

# Epitome of the Teaching

by  
Luis Díaz de Viedma

Translation by Tim Rivera

**Note:** Translation to English of some of the technical terminology has mostly followed the English translations of the terms by Mary Dill Curtis (From the Page to the Practice, Ettenhard's *Compendio de los fundamentos*) for the reader's ease of reference. The original Spanish terminology is listed in brackets or footnotes at the term's first appearance.

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**EPITOME OF  
THE TEACHING OF THE  
Philosophy and mathematical skill at Arms, that the  
Master has to give to the Disciple**

*By Luis Díaz de Viedma, native of the city of Guadix*

**TO DON BARTOLOME DE  
Villavicencio y Negron, Knight of the Order of Alcantara,  
etc.**

**In the year 1639**

**WITH LICENCE,**

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**Printed in Cadiz, by Fernando Rey**

## APPROVAL OF THE ENSIGN

Luis Brabo de Rojas

*BY commission of the Licensed lord Agustín Delgado, Canon of the holy cathedral of the city of Cadiz, Provisor and Vicor general of it and its Diocese, I have seen this Epitome of the true skill, composed by the Master Luis Díaz de Viedma, and I find that it contains nothing counter to good custom, rather that it is very agreeable to the Spanish profession, by which it can be given license to be printed. Given in Cadiz on the ninth of April, 1639.*

*The Ensign Luis Brabo de Rojas*

APPROVAL OF THE MOST REVEREND FATHER  
Juan de Ardines of the Company of Jesus

*BY order of the Licensed lord Agustín Delgado, Canon of the holy cathedral of the city of Cadiz, Prvisor and Vicar general of it and its Diocese, I have seen this Epitome of the true teaching on the proper use of arms, and I find nothing in it against the Faith or good custom, and thus it can be printed. In this College of the Company of Jesus of Cadiz, April 10, 1639.*

*Juan de Ardines*

## LICENSE

*The Licensed Agustín Luis Delgado, Canon, Provisor, and Vicar general of the holy cathedral of Cadiz and its Diocese, by the lord Dean and chapter, Canons in sacris sede vacante, etc. Due to this I give license, on my part, to enable the printing of this Epitome of the teaching of arms, that the master has to give to the disciple, composed by Luis Díaz de Viedma, native of the city of Guadix, heeding the approvals of the persons that have seen it by my commission. Given in Cadiz, 11<sup>th</sup> of April, in the year 1639.*

*Licensed Agustín Delgado*

By mandate of the lord Provisor

*Francisco Espadaña*  
Notary

## TO DON BARTOLOME

de Villavicencio y Negron, Knight of the military Order of Alcantara, Captain of the Spanish infantry, perpetual Ruler of the city of Cadiz, and senior Constable of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, etc.

*C*onsidering (noble Lord) that having brought to light this Epitome of the science, philosophy, skill, and mathematics of arms, it appears to me by just titles and reasons to dedicate it to a person in which the sciences are welcomed, as they are with you. By being such a great lord, and because I know that placing it in the shadow of your nobility will have the effect that I desire, to whom I pray to receive this small service of my studies, although in great will, as it is also the desire that I have to succeed in serving you, whose life God keeps, etc.

Your minor servant,

*Luis Díaz de Viedma*

## TO THE READER

**M**Y primary intent (gentle Reader) has been to bring to light an Epitome of a book<sup>1</sup> that I have given to print on the rules and precepts of the true skill [*verdadera destreza*]. Although I am overwhelmed by the desire to prevent the difficulty that the masters have, being tenacious in that which they once understood, giving less credit to the better by the lazy stealing the study (the father of disillusionment) away from this science, carried away by the old false teaching, enjoying their own movements (which are those that harm us, as will be found in my book *Teaching of the Masters*, where the objections will be smoothed out). With this, the sure path to navigate by this truth will be taken. Thus I have wanted to depict the errors that endure and the necessity of their repair, so that with its precise utility being known, convince the tenacious, invite the lazy, help those well-intentioned, and make the danger known to others. Observation has taught me the study, use, and continual work; I will be able to say that I have three teachings. The first is that I was vulgar, having lived with it more than twenty years, celebrated as skilled [*diestro*], appearing to me that it was the best. Although many came that were said to have the truth, they didn't know it, as they didn't utilize it. After don Gaspar de Rivera y Avila, Commander of Alcantara, came to my homeland

