

# Treatise of Important Advice for the Skilled

by  
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**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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TO D. FRANCISCO DE GUZMÁN  
ZÚÑIGA Y MANRIQUE  
MARQUESS OF AYAMONTE

I had great luck, most excellent lord, in being able to make offers of greater qualities, which correspond to the being and value of Your Excellency, and to the obligation that I recognize. However, being that princes and illustrious lords don't look as much to the *don* (although small) as to the will and fondness which is offered to them, relying on the humanity and nobility that Your Excellency exercises with all his servants, I dare to present and dedicate to you this small Treatise of Important Advice for the Skilled, in which will be found things very advantageous for the defense of man and conservation of his life. Due to my limited ingenuity, I confess that they will not have the value owed to Your Excellency, but being under such protection and shelter, it will certainly be of great value and esteem and accepted by all. Because of that, I beg Your Excellency, as strongly and humbly as I can, to admit with love and good will that which I offer with the same, with which this work will remain as protected as I, prized and obligated to serve Your Excellency, whose life Our Lord guards and flourishes, as this humble servant desires.

# PREFACE

## FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

It is proper for human nature to be subject to error, as the philosopher says, that without exception (curious reader) I come to say that to err is human. When this pension is not inherited from our first fathers, experience has taught us that one cannot reach the complement of practice without antecedent acts of theory, by assimilating our understanding of our first principles to a blank slate, by lacking paint (teaching the same philosophy), as well as by not being exercised in the industrious arts of whichever faculty that it is. I confess that in mine, I could have many errors if I would have degenerated from the rules and duties that I had from the grand master Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, who is as well-known for his deeds as he is celebrated for his works, and with such advanced talents in this science by having been the consummate inventor, to whom is given palm and laurel, not only the most famous in Andalusia, but in all the world, with great pomp and applause in such grand form that, without exaggeration, one can be called innocent who doesn't generally follow the doctrine and great skill [*destreza*] of this man without equal, in whose presence they became not only unequal, but pygmies, who blindly depart from such majestic documents. Although I may appear passionate in these commendations and renown by being an adopted disciple, which I greatly value, nevertheless, the reason has such strength in his writings, that without it I would become one who doesn't follow it. I have very certain premises of sustaining that which I have in this science, by following the clear and obvious paths to the blindest eyes of the

vulgar. Although in the past years I followed and defended insistently the discipline and teaching of some masters of arms, with title, which was said to be the most chosen doctrine of Commander Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza. Having seen and known the errors of these masters, I have sought to remove the credit that I had from before, correcting my faults with the works and writings of Jerónimo de Carranza, my ignorance with his science, until coming to make a demonstration of this that I profess. I don't do it for the splendor and ostentation of a fencing master (which I am not, nor have I been, nor think to be one), but spurred on by my conscience, and the mandate of a certain person or persons to whom I owe not only all respect, but many just obligations, and not least to the reader who, if taking a look at these writings, will be considered a person that wants to be correct. Thus, because it did not err in the origin and beginning that it had, I predict good endings that this book achieved; I don't doubt the prize owed to my diligence, which if I had it from those, it will be by the nobility of the reader and principally by grace of the author, who gave all the honor and glory to our lord God.

The philosophical aficionados advise that the virtue, doctrine, and science of arms does not consist of seeing if the writings have a comma, period, or indent, or if it is written on good paper with black ink, with polished and beautiful handwriting, but in the substance and virtue of the doctrine that has to be taught generally to all, without preamble, excusing all prolixity so that all approve of it. Take note that if something will remain to be said in this treatise, I will give it (God giving me life) in the promised book of the Demonstrations, final book, where in order to understand it, it will not be necessary to be potions in order

to receive the purge, as some chroniclers have commented by not understanding the text of Jerónimo de Carranza.

Marsilio Ficino says in book 1<sup>1</sup> that in order for a man to understand whatever art or science, he must be helped and favored by nine things; the first three are three celestial planets: Mercury, Phoebus, and Venus; the other three proceed from the soul, which are stable will, acuteness of wit, firm and tenacious memory; the other three are called terrestrial, to wit: prudent head of the family, excellent teacher, and learned doctor. This philosophy says that without these nine things, no one can reach the end that he intends in such sciences. Continuing the reason given above, Mercury helps us seek the path where we have to be guided in the science, Phoebus (who is the sun) helps and illuminates with his clarity and splendor those that seek the science, then Venus comes grandly, whom we justly call the mother of grace, which is given so that one can seek with Mercury the science which is intended, and gives grace so that Phoebus illuminates with his rays. The other three things our diligence reaches. Regarding the last three, the head of the family is required for the livelihood and governance of the one who learns, the chosen teacher so that he will know to teach, and the doctor so that he cures the defects that will come in such studies.

