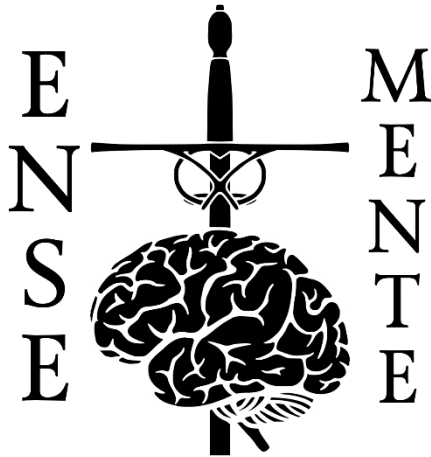


**A number of general rules and
observations on fencing, connected to
the Royal Academy at Sorø.**

A partial translation of Uniwersytet Wrocławski
manuscript MIL. IV 30.



Translated into English by Reinier van Noort
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About this document

Manuscript MIL. IV 30, held by the library of the University of Wrocław,¹ presents a notebook of one or more students at the Knightly Academy at Sorø, that can be dated to around 1632 based on an inscription on fol. 30v.

The notebook contains notes on mathematics (fol. 1r to 22r), followed by some empty pages, and then a section of notes on fencing (fol. 25r to 71r). Based on content, these notes on fencing can tentatively be further divided into four parts.

- 1) Fol. 25r to 30v present notes on fencing that were most likely written by a student based on the lessons they received;
- 2) On fol. 30v, a single lesson is presented, with a dedication signed by *Hanß Wilhelm Scheffer*;
- 3) Fol. 31r to 71r contain lessons on fencing that appear to have been copied from the hand-written extensions included in the Göttingen copy of Hans Wilhelm Schöffers' fencing book;²
- 4) On fol. 42v, a single lesson is presented, that is signed by *Clauß Seehefeldt*.

¹ Anonymous (Hans Wilhelm Scheffer) (1632) *Etliche General Regeln undt Observationes, so bey den einfachen Fechten in acht zunehmen undt zu wissen vonnöthen sein*. Mil. IV 30, Uniwersytet Wrocławski.

² Schöffers von Dietz, Hans Wilhelm (1620) *Gründtliche und eigentliche Beschreibung der freyen Adelichen und Ritterlichen Fechtkunst*. Marburg, Johan Saur. 8 ARS MIL 1090/61, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.

This document presents an English translation of parts 1, 2 and 4, but does not include the lessons presented in part 3. While the initial pages mostly leave large open margins around the text, in part 3, many of these margins have been filled with further text, likely because the writer feared running out of space. Part 1 likewise contains some marginal notes, but they appear to be (somewhat later) insertions made by the author to expand upon the text he had written.

The contents of the manuscript show a strong connection to Sorø, and to Hans Wilhelm Schöffner who was a fencing master at the school. The lessons presented in part 3 strongly imply that whoever authored this manuscript had access to Hans Wilhelm Schöffner's personal notes, and knew him personally. However, the identity of this author is unclear. Hans Wilhelm Schöffner's dedication is to his "good friend" and "former student", *Heinrich von Raden*. However, the name *Friederich Henning* is written repeatedly on one of the cover pages of the manuscript. An analysis of the handwritings of the different parts of this manuscript may help shed some light on the history of this work's ownership and creation.

About the translation

In the following translation, square brackets ("[...]") have been used to indicate additions made to the text for clarity (where the meaning of the text could be interpreted differently without these additions). Where needed, footnotes have been added to further clarify

choices made in the translation, or to indicate other important aspects of the text.

English translation of technical terms, as well as these terms in the original language, are as follows:

to advance	rücken
angled	angulirt
to beat	battiren, battieren
bow ³	büge
to break back	zurück brechen
to change	mutiren, wechseln
to cut	hawen, hauen
cut	Hieb
cut, hew	Haw, Hauw
to cut-after	nachhawen
circle-fencing	Zirckelfechten
committing the sword	commettre di spada
counter-, <i>contra-</i>	contra ⁴
dagger	Dolch
to disengage	caviren, cavieren
disengagement	cavation
to engage	stringieren, stringiren

³ Based on context, this most likely refers to the knuckle-bow of the sword.