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1 Díaz de Viedma, Luis. *Method of the Teaching of Masters*. Cadiz, 1639.

and reduced me to another more adjusted play, in my writings I now call these *diestros* wise vulgars. These two plays consider the difficulty that there was in being able to teach them to the disciples: the great displeasure, brawling all the time, such little control and reason that all attained. So basing judgment on this, I gave philosophy, until God had been served that I had found a mode of teaching so easy that, in four months, a man can enter in this truth, free from the storms and din that will be offered to those that do not keep to the rule of my writing.

The professors of this art will say that they are tired of referring to some reasons many times. Due to the lengthy experience that I have, I beg them not to get angry, and to consider that by having a man remove his own natural movements, they acquire the artificial. It is difficult to understand this art, and he will see that having gone through my book many times, and having them adjusted to the theory and practice, he appears to be very good with it; some days later, return to study and adjust to it, considering that one has to suffer and the other has to work in order to see and adjust the quantities that are lost or gained, until being in it. He will see how some things seem different than before, because each day it happens to me with the disciples that I teach, and more if one has been taught by other masters.



**A** man is credited only by that which he knows, and those who know esteem study, which is that which brings valor to men in all sciences. As the art of arms is reduced to a science, as proven by our authors (who were Commander Geronimo de Carranza, a wisely noble man, and in his imitation Don Luis Pacheco de Narváez, glory of our age), it would be good for the disciple to take this Epitome, so that he can enter into this science with ease, and that the master can give instructions on it, until reaching the desired end, which is to know.

I would have served little in forty years, by my fondness, having worked on the skill of arms, many times going over the books of the interesting old authors (and particularly those of Commander Geronimo de Carranza, and our author don Luis Pacheco de Narváez, whose ingenuity, knowledge, and understanding have no equal), if I had not reached an easy mode of teaching the arms. Having understood the cause of the mistake, because

men have not known it, and how they will know it with ease, I give a mode of teaching that has never been seen, very desired by the old authors, but attained by none. I have discovered that the first thing that the disciple has to know is that his own natural movements are harmful to him, and divert him from this science in such form that if a man is not satisfied with the movements that have to be known by science, and the *atajos* that have to be done with security until being in them, he cannot be corrected after, and will remain vulgar, which is the natural state of man.

These reasons state that I have to remove from a man his own natural movements and give other artificial ones, making them second nature in him. This causes admiration to the most wise; this will easily be seen by one who will follow my reason and read my writings, working on them, far from the usual vanity of the masters of the common skill, little studied, saying that they know, wanting to talk as if they know science, as happens to me each day

with men that are held as wise in this science, with vanishing and fear.

Taking the sword in the hand is the most important, and is the first that we have to remove from a man, not using his own nature, which is that when he takes the sword, he places the pommel below the blade of the hand, the sword remaining in obtuse angle [*angulo obtuso*], appearing stronger and more secure, and that for his defense and safety there would be no other posture. It is the greatest mistake that there is in this science, and thus the pommel of the sword has to be in the channel of the wrist, in order to pursue this art. Although at the beginning it appears difficult, and he will say that the sword has no strength, use it, and in a few days he will see its advantage, and the deceit in which he lived.

Then consider the circle that is imagined between the two combatants, which is the key of this art, and see the governor that has letters and steps, as the demonstration shows with its lines (which are eight), understood in this

form. That of point A to point A is the straight line of the diameter. That of point B to point B, and that of point C to point C, and that of point D to point D, we call transverse. That of point F to point F we call the infinite or finite, as it can cut or lengthen infinitely. That of point R is backward [*extraño*], and that of point O is mixed (because it participates in two lines), and the two lines of the circle will be infinite, as they have no beginning or end.

