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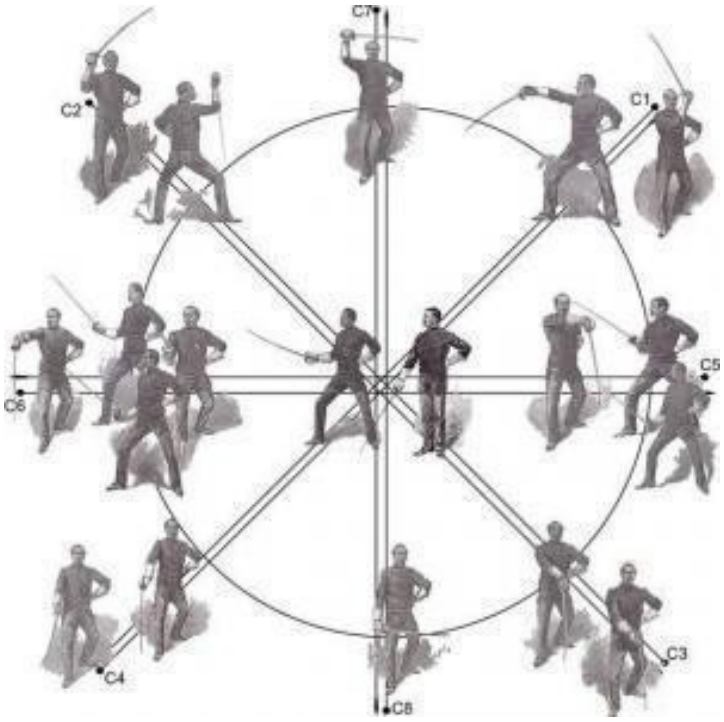
The Fundamentals in fencing



Index

Introduction

In the education and training of the fencer, fencing theory contemplates two very distinct parts: personal fundamentals and the relationship with the opponent.

The latter obviously constitutes the eschatology of fencing or its ultimate goal, which is naturally to be able to overcome the opponent who is in front of us on the platform.

But before being able to face the antagonist in a free assault it is necessary, indeed essential, to be in possession of a whole series of knowledge and motor skills relating to the management of one's body; these are the so-called fundamentals of fencing technique.

Below we will gradually address the individual topics that concern this specific preparation for combat.

First of all, we will begin with a general discussion of the concept of screen system.

We will then move on to examine the relationship that must be established between fencer and weapon apparatus, be it foil, saber or épée.

We will therefore talk about the guard as a waiting posture for the development of shots.

We will dedicate a chapter to the specific problem of walking on the platform.

We will then focus on the problem of spatially reaching the adversary's target.

Below we will analyze the problem relating to measurement, i.e. the distance between the respective targets

We will conclude the series of topics by examining some spatial sites present around the fencer on guard.

The journey, as we can see, is not short; among other things, I warn you that the problems relating to the various points indicated will not be fully explored, but only mentioned or little more. In fact, other works of mine have already gone into the details of the topics covered here and, where deemed appropriate, they can be consulted to dissect the individual topics: "SPACE AND TIME IN FENCING ASSAULT" and "ELEMENTS OF GEOMETRY AND PHYSICS IN THE APPLICATION OF FENCING THEORY" (both in the BOOKS TO DOWNLOAD section of the passionscherma.it site) - "MICROSCOPE ON TECHNICAL ASPECTS" - "PHYSICS

AND GEOMETRY IN FENCING" (both specific sections present in the site just mentioned above)

Therefore this work of mine on the "Fundamentals of fencing" will mainly have a function of extrapolation and discussion of general concepts; however, in-depth studies on technical aspects of particular value and significance will not be disdained.

Screen-system concept

When starting to talk about the training of a fencer, it is important, if not absolutely essential, to first of all keep in mind the concept of system, that is, of something understood as a connection of elements in an organic and functionally unitary whole.

In this sense, an example can help us: that of a motor vehicle, that is, a vehicle designed for the transport of people and objects; vehicle to which over time specific accessories have been added to facilitate and make the vehicle increasingly efficient: headlights to see in the dark, horn to signal presence, up to the modern addition of airbags for safety and satellite navigation.

Likewise, the fencer is taught to hold and manage a bladed weapon, he is taught to stay on guard, to move on the platform and many other useful things without the hostile presence of the opponent on the platform.