⁴ This is sometimes abbreviated with a symbol that most resembles a “q” with diacritics.

to force	forciren
French thrusts	franzstöße
gait	gangh, schridt
to go in	eingehen
going through with the blade	durghgangh mit die Klinge
guard	guardia
hilt	gefäß
to lift over ⁵	überheben
lunge	stockada
to make a <i>volta</i>	voltieren
measure	Mensur
measure, narrow	mensur, enge
measure, wide	mensur, weite
motion	motion
opening	Bloße
to overrun	übereilen
to parry	pariren
parry	parade
to pass	passiren
pass	passada
posture	Positur
to pre-empt	vorkommen

⁵ I.e., lifting your blade over that of your opponent.

<i>prima</i>	prima
proceeding	Caminiren, Caminade
to pursue (their blade with yours)	nachrücken
<i>quarta</i>	quarta, 4ta
rapier	Rappir
to recede	zurückweichen
re-disengagement	recavation
to resolve	sich resolviren
<i>secunda</i>	2da
to slice	schneiden
to step	treden
step	Tridt
to step forward	zutreden
step forward	zutrit
strong	stärcke, stercke
to suppress	dämpfen
<i>tempo</i>	tempo
<i>tertia</i>	Tertia, 3tia
to thrust	stoßen
thrust	stoß
trial-cut	versuchhieb
weak	schwäche, schweche
to wind	winden

to withdraw

retrahieren, retrahiren

without guard

senza guardia

to yield with your blade

deine Klinge nachgeben

Bibliography

Anonymous (Hans Wilhelm Scheffer) (1632) *Etliche General Regeln undt Observationes, so bey den einfachen Fechten in acht zunehmen undt zu wissen vonnöthen sein*. Mil. IV 30, Uniwersytet Wrocławski.

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8 ARS MIL 1090/61, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.

Acknowledgement

Harrison Ridgeway first came across this manuscript in the library of Wrocław, and brought it to my attention, for which I am most grateful.

A number of general rules and observations that need to be taken heed of and known in fencing [with the] single [rapier].

Of the posture.

Your left heel, your right foot, both your shoulders, your right arm (which must be somewhat bent), and your blade must be one line, in the *tertia*. Your left hand diagonally in front of your left eye. When you begin to engage, extend your right arm straight, but keep your body somewhat withdrawn. When you thrust, then first extend your body fully forward, and after that set your foot forward, and this very swiftly. If it is in *quarta*, then you must stand with your body straight perpendicular, as then the bow comes to your left side; and with your right shoulder somewhat higher than your left. If it is in *tertia*, then you must have your body somewhat bent, but not forward but to the side. In both thrusts, you must stand such that your left foot stands fully on the ground, though [set] across, and does not lie bent down; your right foot stands straight, so that your knee and toes lie on a perpendicular line. Your left arm is whipped back. If this is in *quarta*, [your left arm] must also be as in *quarta*; if this is in *tertia*, [your left arm] must also be as in *tertia*. If now, you want to [go] back again, help yourself with your left hand, and return it into the posture with your body and feet.

NB. When you perform a thrust, then carry the step of your foot as far as the length of your arm.

Of the blade.

The blade is divided into 4 parts, with which you can know when and how you must recognize the measure from that, and thus engage, disengage, lift over, thrust, pass, withdraw, go in and parry.

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Of the measure.

The measure is twofold; the wide and the narrow.

The wide measure is when you must set forth your foot in the thrust.

The narrow measure is when you do not have to do that, but can still reach your enemy.

You have the measure, when you are with your strong in your enemy's weak or with your half strong in your enemy's half weak; or when you touch your enemy's cross with your point.

Gaining the wide measure is done: 1) when you go to your enemy, who stands still. With this you must observe that you use your natural gait, and then that you do not start to engage any sooner than when you have set your right foot on the ground, and you have prepared yourself well for the thrust.

2) When you stand still, and your enemy comes at you. Here, you must note that you must stand well-withdrawn; and when your enemy is in the measure and wants to go to your blade, then you must not let them touch your blade, but take the *tempo* and thrust. But if they have touched it, then you break back, disengage, and engage your enemy's blade again and thrust.

