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THE UTILITY OF PLAY OR THE ENCHANTMENT OF INSTRUCTION AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS:
GEORG PHILIPP HARSDÖRFFER’S FRAUENZIMMER GESPRÄCHSPIELE

Summary

The instructional model of the Horatian dictum prodesse et delectare at play in the Gesprächspiele renders the useful pleasant in an encounter with (foreign) cultural practices — which can be read as an encounter with knowledge itself — and which, in turn, prepares the learners for material encounters with others. These encounters with foreign cultural practices (knowledge) represent a form of “situated learning” with its multi-sensory inputs rendering learning more effective. This oral-visual culture in print allows us to examine this sensory form of learning through interactive multidirectional games that were both enchanting and useful (educational). The Gesprächspiele imparted cultural knowledge and social rules of conduct and practiced mental and physical dexterity and sensory coordination.

There is little debate in Harsdörffer scholarship on the Frauenzimmer-Gesprächspiele (1641-1649) that the genre combines the Horatian dictum prodesse et delectare in an almost exemplary fashion.¹ The instructional model of the Gesprächspiele renders the

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useful pleasant in an encounter with (foreign) cultural practices — which can be read as an encounter with knowledge itself — and which, in turn, prepares the learners for material encounters with others. This nexus is at the center of this article.

Etchings of culturally significant sites open each volume of the Gesprächspiele. The initial etching sets the scene, opening both the volume and the entire series with a depiction of a garden and the façade of a country house on one page and an interior space in which the conversations take place on the other. The players are depicted in the representative semicircle, which opens a space for the reader to participate. Several aspects of “play” are represented: the quick movement associated with play, variety, gaiety, and sociability, and also proper social conduct and its rules of conversation and gestures. Movement is suggested by the play of the water in the fountain, the movement of the animals in their differing associations. The splendid peacock suggests the enchantment of instruction and the chicken the utility of play. Varying the clothing and gestures and facial expressions of the players, the etching for the second volume takes us visually into an enclosed garden space, where we meet the circle of players. These etchings visually prepare the reader for the encounter with the book’s content and provide illustrations to an important game or activity in the respective volume. Taken together they create a visual microcosm of cultured sociability, centering on the activity of play.

The Gesprächspiele prepares not only its fictional players, but also its readers for these encounters through the art and science of “learning by doing”. The participatory performances and enactments make learning more pleasurable, and thus renders the preparation for social encounters more effective. On one level of didacticism, the playful practice provides encyclopedic knowledge through discussions of the central cultural topics of the time, ranging from astrology, chemistry, physics, poetics, and ethics to the arts and theater. On another level, the form of play itself teaches conduct and rule-based decisions, creates order, rehearses skills, such as question and answer sessions, and offers practice in the vernacular language and in social conduct. In this sense, we can speak of two levels of

refer to this edition; the Roman numerals refer to the volume and the Arabic numbers to the original page numbers.
didacticism: the form of play in the *Gesprächspiele* teaches not only content, but also the process of learning. Providing encounters with (foreign) cultural practices and knowledge that facilitate social and cultural education, Harsdörffer prepares his audience for the mastery of social encounters of many kinds: the readers become acculturated to foreign encounters — with persons outside the home, with the opposite sex, and with political and business circles.²

The cultural practices and knowledge socialized by the *Gesprächspiele* are themselves “foreign” — in the sense that they are not part of the readers’ educational and social preparation nor of their psychological and cognitive reality. The encounter with the foreign (knowledge) can thus be read as the acquisition of culture itself. This knowledge is acquired through the playful encounter with the cultural practices presented in the *Gesprächspiele*. By acquiring this culture with the help of the *Gesprächspiele*, the participants domesticate the foreign. It becomes part of the social persona and is no longer foreign, but familiar. Cultural knowledge itself represents the foreign that needs to be acquired in a playful encounter and integrated into the cultural practices and personas of the readers. More often than not, the knowledge that the participants make their own is not only psychologically or ideologically foreign, but also foreign in a spatial, geographic sense as many of Harsdörffer’s games and activities are translated and adapted from French and Italian and other foreign, non-German sources. The playful encounter with the (foreign) cultural knowledge, in turn, alters the social persona of the readers, preparing them for actual physical encounters with the Other. The playfully educated and civilized reader is then prepared for social encounters with strangers.