To understand better, one has to consider the circle that is imagined between the two combatants, which will have the line of the diameter eight feet<sup>2</sup> from point A to point A (established with the swords of mark<sup>3</sup>), which will be twenty-four feet around, that reduces to steps of three feet, being eight according to Euclid, prince of geometry; we will deal with this circle, governing ourselves by it. I have already said that the first that we have to intend is removing our own natural movements and learning the artificial, and this has to be understood in this form, and each one will be able to experience them in their house for

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2 The Spanish foot was a unit of length equivalent to just under 28 cm / 11 in.

3 Having a blade length of up to 5/4 *vara* (104 cm / 41 in).

better satisfaction with it. One will see that planted on point A, taking the sword on the outside, his own nature causes him to step to point D, with which he will be uncovered and wounded; by second nature, he has to step to point B, the body remaining profiled, and he will see that he wounds freely. Similarly, when taking the sword on the inside, one will see how his own nature causes him to step from point A to point B, with which the body will be uncovered and wounded; he has to step to none other than point D, the body remaining squared, which which he will necessarily wound the opponent, because his sword will have one movement, and the opponent's four.

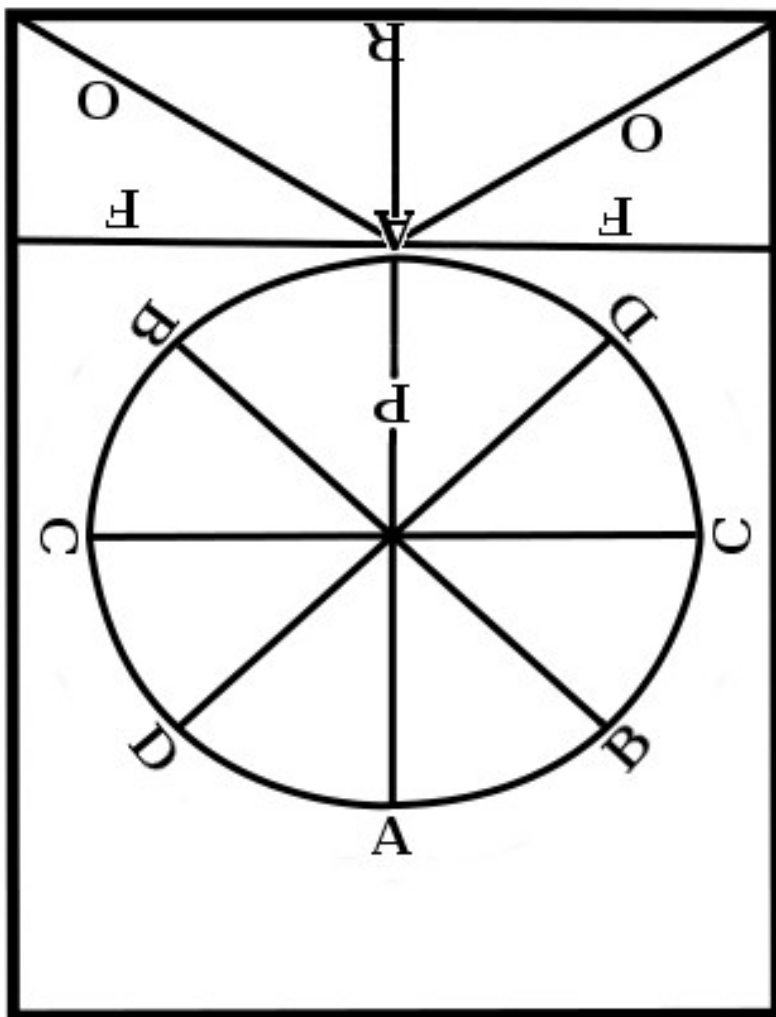
With these two *atajos*, the one from point A to point B is the general of line in cross [*general de linea en cruz*], and the one given from point A to point D is the general *atajo* [*atajo general*]. They have to serve by making rounded *atajos* with helical lines.

