

The Nuremberg Hausbuch (Ms. 3227a) is a German commonplace book (or *Hausbuch* in German) thought to have been created some time between 1389 and 1494. The original currently rests in the holdings of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, Germany. It is sometimes erroneously attributed to Hans Döbringer, when in fact he is but one of the four authors of a brief addendum to Johannes Liechtenauer's art of long sword fencing, which is also the only fencing material in the manuscript that appears in another fencing manual (the Glasgow Fechtbuch).

The rest of the manuscript is a typical example of a 15th century commonplace book, containing a variety of unrelated treatises on mundane and esoteric topics, ranging fencing and grappling to medicine and magic. The martial sections of the text seem to consist of commentary on and expansion of the teachings of Liechtenauer, even containing the only biographical details of the master yet discovered, and it is even speculated that he was still alive at the time of the writing. Due to the long identification with Hans Döbringer, the anonymous author of this text is sometimes called Pseudo-Döbringer.

Below is a translation of the anonymous gloss of Liechtenauer's verses on long sword fencing (fencing with both hands on the grip). This text is extraordinarily dense and difficult, and in preparing this document I relied heavily on the pioneering work in the first years of the 21st century by David Lindholm, Thomas Stoepler, and Grzegorz Żabiński, as well as more recent efforts at translation and analysis by Jens P. Kleinau and Christian Trosclair (whose translation currently graces the Wiktenauer). I didn't feel inclined to produce a new translation of Liechtenauer's verses, so I have instead used a modified version of Harrison Ridgeway's rhyming translation.

My primary intent with this translation was to produce a readable text that untangles a lot of the convoluted phrasing and conveys the core ideas as clearly as possible. This is a departure from my usual translation style—I actually like convoluted phrasing—but this text is so dense that it's hard to make sense of it any other way. I prepared it for use in my gloss compilation project, where I reimagine Pseudo-Döbringer as an owner and marginal commentator on a copy of the combined Ringeck-Danzig-Lew gloss.

I once believed that Pseudo-Döbringer was presenting a divergent interpretation of Liechtenauer's teachings, but after this work, it seems clear to me that his writings are very much in line with the teachings of other early glossators, and only the terminology differs much. The core conception of Pseudo-Döbringer's interpretation, the *Vorschlag* (leading strike) and *Nachschlag* (following strike), is not a unique teaching at all, but merely a longer treatment of Liechtenauer's general lesson, about hewing a threatening strike to long point and then striking your opponent with *zecken* or other plays.

No translation can ever be truly unbiased. That said, 3227a, even more than most texts, steadfastly refuses a generic or neutral reading. All of the translations mentioned above are reflections of the interpretations of their authors, and mine is no different. Please forgive my mistakes as they become apparent in the future. HEMA is a journey of discovery for all of us.

Michael Chidester
Wiktenauer Director
23 December 2019

Here begins Master Liechtenauer's art of fencing with the sword, on horse and on foot, armored and unarmored. First and foremost, you should notice and remember that there is only one art of the sword, and it was discovered and developed hundreds of years ago, and it is the foundation and core of all martial arts. Master Liechtenauer understood and practiced this art completely and correctly; he did not discover or invent it himself, as has been written previously, but rather traveled through many lands and searched for the true and correct art for the sake of experiencing and knowing it.

And this art is serious, correct, and complete, and everything that proceeds from it goes toward whatever is nearest by the shortest way, simply and directly.

When you want to hew or stab at another, it should be as if you tied a thread or a cord to the point or edge of your sword and pulled or drew it toward his nearest exposure, for you should hew or stab in the shortest and surest manner, in the most decisive way. You should prefer to do nothing else, because proper fencing does not have broad or elaborate parries, nor wide fencing around by which people procrastinate and delay.

You will still find many false masters claiming that they believe that the art of the sword grows better and richer from day to day, and that they have conceived and created a new art. But I would like to see anyone who could invent and perform a legitimate strike or play that falls outside of Liechtenauer's art. All they do is jumble and confuse the plays and then give them new names (each according to his own ideas), and they devise wide parries and often want to do two or three strokes in place of a single one. They do this to be praised by the ignorant for the sheer liveliness of it, as they stand fiendishly and perform elaborate parries and wide fencing around, and, having no measure in their fencing, they deliver long and far-reaching strikes, slowly and clumsily, and with these they delay and over-extend and expose themselves quite severely. This does not belong to earnest fencing, but only to play in the fencing schools for exercise and entertainment.

For earnest fencing goes swiftly and precisely, with no hesitation or delay, as if measured and balanced by a cord or something similar. When you hew or stab at the man who stands in front of you, then clearly no strike backward or to the side can help you, nor any wide fencing with multiple strikes, nor other means by which you will procrastinate and delay, missing the opportunity to end it with him.

On the contrary, you must strike straight and directly toward him (toward his head or body), according to what is nearest and surest, that you may reach and take him swiftly and rapidly. And delivering one strike is better than four or six, delaying and waiting too long so your opponent wins the Leading Strike more swiftly than you (because this strike is a great advantage in fencing).

It is written further on in the text how Liechtenauer only lists five strokes, along with other plays which are sufficient for earnest fencing, and he teaches how to perform them according to the true art, straight and direct, as closely and as certainly as possible. Moreover, he leaves aside all the new

inventions and confusing work of the false masters, which do not come from this art.

Now notice and remember that one cannot speak or write about fencing and explain it as simply and clearly as it can be shown and taught by hand. Therefore, you should consider and debate matters in your mind, and practice them even more in play, so that you understand them in earnest fencing. Practice is better than artfulness, because practice may be sufficient without artfulness, but artfulness is not sufficient without practice.

Also know that the sword is like a set of scales, so that if the blade is large and heavy, so must the pommel also be heavy (just as with a scale). Therefore, to use your sword certainly and securely, grip it with both hands between the guard and the pommel, because you hold the sword with much more certainty like this than when you clasp it with one hand on the pommel. You also strike much harder and more strongly, because the pommel overthrows itself and swings itself in accordance with the strike, and the strike then arrives much harder than when you grip the sword by the pommel (which restrains the pommel so that the strike cannot come strongly or correctly).

