of great fatigue; - it is necessary to assure the organs of the body, which all these causes impoverish and hurt, ample room in a well-developed muscular system, level the exercise of all the faculties so that they do not put the life of the patient at risk. excessive exercise of a room, and temper with a healthy system of blood circulation, and with the distribution of force in the use of all the organs (...) It is necessary to strengthen, mainly, the children's body as their spirit grow ([Martí, 1975, p.389](#))".

The development of these faculties was only achieved when the school was capable of fulfilling its social function of forming healthy and strong people, an idea that this approach is still fully valid today.

The importance of the practice of Physical Education and Sports for university students who dedicate themselves to this is of vital importance, as stated ([Barrientos et al., 2011](#)).



Physical Education, Sports, Recreation and Therapeutic Physical Culture play an important role, the different classes of subjects show how Martí's thought is constantly in force since it is a necessity for Cubans and especially for students.

The newspaper La Nación. Buenos Aires, June 3, 1883 pointed out "Since man comes to live, education must prepare him to live. At school you have to learn how to manage the force with which you have to fight in life" (Martí, 1975, p.53).

The true school educates the child both physically and intellectually, paying great attention to the practice of Physical Education, sports and healthy recreation. All its approaches have been carried out with the true revolution in the field of education and sports as social achievements that the country is called to preserve in the current conditions. Education and physical culture are the privilege of the entire people.

José Martí arrives in the United States in 1880, it is in this country that he begins to contemplate sports, so in his chronicles and articles he elaborated an arsenal of ideas that constitute an important contribution to sports, Physical Education and recreation. With audacity, he bequeathed us the most original narrations that endorse the permanent validity of his work in sports.

Martí narrates several competitions, in which he often saw the problems and explained their solutions, meditating with a depth that in our eyes constitutes an incomparable legacy for all those who love physical culture and sports in any of their manifestations.

He was an actor in a true renewal movement that eliminated the judgments and prejudices that went against healthy sports, he drew his own conclusions and in journalism he had one of the most accurate views on sports practice. He was able to make journalism a daily exercise that gave him his name, extolling the real competitions of boxing, athletics, wrestling, many of them with a mercantilist spirit.

It can be said without mistake that the fifteen years he spent in the United States from 1880-1895, he poured his knowledge into the press extolling the great sporting events. Proof of this are the collaborations in La América, La Nación of Buenos Aires, the Liberal Party of Mexico, La Opinion Nacional of Caracas, La Opinion Pública of Montevideo and El Avisador Cubano, among others.

He spoke of the need to create gyms like those used today in the fight against obesity and sedentary lifestyle. In the Golden Age magazine, without a doubt the highest dream of José Martí dedicated to the children of America and of which only four numbers were published, there are numerous quotes in relation to children's games.

Suárez and Rodríguez 2017 stand out,

Similarly, they point out that, without being an expert in the matter, neither specialist in sports, the Cuban Apostle was able to describe what he saw and go further, since he argued, said what he felt, authentically referred to athletic contests, highlighting human values such as solidarity, humanism, honesty, those that are in the true essence of sport.

He denounced the corruption and the scourges of healthy sport for professionalism. In the work entitled The barbarian walkers. Men's races. Greek athletes and modern athletes in the National Opinion of Caracas of March 22, 1882 describes the attendance



of people to a walker event where the loss of moral standards and the use of money as a form of realization is revealed, he pointed out:

One of our last letters from that city spoke to our readers about the last bet of the walkers in New York. The gamblers finally finished off their commitment, and all of them walked in six days, around the barrier of a great circus, five hundred and twenty-five miles, and there was one, a bony and gaunt Englishman, who walked six hundred miles in six days. Already at the end of the race, it did not seem that they were raising feet, but logs. No expression of spirit could be seen on their faces. One of them was dragging himself, his eyes closed, his gaunt hands wiping his cold, sweaty forehead. Another, a black boy from Haiti, with the face of a criminal, walked with extraordinary elegance and firmness: his hands were filled with gifts and flowers. Another was staggered to his feet by his cruel nurses, and made to walk like a beast. Well, the company that took charge of managing this show reported having collected \$45,674 from it, of which \$6,335 came as rent from vendors who set up their tents in the circus; and the rest for the product of the tickets of the attendees to the exhibition, who arrived one day by leaving \$10,618 in the office, and who in none of the six days of the show left less than \$5,000. Of those monies, \$6,000 was kept by the managing businessman for his work and risks, \$18,000 was set aside for payment of expenses, in which the businessman also took advantage of cash, and \$21,000 was distributed pro rata among the bettors (Martí, 1975, p.273).