NB. You can also gain the wide measure when you have engaged out of measure, and after that put your right foot forward, keeping your body back, and following with your left foot, and thrust. If they want to take the *tempo*, due to [the movement of] your left foot, bring this forward and counter-thrust.

3) When you both go forward. Here, you must note that as you come into the measure, regardless of with which foot, after that you set your last foot forward and thrust. If your enemy thrusts, then you counter-thrust. Because, if you wanted to bring your left foot behind your right, your enemy would take the *tempo*.

You can also have and gain the wide measure such that your enemy does not have it. To wit, when they thrust straight,

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more precisely 1) when you stand with your body withdrawn well, and your enemy does not; 2) when in thrusting you step forward with that foot that stood behind in engaging. And in this way, you have the measure when you stand with your full or half weak at your enemy's full weak. And for this it is good if you begin to engage in this way with your left foot in front. 3) when your enemy thrusts out of measure, as with that they bring you the measure, while they cannot thrust forth further.

You gain the narrow measure in two manners: 1) when your enemy thrusts, you pull your right arm to yourself, parry with your strong, and extend it again or thrust.

2) When you are in the wide measure, and you put your right foot forward, and let your body rest fully on your

left. Then, when this is done, you merely extend your body, and thrust.

Of the engaging.

Engaging is, in fact, when you are with your half strong on your enemy's half weak. When you want to thrust at someone, you bring your full strong into their full weak. With this you must note, 1) that you do not start to engage any sooner than when you stand firm. 2) That in engaging, you do not force [your opponent's blade] off the line. 3 Salvator says that it is better that you are either very loosely on your opponent's blade, or else do not touch it at all, but only go with your strong over their weak, so that, when your enemy disengages, you can better take the *tempo*. This cannot be done if you are holding [your blade] strongly against [theirs], as then when your enemy disengages, you will let your blade go down somewhat, and thus lose the *tempo*. And also, doing so, your enemy

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does not notice as quickly that they have been engaged.

NB. Note also that because of that, on the inside, you engage almost in *tertia*, so that, when your enemy disengages, you do not need two motions, but only thrust forth the *tertia* into the disengagement. And on the outside, you engage in *quarta*, so that, when your enemy disengages, you only need to thrust forth the *quarta*. Or else, so that when your enemy does not disengage, they will not notice that you want to thrust forth the *quarta* on the inside, and the *tertia* on the outside.

NB. That it is better to engage on the outside than on the inside is apparent from this, that then, I do not give

more than only one opening, whereas when you engage on the inside, and move off the line a little, you give two openings.

When someone does not want to let themselves be engaged, but goes with their blade to the side somewhat, then beat first, and thrust; both on the inside and on the outside.

NB. When your enemy wants to engage you, and they stand still, then do not let them touch [your blade], but disengage and engage them. If they set themselves back, and want to engage you, then make the counter-disengagement, advance immediately after that, and engage them. If they go in at you, and want to do this, then set yourself back, disengage, and engage them.

NB. When you want to engage, then go to the side to where your enemy's point is aimed.

NB. If someone comes at you, to engage you, then stand in *quarta*, to better disengage, and catch them on the outside. If you go at them, then go forth in a straight *tertia*.

Of disengaging.

Disengaging includes: 1. the plain disengagement, 2. the counter-disengagement, 3. the re-disengagement, 4. the going through with the blade, otherwise called committing the sword, and 5. the half disengagement.

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You must disengage 1. when you are with your weak or half weak at your enemy's weak or half weak. With that, you advance and take the measure. If your enemy thrusts while you want to set your left foot after, you must bring this forward and counter-thrust. (NB. This must be understood from the counter-disengagement.) When you have engaged with your half weak in your enemy's half

weak, and your enemy recedes and disengages; or even when they do not recede, but only disengage, you must do the same anyway, and counter-disengage and advance into the measure. But if you are already in measure, you must not disengage when your enemy goes back, but pursue [their blade] with your strong, and engage on the other side.

[2.] Secondly, you disengage when your enemy wants to go with their strong against your weak, or with their half strong against your half weak, and do not let them touch your blade, but disengage and thrust, or engage again.