Furthermore, when you fence with another, take full heed of your steps and be certain in them, just as if you were standing on a set of scales, moving backward or forward as necessary, firmly and skillfully, swiftly and readily. Your fencing should proceed with good spirit and good mind or reason, and without fear (as is written later).

Accordingly, you should also have good measure in your plays, and not step too wide, so that you may better adjust yourself to another's steps, backward or forward, however they go. And two short steps often occur before one long one, so you will need to do a little run with short steps as often as you will a big step or leap.

And whatever you want to perform cleverly, in play or in earnest, should be hidden from the eyes of your opponent, so that he does not know what you intend to drive against him. And as soon as you approach the point where you believe you could very well reach and take him, step and strike toward him brazenly, and then drive swiftly toward his head or body. You must always win the Leading Strike, whether it lands or misses, and thus allow him to come to nothing (as is written better further on in the general lesson).

Moreover, it is always preferable to target the upper exposures rather than the lower and then boldly and swiftly drive in over his hilt with hewing or stabbing, since you can reach him much better and more certainly over his hilt than under it. And you are also much more sure in all your fencing like this, for the upper hit is much better than a lower one. But if it happens that the lower exposures are nearer (as it often does), then you must target them.

And always go to the right side with your plays, because in all matters of fencing and wrestling, you can better take your opponent in this way than directly from the front. And whoever knows this piece and brings it well, they are not a bad fencer.

Remember that if you are required to fight earnestly, you should contemplate a thoroughly-practiced play beforehand (whichever you wish, if it is complete and correct), and internalize it seriously and hold it in your mind with good spirit. Then perform whatever you chose upon the other with pure intent (just as if you were to say, "This I truly intend to drive well"), and it should and must go forward with the aid of God, so it will fail you in nothing. Thus you do righteously by charging and stepping in to strike the Leading Strike (as it is written often further on).

OH, all fighting requires
The help of the God of Righteousness,
A straight and healthy body,
And a complete and well-made sword.
Before, After, Strong, Weak;
"Within", remember that word;
Hews, stabs, cuts, pressing,
Guards, covers, pushing, feeling, drawing back,
Winding and hanging,
Moving in and out, leaping, grabbing, wrestling,
Speed and audacity,
Prudence, cunning and ingenuity,
Measure, stealth,
Reason, deliberation, readiness,
Exercise and good spirit,
Motion, dexterity, good steps.
In these several verses
Are fundamentals, principles
And concerns,
And the entire matter
Of all the art of fencing is labelled for you.
You should consider this correctly,
As you will also actually
And in particular hereafter
Hear or read it,
In an exact and precise manner.
Fencer, understand this,
So will be revealed to you the complete art
Of the whole sword,
And many good and lively attacks.

MOtion, that beautiful word,
Is the heart of fencing, and the crown.
The whole matter
Of fencing, with all
The concerns and articles
Of the foundation, which
Are called by their names,
Will be revealed to you hereafter.
When you fight,
Be well familiar with them,
And stay in motion
And not at rest,
So that when fighting starts,
You drive in correctly,
Continuously and decisively,
One after another, boldly,
In a continuous advance,
Immediately and with no pause,
So that your opponent cannot come
To blows. This way, you will profit

And the other will be harmed.
Because he may not escape
Without being beaten,
Provided that you fence according to this advice
And according to the lesson,
Which is written in this way:
**I say to you honestly,
No man covers himself without danger.
If you have understood this,
He cannot come to blows.**

Here remember that *frequens motus* (continual motion) is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all fencing according to this art and teaching, so that you strike the beginning, the middle, and the end in a single advance, and bring it well without the hindrance of your adversary and without allowing him to come to blows. This is based on the two words Before and After (that is, the Leading Strike and the Following Strike); immediate, in una hora, quasi unum post in aliquam sine aliquo medio: directly, in a single moment, one after the other with nothing in between.

This is the general preface of the unarmored fencing on foot. Remember it well.

- 1 Young knight learn onward,
For god have love, and ladies, honor,
- 2 Till your honour is earned,
Practice chivalry, and learn,
- 3 Let the art grace you wholly,
And in war bring you glory.
- 4 Wrestle well, grappler;
Lance, spear, sword, and dagger,
- 5 Wield them, be brazen,
In others' hands raze them.
- 6 Strike in and close fast,
Advance to meet, or let it past.
- 7 Earn the envy of the wise,
Win boundless praise before your eyes.
- 8 Therefore here behold the way,
Every art is measured, weighed.
- i And whatever you wish to drive,
Shall stay in the realm of good reason.
- ii In earnest or in play,
Have a joyous spirit, but in moderation
- iii So that you may pay attention
And perform with a good spirit
- iv Whatever you shall do
And whip up against him.
- v Because a good spirit with craft
Makes your resistance dauntless.
- vi Thereafter, conduct yourself so that
You give no advantage with anything.

- vii Avoid imprudence.
Do not engage four or six
- viii With your overconfidence.
Be modest, that is good for you.
- ix It is a bold man
Who dares to confront his equal,
- x But it is not shameful
To flee from four or six at hand.

This is the general teaching of the sword.

- 9 To have the art within your sight,
Set left forth and strike with right,
- 10 You will find that left with right
Is the strongest way for you to fight.
- 11 He who waits for strikes and follows,
In this art finds naught but sorrow.
- 12 A nearing strike is good to do,
Your shield to stop him changing through.
- xi Do not hew toward his sword,
But rather seek out his exposures.
- 13 Toward the body and the head,
Slash in and withdraw, do not forget.
- 14 With your whole body shall you fight,
For that is how you fence with might.
- 15 Another rule you should not slight:
Fence not from left when you are right.
- 16 If with your left is how you fight,
You'll fence much weaker from the right.
- xii So always prefer to fence
Downward from the left side.
- 17 Before and After, these two things,
Which are to all arts a wellspring.
- 18 Likewise there is Weak and Strong,
And the word Within, remember here on.
- 19 You can learn, then,
With skill, to work and defend.
- 20 If you easily take fright,
You shouldn't ever learn to fight.
- xiii Audacity and speed,
prudence, cunning and ingenuity,
- xiv Reason, stealth,
measure, deliberation, readiness
- xv Fencing must have all of this
and carry a joyous spirit.