And this is only the physical support for what is his previous mental activity: observing, thinking and working out what to do when faced with an antagonist who behaves exactly like him; all of which obviously and wonderfully compete with each other.

What I mean by this: that every teaching that is transmitted to the neophyte must be framed in a progressive construction of a single whole, that is, of a functional fencing system, which will be used in its entirety during the platform clash; and this aspect, naturally in relation to the age of the neophyte, must be understood as a learning method.

In other words: it must be immediately clear to the new fencer that any faulty application of a technical gesture cannot fail to have necessary repercussions on competing aspects; for example, to simplify, a guard that is too wide will obviously allow a smaller lunge than the potential one. Just as a block that is too far from your body will delay the relevant response, just as a shoulder not in line with the other will alter the normal line of attack or as an excessive lunge will make it progressively more difficult to return to guard.

In conclusion, in the fencer system there are numerous interconnections between the physical postures of the individual parts of the body, not to mention those relating to the research and development of the opposite both in attack and defense.

This is, in my opinion, the most important aspect relating to the so-called "Fundamentals" of fencing: in principle everything should be recorded in the best possible way, in order to guarantee the full potential that every fencer possesses and this at every level of his technical maturation.

An important fact should also not be overlooked: while we are in conflict with our opponent and this constitutes the essence of the clash, in Fundamentals we are not competing with anyone else except ourselves. In other words, with the former we just fight, while with ourselves we should have ample power to speak and intervene.

This is why, in relation to his Fundamentals, every fencer should be as intransigent as possible with himself: every mistake, small or large, he allows himself, he then pays for in what matters most, that is, in competitiveness with the opponent in question. . We know well that perfection is not granted to us humans, but it is not forbidden at all, indeed it is highly desirable that we instead always strive to reach out towards it: remembering this, constantly monitoring ourselves and trying to improve ourselves already constitutes a force in itself; having a clear conscience certainly gives you an extra boost.

In the Fundamentals every fencer should continually observe himself with critical eyes, more critical than the most severe master.

From this perspective, the message, alongside the technical notion, that the teacher can give is fundamental: good teaching consists in making the student directly experience the negative effects of incorrect application of information.

In fact, for the profound and critical acquisition of a teaching the problem is not only that of being able to correctly apply its extremes, but also and above all that which practically demonstrates its reliability and truthfulness.

In this regard, there are plenty of examples, even funny ones: ask the student to dramatically increase the width of his guard and then invite him to take quick successions of steps forward or backward; or invite him to exaggerately tilt the line of his shoulders forwards or backwards and then see where his armed arm ends.

The problem is that during the fight the fencer is completely absorbed in the confrontation with the opponent, so he doesn't have too much time to keep the quality of his fundamentals under control: his R.A.M. it is entirely occupied elsewhere, against the so-called enemy. In fact, you can work on your Fundamentals especially when you are alone on a platform in your club, perhaps

aided by your teacher, but above all supported by your own stubbornness and willpower.

Aware, or made so, of the fact that compliance with a technical dictate does not represent a formal value of an abstract rule, but, on the contrary, a content of an absolutely pragmatic nature, verified over time and sanctioned in the treaties of a certain era. So not aesthetics, but pure efficiency.

One last concept: as mentioned above, the fencer, as we well know, combines physical performances with mental ones.

The fact of feeling efficient in the Fundamentals, naturally in the various degrees of evolution concerning each one, is invigorating for the spirit of the fencer, who, it goes without saying, exists only because he is a fighter in perpetual antithesis with the opponent in question.

Not only that: but full knowledge of the potential of some of one's own Fundamentals, I am thinking for example of those relating to mobility on the platform, is of fundamental importance for a correct approach to the attack: for example, a comparison with the speed of the opponent must absolutely lead to a suitable recording of the important variable constituted by the measurement.

Much of what the fencer thinks and does during the attack is interconnected: as we have seen, sometimes hidden threads connect different aspects of his performance; his interest is to maintain the most careful control over it.

Ultimately, the fencer's structure must constitute a harmonious whole, where each single part relates in an optimal way to those directly connected and, all together, to a single principle of maximum efficiency.