This process of familiarizing players and readers with the foreign becomes more effective and pleasant through the emphasis on multisensory and participatory learning. The utility of play and the enchantment of instruction are achieved by the plethora of varied cultural practices assembled, described, and depicted in its pages. The pleasurable aspects of the activities and the lively interaction of the players in the *Gesprächspiele* create a conducive, affective environment for seemingly effortless learning and the acculturation of conduct. More effective and inclusive than purely abstract learn-

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² I would like to thank the editors of this volume, Mara Wade and Glenn Ehrstine, for their most valuable input.
ing, this unique participatory learning situation with its socialization of different interactive roles and tasks offered in the *Gesprächspiele* takes on an important role in what Norbert Elias has termed the “civilizing process” in his focus on larger cultural and historical trends. More specifically, the encounters with foreign cultures that are considered to have a higher level of cultural sophistication than that of German-speaking lands are supposed to elevate the latter to the same high standard by aiding the acquisition of cultural knowledge of the foreign models.

By offering this wide array of foreign cultural practices for the delectation and acquisition of German participants and readers, Harsdörffer’s *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* resemble a two-dimensional cabinet of miniature rarities. Not unlike the *Gesprächspiele*, these repositories of the marvelous created an analogy between the world and the image: “Splashy arrangements turned the repository into a theatrum whose grotesque materials were accumulated in order to be looked at.” Both the *Gesprächspiel* and the *Raritätenkammern* offered a playful encounter with the unknown, the foreign, and the unusual. Learning about these alien objects, on the one hand, and about cultural practices, on the other, incorporates them into a person’s knowledge base, rendering the unfamiliar familiar.

Not unlike these visual assemblies of rarities, the richly illustrated and diverse texts and topics presented in the *Gesprächspiele* create a similar spectacle. Unlike the purely visual spectacle of the *Raritätenkammern*, the *Gesprächspiele* have additional dimensions. The visual impact (illustrations) is enhanced by the verbal and even a physical, participatory dimension (i.e., if their appeal as actual instructions for the described games and playful activities is taken seriously). Their unique appeal and their effectiveness — the utility of play and the enchantment of instruction — as a conveyor of encounters with the foreign and the as yet unknown cultural practices resides, in part, in the multisensory interplay of the verbal, the visual, and — to some extent — the kinesthetic.

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As a “nationalsprachliches Bildungswerk”, the *Gesprächspiele* effectively make the work’s foreign sources accessible in German and thus have a patriotic effect. However, Harsdörffer sees the *Gesprächspiele* as contributing not only to the elevation of the German language, but also to the enhancement of social practices and values. Consequently, the encounter with the foreign is more than a linguistic phenomenon. Harsdörffer intends to do more than simply enhance linguistic sensibilities and skills, seeing them rather as part of a civilizing trend, improving both courtesy and virtues. After all, the latter are intertwined with the forms of sociability encountered in the more sophisticated European models, which he makes available to his German audience. Within one of the playful discussions, one of the players reiterates the civilizing and linguistic pedagogical aspects of the *Gesprächspiele*. His contemporaries recognized these linguistic pedagogical values, and Harsdörffer was invited to join the most important *Sprachgesellschaft*, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* (1642), one year after the appearance of the work.

In addition to the linguistic encounters, the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic encounters demand further investigation. As Stafford observes: “The mind-shaping powers of the ocular, tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory skills remain scarcely articulated in the tale of Western civilization’s turn to the cultivation of the interior.” Her basic premise is that “high-order thinking was taught in the construction of visual patterns and that optical technology often boosted the learning process of difficult abstractions.” Visual education arose in the Early Modern period and developed on the boundaries of play and experimentation, of image and text. The *Gesprächspiele*

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5 Matuschek, see note 1, pp. 139-40.
6 “Gesprächspiele zu Aufnehmung unserer Teutschen Sprache […] welche zu guten Sitten und Tugenden dienlich” (III, 133).
7 His compilations and adaptations name the “Senesische Spiele”, Scipio Bargali, and an unknown author’s “Spielhaus” as models (La Maison des jeux appeared anonymously Paris, 1643). In the second edition (1644), he takes notice of Sorel’s text, while Harsdörffer’s first edition appeared before Sorel’s *Maison* (I, iii).
9 Stafford, see note 3, p. xxii.
10 Stafford, see note 3, p. xxiii.

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are a central example for this border situation. In addition to the visual and textual elements, the actual players in the *Gesprächspiele* also encountered the foreign cultural knowledge of the games in a tactile, aural, and kinesthetic manner. The audience, if it uses the volumes as actual manuals (“Spielanleitungen”) can repeat these multi-sensory experiences, or it can choose to remain on the level of picture and text.