A general gloss follows here. First and foremost, notice and remember that the point of the sword is the center, the middle, and the core, which all fencing goes forth from and comes back

to. The hangers and the winds, which a lot of good fencing plays originate from, are the affixing and the revolving of the center and the core.

They were conceived and created so that if you hew or thrust exactly to the point, though you do not hit immediately, you may yet hit your opponent with these plays: with hewing, stabbing, and cutting, and with treading in and out, stepping around, and leaping.

And if you mislay or overextend your sword when shooting or lunging, you can recover and realign it with winding and treading out, and thus come back to the reliable plays and rules of fencing, from which you can again hew, stab, and cut. For according to Liechtenauer's art, all hewing, stabbing, and cutting comes from the plays and rules of the art of the sword.

(It is written further on how one play or rule results from another, and how to make one play out of another, so that as one strike is defended, the next advances and succeeds.)

Moreover, notice and remember that no part of the sword was conceived or created without reason, so you should apply the point, both edges, the hilt and pommel, and everything which is on the sword, each according to its particular role in the art of fencing, and according to how you discover and embody the practice (as we will read in a more detailed manner hereafter).

Also notice and remember that when Liechtenauer says, "**If you wish to show art**", etc., he means to advance your left foot, and with that, hew from your right side with threatening strikes (straight toward the man), just as soon as you see where you can take him, and would certainly reach him with stepping.

And he means that when you wish to fence strongly, fence with your left side leading, and with your entire body and strength, toward his head and body (whatever you can get) rather than toward his sword. In fact, you should strike as though he had no sword, or as though you could not see it, and you should not disdain the slashing, but be always working and in motion so that he cannot come to blows.

He further means to not directly track and follow your strike with your feet, but rather move somewhat aside and curve around so that you come to his flank, since from there you can reach him more easily than from the front. And when your hewing and stabbing goes forth directly toward his exposures (toward his head or body) with stepping and treading around him, then those strikes cannot be defended or diverted by changing through or other such plays.

Also notice and remember that when he says "**Before, after, these two things**", etc., he means there are five words: Before, After, Weak, Strong, and Within. On these words is built the entire art of Master Liechtenauer, and they are the core and the fixed foundation of all fencing on horse or on foot, armored or unarmored.

With the word Before, he means to always take and win the Leading Strike, whether it lands or not. (As Liechtenauer says, "**Strike here and step there; charge toward him, hit or move on**".) When you approach by stepping or running, just

as soon as you see you can reach the other with a step or a leap, then drive joyously toward wherever you see an exposure (toward his head or body, wherever you feel sure you can take him), boldly and fearlessly. In this way, you always win the Leading Strike, whether it goes well or poorly for him. And be certain and measured in your steps, so that you do not step too close nor too distant.

Now, when you execute the Leading Strike (be it hewing or stabbing), if it succeeds, then quickly follow through. But if he defends against it, diverting your Leading Strike or otherwise defending with his sword, then as long as you remain on his sword, while you are being led away from the exposure you had targeted, you should quite precisely feel and notice whether he is Hard or Soft, and Strong or Weak on your sword (in his covering and diverting of your hew or stab).

Thus, you fully feel how he is in his action. If he is Hard and Strong Within it, then as you fully feel and notice this, become Soft and Weak during and Within it, and before his cover is complete, execute a Following Strike. In other words, you **immediately** strike while he is still defending himself and covering your Leading Strike (be it hewing or stabbing). Thus, you seek out other plays and rules, and with those, you again step and strike toward his exposures.

Thus, you are continually in motion and in contact, so that you confound and cheat the other amid his covering and defense, so that he has too much work covering himself and cannot win either strike. This is because when must cover himself and fixate on the strikes, he is always in greater danger than you, since he must continue to defend himself or allow himself to be struck, and therefore can only make his own strikes with great pain.

That is why Liechtenauer says **I say to you honestly, no man covers himself without danger. If you have understood this, he cannot come to blows.** You must thus fence according to the five words, which this dictum and the whole of fencing are based on.

(Thus, a peasant may end up slaying a master, simply because he is bold and wins the Leading Strike, as this lesson describes.)

By the word Before, as we read earlier, he means to step in or charge, boldly and fearlessly, with a good Leading Strike (or with any initial strike) aiming toward the exposures of his head or body.

Whether you land it or not, you still succeed at dazzling and frightening the other, so that he does not know what to do against this, and cannot recover or come to his senses before you **immediately** do a Following Strike, and thus you continually force him to defend and cover, so that he cannot come to his own blows.

For if you do the Leading Strike and he succeeds in defending, then in his defense and covering, he could always deliver a Following Strike faster than you (even though you had the first one). He could **immediately** hew, or drive in with his pommel, or send crossing strokes (which are always reliable), or he may just throw his sword forward crosswise (and with

that, enter other plays), or begin something else before you get the chance to continue.

So perform the Leading Strike and the Following Strike as one idea and as though they were a single strike, one swiftly and promptly following the other.

(It is written further on how one play grows from another such that your opponent will not get away unbeaten, as long as you follow this teaching.)

Also, when it happens that the other defends against the Leading Strike, he must defend with his sword, and in this way, he must always come onto your sword. And if he is late and unready in his defense, then remain on his sword and **immediately** wind, and quite precisely feel and notice whether or not he wants to withdraw from your sword.

Once you are engaged with each other on the sword and have extended your points toward each others' exposures, if he withdraws himself, then before he can recover from your strike, **immediately** follow through with a good stab toward his chest with your point, or otherwise forward toward wherever you can land the surest and closest strike, in such a way that he cannot escape from your sword without harm, because with this **immediate** following, you are ever closer to him, and with that you direct your point forward on the sword toward whatever is nearest and closest.