And, as we will see in the continuation of our investigation, in this harmony sometimes the principle of the contemporaneity of the movements will be affirmed, sometimes instead that of the precedence of one gesture over another; this demonstrates that the Fundamentals do not represent something static, but on the contrary a set of values that must be continually monitored and recorded as best as possible.

This is what the fencing system represents in my opinion.

Relationship between fencer and apparatus

The sidearm is a tool and consequently its best use is essential for the fencer. In fact, the activity of the armed arm is fundamental even before entering into competition with the opponent's counterpart: while the lower limbs are responsible for the activity of walking and forward projection during the attack and the non-armed arm alone complementary activities, the fencer's point and blade must be able to release all their executive potential in themselves.

The problems connected to this efficiency are: the way of physically relating to the tool itself, the way of managing it and the application of muscular strength in its management.

The first question, as listed, specifically concerns how to hold the weapon and in this regard we can take into consideration two themes: the examination of some general principles and the different typology of existing handles.

The former refer to the need for adequate contact between the fencer's hand and the part of the weapon assigned to it: in fact, in the overall grip of the hand, the individual fingers are assigned a different function: the index finger from below provides the greatest support – the thumb tightens from above – the middle finger tightens from the side – ring and little fingers perform additional anchoring functions; the guide fingers are the first three and the management and movement of the weapon must be entrusted more to them.

Over time and according to contemporary schools, certain types of handle have gradually become established for the use of foil and épée (for the sabre, as we well know, there is only one form): lastly we find the now almost universal so-called anatomical handle (with slots for the fingers of the hand) despite its numerous variations and the French handle called smooth (without any grip). Meanwhile, at the end of the 60s the Italian handle, the prettier and more aesthetic one with the gavigliano, the ricasso and the characteristic double arches, had definitively retired.

It goes without saying that a certain type of handle facilitates a certain type of shot, while simultaneously making another more complicated: these are in fact only personal choices of the fencer.

Let's now examine how to manage the tool-weapon.

The entire armed arm participates with all its sections: we have just finished discussing the hand, now it is a question of focusing our attention on the forearm and then on the entire arm.

The first must take charge, through rotation on its axis, of configuring the so-called most suitable punch in relation to both the penetration and defense line: thus, for example, the fourth block is facilitated by its partial rotation towards the 'inside of the guard, as instead a third block towards the outside.

The entire arm, in addition to being a complement to the movements of the forearm, is also to be used as a spatial movement of the tip and the blade: forwards for the development of the blow or in any case of its feint or backwards to gain space in the defense with iron or in close combat.

Let's now talk about the application of muscular strength in handling the weapon.

Having made the excessive force previously necessary in relation to heavy and very heavy weapons superfluous, given their new lightness, the value of speed has instead been affirmed: therefore the application of force to the minimum necessary to facilitate both the times of movement of the iron and the best control of the latter. Specifically, the so-called timed grip of the hand which only temporarily increases muscle energy during hits on the edge performed or suffered; and the necessary absence of the contribution of force produced by the shoulder in the conduct of the iron, which would only produce executive delay of the action and, with its consequent stiffening, a probable inaccuracy of the final shot.

As a final topic I would deal with armed arm training.

It goes without saying that, although exactly set up, this advanced limb of the fencer, let's go as far as to define it as his sting, in order for it to be able to adequately carry out its function it requires assiduous and continuous exercise, therefore essentially time: try, try again, correct, record are just some of the key words to better master your weapon. We start from the famous "stick", which the neophyte perceives during the very first lessons, to arrive, little by little with patience and again with patience, to that feeling du fer, which constitutes the ideal achievement of the perfect fusion of one's limb with the weapon being held; a sensitivity that some masters (of the past) even fabled led to intuiting, through impalpable vibrations and evanescent pressures, the opponent's intentions.

The guard

Every type of confrontation with an opponent presupposes a waiting bodily posture that responds to various types of needs; fencing is probably one of the most classic and popular examples.

The first concept, although obvious, is that the body from its normal and ordinary attitude places itself in a particular position, both as a whole and in its individual parts.

Due to the fact that the fight does not take place from a standing position, i.e. from a static position, the need arises to assume a posture that facilitates rapid movement forwards and backwards: the legs flex adequately, neither too much nor too little , to capture suitable potential energy to be used to walk with the maximum possible speed.