3. When the other has already touched your blade and has thus engaged it, then break back, disengage, go onto their blade, and thrust.

The counter-disengagement is used: 1) firstly, as already said above with regards to the counter-disengagement; 2) when you are staying out of measure and your enemy thrusts, then you counter-disengage and counter-thrust, because, as your enemy thrusts, they bring you the measure.

The re-disengagement is when the one who disengaged first, makes a counter-disengagement with which the counter-disengagement of the other is deceived. This can be observed well in the lessons, when you jerk a little with your first disengagement, and your enemy disengages and wants to counter-thrust, and then you also counter-disengage and counter-thrust.

A going through with the blade is when you disengage, and your enemy does not, but pursues your blade, and then you disengage again and come with your blade to that side that you were on before. This is

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also almost like a feint, except that you do not beat with your foot.

The half disengagement is when you stay under your enemy's blade. It is used: 1) when you see that you would reach your enemy's body before a full disengagement would be completed, and then you stay under your enemy's blade and make a *volta*; 2) with the half disengagement you can also prevent your enemy's full disengagement, namely when your enemy is engaged on the outside, and wants to disengage from their left to their right, you can make a half disengagement from your left to your right, and prevent their full disengagement. When they are engaged on the inside, you have the same opportunity.

Of lifting over.

With the lifting over, you must note that you must lift over when your enemy goes with their half or full weak to your half or full strong. For example, when you give them an opening from the middle *secunda*, over your right arm, and they pursue as just said, then lift over. But if they pursue with their strong in your weak, then disengage and thrust in the same *tempo*.

If you are with your blade on the inside of someone's blade, then lower your upper body backwards a little, and depart their blade with yours in the middle *secunda*. As soon as they will then pursue your blade with theirs on the outside intending to engage you, then swiftly lift your blade up over theirs, such that you come with the strong of your blade on the outside of their weak. Then thrust the *quarta* in over their arm on the outside.

Go down with your blade into the lower *tertia*, to your right side, such that you fully and completely expose your body on the inside. As soon as they will pursue your blade with theirs on the inside, intending to engage you, lift your blade over theirs, and thrust the *secunda* to their left breast on the inside.⁶

Of passing.

How you must thrust, and from which guard, is shown in the lessons. When you have thrust, and your enemy parries, then you must observe this:

On the inside; 1) If your enemy stands still and parries with their half strong in your half strong, then pass the *secunda* on the inside. But if they parry very deep, then pass the *quarta*, almost with the help of a half disengagement.

2) If they break back, or only draw back their arm, and parry with their full or half strong in your weak or half weak, then also break back.

3) If they go in and parry with their strong in your strong, then also go in, grab them by their hilt, go up with your blade onto their blade, and thrust.

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On the outside; 1) When you thrust *tertia*, and your enemy goes up high or parries with their half edge;⁷ if they go up high while standing still, break [back] or go in, do as you have done on the inside. But if they parry with the half edge while standing still, then disengage, hold your blade straight and pass.

⁶ This paragraph was written in the page margin.

⁷ I.e., their false edge.

NB. On the outside, you can always pass *secunda* under the arm when your enemy turns into *secunda*, even if they do not go up high.

When you pass, you must set your left foot broad, or across, after you have taken quite a large step with it, so that you can bend over better, and stand better; and also bring your enemy's blade out of the way better. When you want to make the pass over the arm, extend your arm as well as your upper body well, and pass. If they go through and want to engage your blade, pass forth on the inside. If they want to thrust the *quarta*, counter-thrust with [a pass of] your left foot.

Of the lunges.

For the lunges, you must, before all things, hold the line of the lunge over the arm, wherever your enemy may go. When you engage on the inside, and they disengage, then you must always be willing to thrust *tertia*. But if they lower⁸ in the disengagement, then change into *quarta*, and slice this. If they stay straight, then stay in *tertia*. If they go upwards, and push against [your blade] somewhat, then change into *secunda* or *prima*, as those guards fall in deep. If they come too high, then pass *secunda*. Otherwise, it is also good, when the other thrusts over your arm, that you parry in *tertia*, and after that pass away under their blade, as in that guard you do not give any opening for pre-empting the pass.