Thus, even if your opponent hews or stabs wildly around with his withdrawal, you can always come faster into the Following Strike (hewing or stabbing) before he comes to his first.

And with the word After, Liechtenauer means that when you have made the Leading Strike, you should **immediately** and without pause, in the same movement, deliver a Following Strike, and be always in motion and in contact, and always drive one after another. If your first strike fails, then the second, the third, or the fourth lands, and your opponent is never allowed to come to blows. No one may have greater advantage in fencing than he who executes the five words according to this lesson.

But if, once you have come onto his sword, the other remains on your sword with his defense and covering, and you also remain on his sword and have not yet delivered a Following Strike, then stay on his sword and wind, and quite precisely feel and notice whether he is Strong or Weak on your sword.

If you feel and notice that he is Hard, Strong, and firm, and wants to press on your sword, then be Soft and Weak against it and give way to his strength, and allow your sword to be swept out and driven away by his pushing. Then quickly and rapidly pull aside and withdraw your sword, and drive swiftly against his exposures, toward his head or body, with hewing, stabbing, and cutting (however you may find the nearest and surest way).

Because the harder and surer he pushes in and forces with his sword while you are Soft and Weak against it, allowing your sword to go aside and giving way to him, the more and the further his sword too goes aside, so that he becomes quite

exposed. And then you may strike and injure him as you wish before he recovers himself.

However, if you feel and notice that he is Soft and Weak on your sword, then be Hard and Strong against him, and charge forward with your point firmly on his sword and drive toward his exposures (whichever may be closest), just as though a cord or a thread were tied to the point of your sword which would lead it to his nearest exposure.

And with this thrust you become well aware of whether he is so Weak that he lets his sword be pushed aside and lets himself be hit, or if he is Strong and defends and diverts your stab.

If he is Strong on the sword, defending against your stab and diverting the sword, then become Soft and Weak against it once again, and give way to him and let your sword be pushed aside, and then swiftly seek his exposures with hewing, stabbing, and cutting (whichever it may be). And this is what Liechtenauer means by the words Hard and Soft.

And this is based on the Authorities. As Aristotle wrote in his book *Peri Hermeneias*: "Opposites positioned near each other shine greater" and "opposites which are adjoined, are augmented". Thus, Strong against Weak, Hard against Soft, and vice versa. When strength goes against strength then the stronger always wins, but Liechtenauer fences according to the true and correct art, and a weak man wins more surely with his art and cunning than a strong man with his strength. Otherwise, what is the use of art?

Therefore, fencer, learn to feel well; as Liechtenauer says **"Learn the feeling; "Within", that word cuts sorely."** Because when you are on his sword, and you feel well whether he is Strong or Weak on your sword, then during and Within this, you may well consider and know what to do against him (according to the aforementioned art and teaching). For truly, he cannot withdraw from the sword without harm: as Liechtenauer said, **"Strike in so that it snaps at whoever withdraws before you."**

If you act firmly according to this lesson, you will always take and win the Leading Strike, and as soon as you execute it, charge in with a Following Strike immediately and without delay (that is, the second, third, or fourth strike, whether it be a stroke or a thrust), so that he can never come to blows. If you should come onto the sword with him, be certain in your feeling and do as was written earlier.

Because it is the foundation of fencing for a man to always be in motion and to not delay, and fencing is also based on feeling, so do as stated before and always have measure and moderation in all that you drive and begin. If you win the Leading Strike, do not deliver it so impetuously or aggressively that you cannot afterward deliver a Following Strike.

This is why Liechtenauer said **"Thus you will see, all things have measure and moderation"**. And understand this also when stepping, and in all other plays and rules of fencing, etc.

This is the text in which he names the five strokes and the other pieces of his fencing.

- 21 Learn five strikes,
To the guard from the right.
- 22 Wrath strike curves thwarts,
Has glancing with parts.
- 23 Change-through, disengage,
run-through, cut-off, press hands
- 24 Draw back and disengage,
Run through, crush hands, and cut away.
- 25 Hang and wind to exposures below and above,
Strike and catch, sweep, and thrust with a shove.

This is about the wrathful stroke, etc.

- 26 Who strikes from above in any way,
The wrathful strike's point keeps him at bay.
- 27 If he sees and fends you off,
Be fearless, take it off above.
- 28 Turn and thrust if he holds strong so;
If he sets you off, take it below.
- 29 Now remember this part:
Hew and stab, lay Soft or Hard;
- 30 Within the Before and the After,
Be careful, and do not rush to the war.
- 31 Those who rashly seek the bind,
Shame above and below is all they'll find.
- 32 Howsoever you will wind,
Strike, thrust, cut you seek to find.
- 33 Further, you should learn to choose
Which of them should best suit you.
- 34 In whatever way you've bound,
Many masters you'll confound.
- xi Do not hew toward his sword,
But rather seek his exposures.
- xvi Toward his head, toward his body,
If you wish to remain unharmed.
- xvii Whether you hit or you miss,
Always target his exposures.
- xviii In every lesson,
Turn your point against his exposures.
- xix Whoever swings around widely,
He will often be shamed severely.
- xx Toward the nearest exposure,
Hew and stab with suddenness.
- xxi And also step always
Toward the right side with it,

Gloss. Here notice and remember that when you hew over him straight from your shoulder, Liechtenauer calls this the **wrathful stroke**. When you are in your fury and wrath, there is no other stroke as ready as this blow straight from your shoulder toward the man.

By this, Liechtenauer means that when someone begins to hew a downward blow at you, counter it by hewing **wrathfully** in and then firmly shoot your point against him. If he defends against your thrust, then swiftly take it away above and drive suddenly to the other side of his sword. But if he defends that, then be Hard and Strong against him on the sword, and wind and stab swiftly and boldly. If he defends this thrust, take off again and quickly throw a strike below toward his legs (or wherever you can).

In this way, you continuously drive one strike after another, so that he cannot come to his own plays. And the earlier words Before and After, Within, Weak and Strong, as well as hewing, stabbing, and cutting; keep them in mind at all times, and by no means forget them in your fight.