Due to the fact of having to quickly project forward and reach an opponent's target who dutifully keeps at a safe distance, the guard requires that the body profile itself in relation to the opponent: hence from this posture, opening the compass of the legs, the widest and fastest possible spatial advancement is produced. Among other things, by moving your body away, you offer yourself less of a target for the opponent's blow, who is even forced to break your armed fist to provide a better angle of incidence for your attack line.

In order for the entire body on guard to best express its offensive and defensive potential, the guard must respect physical principles of static and dynamic balance: the weight of the body must be distributed equally between the two lower limbs to ensure better ride and ride quality; here there must be the right distance between the two feet; here the shoulders must lie on a line parallel to the ground to give the right orientation to the work of the armed arm; that the front foot is properly directed towards the antagonist to impose the appropriate forward and backward walking and to direct the opening of the leg compass in the best direction towards the antagonist.

Due to the fact that the entirety of the fencer participates in the fight, the guard also reserves for the unarmed arm, whatever the posture in which it is held, the dual function of contributing to the forward momentum of the blow and of rebalancing during the return on guard.

These, although sketched out without extreme precision, are the canons of fencing theory; then the reality is different.

If you want certain proof, it is sufficient to go to a second level technical competition or in a room of a certain importance: you will never find a fencer on guard the same as another as everyone interprets this Fundamental and personalizes it, sometimes even too freely .

However, things change and not a little if you have the opportunity to observe the most important competitions, World Championships if not the Olympic Games: with the necessary exceptions, here the canons of the guard are very respected; the reason is that the experience of these top fencers has allowed them to understand that certain instructions in the treatises do not correspond to aesthetic and hedonistic values, but, on the contrary, to essentially functional postures, which guarantee maximum efficiency on the platform.

However, once his guard posture has been constructed, the fencer can benefit from a reassuring position from which he can carry out the activity of a fighter who does not act purely at random: observe the enemy by cataloging his characteristics, search in his own technical baggage for the most suitable opposites various potential situations, defend yourself from the attack by welcoming it in the best possible situation, wait to execute your attack instantly and at the most convenient measure.

In fact, even common language summarizes all these needs in the well-known phrase: "Be on your guard".

In my debut at the "Fundamentals of fencing" I talked to you about the concept of the fencer system, that is, the sum of a whole set of functions that must harmoniously supersede the combat activity. Here, the guard constitutes the central nucleus of this theory, the backbone for the best realization of all the shots contemplated by the current fencing theory.

Once upon a time at the most important competitions for young talents, you will probably find it hard to believe, beyond the normal ranking, a prize was also awarded for style; certainly a laudable attempt to educate the very young, directing them to respect the canon as a search for their maximum functionality.

However, today are different times and not only in the fencing halls: you have to get everything immediately; any means is good especially if it is as fast as possible, with all due respect to the famous Machiavelli.

Walking on the platform

As we well know, fencing is not a static sport, quite the opposite: after the a-voi the fighters are in constant movement and this for three quite obvious reasons.

The first is that each of them almost always conjectures a different measurement, a measurement that depends on body size, speed or technical contingencies; all of this not in absolute value, but in relative value, that is, in relation to the actual characteristics of the fencers on the platform.

The second based on the concept that a stationary target is more easily attacked than a moving one; therefore we move continuously so as not to give the opponent easy spatial references, we move to try to defend ourselves in the sense of making the opponent's attack more difficult.

The third on the obvious consideration that an attack that starts from a static position is more quickly perceptible than one that instead hides behind a continuous movement of advancement - retreat.

Walking forwards and backwards is an essential element of the challenge celebrated on the platform.

From all this comes the great importance for the fencer of knowing himself and being able to move in all directions.

Moving forward to get as close as possible to the opponent, stealing his measure as they say in jargon, to then promptly unleash the premeditated attack or as a compensatory tool to overcome a marked difference in height between the two contenders (while for one it is sufficient 'lunge, at the other it is necessary to resort to the forward-lunge step); backwards, on the contrary, to render the opponent's attack harmless by applying the so-called defense of measure (in jargon loose measure) or at least to dampen its impetus.

The fencing technique, as is known, offers a range of solutions: step step, leap, cross step. It should not be forgotten that in the saber specialty, in order to limit the tendency to attack attacks, anyone who, while advancing, puts the back foot before the front foot is penalized.