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1 *De vita libri tres*, Florence, 1489.

## CHAPTER I

*Which deals with what science is, and how it differs from art, and if the skill at arms [destreza de las armas] is science or art.*

**E**XPLANATION of this chapter requires first taking note of Aristotle's book *Ethics*, c. 3, with the angelic doctor St. Thomas in *Summa*,<sup>2</sup> 2, in questions 5 and 7, that there are five habits of understanding with which we learn the truth without error, to wit: intelligence, wisdom, prudence, art, and science. With these habits, we learn the truth without error, which are distinguished from suspicion and opinion (and in them, although sometimes we learn some truths, ordinarily they come with error).

It now remains to know what is wisdom, which is what considers the highest causes, like God and the angels, and at the same time understands the knowledge of the rest of the sciences. Prudence is the reason for doing something well and composing custom. Art is a good reason for making some external works. Finally, science is a certain and evident habit deduced from certain and evident premises which, due to the certainty that it has, is differentiated from opinion, which is always fearful in its actions.

Presupposing what was said, take note that the art can be considered in two manners: firstly, properly, it is considered as a science and liberal art, in which manner it is together with many precepts; secondarily, it is considered improperly, to wit: as far as this art is distinguished and differentiated from the first, and in this consideration it becomes a reason for doing some external work, and they pass to the exercise of some matters (which are properly

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<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Basel, 1485.

called actions), as are building, cutting, and hammering, which are mechanical because they are only exercised in matters that have form due to the exercise of the body. They are differentiated from the liberal arts, which are the same thing as science, in which the liberal arts have intellectual actions, the others having corporal actions.

Then, having dealt with which is science, which is liberal art, and which is mechanical, it now remains to air to which of these the skill at arms is reduced – if it is science, liberal art, or mechanical art.

I say that as the skill at arms is ruled and governed by the actions of understanding and knowledge of the effects by their cause, founded in mathematical beginnings, from here it is said that it is a liberal art and together with many precepts, by which the *diestro* [skilled] comes to know the paths where he has to go, the means that he has to take, and the ends that it can have, which is ruled by science. Thus, it becomes the same thing, as much as it is exercised by the actions of the body for having to give a blow and defend from the opponent. Thus, Jerónimo de Carranza says it in the first dialog, in the *Compendium*,<sup>3</sup> on folio 3, already placing *atajo* and other necessary requisites. Due to this, it comes to be an art in a manner that results in being part science as far as the knowledge, and part art as far as the exercise, which results in the liberal art that is participating in a habit of understanding, that it is a science, and in the other extreme sense that it is art.

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3 Pacheco de Narváez, Luis. *Compendio de la filosofía de las armas de Geronimo de Carrança*. Madrid, 1612.

## CHAPTER II

*Where it is declared what the true skill is and why it was invented.*

**T**HE true skill at arms is a discrete invention, with which man finds that which suits his preservation, without there being error in the danger. It is a method of working scientifically with the determination of understanding, as far as wounding and being defended. It is a dispositive mode of the intentional concept of the *diestro*, with which one finds the most convenient means to reduce to action that which the understanding engenders in its potency. If some aficionado will want to know why the true skill at arms was invented, I would ask him to take a look at the christian skill, dialog 4, of the Compendium of Jerónimo de Carranza; he will find on fol. 154 where it says that the true skill at arms was invented for the defense of man and preservation of his life. Then, it says that as medicine is capable, by means of treatment with it, to attempt to give health to the sick – the true skill at arms is for a man to attempt to be defended from his adversary with it, and offend him if called for. On folio 3 of the same Compendium, it says that the true skill is a scientific knowledge and easy use that teaches one to wound and be defended from the opponent.



### CHAPTER III

*Where three necessary points are declared: in the first, it is declared what a demonstration is; in the second, what is part and what is whole; in the third, the materials of the true skill are declared.*

**O**F the most necessary and important points of the true skill which we have to deal with in this chapter, it is the definition of the demonstration, which, according to Aristotle, lib. Posteriorum, c. 1, is a syllogism that consists of first, true, and immediate causes, with the first of which one comes to the knowledge of the conclusion. Accommodating it to our purpose, we will say that the demonstration is a manner of discourse with which the thing comes to be understood and known when it is deduced from its causes; its causes are those which are not able to be another manner, as when the scientific *diestro* knows that his opponent being established with his arm and sword in the high posture in obtuse angle [*ángulo otuso*], or low in the acute [*agudo*], we will say it is a certain and known thing that the right angle [*ángulo recto*] reaches more, with which he is wounded with a thrust, having proportionate mean [*medio propocionado*].