After all, in the *Gesprächspiele* spatial and kinesthetic intelligence is not separated from rational-linguistic competence. In the playful activities of the *Gesprächspiele*, the linguistic message is intimately connected with extra-linguistic elements, such as gestures, pantomime, and movements. Knowledge and mastery of social codes, symbolic practices, and cultural comprehension can be acquired not only by rule-based instructions (“Spielregeln”), but also by imitation. Rules could be comprehended by watching others at practice and by imitating the activity, that is, by participation, which, in turn, reinforced the cognitive elements with visual, tactile, auditory, and kinesthetic information. The six players — three women and three men of various ages — take turns directing the activities. The “Spielstab” which denotes responsibility for the individual activity in question is passed from one participant to the other and thus allows the participants to assume various roles (with their prerequisite discursive strategies) in the activities. At any given time, they may summarize or organize what others have said, present the rules of the game, and elaborate on others’ statements. These encounters familiarize the participants with the major tasks of polite communication: they practice how to construct a topic and organize its presentation, and how to steer and amplify it. In the playful interactions of the *Gesprächspiele*, major interactional abilities in the vernacular as well as important lessons in polite discourse are socialized.

Conversation itself as an interactive and flexible communications system, as “that momentary act of conjuring”, offers important practice for the velocity in the movement of thought that is a prerequisite for learning.11 The coupling of conversation with games and other playful activity heightens the dynamics of interaction and provides an important precondition for the agile thought of

11 Stafford, see note 3, p. 3.
reasoning. The many bits of dialogue and activities described flow into other ideas that develop before the participants’ and readers’ eyes and, in turn, spark new games and activities. Stafford describes the flow of conversation as “mobile thought [which] is material, elastic, splintering into fresh forms and startling angles.” We can think of the witty conceits of Baroque rhetoric and poetics that quicken and sharpen thought in the application in the games of the Gesprächspiele.

Harsdörffer discusses this form of “learning by doing”, the acquisition of various forms of knowledge by practice not only in the Gesprächspiele, but also in his Fortsetzung der Mathematischen und Philosophischen Erquickstunden (1651), on whose title page wisdom — the winged head hinting at higher-order thinking — towers over putti engaged in various forms of play. The less overtly purposeful games of childhood (mirror, whirligig, and inflated bladder) are juxtaposed with those that are more obviously directly useful (instruments for mathematical measurement), suggesting practical knowledge acquisition. The visual presentation on the title page underscores that both kinds of toys and the playfully applied dimension associated with them assist in learning. Likewise, the encounter with the foreign, with the unknown, leading to its acquisition and integration is most effectively and effortlessly achieved through a multi-sensory playful pleasant engagement — on the title engraving, it is portrayed as child’s play. Stafford’s point that there is no “learning without desire, no education without enjoyment” is well taken and informs this reading of the Gesprächspiele and their focus on utility and the enchantment of instruction. The encounter with the foreign has to be pleasurable for the alien to be readily integrated into one’s own cultural and social practice.

In the Gesprächspiele, examples of playful learning include the visual and verbal account of games such as “Das lebendige Schachspiel” (II, 76-84; see ill. 1). Harsdörffer modifies and elaborates on an earlier Italian model, which Degenwert, the character who suggested this topic, contextualizes historically with his explanation that it was part of sociability during the days of Queen

12 Stafford, see note 3, p. 5.
14 Stafford, see note 3, p. xxvii.
Catherine of France. With this brief lesson in the cultural history, he introduces his detailed verbal instructions of the allegorical attire distinguishing the living game pieces. The games in question are enhanced by a kinesthetic dimension (they are designed to be acted out). Beyond teaching the rules, the performative aspect also teaches graceful movements and gestures:

So aber ein solcher lebendiger Stein den andern zu nehmen kommen/ wie in dem Schachspiel beschicht [sic]: so küsset der an die Stell trettende/ dem mit Höflichkeit von dannen weichenden die Hand/ und welches unter dem Spielgenossen an seinem/ oder eines andern Anordnung irret (wie leichtlich beschehen [sic] kan/) muß so bald ein Pfand von sich geben/ und nachmals widerumb an sich lösen.\(^{15}\)

The lost item can be reclaimed by answering questions on the topic of chess. An illustration of the human chess game rounds out the account: in a large hall divided by 64 floor tiles in two colors, women embody the white game pieces and men the black ones. Kings, Queens, and the other game pieces are distinguished by characteristic dress and insignia. The pawns are embodied by Cammermagd and Edelknaben (II, 81). Symbolizing the context of the game, allegorical wall hangings in the room depict the war between the sexes. The game of tactical movements and chance is a playful acculturation of strategic action in encounters with others. As in the most other activities, the instruction is multi-sensory and multi-layered in that information on one topic is conveyed and repeated in a variety of ways reinforcing the newly encountered knowledge.