⁸ The text does not specify what it is that your opponent lowers.

Of withdrawing.

When the other withdraws and gives deceptive openings, then set your left foot right up against your right foot, and after that go on

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their blade again, and thrust. But, if they have withdrawn far, then set your right foot forward, and come after with your left, and after that go on their blade.

NB. The withdrawing is threefold: 1) with the body alone; 2) with the left foot and the body; 3) with the left and right feet together.

NB. When someone stands in the middle *tertia* with their right arm back and their blade low, then go with the weak of your blade to their weak, lowering your point a little. The closer you come, the more you go up with your point and down with your hilt, so that you catch their weak with your strong, and thus go forth to their body. If they stand with their arm withdrawn better, then go with your point to their cross. When you have arrived there, lower your cross, and take their weak with your strong. If they stand very far back, go with your point to their right shoulder, and secure your lower body well with your left hand.⁹

In parrying you must take heed:

1) That you do not parry on the inside much, but disengage and parry on the outside, while withdrawing

⁹ This section is repeated in the margin of fol. 28v, but then crossed out. However, in the final lines, the marginal note reads “upper body” rather than “lower body”.

a little. Thus also, with this disengagement and parry, the French thrusts are best parried.

2) By slicing in *quart*, you can parry many thrusts.

3) You may perhaps parry, when you do not also thrust along at the same time.

Of the *tempo*.

Note, that the best *tempi* can be taken when your enemy lifts their foot.

1. When they are already in measure, and wants to bring their left foot to behind their right. But if your enemy wants to do this [to you], then bring your left foot forward and counter-thrust.

2. When your enemy lifts theirs to thrust, as then they are weakest. Moreover, they cannot break the measure in the same *tempo*.

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Furthermore, you must also know that you should not lightly thrust upon a *tempo* that your enemy gives you with only their hand alone, as these are commonly a deception, and in addition, the enemy can withdraw, and take the measure from you. But if someone [gives one] unknowingly, then you can well thrust into it, also from the wide measure. Or else, when someone gives you a *tempo* without withdrawing, when you are well in the narrow measure, you can also take this. Otherwise, when you are in the narrow measure, you do not have to wait for a *tempo*, but [you can] thrust forth quickly.

Of the *contra-tempo*.

When you want to make a *contra-tempo*, you must: 1) not be too deep in the measure, so that you will not be overrun; 2) not make the motions too large; 3) observe the *contra-tempo* very well, so that you are not hit.

To avoid the danger of the *contra-tempi*: 1) in that case, you do not go forth when your enemy gives openings for that, or else very carefully; 2) you turn your rapier to such an opening when it is given to you, and when your enemy then wants to make the *contra-tempo*, you thrust to the other opening that they give in making the *contra-tempo*.

When someone engages your blade on the inside, and you stand in a straight *tertia*, then swiftly disengage through under their blade, and act as if you want to thrust in at them on the inside of their blade in *secunda*, but you must remain standing still with your right foot. As soon as they will then disengage through under your blade, and want to thrust the *secunda contra-tempo* at the same time with you, swiftly disengage again, through under their thrust from your left to your right, and thrust the *secunda contra-tempo* on the inside, to their left breast.¹⁰

How you must go against the circle-fencing.

Observe: When they want to wind on the inside:

1) withdraw and disengage at the same time. If they counter-disengage, re-disengage and thrust *quarta* over the arm. If they raise up high, and want to change, then pass the *secunda* under their arm on the outside.

¹⁰ This paragraph was written in the page margin.

2) See that you come with your strong in their weak, and pass the *secunda* on the inside.

3) Yield with your blade, also wind along, come with your strong on their weak, and thrust *quarta*.

If they want to wind on the outside, also yield, wind along, and thrust *tertia* over their arm.

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Now follow some observations on the proceeding.

That it is better to move continuously by proceeding than to stand still is apparent from this, that:

1) You need to have two *tempi* when standing still, (1) to raise your foot, and (2) to set it down again.

2) When you stand still, you give your opponent more opportunity to assess you than when you walk.

3) Your enemy cannot resolve so swiftly.