This other *atajo* is that which is the most important to know, and that which is most forgotten by men, and is the key and door of this science, and will be understood in this

form. The opponent having made the low general [*general baja*], stepping from point A to point B, having chosen the mean of proportion [*medio de proporción*], passing to the proportionate mean [*medio proporcionado*], he will always be able to wound freely, and coming to wound to the face, he will see how his nature causes him to remove the sword to one side or the other, having it in obtuse angle, as all the masters have done. This is a notable mistake, until he is scientific, but rather he has to place it in acute angle [*angulo agudo*], placing the point of the sword below the strong and quillions of the opponent's, stepping to his right side from point A to point B, the body remaining profiled, with which he will parry, and wound his opponent. This will be the opposition of the general weak below the strong [*general flaqueza debajo de la fuerza*], which is that which the *diestro* has to attempt to know, as it is the door of this science (and there is no other).

One who has to follow the precepts of this science has to first consider the rounded circle, and be planted on point A, the body profiled straight, balanced over both feet, the right

Key and governor of the skill



foot straight on the line of the diameter, and the left transverse in such conformity that the ankle bone of the left comes straight from the heel of the right, with no longer of a gap than such that turning the point of the left reaches the heel of the right. From there, he will give a curved step [*compás curvo*] from point A to point B, the body profiled, and as well to point C and point D, until returning to point A. In the same conformity he will go by the circumference on the left side, giving curved steps from point A to point D and point C and point B, until returning to point A, the body squared. In order to make the limbs agile, he will step from point A to point P, which will be a straight step [*compás recto*], and from point A to point R, which will be a backward step [*compás extraño*]. This touches the left foot, and from point A to point F, which will be a lateral step [*compás de trepidación*], to the circumference on the right side. From point A to point O will be a lateral and backward step.

It will be understood in the same conformity on the circumference to the left side, but those that are more



suitable seek the beginning, which are the rounded from point A to point B and point C and point D, until returning to point A, and we will say curved step to the circumference of the right side, the body remaining in profile. In the same conformity on the circumference to the left side from point A to point D and point C and point B, until returning to point A, and we will say curved step to the circumference on the left side, the body remaining square.

It suits that this is done, which has to be the first stone of the edifice with which we have to take steps and rounded *atajos* on helical lines, that are done in this form. Having chosen the mean of proportion on point A, the swords established in such conformity that the *diestro's* sword makes a point with the right eye to the quillon and point of his sword and to the adversary's nose, and that the points reach to the pommels, considering that now the same steps have to be given to one side and the other, with the swords.

Always in order to understand whichever science, it will be necessary that one suffers and the other works in order to know the quantities that are lost or gained, and having the mean of proportion chosen, the *diestro* will step to point B, passing his sword below the opponent's, making on it an *atajo* of general of line in cross, the swords remaining to the *diestro's* right side. In the same conformity, the opponent will step to point B, leaving to wound, and the *diestro's* sword will follow around without losing the sword, from one letter to another, until returning the sword to the same *atajo*, body, step, and sword at the same time, the body profiled. He will give steps on the circumference of the left side as well, as shown in the demonstration, taking the opponent's sword on the inside, the body remaining squared. In the opponent leaving, he will return around to cut it short, until returning to the same *atajo*, and this *atajo* has to be done many times, as they compose the body, and dispose the man to receive the science.

Keep in mind that the opponent can't establish in more than these six postures, and that these are subject to the seven generals, as will be seen in the demonstrations in my book, Teaching of Masters.

All the craftsmen that make works to better their reputation and fame aim to take the foundation of the depths and bowels of the earth, reducing it to rule and step, so that the edifice does not fail. Thus, consider this science as a wall and fortress of a man. Other wise authors have founded, and found on five techniques [*tretas*], which are *tajo*, *revés*, half *tajo* [*medio tajo*], half *revés* [*medio revés*].<sup>4</sup> This has been a notable mistake, and has caused and will cause notable errors in the masters that will follow it, from which the disciples will remain vulgar. He that reads my book will find there the deceit and disillusionment of all, and will see how this science has to only be founded on the seven generals, that are the beginning, middle, and end. All the rest are particular, and are subject, and I will tell of them in the form that each one has to be understood, and which has to be first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh.