In the living “Dammspiel” black and white game pieces are also distinguished by gender (VI, 195-98; see ill. 2). In contrast to the chess-game, this game is depicted as taking place in a courtyard with numbered fields prepared as a game board. Two leaders (one female and one male) oversee the expanse of the game board from an external vantage-point and direct the individual players to move:

\(^{15}\) And when such a living game-piece comes to take another one, as it happens in the game of chess, then the one moving into the position of the one that has to move out of this spot has to politely kiss that person’s hand. If one of the players accidentally errs in moving into the correct position (as can easily happen), he or she needs to forfeit a personal item that can be reclaimed after the game (II, 83).
Es ist eine grosse Lust dieses Spiel im Werke zu sehen/ in dem Jungfrauen und Jünglinge/ gleichsam in bewegliche Steine verwandelt sind/ und eine Probe leisten können höflicher Sitten/ und Geberden. […] Man möchte sagen es were solche Kurzweil ja so zulässig/ als etwan ein Dantz/ ein Reyen/ oder andere junger fröliche Zeitvertreibung.\textsuperscript{16}

Angelika, the player who introduced this particular game points to an additional layer of visual entertainment: this game resembling a ballet should be performed in a courtyard so that a large audience can watch from the windows above.\textsuperscript{17} Beyond a participatory form of pleasant instruction, the activity’s potential as spectacle that can be integrated into larger forms of sociability is emphasized.

The performance both provides entertainment and also encounters with polite manners and gestures. Therefore it is as useful a form of amusement as a dance. In these games, rule-based cognition intersects with the visual spectacle of the life-sized game board and players as well as with the kinesthelic experience of acting as a play figure moving around on the board. The participatory element enriches this game with forms of social interaction like dance and polite gestures, enhancing the positive, enjoyable experience and thus fostering a positive affective disposition for an encounter with rule-based and social learning. The reference to dance reminds us that just as the intellect can be trained in the encounter with unknown practices, so, too, can the body be taught new ways of moving, different gestures, and new postures.

In a similar vein, the illustration opening the fourth volume of the \textit{Gesprächspiele} takes us on a pleasurable boat trip in the garden, which relates to the topic of “spazieren” discussed in this volume. The pleasurable non-directional activity of strolling in nature is an important part of cultured sociability and civilized conduct, as Rosemarie Zeller points out. The movements suggested here are not

\textsuperscript{16} It is a great pleasure to watch this game unfold in which young men and women are turned into living game-pieces and can serve as examples for polite manners and gestures […] One would readily admit that such forms of entertainment are as appropriate as the various forms of dance and other light-hearted amusements (VI, 198).

\textsuperscript{17} “Die Erfindung gleichet der vormals gedachten Art/ dem Schach/ mit lebendigen Steinen zu spielen: Doch ist dieses hinzugeethan/ daß besagtes Dammspiel in einem Hof/ da viel von den Fenstern zugleich zusehen können/ angestellet worden” (VI, 196).
utilitarian in the sense that the purpose of the activity is to bring people from one point to another, but they are aesthetic and pleasurable in their own right. Through the encounter with visual models, the readers are socialized in activities, movements, and gestures that convey sophisticated culture. This performativity assists in civilizing German culture.

Visual encounters are foregrounded in the lessons in geography. The geography, the national character, and the importance of various countries are visually depicted in the shape of the human body (II, 218; see ill. 3). Europe is compared with a female figure. The head represents “Hispania”, the chest “Frankreich”, the arms “Welschland” and “Engelland”, the skirt “Teutschland”, “Polen”, and “Schweden/Dennemarck”, which is flanked by “etliche Land so den Türcken angehören” (II, 217). The strategy of linking the foreign (knowledge about geography) and the familiar (the human form) assists in integrating the new (geographical) knowledge into familiar territory, and as a learning tool aids in the retention of this newly acquired knowledge. In addition, the visual representation reinforces the verbal description. This doubled mnemonic aspect (verbal and visual) is then further reinforced and elaborated on by the players. In an additional dimension of the playful activity, the players are invited to represent the various countries and relate the accomplishments and unique features of this country.