On the second point that I have to deal with, on the whole and its parts, according to Aristotle, book 7 of the Demonstration in ch. 10 and 2 and in book 1, it says that the whole is nothing other than a joining of the parts that comes to make an entire whole composed of its parts, which must be understood regarding all the physical and similar. Thus, in the movement of conclusion [*movimiento de conclusión*], the *diestro* makes use of the whole and its parts, which are the movement of the feet, body, arm, and

sword, such that all these movements together come to be one entire whole, which is finishing the technique [*treta*].

We also say that one entire thing is a whole, like a whole cypress or a stick; we call the parts those things which together compose the whole, like the materials of the house that they compose. In the same way, we say that man is an entire whole, because he is composed of many parts. This reason settled, we will call the arm and hand together with the sword a part in order to differentiate from its whole, which we have already said is the body. When one will hear it said in the skill and exercise of arms (in practice as well as theory) that the part goes one way and the whole goes the other, it will be a settled and known thing, that the movement of the body and the feet go one way and the movement of the arm and hand and sword go another different way, as when the *diestro* throws a cut of diagonal *tajo* to the opponent's left side and passes with the steps to the opponent's right side, or how when the *diestro* circles the opponent's sword with his and puts himself in the general of obligating with the weak below the strong [*flaqueza debajo de la fuerza*] of the opponent.

When one will hear it said that the whole and part have to go to only one site, it has to be understood that the movement of the feet, body, arm, hand, and sword go directed all together to one place, or to one point, as when we run a blow of first intention, which then, in the movement of the feet, body, arm, and sword, the beginning and the end come together, making the consonance of music in all these movements, or how when we bring the opponent's sword with ours ahead in the rule of *atajo* or the line in cross [*línea en cruz*].

When it will be said to unite the part with its whole, it has to be understood that we will bring the arm as a part

close to the body, which is its whole, and the part being united with its whole, the acute angle that the *diestro* makes with his sword will be fortified, subjecting the opponent's. The *diestro* having acquired the proportionate mean with its parts, will be able to wound and be defended.

## CHAPTER IV

*Where it is proved that the true skill at arms depends on the scientific knowledge, and on the error<sup>4</sup> that the scientific can have, and the success of the ignorant.*

COMMONLY, having dealt with some faculty or science, all the philosophers place before all things the object and mark where such science is directed, such that without it, one will be blind and without foundation. Because without such object, one proceeds confused and misguided, this treatise of *Advice* will not degenerate from the order and method that the philosophers follow. It will be well-followed, placing as the object the universal defense of man that originates and branches out from geometry, child of the mathematical disciplines, which have the first place among all natural sciences by the evidence and clarity with which it proceeds.

It remains now to prove that the true skill is founded on science; it is seen clearly being so, as by means of it, the scientific *diestro* comes to know the effect by its cause, which are the necessary parts and requisites so that it is. Consequently, pertaining to the second definition given by the prince of philosophers, Aristotle, in book 2 of the *Demonstration*, ch. 2, it is an easy, certain, and true habit and use, acquired by demonstration. This truth is such that it does not need many proofs; as I have said, it is founded on the mathematical disciplines and sciences, which are all pure demonstration, as it declares what is point, length, width, and depth, and all types of figures, which I do not refer to, due to this not being the proper place.

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4 The text says *hierro* (iron), but probably meant *error* (error), which is what the body of the chapter deals with.

This science of arms is a habit acquired by demonstration. It is very certain, because one who exercises it every day is found more agile and ready in the practical as well as speculative knowledge, due to the new acts that one does. As it necessarily can't be done without demonstration, one comes to know the parts of which the science consists, which is a habit and easy use acquired with demonstration.

As far as the other part, which is saying that it is one of the most noble sciences, it is a manifest thing, as the object looks more noble, which is the conservation of the individual and natural defense of man. All try to attend to this as they can (some more than others), with respect to the agility, speed, and certainty. One finds those who are ignorant and not very scientific far behind those that know, because as foundations, these always go to the principal end and point which gives them their opposition by the speculative science and executing it in practice.

Thus, among ingenious *diestros*, a question is usually dealt with which asks if a scientific *diestro* can err and an ignorant be correct, which can easily be answered that it is very proper for men to not be correct in all by not having perfect knowledge of the truth. As for this, that it is very proper for men to err, it is a common axiom, and thus specifying it and coming to the intent which is asking if one who is scientific can err, and another who is ignorant can be correct.

I respond that one who is scientific in the skill, in not lacking that science, can't err, because science, as we have said, is a certain and evident habit directed to the knowledge of the truth; but if this scientific *diestro* errs, how would we respond?

I advise that such *diestro* will err lacking the true science

and knowledge of the point or blow that he would have given to the opponent, and thus he will not err as one who is scientific, but as one who is ignorant.