Law of fencing: there is no best solution, there is only the most suitable solution for the specific case; for example, the slow step, which engages the lower limbs less muscularly, is obviously suggested for the development of complex actions such as compound ones; instead the leap, relying on a real explosion of energy, is

better accompanied by actions of less technical chiseling; the crossed step, especially if performed in succession, undoubtedly creates dangerous entanglements between the lower limbs, but on occasion, for example a closure in the epee specialty, the expert fencer certainly does not refuse it.

It is fundamental to be able to tune the walk with the action of the armed arm: in attack to save technical time, for example in the step forward I thrust the lengthening of the arm in conjunction with the execution of the step; in defense to make a correct save by coordinating it with the step back. With these concepts we return to the vision of the fencer conceived as a global operating system, a vision for which we refer to what was said previously.

Moving on, the ability to walk on the platform is also very important for tactical reasons: by creating constant pressure forward you can force the opponent to the ropes, which in fencing means making him get dangerously close to the rear limit; in this extreme spatial situation, when perhaps the antagonist can no longer retreat, his reactions, being more induced, become more predictable and therefore can facilitate, for example, the setting of a backbeat. In this case, advancement becomes a fundamental piece of a certain type of shot.

Walking also plays a decisive role in the well-known mechanism called counterattack: the leap backwards, loading the legs and slightly unbalancing the body forward, allows you to immediately execute a quick aggressive arrow on the opponent precisely in the most challenging moment of the return for him beware, when the muscular system and induced physical rebalancing absorb it greatly.

In conclusion, a historical quote, believe me not for a display of culture, but only to adequately exemplify the topic: Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus, Roman Consul who in the third century BC. fought against Hannibal, due to his military tactics he was called the Cunctator, which translated into our language means the temporizer. In practice he produced an attack that was both violent and above all fast, and then retreated and attacked again at another point of the enemy's formation, followed by another attack in another part and so on, without ever getting involved in a decisive clash; what allowed him the final victory was precisely his ability to move quickly from one point of the territory to another. Now, if Quintus Fabius Maximus with his army thus won the war against Hannibal, a fencer against a single opponent can well win his match!

Ultimately the fencer represents an intelligent war machine in perpetual motion.

Spatial reaching of the opponent's target

One of the fundamental problems of the fencer is that of being able to reach an opponent's target: in fact, mutually, each of the two fighters obviously keeps the distance he personally deems necessary to have the necessary time to react to the opponent's attack.

Therefore, even though he is not yet in the real match, the fencer needs to include the best technique in his fundamentals to be able to best lean forward.

Interesting is the fact that, after having managed to evade the activity of the antagonistic armed arm, that is, in a word, his defense with iron, there is always the residual problem of reaching a part of his body. Therefore in fencing theory the concept of attack has two aspects: one relational with the opposing fencer and one purely spatial in nature.

We have already considered previously that a good part of the reasons that lead to being on guard as is customary today lies in the fact of being in the best possible conditions to be able to overcome the so-called measure: bent legs ready to release potential energy appropriately forfeited and body inclined with respect to the directing line to be ready to withdraw completely in the forward lunge.

In fact, the distance that separates the tip or blade from the desired target can be eroded by two different segments produced towards it: the total lengthening of the armed arm and the displacement of the entire body.

In the first case, the product approach generally does not exceed 30 cm. about; but the small size should absolutely not be misleading as every centimeter can be decisive in the final result, i.e. being able to touch the opponent. We also remember that, with the exception of the saber specialty where contact with the target alone is sufficient to signal the blow, in foil and épée the tip must not only reach the antagonist's body, but must then go spatially further along the length of the respective strokes, in order to overcome the resistance of the springs inserted in the bush.

In the second case, that of moving the entire body, the fencing technique provides the coordinates and spatial dynamics for two types of approach: the lunge (perhaps the other alternative name of lunge gives a better idea) and the arrow (perhaps better known also in Italy with a French term, the flèche).

It goes without saying that both movements towards the opponent can be preceded by a step forward; but not more than one, otherwise it would no longer be an attack, but a real promenade!

Let's start by discussing the lunge which is the most classic of the ways of attempting to approach the antagonist, certainly the most statistically used one.