The learning strategies of linking the unknown with the known and providing multiple layers of engagement with the same subject matter as a form of review teaches not only the geographical content, but also models a process of learning.

These and other participatory performances and enactments make learning more pleasurable and at the same time effective by aiding retention as the new knowledge and cultural practice becomes embodied. The performative aspects make abstractions concrete and

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18 “Das Spazierengehen fügt sich in die Reihe jener Beschäftigungen ein, die den gebildeten Menschen vom Barbaren unterscheiden. Das Kriterium für die Unterscheidung ist wie immer der Anteil des Verstandes und damit der Künstlichkeit an der betreffenden Beschäftigung. Das Spazierengehen ist ein gesittetes, ja beinahe kunstvolles Sich-Fortbewegen”, Zeller, see note 1, p. 47.

19 “Nun wollen wir erzehlen/ was jedes in dem Land/ dessen Namen es zu tragen hat überkommen/ für besonders/ und gegen andere Reichen von fremden Sachen habe” (II, 219).
the information becomes internalized in an interactive manner. Encounters with abstract principles and rules that would otherwise require mental exertion can easily be grasped when they are assisted by demonstrations. Even complex subject matter and obscure rules can be made concrete. As a staged incarnation of the rules, the performing body becomes a learning instrument for the players themselves and a teaching tool for the observers.

Volume five opens with the depiction of an interior space adorned with wall hangings, which also are the subjects of several activities in this volume. The didactic quality of repeated visual encounters with images is at the core of a description regarding the proper use of wall hangings ("Die Tapezereien", II, 89-148). The use of wall hangings conveys cultural taste, offers visual simulation, and — depending on the subject matter — can be highly instructive. The question is posed how best to embellish a hall or room with wall hangings (two kinds are mentioned, those that are painted and those done with needlepoint). The respondent to the question first discusses the value, artistic skill, and cost associated with this form of adornment. He then describes the design criteria, where to place them, which styles are appropriate for the use of the room, which fabrics are appropriate for which season etc. For other, more formal venues, the fusion of utility and pleasure is foregrounded. As an example for a wall hanging that is not only attractive but also instructive, the depiction of the owner’s territory is suggested (II n.p. [p. 95]; see ill. 3). This takes the form of an embellished map, with the surrounding pieces showing the bordering territories:

Wann man nemlich eines Fürsten Landschaft durch Geometrische juste Abmessung in Grund legte/ und (wie man sonsten Landtafeln oder Landkarten macht/) solche geneete oder gewirckte Landteppich verfertigen liesse. In dem ersten Tapet solte seyn der ganze Begriff deß Lands/ mit den angrentzenden Herrschaften/ nach dem verjüngten Maaßtab fürgebildet/ aber ohne Mühe zu ersehn/ und ins Gedächtnis zu fassen/ wie weit sich das Gebiet erstrecket/ was für Flüß/ Wälder/ Markungen/ Brücken/ Berg c. sich hier und dar befinden/ wie ferne/ wie ein Stadt und Dorff ab— oder angelegen/ und in Summa aller der Nutzen könnte daraus gezogen werden/ welcher sonst bey den Landtafeln zu suchen.

20 If one, for example, took a prince’s territory — properly surveyed as is done for maps — as the basis for the wall hangings. In the first wall hanging, the
A wall hanging resembling a map complete with rivers, villages, and important bridges could serve as an effortless visual reminder to its owner. Several aspects of the didacticism of the image are teased out:

Dass wir ohne Unterlaß für Augen haben/ sencket sich unvermerckt tieff
in unser Angedencken/ und sondert uns auch vielmal von den bösen und
müßigen Gedancken ab: Gestalt wir nicht allein unsern Mund und
Ohren vom Bösen und müßigen Gedanken/ (wie von ungeschmackter
Kost/ uns zu hüten wissen/) sondern auch unsere Augen jederzeit zu
nützlichen Betrachtungen anhalten solten.21

Again, the ease of visual learning is foregrounded. The pedagogy of the image is believed to be at work even without directional attention, without conscious effort. Being exposed to visual information and being surrounded by it was thought to enhance learning and, by implication, aid in the formation of good cultural taste. In addition, being surrounded by desirable images occupies the senses and deters them from less desirable visual occupation.22 Other suitable topics include historical scenes, which could be arranged so that they relate a narrative, so that they tell a visual story and depict the historical sequence of events. Other subjects recommended for depiction were encounters with exotic countries and animals, suggesting the integration of the foreign into the domestic realm. The images on wall hangings could, thus, familiarize the users with foreign and exotic worlds.