Furthermore, do not rush with the **war**, because if one that you aim above fails then you should drive below. It is written further on how one strike makes itself out of another according to the legitimate art, regardless of whether they be hewing, stabbing, or cutting.

And do not strike toward his sword, but rather toward him (toward his head or toward his body, wherever you can, etc.).

Also consider that the first verse could state: “**Whomever you hew over wrathfully, the point of the wrathful stroke threatens him**”, etc.

Simply act according to this teaching and always be in motion; either you hit or you miss, but he cannot come to blows. And with your striking, always step out well to the side.

Also remember that there are only two strokes, that is, over and under both sides, and all other strokes come from them regardless of how they're named. These are the pinnacle and the foundation of all other strokes, and they, in turn, come from and depend on the point of the sword, which is the core and the center of all other plays, as was written well earlier.

And from these same strokes come the **four displacements** from both sides, with which you disrupt and counter all hewing and thrusting, and all guards. From them, you also come into the **four hangers**, from which you may drive the art well, as is written further on.

And however you fence, your point should ever and always be turned against your opponent's face or breast, so that he is frustrated at every turn and concerned that you will arrive faster than him, because your path to him is shorter.

And if it happens that you win the Leading Strike, then be secure, certain, and quick with the winding, and as soon as you

have thus wound, **immediately** begin to drive agilely and courageously. And your point should always seek your opponent's breast, turning and positioning itself against it, as is written better further on. And your point, as soon as it comes upon another's sword, should never be more than three hands' breadths away from his face or breast, and take care that it will arrive on the most direct path and not travel widely around, so that your opponent cannot arrive first. Do not allow yourself to become lax or hesitant, nor defend too lazily, nor be willing to go too widely or too far around.

This is about the four exposures.

36 Four exposures know,
To truly guide your blow.

37 Without fear or doubt,
For what he'll bring about.

Gloss. Here remember that Liechtenauer divides a man into four parts, as if he drew a line on his body from his scalp downward to between his legs, and another line on his body crosswise along his girdle. In this way, four quarters arise: one right and one left above the belt, and the same below the belt. These are the **four exposures**, which each have their particular applications. Never target the sword, only the exposures.

How to break the four exposures.

38 Redeem yourself by taking
Four exposures by their breakings.

39 To above, you redouble,
Transmute low without trouble.

40 Now do not forget,
No one defends without a threat.

41 If this is well known,
Rarely will he come to blows.

This is about the curved stroke, etc.

42 Throw the curve, and don't be slow,
Onto his hands your point should go.

43 Many cuts you will offset,
With a curve and with good steps.

44 Hew the curve to the flat,
Weaken masters with that.

45 When it clashes above,
Step off, that I will love.

46 Hew short, and curve not,
If the changing through is sought.

47 Curve who'd distress you,
Confuse, bind, and press him,

48 Give him no way to know
Where he's safe from your blow.

Gloss. Here notice and remember that the **crooked stroke** is hewn from above and goes in a **curved** way with a good step outward to one side.

That is why Liechtenauer says that if you want to deliver this stroke well, step well to the right, fully flanking him with your strike, and hew in a **curved** manner, swiftly and well, and then throw or shoot your point over his hilt and over his hands.

And strike ~~toward his~~ with your flat; if you hit ~~the flat~~ his sword, then remain Strongly on it and press firmly, and see what you may perform in the quickest and most decisive way, with hewing, stabbing, or cutting.

And by no means should you hew too shortly, but if you do, then do not forget the **changing through**.

There is a stroke called the **deceit**, as it is written after the **cross stroke**, which comes from the **curved stroke** and should come before the **cross stroke**, and it besets **crookedly** and obliquely from below and shoots the point in over his hilt, just as the **curving stroke** does down from above.

53 Deception misleads,
 And slashes low where you please.

54 The inverter equips you,
 To run through and grip, too.

55 Take the elbow to bring
 Him off balance, and spring.

56 Deceive twice;
 If you touch, make a slice.

57 Double it and on it goes,
 Step in left and don't be slow.

xxiii Because all fencing
 Will by rights, have speed,

xiii And also audacity,
 Prudence, cunning and ingenuity,

This is about the cross stroke, etc.

49 What comes from the sky,
 The cross takes in its stride.

50 Hew across with the strong,
 And be sure to work on.

51 To the plow drive across,
 Yolk it hard to the ox.

52 Take a leap and cross well,
 And his head is imperilled.

Gloss. Here notice and remember that of the whole sword, no strike is as good, as honest, as ready, and as fierce as the **cross stroke**. It goes **across** to both sides, with both edges (the front and the back), to all exposures (the upper and the lower), and when you hew **across** correctly, you counter and defend against everything that comes from above (meaning the high strikes and whatever else goes from above downward).

When you bring or throw the sword forward well, it **crosses** in front of your head to whichever side you want, just as if you were to come into the upper hangers or winds, except that when you hew **across**, the flats of the sword are what turns: the one above or upward, and the other downward or below, and the edges go to the sides, one **crossing** to the right side and the other to the left side.

And it is quite good to come onto your opponent's sword with this **cross stroke**. And when you get onto his sword, no matter how it happens, he will only escape from you with great difficulty, and you may strike toward both sides with **cross strokes**.

And as you bring the **cross stroke** to either side, above or below, your sword should go up with the hilt above you, and with your hands thrown forward in front of your head, so that you are well covered and defended.

And you should bring the **cross stroke** with a certain strength, and when you must fight for your neck, use the teaching written previously so that you win the Leading Strike with a good **cross stroke**. When you approach him, as soon as you see that you may reach him with a step or a leap, then hew across with your back edge from above, toward his head from your right side, and let your point shoot and then **cross** well so that the point drives well and winds, or turns around his head like a belt. Thus, if you **cross** well with a good leap or step aside, he may cover or defend himself only with difficulty.