To the second question, if one not being scientific but chimerical in his skill, without foundation and knowledge of the truth, as is seen today, is able to be right and truly correct – to this one responds that although one can be right and truly correct, he doesn't go with the scientific knowledge, but accidentally going blindly without knowing what is done, because he lacks the rule and demonstration to follow in order to achieve his intent, and thus he will not return a second time to the knowledge that he should, but perhaps ignorantly.

Against the conclusion of this chapter, some *diestros* usually object by saying that science is not founded in the bodily exercise, and that this science of the arms is founded in it, and consequently, it is not a science. They confirm this by saying that science doesn't deal with particulars, from which it follows that it is not a science.

One responds to this argument that the true skill at arms is not founded really and truly in bodily exercise, but in the true and universal knowledge of the *diestro*, who looks scientifically at the effect that emanates from its cause. With this, the *diestro* not only knows what the opponent can work in action, but also in potency, knowing the brief movements that the adversary can work in the first intentions, in which not much space of time is given, as are given in those of second intention. So that when the scientific *diestro* is exercised, he doesn't look primarily to that bodily exercise, but to the knowledge that consists of the speculation of the truth, which looks like a proper and true object.

As to the second part of this argument, which says that

science doesn't deal with particulars while this does, I say that this science primarily doesn't deal with particulars but with the universal. Thus I say that when the understanding has been made lord of all the particular requisites of this art, the *diestro* proceeds with the *atajo* universally, and so that this *atajo* is universal, it has to be formed with all the parts that the art requires and the science mandates. The aficionados take note that it is one thing to place *atajo* without art and another thing for the *diestro* to place the *atajo* with art; I advise this in respect that there can be some differences in placing *atajo* without art, because in the time that an ignorant is occupied with searching for the sword, the scientific *diestro* will be able to find the body. This is the doctrine of Jerónimo de Carranza, and thus it is necessary to go with much feeling to find the sword with the *atajo*. It is important to the *diestro* in order to work universally, to have a whole and true knowledge of the mean of proportion [*medio de proporción*] and proportionate mean, which are the greatest foundation of the true skill, together with the knowledge of the profiles of the body, posture of the sword, figures of angles, and also the simple and double steps, when they have to be curved or straight, and when backward or forward, or to one side and the other, and also of the knowledge of touch [*tacto*] (one of the principal senses), and of their own and others' movements. Take note that I call our own movements those with which a blow is given, and others' those with which he is not wounded. Without these requisites there are others, which are deceits [*engaños*], attacks [*acometimientos*], parries [*reparos*], deflections [*desvios*], impediments, and other things that pass in silence, and thus the *diestro* that will have universal knowledge of what is said, to work with the *atajo* universally, with which the difficulty will be resolved,

seeking in the following chapters to declare all those that will be offered, according to what can and will be reached. Concluding in this chapter the definition of the universal, we will say that it is a rule and measure of the type that we have to have as opposite master in all the singular techniques, in attacking as well as in waiting.



## CHAPTER V

*Where a question that a diestro makes is answered: which is of more value, the particular or the universal?*

**A**S all the sciences, arts, and offices consist of definitions, divisions, and argumentation, it will be good for us to respond to a curious question, which is: which is more valuable in the skill and exercise of arms, the particular or the universal?

The response to this is that as far as the universal is lord and master, below which are contained the particulars, it becomes in its essence and virtue more valuable than the particulars, because the particulars originate and descend from it like the root, foundation, and beginning of the being that they come to have. Thus, for this, without comparison, it is more valuable than the particulars, but as far as the operation and deduction, only the particular is that which exercises it, reducing that which was in the knowledge, in the formation and operation, which is the office of the particular. Thus they come to have different offices, the one for teaching and demonstrating, and the other for working and exercising that which the universal teaches, and for this, the particular comes to be more valuable than the universal.

## CHAPTER VI

*Where a question that a diestro asks is answered: which is more valuable, attacking or waiting?*

**T**HIS question is answered with a necessary warning, which is that it is certain that whatever thing that is worked is more valuable than that which is waiting in potency, because the principal end to which potency is reduced is the act to which it is ordered. Not coming to achieve it, the saying of Aristotle in the second *Physics* fits, where it is said that potency which is not reduced to action is in vain, from which it is inferred that one that goes in action attacking with a simple technique is more valued than one that is waiting in potency. Take note that one who would attack has to go with universal knowledge. It is also proved with another evident reason, which is that one who waits is in potency (as we have said), although it is not so noble an action as one who attacks, because this is in action, and one that waits, although he sees, almost can't judge the place where one that attacks with a simple technique can enter; this is due to them being things that depend on the hidden intention of one who attacks, and thus one that waits has to do so with more apprehension. Besides this, he that attacks knows, by the profile of the body or posture of the sword, the figure of the angle and thereby where the strength and weakness is.