With regard to the wall hangings, the most senior player, Raymund, suggests that in the encounter with visual knowledge

entirety of the territory with its bordering lands could be depicted on a small scale but clearly visible in order to grasp the whole with all its rivers, forests, demarcations, bridges, mountains etc., without effort so than one can clearly tell how close or far a city or village is located. In short, all the use that is associated with maps could be brought to bear on the wall hangings (II, 92).

21 What we constantly have in front of our eyes makes its way deep into our memory and keeps us from evil and idle thoughts. Just as we should keep our mouth and ears from evil and idle thoughts (as we know how to keep away from unsuitable food), we should occupy our eyes with useful images (II, 94).

22 Other sets of wall hangings tell an allegorical story, which is included in six illustrations and elaborated on by the text. The presence of images as examples again provides multi-sensory access to the object under investigation.
young noblemen with an aversion to traditional lessons could be brought to acquire knowledge without the labor and tedium often associated with learning:

Ja/ auff solche Weiß könte ein junger Fürst durch dergleichen Landgemähl […] in der Weltkundigung wie mit der Geographischen Spielkarten mit Lust/ ohn einige Arbeit/ und Obliegen denen ihnen oft verhasten Büchern unterwiesen werden: wann ihm nemlich grosse und wolsichtige Landgemählde/ in seinem Zimmer verordnet würden/ in welchen der gantze Weltkreis/ folgendes alle Theil der Welt/ und nachmals alle und jene Königreich absonderlich verfasset und abgebildet/ stettig für Augen schwebend/ die er unfehlbar bemercken müste.23

As with geographical playing cards, this type of encounter with — in this case geographical — knowledge connects the enchantment of the activity intricately with its utility.

The game of visual instruction of letters through images, children’s encounter with new knowledge in the “Die Buchstaben”, illustrates this principle further (V, 67-72; see ill. 5). It begins with an illustrated description of how to teach letters to children as the foundation for further games with the various letters. Because children are visually oriented and like nothing more than pictures,24 images facilitate learning, making it efficient, quick, and pleasurable.25 Therefore this activity proposes that each letter is visually formed by an object which also begins with the letter in question. Not only are the object and the letter linked, but pain is also taken to liken the shape of the letter to the depicted object — although all this seems quite forced and requires significant manipulation and imagination. The “Ohr” for example, is not only depicted by the oval shape forming the letter O, but its shape is also emphasized in the depiction linking the shape of the object to the letter (V, 68; see ill. 4). These images are then put on dice for yet another a playful

23 Indeed, through these ever-present wall hangings in their rooms depicting the world and all of its parts and the various kingdoms, young noblemen could be taught geography in a pleasant manner (not unlike with geographical playing cards) with significantly less effort and labor than book learning, which they often despise (II, 93).

24 “nichts lieber sehen als Bilder” (V, 68).

25 “[…] damit dieses alles geschwind und mit Lust gefasset werden möchte” (V, 67).
mode of instruction. Once this first step of acquisition is completed, games to practice these new skills are suggested. One can for example have children assemble words from the letters given. Literally to sweeten the learning process, toys and sweets are given as rewards further reinforcing and strengthening the link between utility (learning, achievement) and enchantment (V, 72).

Overall, the Gesprächspiele in their encounters with foreign cultural practices (knowledge) represent an example of what we would term “situated learning”, where the emphasis is on the context of learning and on multi-sensory inputs. With their oral, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic layers, the Gesprächspiele subscribe to the conviction that learning is more effective when it is supplemented by multiple layers of sensory experiences: “Entertaining educational games enriched personal development by fostering intuitive, craft, symbolic, and notational types of knowing.”

The fusion of visual information, conversational activities, and games — often involving a physical dimension — renders the encounter with the unknown information pleasant. This oral-visual culture in print in the Gesprächspiele allows us to examine this sensory form of learning through interactive multidirectional games that were both enchanting and useful (educational). They not only imparted cultural knowledge and social rules of conduct, but also practiced mental and physical dexterity and sensory coordination. Furthermore, this playful didacticism made learning both visible and participatory in its invitation to the reader to play along.

26 Stafford, see note 3, p. 284.