And when you win the Leading Strike with a **cross stroke** to one side, no matter whether you hit or miss, immediately win the Following Strike in a single advance, at once and with no delay, with a **cross stroke** to the other side (with the forward edge), before he manages to recover and come to blows, according to the teaching written previously.

And **cross** to both sides, toward the **ox** and toward the **plow** (that is, toward the upper and lower exposures), from one side to the other, above and below, continuously and without delay, so that you are always in motion and do not let him come to blows.

And as often as you hew **across**, above or below, you should strike well and throw the sword **crosswise** high in front of your head, so that you are well covered.

This is about the cockeyed stroke.

58 The cockeye disrupts
 What the buffalo hews or thrusts.

59 The cockeye endangers
 Whoever threatens the changer.

60 If he looks short to you,
 Defeat him by changing through.

61 To the point cock your eye,
 Take his neck fearlessly.

62 Cock your eye high instead
 To endanger his hands and head.

- xxiv Cock your eye to the right,
If you want to fence well.
- xxv The cockeyed stroke I prize,
If it does not come too lazily.

Gloss. Here notice and remember that the ~~curved~~ **cockeyed stroke** is hewn down from your right side with the back edge. It goes to the left side, **aslant** or askew, while stepping out to the right side with turned sword and overturned hand.

This same stroke counters everything that a **buffalo** (that is, a peasant) will strike down from above, as they often do, and also counters the same as the **cross stroke**, as was described previously.

Whoever threatens to **change through** will be shamed by the **cockeyed stroke**. But strike well **cockeyed** and long enough, and shoot the point firmly, otherwise you will be hindered by his **changing through**.

And you should glance at his point and then strike toward his throat without fear.

And...

This is about the part stroke, etc.

- 63 Hew from your part
And threaten his face with art.
- 64 When it turns it will set
On his chest with great threat.
- 65 What the parter brings forth,
The crown drives it off,
- 66 So cut through the crown,
And you break it well down.
- 67 Press the sweeping attacks,
With a cut and pull back.
- xxv The part stroke I prize,
If it does not come too lazily.

*Liechtenauer holds **four lairs** only, because they proceed from the upper and lower hangers, from which you may surely bring techniques.*

This is about the four lairs, etc.

- 68 Lay in four lairs,
And the others, foreswear.
- 69 Ox, plow, the poplar tree too,
And the day should not be unknown to you.

Gloss. Here he names the **four lairs** or four guards. About them, little is to be held; primarily, that you should not lie in them for too long.

That is why Liechtenauer has a particular proverb: "**Whoever lies still, he is dead; whoever moves, he yet lives.**"

And this concerns the **lair**s, that you should rouse yourself with techniques rather than wait in the guards, and in this way miss your opportunity.

The first guard, the **plow**, is when you lay your point on the earth, in front of you or at your side. After **offsetting**, this is also called the **barrier guard** or the **iron gate**.

The other guard, the **ox**, is the upper hanger from the shoulder.

- xxvi The tree always counters
What the man hews or stabs
- xxvii With hanging, sweeps,
Pursuit, and simultaneous displacements.

The third guard, the **poplar tree**, is the lower hanger. With it, you may well counter all strikes and thrusts.

The fourth guard, from **the day**, is also the **long point**. Whoever leads it well with extended arms cannot be hit easily, neither with hewing nor stabbing. It may also be called "the hanger above the head".

Also understand that you counter all the **lair**s and guards with hewing, so that as you hew boldly toward another, he must flinch and cover himself. That is why Liechtenauer does not say much about the **lair**s or guards, but rather maintains that you should be concerned with winning the Leading Strike before your opponent can (*ut potuit*, as you are able).

This is about the four displacements, etc., etc.

- 70 The displacements are four,
They leave lairs well sored.
- 71 Of displacement, beware:
You should not be caught there.
- 72 If displacement befalls you,
As it can happen to do,
- 73 Hear now what I say:
Wrench off, cut away!
- 74 Set upon to four extents;
Stay thereon if you want to end.
- xxviii *Many strikes you will displace
If good fencing you embrace.*
- xxix Because with the hangers
You come swiftly with the displacements.

Gloss. Here remember that there are **four displacements** on both sides, one upper and one lower to each side, and they counter or disrupt all **lair**s and guards. And however you lead away or deflect someone's stroke, thrust, or cut with your sword, from above or from below, that may well be called **displacing**.

If you are **displaced**, however it happens, then swiftly withdraw and strike again in a single advance. If you **displace** or deflect someone's stroke or thrust, then **immediately** tread in on his sword and follow through so that he cannot withdraw. Then do what you may, but if you hesitate and delay, it will be harmful to you.

Also wind well and always turn your point against his breast, so that he must always be concerned about it.

Learn to come onto the sword of your opponent, which you may do well with the **displacements**, because they come from the four strikes (one stroke over and under each side) and they turn into the **four hangers**. For as soon as you displace above or below, you should **immediately** arrive in the hangers.

And just as you deflect all the strokes and thrusts with the front edge, it is in the same with **displacement**.

This is about pursuit, etc., etc.

- 75 Learn the twofold pursuit,
 And the guard, to cut through.
- 76 The ways to lead out are double,
 From there work and struggle.
- 77 And determine what he seeks,
 Hard or Soft in his techniques.
- 78 Learn to feel with discipline;
 The word that cuts deepest is "Within".
- 79 Learn the pursuit twice,
 If it touches, make a good old slice.
- xxx *In whatever way you've bound,
 All the strong you will confound.*
- xviii In every lesson,
 Turn your point against his face.
- xxxi Pursue with your entire body
 So that your point stays on.
- xxxii Also learn to swiftly wrench,
 So you may end well.

This is about crossing over. Fencer, notice it.

- 80 Whoever aims to take it below,
 By the crossing over, their folly show.
- 81 When it clashes above,
 Remain Strong, that I will love.
- 82 See your work be done,
 Or press doubly hard upon.
- xxxiii Whoever presses you down,
 Cross over him and strike sharply again.
- xxxiv From both sides cross over,
 And remember the cuts.

This is about offsetting. Learn this well.