As we have warned, in this contingency we will not go into the technical detail of the gesture: for those wishing to delve deeper into these aspects, please refer to the other headings indicated at the beginning of the Fundamentals. In fact, it is our desire to address the issues here not in their specificity, but in their general and systematic aspect.

But let's get back to the topic: we were saying that the lunge is the most used tool to develop an attack against the opponent; Let's try to understand the reasons.

First of all, I believe, due to the non-definitive nature of the gesture: in fact, after the lunge, fencing theory also deals with the return to guard, therefore taking it for granted that even in the abstract, not all attacks produce the winning thrust. So we can attempt a type of attack, perhaps neutralized by our opponent, but with the right methods and above all with the right times we can also escape his return action.

Even in the so-called second intention, as we well know, the attack intentionally falls under the antagonist's parry and therefore the primitive lunge is not used to reach the opponent, but constitutes only a technical element of the relevant blow.

The lunge, although using a fair amount of muscular energy both in the forward movement and in recovering the guard, is not the action with the highest energy consumption.

The use of the lunge is also conditioned by another factor of great technical importance: by acting according to a pattern of evolving postural processes which guarantee good muscular control of the armed arm, they ensure the latter, or rather its tip and/or or its blade, an excellent rate of precision in carrying out the blow. In fact, the so-called compound actions, the threads (except the third one which is the most physiologically natural), the various shots that implement the backbeat mechanism and anything else require perfect mastery of the spatial movements of the irons.

In the appendix we recall two applications, let's say turbo, to the lunge: the so-called doubling and the step forward crossbow lunge.

The technique of the former, as we know, consists, before starting the lunge, in moving the back foot until it joins it with the front one; in this way logically the original opening of the legs on guard is gained in moving forward towards the opponent. Obviously the subterfuge must not be applied habitually, otherwise the antagonist, realizing the stratagem, certainly tries to widen his measure.

The crossbow lunge step forward instead exploits the rapid succession of the leap followed seamlessly by the lunge; the muscular performance becomes rather energetic and therefore, consequently losing tip precision, it adapts to percussion actions such as the beat (during the step) and the blow.

Let us now examine the second of the ways in which we can carry out an attack, the barb.

It is certainly the most disruptive: a kind of almost unconscious dive forward, which above all has the aim of making the most of the surprise, literally attacking the measure.

The forward spatiality that the fencer is able to express is roughly equivalent to that obtained with a step forward lunge and has, however, the advantage of expressing itself with only one technical time and not three like the step forward lunge.

However, only simple attack actions and those limited to a single feint are suitable for the arrow: in fact the time in which the fencer is literally lifted from the platform is extremely short and, consequently, the technical component of the shots cannot extend over time. In other words, the athletic component of the execution method of the attack significantly limits the technical nature of the attack itself.

The dig in general, if well executed, is a kind of attack which, at least in theory, does not allow a return to guard, therefore it is a kind of movement, which in the worst case scenario, when the blow does not touch due to the defense of the the opponent or due to one's own flaw in execution, ends with a real escape forward so as not to suffer the opponent's return thrust from behind.

So, in conclusion, lunge or dig?

The question, as often happens in fencing technique, is poorly posed as there are two general rules that significantly influence the intelligent fencer.

The first concerns the different situations that can arise during the real match: a marked difference in height between the two contenders, competing in one

specialty rather than another, as we mentioned just above the choice to shoot a simple shot rather than a more complex one.

The second, however, concerns a well-known and undoubtedly fruitful strategy: never grant the opponent the advantage of being able to predict our moves, meaning not only the nature of the actions, but also the method of our approach; the chances of success increase dramatically if you manage to vary the type of your fencing during the match, wisely diluting over time the winning counter that we may have successfully experienced previously.

The measure

We repeat: the opponent is not yet in front of us on the platform, but, as we continue with our technical reasoning, his presence becomes more and more looming.

In the previous Fundamentals we tried to develop everything that the fencer must always be able to do best in order to be able to compete against the opponent with increasing chances of victory.

Now it is a question of examining a parameter of fundamental importance, a kind of technical metric: the so-called measurement.