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4 and thrust [*estocada*]

Keep in mind that the angles of the skill are four, declared in this form.

Right angle [*angulo recto*] is the sword being straight.

Obtuse angle is the point of the sword being lifted.

Acute angle is the point of the sword being low.

Curved angle [*angulo curvo*] is what is always done with a movement of conclusion [*movimiento de conclusión*], and serves for the cloak, dagger, or buckler.

The movements of the sword are six, which are the postures in which a man can be established.

Violent movement [*movimiento violento*] is lifting the sword high.

Natural movement [*movimiento natural*] is lowering the sword to its center.

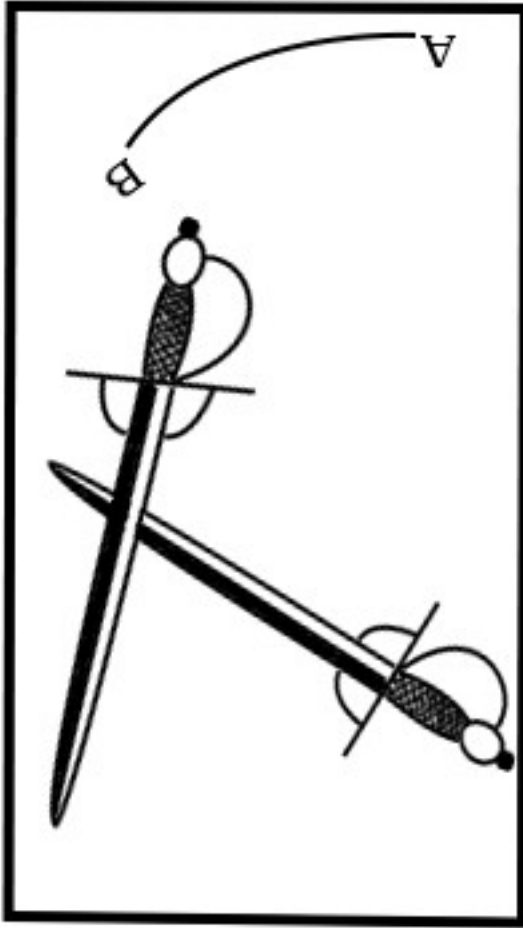
Offline lateral movement [*movimiento remiso*] is parting the sword to one side or the other.

Aligning lateral movement [*movimiento de reducción*] is returning the sword to the right angle.

Backward movement [*movimiento extraño*] is withdrawing the arm.

Forward movement [*movimiento accidental*] is traveling forward.

Mathematical demonstration of the  
GENERAL LINE IN CROSS

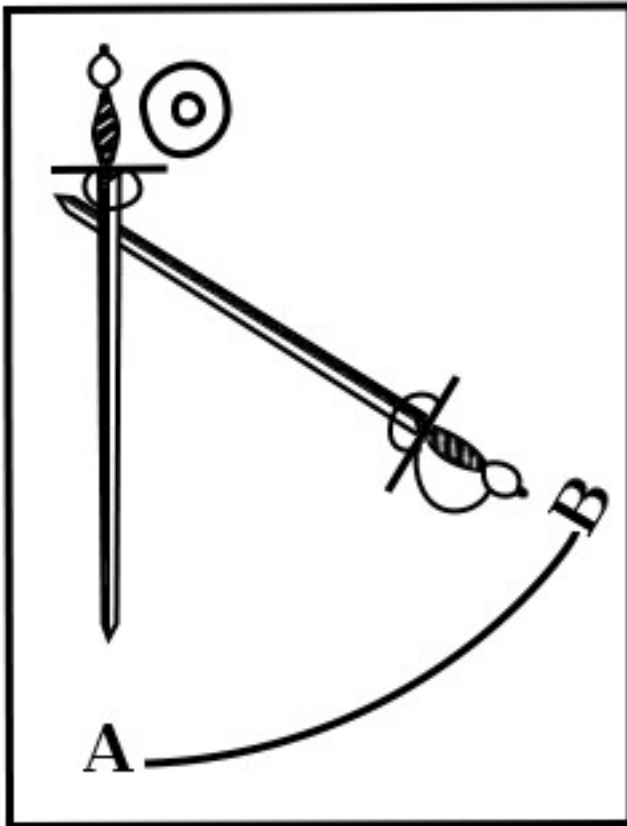


All works that err at the beginning in their foundations  
always remain flawed, leaving the edifice without the