If the *diestro* would know that the opponent's sword is in the posture of the right angle, in this case it is necessary to begin by the sword, necessitating the opponent, taking it from the posture in which it is, placing it in an extreme, which will be done by means of the universal rule of the *atajo*, which can be done on the inside or outside, or with

first intention. If the *diestro* would know that the opponent's sword is in an extreme in an unsuspecting place, in such case the *diestro* can begin the proposition by the body, and by the disposition that he will give to the opponent, the *diestro* will know that which must then be done.

Concluding this question, I will say that for many reasons it is better to attack than wait, since each one comes to be in its jurisdiction with nobility, as we will prove in this chapter.

It is certain that in conflicts, the desires of the spirits are changed with the occasions, in a manner that if a man was mad at another, removing honor from him, when they come to fight, it is not good for the offender to attack the offended with a blow of first intention, even though the desire of his spirit is choleric, because the irascible is calm, and thus it suits the offender to wait to make his defense, which is done by means of the universal *atajo*.

The curious will ask why the offender is not irascible with him. I respond that for irascibility to be found in a subject, two things are required: one is agitation of spirit in the heart, and the second is an appetite for vengeance; as the offender doesn't have this appetite for vengeance, since it is he that wronged, he lacks one of the things that are required to be irascible, from which we infer that the offender cannot be irascible as we have said above. But the aggrieved, as on one hand his is wronged and on the other he has the appetite for avenging it, for this same reason the force of vengeance is obliged to attack first. That said, we come to say that when one would have these occasions, for one waiting is better than attacking (for the offender), and for the other waiting is the more honorable action; but speaking universally, similar grievances and cases of honor

not having preceded, attacking is better than waiting.

## CHAPTER VII

*Which deals with what the master must teach to the disciple.*

**B**Y this chapter being so necessary and important to the masters that teach the exercise of arms and the disciples that learn them, it will be good to advise them of some points or precepts that must be followed. Thus, I advise to the masters and practitioners that after having taught the disciple the particular fundamentals and requisites of this art, the view and doctrine that Commander Jerónimo de Carranza gave us, as the writings of his book, entitled *Philosophia de las armas*,<sup>5</sup> say these words: “the master does not have to teach the disciple that which he knows for himself, but that which the strength, spirit, and disposition of the disciple has made necessary.” This is said and advised because it usually happens that the master is phlegmatic and the disciple choleric, and the master, not taking note of this point, teaches the disciple composed techniques of second intention, which can't be taken advantage of in truth, due to these techniques not equaling the desire of his spirit. Thus, one should teach simple techniques to such, and to the phlegmatic, whose constellation is waiting, composed techniques of second intention have to be taught. For verification of what was said, take for example two horses that were presented to his excellency the lord Duke of Media, D. Alonso Pérez de Guzmán the Good, which were very handsome of body, size, and spirit, and his excellency being told that they ran and finished well, wanted to see them, and thus commanded the picador did them wrong and put them in a

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5 Sánchez de Carranza, Jerónimo. *Filosofía de las armas y de su destreza*. Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 1582.

race, and doing it like this, they ran and finished very poorly, such that the picador will not be able to have or subject. The duke, having seen how badly they had done, asked Jerónimo de Carranza what order or mode he may have to remedy a defect so great; then Jerónimo de Carranza came to see the bits of the bridles, and found that they were switched, and then commanded the picador to exchange them and give each one his bit. Placing them in a race the second time, they ran and finished excellently; seeing the amendment, His Excellency was delighted. I have dealt with this similarity, only because the master takes note in knowing the spirit, strength, inclination, and vigor of the disciple in order to give and teach each one that which his nature requires. In the master doing it like this, he will take advantage of the doctrine for his disciples, and the master does not stop teaching techniques to all terms.

As far as exercising a discipline with another, I advise that the master does not consent to allowing the disciple or disciples to battle in public acts until they have been made lords of the particular fundamentals of the art. Thus the disciples of his will and conformity, if they will want to battle, do so in front of the master, because if they would make some error with the practice sword [*espada negra*], the master may take it and say what they should do in the proposition, resolving and concluding whatever difficulty, in a way that satisfies those present and listening, in theory as well as practice. The master doing it like this, he will take advantage of the doctrine for the disciple and come to trust that which the master has taught him.

I also advise the aficionados that if they will be offered to battle in public acts, it is in such type and mode that he not only does the opponent fear, but also those that will be present, because in some time they don't dare, and giving

the blows with strength is a part of the true skill.