If Pythagoras said that everything is number, in fencing technique we can state with equal tranquility that everything is measure: in fact the eschatological aim of the fencer, that is, his ultimate aim, is to be able to hit a valid target of the opponent who he stops himself on the platform; in other words the categorical imperative is to be able to cover the distance that separates one's tip or blade from the opponent, precisely the measurement.

Fencing theory begins the discussion of the attack with the so-called simple actions, where the defense must not even have time to activate, at least fully: measurement, obviously with speed and the choice of time, is everything.

This, however, is only the macroscopic aspect of the problem: the measurement, precisely as a technical metric as we mentioned above, is also fundamental for the ideal execution of compound attack actions and also those relating to exits in time.

In fact, in the former the feint (or feints), which notoriously constitutes the initial element of the blow, must be carried out at such a distance as to be able to make the danger seem real, therefore, as in the so-called simple attack actions, it must be generally brought to the right size; otherwise the feint(s) does not trigger the opponent's parry reaction.

Even in exits in time the correct evaluation of the measurement is fundamental, otherwise, for example, it would not be possible to successfully shoot a quarter shot or a pass under.

The fencer must obviously connect the measure to the other Fundamentals that we discussed previously: with good walking you can get closer to the opponent and then unleash the attack or, if possible, you can move away backwards to

dampen the attack. impetus of the antagonistic initiative and therefore facilitate one's own defense; the value of your lunge or arrow can ensure the success of your attack.

It is fundamental, and this is not a play on words, that the fencer perceives the full extent of the importance of the distance that separates him from his opponent and must do so from two opposing perspectives: as a free zone necessary to be able to organize his own defense and prepare the appropriate response and as a filter zone to pass through in order to reach an antagonist's target. Not a simple and dry metric quantity, but something composite and variable to be used for the ultimate goal of the winning hit. In fact, for a fairly advanced fencer, the measure is not a constant value during the same match: situations may in fact arise which can lead him to change his attitude such as a marked difference in score, a disadvantaged situation near the end of regulation time or a more general change in tactics.

Now, to try to delve deeper into the matter, it is necessary to make some considerations on the intimate nature of the measurement.

Every fencer has precise physical characteristics that contribute to directly influencing his size: a long-limbed one, being generally slower than the others, tends to lengthen his size; a brevilineo on the contrary, being very reactive, tends to shorten it; a normotype is able to opt between the two solutions.

Another factor that greatly influences the choice of measurement is the type of specialty in which one competes: combat rules and type of targets, with all the technical implications they entail, cannot fail to contribute to determining measurement stereotypes; so in épée and especially in saber, where the so-called are present, you tend to keep your opponent at a distance, while in foil you compete much closer.

But the real problem with the measure is that it is not decided by a single fencer, but is the result of a real preliminary clash in search of the attempted winning shot; this dispute may generally be inconspicuous, but when the two competitors have marked physical differences, this becomes very evident; if the specialty in which one competes is swordsmanship, the battle over measurement becomes one of the major protagonists of the clash. Obviously, those who manage to launch their attack from the position most favorable to them have a greater statistical chance of success.

I conclude the topic with a phrase from one of my teachers: "Whoever manages to impose his own measure on his opponent certainly places a fair risk on the final victory". How can you not agree with him!

Space sites around targets

When the fencer puts himself in the guard posture, some spatial sites of extreme technical importance are determined around his body, in correspondence with his various targets.

Their exact coordinates are fundamental for the armed arm, which, as is known, must perform a defense function based on the interception of the opponent's iron and the subsequent deviation of its line of attack outside the body of its protégé; this is the mechanics of defense with iron.

Why did we use the adjective exact? Because it is good to have a clear concept: the fencing phrase has its beginning, but then in its evolution it can, at least in theory, extend up to infinity conceptually as in the reflection of two mirrors placed one in front of the other; in fact an attack can be parried and the subsequent response counter-parried and so on. This is why it is necessary, when interacting with your blade, to be able to express yourself at your best.

Let me explain: when your iron deflects the opponent's shot, it has fulfilled its function of protecting the target; but this also happens when spatiality is exceeded in the sense of moving exaggeratedly outside the projection of the target itself, therefore to one side or the other or exaggeratedly forward, i.e. always very far from the target. Well, precisely because of the concept of conversation between the irons, it is instead very useful to pay the utmost attention in carrying out a save in the right place, I would say the essential one in order not to be hit, and then be in the best conditions to respond or take advantage of the situation that has arisen. to create to punish the presumption of the opponent.