layout and composure that it has to have so that it is finished perfectly. In this edifice, this general has to be the first stone, and it will be understood in this form, having chosen mean of proportion with the requisites that touch the art and have been said. Planting oneself on point A, step to point B, passing the sword below the opponent's, making an *atajo* on it, and a rounded circle with only the wrist, until the two swords remain on the circumference on the *diestro's* right side. The sword has to remain offline, and the point somewhat obtuse, in such form that point seven of his sword remains on point three of the opponent's, the arm so straight that it is considered a straight line from his left shoulder to the channel of the wrist, with which he will necessarily wound the opponent.

General of line in cross and general weak below the strong are siblings, and the first that always go together, because the one being in line in cross, the other sword will be able to be in weak below the strong.

GENERAL OF WEAK BELOW  
the strong



The present demonstration is done in this form. Having chosen mean of proportion, on point A, give a curved

step on the circumference to the right side to point B, the arm straight, without bending it, with only the wrist, the body, arm, and sword at the same time, making a half circle, until placing the point of the sword below the strong and quillons of the opponent's in such conformity that it reaches, with which he will wound freely by the greater reach, and having gained the degrees of the profile to the opponent. In my book, Teaching of Masters, it will be found with the complement it deserves.

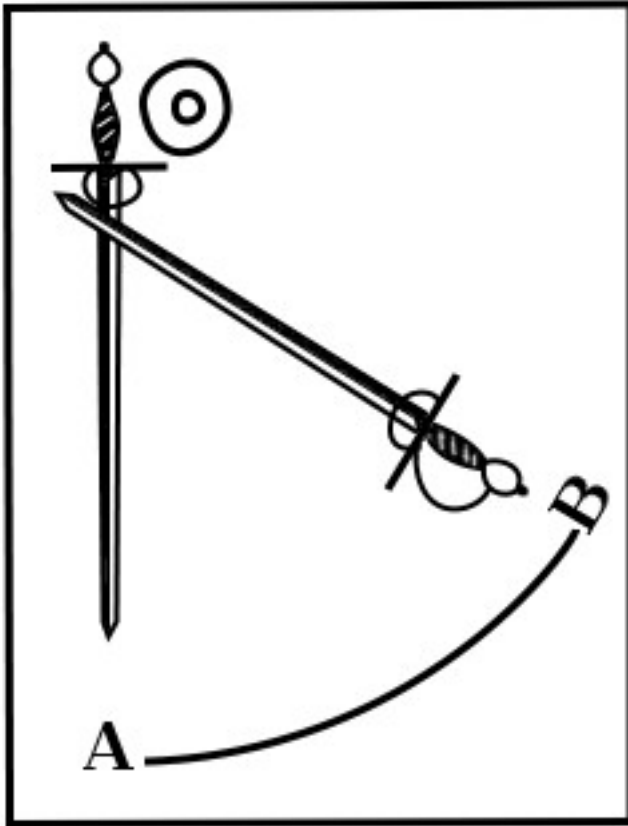
## L O W   G E N E R A L

is the crucible of the two said generals, and is done in this form

Having chosen mean of proportion from point A, give a curved step to point B, taking the opponent's sword from below, making a rounded circle, that will begin in the line in cross, and without stopping the circle, will arrive to weak below the strong, with which he will wound freely. When you will not deal with more than these three generals at the beginning, it will be enough for the teaching of arms.