- 83 The offsetting, learn to do,
 That strokes and thrusts be ruined before you.
- 84 Whoever makes a thrust at you,
 Your point meets his and breaks it through.
- 85 From the right and from the left,
 Always meet him if you'll step.
- xviii In every lesson,
 Turn your point against his face.

This is about changing through, etc., etc.

- 86 Learn to change through,
 And cruelly thrust on both sides too.
- 87 All of those who seek the bind,
 Changing through will surely find.
- xxxv When you have changed through,
 strike, thrust, or wind, be not lax.
- xxxvi Do not hew toward his sword,
 change through, and seek with that.

Gloss. Here remember that the **changing through** goes directly to both sides, down from above and up from below, if you otherwise drive it quickly.

If you want to **change through** from the right side, down from above, then hew from above directly toward him, so that you shoot your point toward his left side, above his hilt, and aim for the little hole or window between his edge and his hilt. If you hit, you have won.

If he defends against this by turning your point aside and pressing it away with his sword, then let your point sink down under his sword, from that side around to the other. And this should not go widely around, but as closely as possible below his sword, so that you may then swiftly drive in over his hilt with a good thrust. When you feel it land, follow through well. And as you do on one side, from above and from below, do the same from the other side.

When someone binds with you, charge forward on his sword with your point toward his exposure. If he defends, **change through** as before, or wind and feel whether his intention is Hard or Soft. Thereafter, seek his exposures with hewing, stabbing, or cutting.

This is about drawing back. Fencer, remember.

- 88 Step up close into the bind,
 Draw back, and what you seek you'll find.
- 89 Draw back, and if he meets, draw more,
 Work and find what makes him sore.
- 90 Draw back whenever you are bound,
 And many masters you'll confound.
- xxxvii Draw back from the sword
 And consider carefully your way.

This is about running through, notice now.

- 91 Run through, hang it to the floor
By the pommel, then bring grips for sure.
- 92 For those who strongly approach you,
Do remember the running through.
- xxxviii Run through and shove.
Invert if he grabs for the hilt.

This is about cutting off, etc., etc.

- 93 When it's firm, cut away,
From below, you cut both ways.
- 94 And the cuts, they number four,
Two below; above, two more.
- xxxix Cut whoever will cross you,
To eagerly avoid injury.
- xl Do not cut in fright,
First consider wrenching.
- xli You can cut well in any crossing,
If you omit the wrenching.
- xlii If you wish to remain unharmed,
Then do not move with the cutting.

This is about pressing the hands, etc., etc.

- 95 Turn your edge just like that,
Press his hands onto the flat.
- xliii One thing is winding,
Another is turning, the third is hanging.
- xliv If you want to make fencers despair,
Then always press while shoving.
- xlvi Over his hands,
Hew and cut swiftly.
- xlvi Also draw the cuts
Above, over his head.
- xlvii Whoever crushes the hands
Withdraws his fingers without injury.

Gloss. Know that as soon as you turn away his stroke or thrust, **immediately** tread in and drive quickly toward him. If you wait and delay, you will suffer injury.

Also notice and remember that you turn away all strokes and thrusts with the forward edge of your sword, from the middle of the edge to the hilt. And as soon as you have turned your forward edge into it, the closer a strike or thrust comes to your hilt, the better and more powerfully you may deflect these strokes or thrusts. Because the closer to the hilt, the stronger and mightier, and the closer to the point, the weaker and more feeble.

Therefore, if you want to be a good fencer, learn above all other things to turn away well, so that as you do so, you come

immediately to the winds, from which you may drive the entire art and beauty of fencing.

The forward edge of the sword is called the true edge, and all strokes and thrusts are spoiled with its turning.

This is about hanging. Fencer, learn this, etc.

- 96 There are the two ways to hang:
From the ground, from your hand.
- 97 In every attack, whether stroke or a thrust,
The Hard and the Soft lies within, you can trust.
- 98 In the window freely stand,
Watch his manner close at hand.
- 99 Whoever draws back,
Strike in with a snap.
- 100 Now do not forget
No one defends without a threat.
- 101 And if this is well-known,
Rarely will he come to blows.
- xlviiii As you remain,
On the sword, then also drive
- xliv Strokes, thrusts, or cuts.
Remember to feel into it
- l Without any preference.
Also Do not flee from the sword
- li Because masterful fencing
Is rightly at the sword.
- lii Whoever binds on you,
The war wrestles with him severely.
- liii The noble winding
Can also surely find him.
- liv With hewing, with stabbing,
And with cutting you surely find him.
- [32] *Howsoever you will wind,
Stroke, thrust, cut you seek to find.*
- lv And the noble hanging
Should not be without the winding.
- lvi Because from the hangers
You bring forth the winding.

Gloss. Here notice and remember that there are **two hangers** from each side, one over and one underneath. With them, you may come onto your opponent's sword well, because they come from high and low strokes.

If it happens that you bind on someone, or otherwise come onto his sword, then remain on his sword and wind, and stay with him on the sword like that, boldly and in good spirit, without any fear.

Then quite precisely wait, watch for, and notice well whatever he wants to do, or whatever he has in mind which he will perform against you. Liechtenauer calls remaining on his sword like this a **speaking window**. And as you stay with him on the sword, feel well and notice his intention, whether it be Hard or Soft, and orient yourself accordingly, as it has often been written previously.

If he happens to withdraw from your sword before you actually begin, then **immediately** follow through and send strokes or thrusts at him (whichever you may perform in the surest way, before he comes to anything else); since you are closer to him as you remain on his sword, merely extend your point against him. Then when he withdraws, before he can perform a strike, **immediately** follow him in with your point. But if he remains with you on the sword, then test well and notice whether he is Hard or Soft on your sword.

If he is Soft and Weak, then swiftly and boldly go forth and attack with your Strength, pressing and pushing away his sword. Then seek his exposures, toward his head or body, whatever you can get.

But if he is Hard and Strong on your sword and wants to press and push you aside firmly, then be Soft and Weak against his Strength, and weaken his Strength and his pressure with your sword.