In this individualism is demonstrated, the debasement of the human being in the face of the possible threat of excessive profit, that is, the performance of any sporting activity in exchange for money.

He gives sport its true social function in the face of professionalism that still persists today. Human dignity, that is, humanism, is the central point of his reflection before everything he saw.

Proof of this is his reflection on boxing, a sport highly questioned by the teacher for its brutality. In the America, New York, July 1884 express,

(...) Thus it is the virtue that, equitably distributed throughout the Universe, whenever in a certain space or locality it is lacking in many, it is collected in only one, so that the balance is not altered and human harmony comes to suffer; in one only, that the honor that is scarce in others he accumulates in himself, and acquires from it prophetic indignation and resplendent eloquence, and is all shame, for being lacking in others; and it is all cheek (Martí, 1975, p.189).

It is here envisioning the social significance of sport where their conceptions are consolidated and entrenched as moral convictions, and govern as certain rules or patterns their conduct in practical activity, in their social relations, in their attitude towards life. There is no narration where his moral conceptions are not present with respect to everything that surrounded him.

This thought in sports in the high sense of duty, honor, example, justice, force of action without malice and petty interests, his preaches for the honesty of men, his defense of the truth above all things, from love to work, to free time and his criticism of paternalism, leisure, false vanities, his relentless hatred of brutal practice in sports.



His high humanism is revealed, his sensitivity to the beautiful or the ugly, the good or the bad, his solidarity and respect for just and noble causes, as well as his sense of collectivism in the face of individualism understood as the necessary unity in the face of evils in which American society was struggling.

When criticizing rented sports, professionalism, Martí's rules and patterns of conduct as one of the aspects of his multifaceted ideology corresponded and were an expression of his ethical thought, his words and actions fully fit.

In a chronicle for La Opinión Nacional, Caracas, December 10, 1881, makes a review of the boxing sport, with great color, denouncing the methods used in American boxing, giving a sample of his vision and historical perspective, which allowed him to be the most faithful exponent of the demands of your time. expressed,

"Here the men charge like bulls, they bet the strength of their heads, they bite and tear each other in the fight and they are covered in blood, their gums depopulated, their foreheads bruised, the knots of their hands emaciated, swaying and falling, receive among the mob that shouts and throws their hats in the air and rushes around them, and acclaims the sack of coins that they have just received in combat. (Martí, 1975, pp.253-259)".

This aspect treated by Martí as inhuman, unethical, not only because of the sensitively human aspect that it contains, of cruelty and injustice, but also because of the damage caused in society by the mercantilist spirit that claimed more victims every day and more than one century continues to be one of the evils of the capitalist system, evils that he subjected to strong criticism, emphasizing in his sports chronicles the damage that this precept so rooted in his time in the United States does to sports.

Further on, in the same work he refers, what to look at them? Little by little, they roll on the ground; take them to their corner, and bathe their limbs with concoctions, attack each other again, hit each other on the skull with mace blows; the skulls sound like a wounded anvil; blood stains Ryan's clothes, and he falls to his knees, while the Boston porter, jumping up and down with a smile, turns to his "corner."

The shouting thunders, Ryan staggers to his feet; Sullivan charges laughing; grab each other's necks and squeeze their faces; they stumble to fall on the ropes; nine times they attack each other: nine times they wound each other; The giant is already dragging himself, his spiked shoes no longer support him on his feet, he already falls lifeless from a blow to the neck, and seeing him senseless, throws the sponge into the air, as a sign of defeat, his second. \$300,000 have been crossed, wagered in all the cities of the nation on the fight between these two young men (...).

This chronicle is a reflection of the professionalism and inhuman treatment that athletes received. It has an extraordinary validity where the super-privileged elites use paid sport to the detriment of human beings, the phenomenon of lack of protection is exacerbated and they bleed to death rapidly, abandoned in an increasingly hostile and discriminatory environment.

In Cuba, in the current situation, the main contribution of the Revolution is that amateur boxing has been an example of the great human work that the teacher called, which seeks in its ethical thinking to stimulate human solidarity and cooperation, which allows it to maintain the sport as one of the social conquests to defend against neoliberal policies, which each day respond more to the strategic interests of the wealthy, which



perpetuates and exacerbates poverty and misfortune, for which Martí's thought is living action, linked to the attitude that men should assume in a situation like the one described.