Among other things, not flaunting one's blade (a simile used with acumen by the masters) also allows for a greater probability of neutralizing a compound attack from the antagonist: the first feint can induce us to go into parade, but, precisely by saving on the movement of the iron, we can have the hope of making a second and perhaps decisive save.

However, these blessed coordinates are quite induced: in fact, an armed hand that is too close to the underlying targets would not be able to move nimbly and therefore quickly as the arm would break at the elbow with an extremely acute angle and would assume a rather unnatural posture; on the contrary, an almost completely extended armed arm would not be able to benefit from the precious

articulation of the elbow, especially when performing parries inside one's own guard.

There are four main frontal targets both of the trunk of the body and of the wrist and forearm, therefore there will be four ideal points overlying the fencer's body which must be respected to the maximum for the reasons just expressed; to these is also added that of the back, creating quite a few problems for every defense. Particular targets in the saber are the head and its two lateral figures; while in the sword the thigh, the knee and the foot.

It should be understood that up to now we have implied a canonical presumption, that is, that the attack blows are delivered linearly; in other words that the attack lines can be depicted as segments, whose ends are the starting point of the blade and the arrival point on the target. The thrust travels on a hypothetical plane and the success of the parry consists in bringing one's blade to the space-time rendezvous on another plane incident to it; this at least in simple saves, in double saves and in half-double saves, while in surrender saves other dynamics of a more physical than geometric nature intervene.

However, in the case of the so-called fuetto shots, i.e. those which make the tip follow a curvilinear trajectory which therefore goes around any barrier erected in defense by the blade, any concept of guarding the iron falls away and the only possibility is to resort to measurement: step back and move out of the range of the blow or, on the contrary, close the measure, still opposing the blade.

But the fencer does not make use of the aforementioned sites only for performing saves: the same spatial parameters also apply on the occasion of a specific attitude with the weapon, i.e. one's own ligament.

The sites are also valid as a starting point for one's attacks: the ligament just mentioned is the right prodrome for a wire strike; from the same site you can also start a joke and a shot.

It is then important to consider the fact that, due to the well-known principle of technical postural reciprocity, the spatial sites on which we are discussing, no longer one's own but belonging to the adversary, are a fundamental geometric reference on the occasion of one's own attack: a quarry, starting from an opponent's ligament, or by performing a compound attack, first threatening the thrust in one site and then bringing the blow to another or the same target if the feint is double.

In short, in front of the respective targets of the two fencers standing guard facing each other, they can be identified as dots, dots colored red if you like the color; they represent both the defensive web and the mapping of access to the underlying targets: real points, but above all ideal for Fencing Theory, such as those hypothesized by Flat Geometry, which indicate the portions of space where one tries to build or destroy the fencing phrase.

Conclusions

In the imagination of the world of fencing, too often and guiltily, attention is focused only on the relationship with the opponent, that is, on the fight that takes place on the platform.

I agree that this is the eschatological aspect of the whole activity, the spectacular aspect and what ultimately constitutes the charm and essence of fencing; but before facing the antagonist of the moment, the fencer must first and foremost relate to himself. And this doesn't just mean dealing with your own personality traits, whether it's boldness or the hidden monsters of the Id; instead, let's talk about his technical preparation in relation to postures and movements that do not yet presume the actual presence of the opponent on the platform.

Therefore a profitable and suitable grip on the handle, a balanced guard posture that guarantees full efficiency both in attack and defense, a calibrated ability to manage the speed and precision of the movements of the armed arm, the possibility of being able to reach with good probability the chosen antagonistic targets are successful.

Then, leaving the purely technical dimension, we cannot fail to make a necessary mention of the so-called athletic preparation which now constitutes an indispensable substrate on which to build the fencer's best performance.

A team effort that is therefore humble, repetitive and tiring, essential to be able to achieve the rewards that, where appropriate, success on the platform gives.

This is that "sacrifice" that champions often denounce; as if there could be an alternative solution to competitive success!

The truth is that in a world that is now professional even for fencers, everyone, more or less, sacrifices themselves; but then the one who is most happy with the composite mosaic of values and situations that produces victory asserts himself.