And as you weaken and his sword goes aside (as was also written earlier), before he can recover, seek his exposures with hewing, stabbing, or cutting (however you can get to him in the surest manner), swiftly, rapidly, and boldly (in accordance with the teaching written earlier), so that he cannot hew or stab, or otherwise come to blows.

That is why Liechtenauer says: "**I say to you honestly, no man covers himself without danger. If you have understood this, he cannot come to blows.**" By this he means that no one can protect himself from you without fear or injury, if you act according to the teaching written earlier: if you take and win the Leading Strike, then he must either continually defend himself or let himself be struck.

If you deliver the Leading Strike, whether you land it or not, then quickly deliver a Following Strike in a single advance, before he can come to blows. Indeed, if you want to deliver the Leading Strike, you must also deliver a Following Strike as if in one thought and intention, as though you would deliver them simultaneously if that weren't impossible.

That is what Liechtenauer means by "**Before and after, these two things, etc.**" If you deliver the Leading Strike, whether you land it or not, then also do a Following Strike at once, swiftly and rapidly, so that he cannot come to blows. In this way, you can preempt him at all matters of fencing.

And as soon as you get to him first and win the Leading Strike, then **immediately** deliver a Following Strike. Do not deliver the Leading Strike if you do not have a Following Strike in your mind and intent; be always in motion and never idling nor delaying. Always drive one after another, swiftly and rapidly, so that he comes to nothing. If you do this correctly,

then whoever gets away from you unbeaten must be very good indeed.

With this art or this advantage, it often happens that a peasant or untrained man beats a good master, because he delivers the Leading Strike and charges in boldly; it may be lightly overlooked, but it hits Within and thus strikes and shames him. This is because it is more dangerous to receive strikes and wait for defense than to attack and win the Leading Strike. Therefore, arrange to be first in all matters of fencing, and to come well to the right side of the other, and then you may be more sure of everything than he.

- 108 **On both sides this concerns:
Learn to step with eight turns.**
- 106 **And each turn of the blade
Into three can be made:**
- 107 **Twenty-four can be named,
Though they're one and the same.**
- 105 **And eight turns there are,
If you rightly regard,**
- lviii And learn to lead them well,
So you may wound the four exposures.
- lix Because each exposure
Has six certain wounds.

Gloss. Notice here that the winds are the correct art and the foundation of all the fencing with the sword, from which all the other techniques and plays come.

It is difficult to be a good fencer without the winds, though certain false masters dismiss them and say that what comes from the winds is quite weak, and call it "from the shortened sword", because they are simple and go naively. They mean that the techniques from the long sword should be done with extended arms and extended sword, and that they come aggressively and strongly with full strength of body and with good stances. And it is terrible to watch when someone stretches himself out as if he would chase a hare.

This is not the way, neither in winding nor in the art of Liechtenauer, as this art does not require great strength. If it were not an art, then the strong would always win.

Here we explore and elaborate the pieces and rules of the unarmored fencing of Master Liechtenauer, using shorter and simpler speech for more and better learning and comprehension. If it was written earlier in rhymes and glosses, unclearly or incomprehensibly, then here it will be recapped with short and simple advice.

First of all, notice and remember that Liechtenauer's fencing relies on five words: Before, After, Strong, Weak, and Within. These are the basis, core, and foundation of all fencing. No matter how much you fence, if you do lack this foundation, you will often be shamed despite your art. And these words were often explained earlier, as they only signify this: to always be in motion and not rest or idle, so that your opponent cannot come to blows.

Before and After signify the Leading Strike and the Following Strike, as it was often written earlier, and this concerns what is called *principium et finis* (beginning and end). If you are a good, serious fencer, you fence with someone because you want to defeat him with your art and not be defeated yourself, and you cannot do this without the beginning and the end. Thus, if you want to begin well, then be the one who takes and wins the Leading Strike well, rather than the other who does not, since if you strike at another, you are more secure and better protected from strikes than him, who must watch out for and receive your strike.

When you take and win the Leading Strike, no matter if it lands or misses, then immediately and without pause, in a single advance, deliver a Following Strike (that is, a second strike, a third, a fourth, or a fifth), hewing or stabbing, so that you are always in motion and drive one after another, without pause, so that you never let him come to blows.

This is what Liechtenauer means by "**I say to you honestly, no man covers himself without danger (without injury). If you have understood this, he cannot come to blows.**" Do as was often written earlier and stay in motion.

The word Within relates to the words Before and After, since when you deliver the Leading Strike and he defends against it, then during and Within his covering and defense, you can come to the Following Strike well.

The word Within also relates to the words Strong and Weak (meaning feeling), since when you are on the sword with another and you feel whether he is Strong or Weak, then you can do according to the oft-written teaching.

And above all things, the foundation should have the principles of audacity, speed, prudence, intelligence and wisdom, etc., and also measure in all things.

If you win the Leading Strike, you should not do it so recklessly that he delivers a good Following Strike. Do not step too widely, either, so that you can recover yourself well and take another step backward or forward if necessary.

As Liechtenauer says, "**Thus you will see, all things have measure and moderation**". Do not be hasty, consider well in advance what you want to drive, and then drive this boldly and

swiftly toward the other's head or body, and never toward his sword.

When you strike with certainty toward his head or body (that is, toward the four exposures), then he often come onto your sword without wanting to. If he covers himself, he covers himself with his sword, and thus he comes onto your sword.

This is what Liechtenauer means when he says

- | | |
|-------|--|
| xi | Do not hew toward his sword,
But rather seek his exposures. |
| xvi | Toward his head, toward his body,
If you wish to remain unharmed. |
| xvii | Whether you hit or you miss,
Always target his exposures. |
| xviii | In every lesson,
Turn your point against his exposures. |
| xix | Whoever swings around widely,
He will often be shamed severely. |
| xx | Toward the nearest exposure,
Hew and stab with suddenness. |
| xxi | And also step always
Toward the right side with it, |
| xxii | So you may begin
Fencing or wrestling with advantage. |