When describing competitions, he denotes extensive knowledge. His revolutionary modesty is revealed, which not only applauds, but also makes a stark criticism of mercantilism in sport. His ethical conception acquires a connoted dimension when negative moral values such as hatred and violence are incompatible with his humanism. It opposes healthy sport inspired by an effective ethical function to lucrative sport where negative moral values are formed and developed.

In 1887, in El Partido Liberal newspaper of México, he refers to a baseball game,

"Already of baseball players, which is a miserable and monotonous game that disturbs the judgment, and like all the others, like regattas, like boxing matches, like races, like what stimulates curiosity, bets, and the natural love of the man to the outstanding, even in physical force and crime, they deprive here so much in summer, that to account for who went around the square more times or took the ball more in the air, they publish the note newspapers at dusk, an edition extraordinary. (...) (Martí, 1975, pp.258-259).

When referring to American football, he points out in the work A scene from "Football". Schools and physical exercises in the Nation, Buenos Aires, January 11, 1885 points (Martí, 1975).

"Under my window passes now, in an ambulance, in pieces joined by the remains of souls, the captain of one of the bands of ball players in the air. They say that the game has been a horrible thing." (p.132).

Later on, the comparison that it develops with Ancient Rome is observed, where the barbarism is revealed, the degradation of the human being that the slave-owning Rome reached and that is present in North American society.

The theoretical deepening that he carries out is combined with the successive critical analyzes of rented sport extracted from the concrete experiences of the capitalist system and the urgency of dealing with it immediately. He reiterated in his chronicles, narratives, stories, the need to eliminate all traces of individualism, where day by day gambling, usury, racism proliferated more and more. From the ethical-moral point of view, it was necessary for him to destroy those patterns of behavior and build on these ruins a new human type, with a new morality.

Many of Martí's precepts are today in the Cuban Revolution the living expression of his thought, of free, healthy, alienated sport versus rented sport.

In another article of his, published in the New York newspaper The Sun, on July 31, 1880, he relates a bullfight in Madrid:

"If a bull bruises a man and he is left on the ground, left for dead, nobody cares. The show continues the same way and sometimes the bull is applauded» (Martí, 1975, p.179).



It demonstrates once again how the human being is just another object and that there is no concern about saving people's lives, because in many cases for those who organize these competitions, lining their pockets is their only purpose, denoting the mercantilist and inhuman of these competitions.

For him, it was something essential, he said that there is nothing that beautifies like the exercise of oneself, nor anything that disfigures like disdain or laziness or the fear of putting our forces into exercises, especially for children it is necessary to strengthen the body as the spirit strengthens. He attaches great importance to these two aspects in the harmony of the human body. He considers that it is necessary to strengthen the body in the cities, where the air is heavy and miasmatic, it causes stress and the best way to combat it is to put the muscles in movement.

Referring later to the role that gyms should play in the preparation of young people and children, he highlighted in La América in March 1883 in a work entitled The gym in the house.

"There is no end to the enumeration of its benefits. It is useful, and it is artistic, which is another way of being useful (...) (Martí Pérez, José, 1975, p.389).

Coinciding with Rondón, Reyes, 2012,

"In this sense, it signified the role that gyms played, since they favored recreation with the development of a healthy posture, by helping to foster a set of relationships for the use of free time, and also allowed establishing the link of the activity physical sports with cultural and social therapy, thus enriching the spiritual needs of man, helping growth and better interpersonal relationships".

The Physical Culture gyms are an expression of this Martí precept of forming healthy minds, bodies with willful energy, with good muscular development, such precious qualities that are observed in his ethical thinking and (Martí, 1975) later points them out as " self-sacrifice, self-control and serenity in misfortunes" (p.392).

In another of his chronicles: Venetian days in New York- A regatta. The Anglomaniacs of October 22, 1885 refer to the regattas and points,

Regattas, like so many other things, are not valued for what they are in themselves, but for what they symbolize. From the United States the heiresses go to England, to marry the lords; no New York gallant thinks he's baptized in elegance if he doesn't drink London water; London paints and writes, dresses and walks, eats and drinks, while Emerson, he thinks, Lincoln dies, and the captains in war blue and clear eyes look at the sea and triumph. It has greatness at home, and like good idiots, because it is from home, they disdain it. Even the ant, the miserable ant, is more noble than the parrot and the monkey (Martí, 1975, p.298).