Mathematical demonstration of  
GENERAL WEAK ABOVE  
the strong [*general flaqueza encima de la fuerza*]



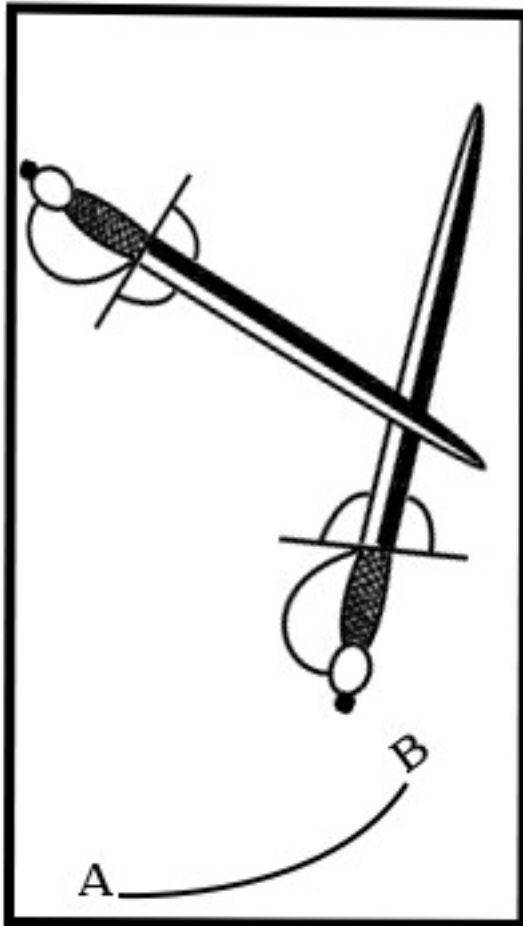
This general is just done by having chosen mean

of proportion with the requisites that touch it, giving a curved step to point B, only placing the point of the sword above the strong of the opponent's, close to the quillons, with the body and sword at the same time, the body profiled, with which he will wound freely.

Demonstration of  
H I G H G E N E R A L  
[*general alta*]

It will be understood in this form: mean of proportion chosen on point A with the requisites that have been said, giving a curved step to point B, passing the sword above the opponent's, making a rounded circle on it with only the wrist, without stopping, until placing it in weak over the strong, with the body, sword, and step at the same time, the body remaining profiled. This general is the key of the two generals, because whenever the one sword makes a general of narrowing [*general de estrechar*], the other will be able to choose weak over the strong, which which the one is opposed to the other.

Mathematical demonstration of  
GENERAL OF NARROWING

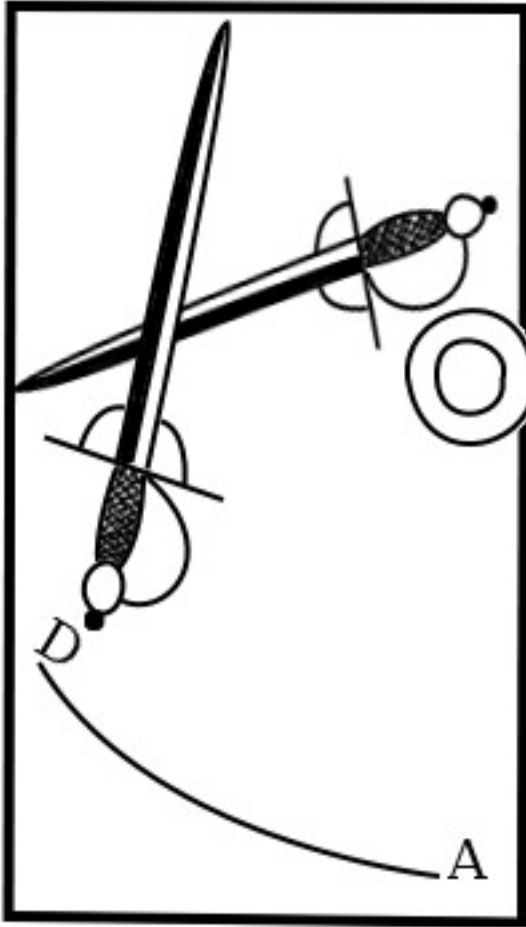


Many masters of the true skill have begun to teach with this general, and it is a notable mistake.