Only with princes and lords it has to be used with respect and courtesy, and although the *diestro* knows that he can give them, he has to play ignorant, as losing with the lords is winning. For he that wants to keep friends, it is necessary to not execute all that one knows, but in good mode and order bring him to understand that there is no man, however rustic that he may be, that doesn't know something of what he sees or they tell him.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Where it is proved that the technique of atajo is universal.*

**W**HEN we say the name of something which is meaningful, it does not need explanation, as its meaning manifests it. Even though in saying universal technique, it is enough to know it (which was the *atajo*), we will still say that it is a universal impediment against all the blows, general as well as specific. By having dealt with this technique, it is necessary for us to have something of its explanation.

The dispassionate *diestros* will find that in the declaration of the theory of the art, Jerónimo de Carranza says these words: “Universal technique is that which is done against *tajo*,<sup>6</sup> against *revés*, and against thrust, for attacking as well as waiting,” and then further ahead says “the technique of *atajo* is universal.” Verifying and giving understanding on that which it has said and says, *atajo* in the skill is when one of the arms is placed over the other, so that the one which is subjected has less parts by which to leave to wound, from which judgment and statement no *diestro* will depart, due to the value that has in itself, which will I will prove by the evident and clear reasons that there are for it.

There are three generic blows with which one combatant can wound his opponent, which are *tajo*, *revés*, and thrust. The *atajo* is no more than one, and although in the formal it is particular, in the virtual we will call it universal, with respect to having the power to impede and subject the three blows, which it could not do if it were not

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6 The text says *atajo*, but *tajo* is what is found in Carranza's work.



universal.

It is proved with evidence that it is universal, of this type: the universal, according to Aristotle, is defined with three definitions in different places, which all come to be reduced to one. The first will be found in book 2 of *Metaphysics*, ch. 13, and in book 1 of the *Demonstration*, ch. 8, where it says that it is that which can be in many; not that it actually is it, because many universals will be given which actually cannot be in many, but only in one, as is the sun, moon, and world, because they can be in many, which is the essential definition of the universal that the philosopher gives in book 1 of *Interpretation*, ch. 5, saying that the universal is that which can be propagated in many.

The third definition, which is being in many and outside of many, and by not being to our purpose, we do not refer to it. The definitions of the universal supposed, which is being propagated in many, it will be good that we come to the explanation of the universal of *atajo*, which is by suiting the definition to it, being proved like this:

The universal is that which is in many. In the technique of *atajo*, these properties will be found; so, the technique of *atajo* is universal.

It is proved even better that the universal technique of *atajo* is against *tajo*, against *revés*, and against the thrust, for attacking as well as waiting. The technique that is against *tajo*, *revés*, and thrust has essential properties of the universal; so, it follows that the technique of *atajo* is universal, and therefore it is.

There is no lack of those who, against this truth, have said that the *atajo* is not universal, affirming that if it were, it would have to include any particular and all the movements. Saying then that it doesn't include them, it cannot be given such name; saying, for example, that it

doesn't include the opposing line when it moves restlessly below the acute angle, nor does it include the circular movements that are done or formed for the cut of *tajo* or *revés* behind the back, giving those circular turns until coming to the obtuse angle. Then, it is certain it doesn't contain what was said; for this reason, it cannot be given the name of universal.

To this sophistic objection, one easily responds that the *atajo* is not obligated to include nor subject the movements that are null and absent, which can be said of all those that don't come to have the effect of being able to wound. Thus it will be enough that this *atajo* includes the cut of *tajo* and *revés*, and the thrust, that are the three generic blows that all men use when they fight with sharp swords or battle in the plazas or yards with practice swords. These movements with which these blows are formed being destroyed and diverted, none of the rest make mention or principal of them, although they proceed infinitely, because it would be impossible that they have the effect of blows. Thus I say that one has to be cautious of the movements that give blows, which are: the natural for the cut of *tajo* or *revés*, and the forward [*accidental*] for the thrust, and the oblique [*oblicuo*] for half *tajo* [*medio tajo*] or half *revés* [*medio revés*]. These movements destroyed and diverted, none of the rest make principal or memory of them, due to being done in absence, which are all those that leave from the circumference imagined between the bodies of the combatants; the rest are subject to the value of the universal technique of *atajo*. If some incredulous person would not want to concede that which is advised here, I ask him to give another technique that has more value than the universal *atajo*. If he would give it (which is impossible), then I will confess to have erred with the commander