Observe that: (1) you must unite your body, feet and rapier well; (2) maintain your natural gait, and; (3) bend over well. (4) In approaching, you must not bring your body outwards or inwards, until you come into the measure.

Salvator's rules for proceeding.

Rule 1. In the straight line. Observe that you begin to walk with [your] point at [their] point, without [touching their] blade,¹¹ and keep making yourself stronger and your enemy weaker.

[Rule] 2. To the high *tertia*. Observe: (1) that you must be with your body in perspective; (2) that you hold your

¹¹ Here, the original text reads *ruhungh*, which would change the meaning to "without resting of the blade". However, more likely *rührungh*, or "touching", was intended.

right arm well bent, and never lower it; (3) that you approach on the outside, and bend over well when you come into the measure; (4) that in this guard you do not disengage before your enemy raises their point.

[Rule] 3. Without posture until you come into the measure. And this is the *tempo*, when you have your foot in the air to step into the measure, that you go with your strong onto your enemy's weak, on the outside or on the inside.

[Rule] 4. Going under your enemy's blade, and going forward as you come into the measure. When you step into the measure with your right foot, you must bring out your right foot. And your left foot you must bring to your left side. And you must place your body onto the foot, so that it stands off the line.

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[Rule] 5. Always in *quarta*, going with your point to your enemy's hilt to disengage better.

[Rule] 6. The proceeding without waiting for any *tempo*, and such that your enemy cannot use their hand.

Hans Wilhelm Schäffers rules are.

1. Going in a circle.
2. Going in a straight line.
3. Going in without guard.
4. Going in high *tertia*.

Now follow some observations on the cut, or hew.

There are nine cuts, and six parries. The posture is such that you always stand with both your feet close together, and direct your blade somewhat angled with your point

aimed at your enemy's eyes so that you cannot be cut on your right arm from above.

NB. 1. Engage with your weak or half weak in the other's weak or half weak, so that they do not have the measure, but bring this to you when they cut.

2. Always secure yourself on one side, so that you force the other to cut into the opening.

3. That you do not make your first cut while stepping forward, but make a trial-cut out of measure.

4. Observe well when the other cuts, whether they also set their foot forward or if they are making a trial-cut.

5. Parry (1) with your half or full weak in the other's half strong if you want to cut-after, and quickly turn your hand into *prima*: (2) with your half strong in the other's half strong if you want to slice;

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(3) with your full strong in the other's weak if you want to thrust.

6. When the other cuts, and you want to thrust, then stand still while parrying. If you want to cut or slice, then step forward while parrying.

7. When you withdraw after your cut, then let your blade lie along your right [leg], so that in cutting after, they do not cut your [leg].¹²

A good play of the dagger and rapier.

If one stands with their dagger well extended from themselves, and with their rapier short, as you can also see on the figure indicated with the number 247, on the left

¹² While the original reads *fuß*, based on context, the (lower) leg was meant here.

side of the picture, then make the counter-posture as you can see on the figure number 247, on the right side of the picture, and go to their dagger well, from above. Then, when you think that you are in the measure, thrust swiftly <from above, and thrust the *quarta* in straight under their left arm, with a step forward of your right foot. When this thrust is done right, it is not easy to parry.

This I have written for my good friend, Heinrich von Raden, my former student of almost two years, always in friendship, in Sorø on the 6th of May 1632.

Hanß Wilhelm Scheffer, Fencing master at the Royal Noble Knight's School Sorø.

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A good play for countering someone when they thrust at you over your blade on the outside.

When someone stands with their dagger behind it,¹³ then go with your blade over their blade on the inside. If they then thrust in over your blade on the outside, then pay attention well to the *tempo*, so that as they thrust, you step in at them with your left foot in the same *tempo*. Fall onto their blade on the outside with your dagger and rapier, so that their blade is suppressed, and in one *tempo* thrust the *tertia* to their right breast on the outside. But, as you step in at them with your left foot, you must keep your dagger and rapier close together. Thus, their blade is weakened properly, and you can [hit]¹⁴ them easily. This works well.

Clauß Seehefeldt

¹³ The German reads *dahinden*. This most likely refers to their sword, meaning that they stand with their dagger behind their sword.

¹⁴ The original reads “thrust” here.