This general is understood in this form. Having chosen mean of proportion, as is said, in point A, step to point B, passing the sword above the opponent's, making a rounded circle with just the wrist, until placing the sword below the opponent's, in such conformity that the opponent's point remains close to the *diestro's* quillons, and the *diestro's* in obtuse angle, the hand fingernails-up, the body profiled, with which he will be able to wound freely.

The greatest fear that I have is that they will not understand, appearing to them more understood, that they are in it, and thus I beg them to go over my writings many times, adjusting them to account and reason, so that they will be disillusioned.

Mathematical demonstration of  
GENERAL ATAJO

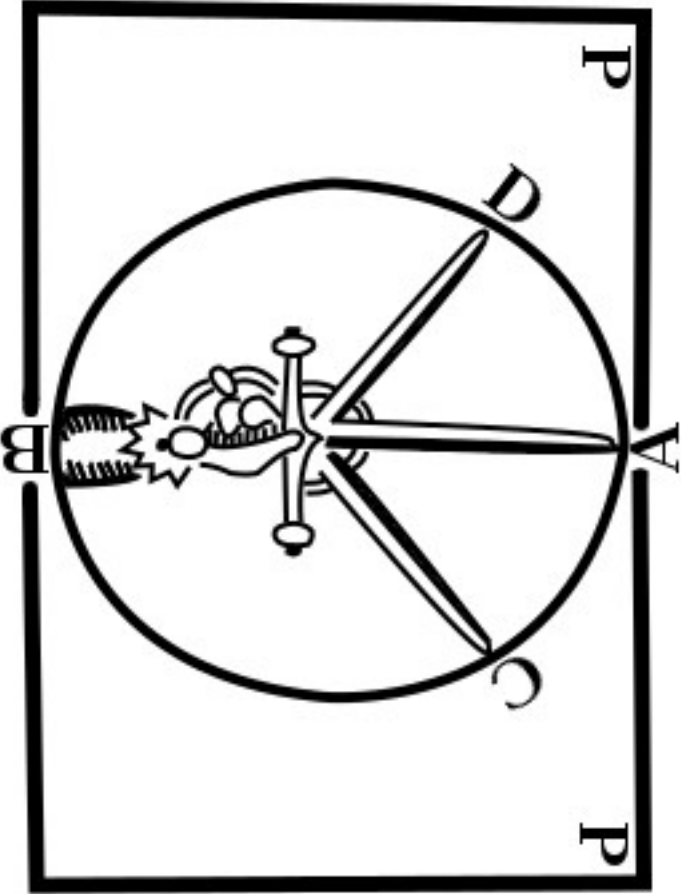


The nature of man is to begin with this part, that

whether vulgar or true, has been the greatest mistake that the professors of this science have had, as will be found in my book, Teaching of Masters.

This general is done in this form. Having chosen mean of proportion at point A, give a curved step to the circumference on the left side to point D. The body has to remain squared, the right foot transverse to his right side, the left shoulder that confirms with the opponent's right, the sword hand and quillons almost fingernails-down, and close to the right thigh, the swords in the middle of the longitudes, or lengths, with which the *diestro's* body will come to remain behind his sword. The opponent's sword will have four movements that it has in order to wound, which will be a natural lowering, and another aligning lateral, passing below, a violent in order to raise, a forward to wound, and the *diestro's* has no more than one mixed movement, with which, leaving or not, he will necessarily be wounded.

Demonstration of the right, obtuse, and acute angles



The present demonstration shows clearly that the sword has to be placed in the channel of the wrist, as is said, and serves to disillusion the vulgars that establish curved, placing the sword in obtuse angle, which is the sword that point C shows, or in acute angle, which is the sword that point D shows, with which it will be seen that each one lacks in reaching to point A, which is a man's chest, where the straight sword touches. With this, the right angle is proven to be better than the obtuse or acute.

All of this requires work to understand the generals, and the particulars over which they have dominion, and it suits the disciple to take this in order to be able to enter into the truth. In my book, Teaching of Masters, one will find that which suits for one friend to teach another with the best style that I have been able to attain. It would make me happy for the studious to study it and adjust to it, and advise me if they find an error, so that my desire is met.

PRAISE GOD