Jerónimo de Carranza and will say that I had no reason in affirming that the technique of *atajo* is universal. But I advise to the aficionados that if they will dare to make counterpoint and contradict the fundamental doctrine of the master of the Spanish nation, Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, they need eagle feathers to accompany the understanding in its subtleties; they cut them well, because no confusion of blunders happen, as some presumptuous have thrown them, disputing ingenious *diestros*. Because some time doesn't show me some jurisconsult, I will say and teach in my writings the order that the *diestro* has to have to know the mode of placing *atajo* by whichever of the three ways. The sense of Jerónimo de Carranza, in which he says that the technique of *atajo* is universal, means that the *diestro* cuts short and ends his intent by the shortest path. Knowing to do it (that is, going by the *atajo*), we will quickly come to the intended end, excusing superfluous and impertinent movements. Concerning the steps and movements of the feet, as well as those of the sword and the technique that is done by the shortest path, it can well be called the technique of *atajo*. Jerónimo de Carranza seems to teach this on fol. 63, p. 1, saying "that which touches experience is diligent in the application of the proposition, quick in movement, strong in danger, wise in the prosecution of the blows or techniques, light in order to leave from danger," which words make expensive the abbreviating, cutting short, and concluding. This gives understanding on the same page 63, where it says: "so, the body regulated in all its profiles, and the degrees placed to all the movements that are those which the distance of all things make, a universal conclusion is taken so that not being in doubt of the offense of the opponent and defense of the *diestro*." The second sense is that which Carranza

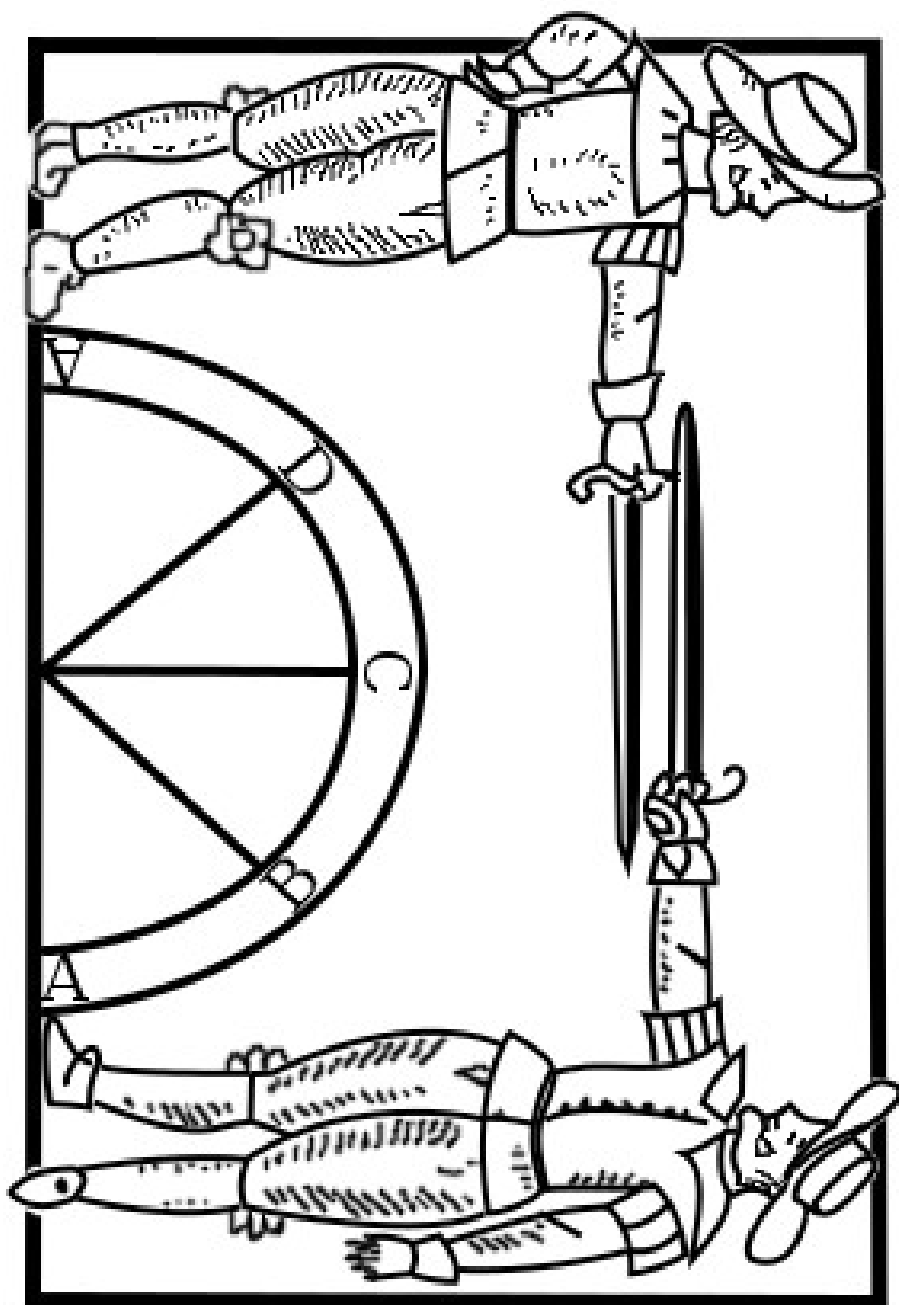
says in this text in the first words, that one takes a universal conclusion, and true knowledge of the fundamentals of the skill, and of the essentials of it, and of all that which the art teaches; the *diestro* is well-known and exercised, in order to know in time due to apply to each thing its opposition. The third sense is from D. Luis Pacheco de Narváez, teaching by means of his five ways,<sup>7</sup> not approved as good by many scientific *diestros*. The fourth sense is that going by the *atajo*, with which the universal is practically placed in use and exercise, the universal is in the second mode, which is as much as if it said, even though it is true that all that which is in the understanding in its universal intellectuality. When one will want to place it in action, each thing is characterized itself in distinct acts taking real form. There is a particular way in the skill, which Carranza called *atajo*, which is universal. Carranza understands in the first mode, that it is what the *diestro* abbreviates in all occasions and excuses delays; long mode can be called universal, because it is a rule that ordains that they cut short too many superfluous movements, and that it is concluded in the necessary and unavoidable.