With his usual journalistic style, Martí becomes a critical narrator and at the same time an exalter of sporting beauty in many disciplines.

He even links one, fencing with the contest that was being prepared in Cuba. The patriotic disposition of men stands out, capable of giving their lives for freedom as a beautiful and respectable human sacrifice, these moral principles so rooted in moral convictions, constitute the expression of the interpretation of the need of their time, linking their high patriotism and humanism.



In the Patria newspaper dated March 24, 1895 in a work entitled Cuba. At home. He stated "Fencing increases and orders the faculty of man" (Martí, 1975, p.260).

In that same work, he makes known men like Lorenzo García who, through the sport of fencing, poses "without the interest of fame or the tastes of authority, they still find the poor bread of their children, a way to contribute their portion of bread for the country" (Martí, 1975, p.417).

The dedication to the independence cause, his high sense of duty, his perseverance and discipline expressed at every moment that the homeland calls. In men like this, stripped of all mercantilism and full of patriotic love, he supported himself to organize the necessary war.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a fencer, Ramón Font, would put Cuba's name very high in the II Olympics of the Modern era, obtaining a gold medal.

When referring to the fight in Mexican Scenes in the Universal Magazine of Mexico on August 12, 1875 he outlines,

"The fight in which it gains fame needs daily combat and encouragement; It is not shameful to be defeated in today's battle, when this intensifies intelligence, exalts spirits, and leads to winning more brilliantly in tomorrow's combat (...)" (Martí, 1975, p.307).

Regarding children and the education, they receive in the United States in North American Scenes of June 6, 1884, he points out,

The children in New York who like balls and guns more than books, because in schools the teachers who do not see their definitive career in teaching, do not teach them in such a way that study occupies them and makes them fall in love, - and of the houses, the parents usually push them ugly, as if not to annoy them with their pranks and entanglements, to the streets; the children, help us God!, or they stop at the corners, which is not entirely bad, to exchange flirtations with perky little damsels of ten or twelve years old who with the look and air of a woman go alone; or they enter quietly, hiding from the police, in a patio to play ball, or they leave the cigarette shops, which for this wickedness should be boarded up with the cigarette case inside, flaunting lit cigarettes on their bare lips. (...) (Martí, 1975, p.60).

In his deep historical-concrete vision, Martí's conceptions about the influence of Physical Education, he trusted in the development of the potentialities of the human being, capable of moving the less passionate reader. A wide concern was for the development of healthy and mental capacities from the earliest years.

These assessments made in the work, in its broad sense, are enough to appraise the vitality and freshness of their ideas. Undoubtedly, his ethical thinking about the sports sphere constitutes a valuable contribution to Cuban revolutionary thinking about the moral values that athletes should have today. In summary, he emphasizes in a central element his revolutionary humanism and his conception of the man that should be formed.



With the construction of the new society, Martí's ethical thought about sport, present in all its projections, becomes singularly valid, since it contributes to forming revolutionary principles and values in athletes related to the social mission of sport.

A constant struggle is inferred against the degraded and sickly sport of a society that is not ours or against the futile escapism of an empty and alienating sport. It constitutes at the same time an x-ray of mercantilism and the inhuman treatment to which athletes were subjected in the middle of the 19th. century.

In today's world, where the ethical thought of the teacher regarding sport is debated in neoliberalism, its study is necessary. Turn sport into healthy entertainment where the humanistic values of men and women are revealed, opposed to individualism and the mercantilist spirit that prevails today in many countries, turning this goal increasingly into the content of everyone's daily life, that is the challenge to which José Martí dedicated his life and that the Revolution bears in mind.

CONCLUSIONS

José Martí developed an arsenal of ideas that constitute a high contribution to the development of sport and Physical Education. In journalism, the teacher had one of the most accurate views on the practice of sport. Through his chronicles, he combats individualism, the debasement of the human being in the face of excessive profit, that is, the performance of any athletic activity in exchange for money. His precepts are today in the Cuban Revolution the living expression of his thought, a manifestation of free, healthy, alienated sport.

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Authors' contribution:

Juan Carlos Hernández Martín: Conception of the idea, search and review of the literature, preparation of the database, general advice on the topic addressed, drafting of the original (first version), revision and final version of the article, correction of the article, translation of terms or information obtained, review of the application of the bibliographic standard applied.

Isabel Reinoso Castillo: Search and review of literature, preparation of database, general advice on the subject matter, revision and final version of the article, proofreading of the article.



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