All the previous understood, and the *diestro* having been made capable of all the fundamentals, it will be good to take note that the posture of greatest reach is that of the right angle, without an extreme in the body, feet, arm, hand, and sword, only that the column is straight as we have demonstrated in the painting of the small nude man, which is forming the three circles that the *diestro* can make in the three joints, shoulder, elbow, and wrist. Take note that if the *diestro* would want to place *atajo* by the way of the posture of the sword, which will be on the right side of

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7 Pacheco de Narváez, Luis. *Grandezas de la espada*. Madrid, 1600. f.283v

the opponent on the circumference, which would be that of the letter A. First and before everything, he will choose the mean of proportion, communicating the opposite with its line, and with superior angle, he will subject it with greater degrees of his sword to the lesser of his adversary's, which will be number six or seven of the *diestro's* to four or five of the opponent's; with a quick movement of the part and whole, the *diestro* will enter to the proportionate, giving a curved step, which will be a distance of two and a half feet, little more or less. He will be unequal to his adversary, such that if the adversary was established in profile, the *diestro* has to be subjecting squared, turning or twisting the point of the right foot to the outside of his right side. Being commanded to place the body and the feet in this way, because the opponent doesn't have reach on the outside nor the inside. The subjection will be done with much feeling and reservation, not applying more parts of force in the mixed natural movement than will be enough to have captured and subjected the opposing line with little pressing. That which is above will lower that which is below, and although by this part the *diestro* goes subjecting the opposing four angles; the two corners that make the letter B are acute, and the other two that make or signify the letter C are obtuse. It will suit the *diestro* to take the acute angle himself and give the opponent the obtuse, which is the greatest of all. This cannot be occupied by its own nature, even though all types of angles look good, they can be occupied as the *diestro* has chosen mean of proportion with disposition, without which they cannot be occupied, and this has to be done by catching the opposing sword in action.



Take note that by this path the *diestro* has to make three angles: the first is that which the *diestro* makes in the good posture of the feet over which the body will be loaded; the second is the corner that the arm makes with the body; the third is that which the *diestro* has to take himself and that which he has to occupy with his body. For greater clarity, we paint this demonstration so that it is seen how the *diestro* has to look with his opponent.

So, if the opponent would consent in the *atajo*, the *diestro* will throw the blow to the closest, most uncovered, and least dangerous as we have taught before in the demonstration of the small men with the points that the three letters (A, B, C) signify. For confirmation of what was said, we paint this demonstration so that the aficionado knows that in order to wound with a straight thrust, he has to bring the strong or greater degrees of his sword close to the weak of the opponent's, such that he parts with the close (which is the strong) and wounds with the remote (which is the point or weak).

Take note that if the *diestro* has placed *atajo*, and the opponent will lift the hand and sword, forming a violent movement in order to give a cut (*tajo* or *revés*), in that beginning, the *diestro* will be able to wound with a straight thrust below the right arm, which we call exit. He seeks to give this blow before the natural movement lowers, not remaining in the blow, but in giving the blow, he leaves with much speed to the mean of proportion. It suits the *diestro* to be profiled, placing his body behind his arm and sword in order to wound, and in this way he will be defended. If the *diestro* would want to form a movement of conclusion, he takes care when the opponent goes to wound with the natural movement, and in making an angle with his sword on the opponent's, of whatever quality that

it is, occupy it with the body, a universal rule for all type of arms. The *diestro* is careful to not lift his sword from the opponent's to wound until the left hand has captured the guard above or below, as it appears in this demonstration. The *diestro* seeks to bring his left side as close as he can to the opponent's right side, putting the point of the sword in his face or on his neck or throat, and in this way, it remains the *diestro*'s choice whether to wound or not.