

Destreza Translation and Research Project

The following document is a translation of a portion of Francisco Antonio de Ettenhard's *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza y filosofía de las armas* (Madrid, 1675). The original text in Spanish is from Spain's Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

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Special Thanks

A Fulbright Fellowship and a grant from the Program for Cultural Cooperation Between Spain's Ministries and U.S. Universities that funded my research into Spanish historical swordplay made this work possible, and I hope that this translation will contribute in some measure back to the western martial arts community and further acquaint the English-speaking world with this tradition. I would also like to thank my husband Puck Curtis for his continued support and his critical eye as well as the many people who have contributed to my research, including Dr. Adrienne Martín, Dr. J. Ignacio Díez Fernández, Dr. Manuel Valle, Eric Myers, Alberto Bomprezi, and other members of the Asociación Española de Esgrima Antigua.

Translator's Note

The page numbers of the original Spanish text are bolded and marked in brackets within the translation.

Illustration Note

The illustrations have been redrawn by Puck Curtis.

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COMPENDIUM OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TRUE ART AND PHILOSOPHY OF ARMS.

TRUTH

BREVITY

Dedicated
to the Catholic, Sacred,
and Royal Majesty of the
King, Our Lord
Don Carlos II.
Monarch of Spain
and the Indies.

SCIENCE

ART

By Don Francisco Antonio de Ettenhard,
Knight of the Order of Calatrava.

With Privilege.
In Madrid: By Antonio de Zafra.
Year of 1675

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Illustrations by Puck Curtis

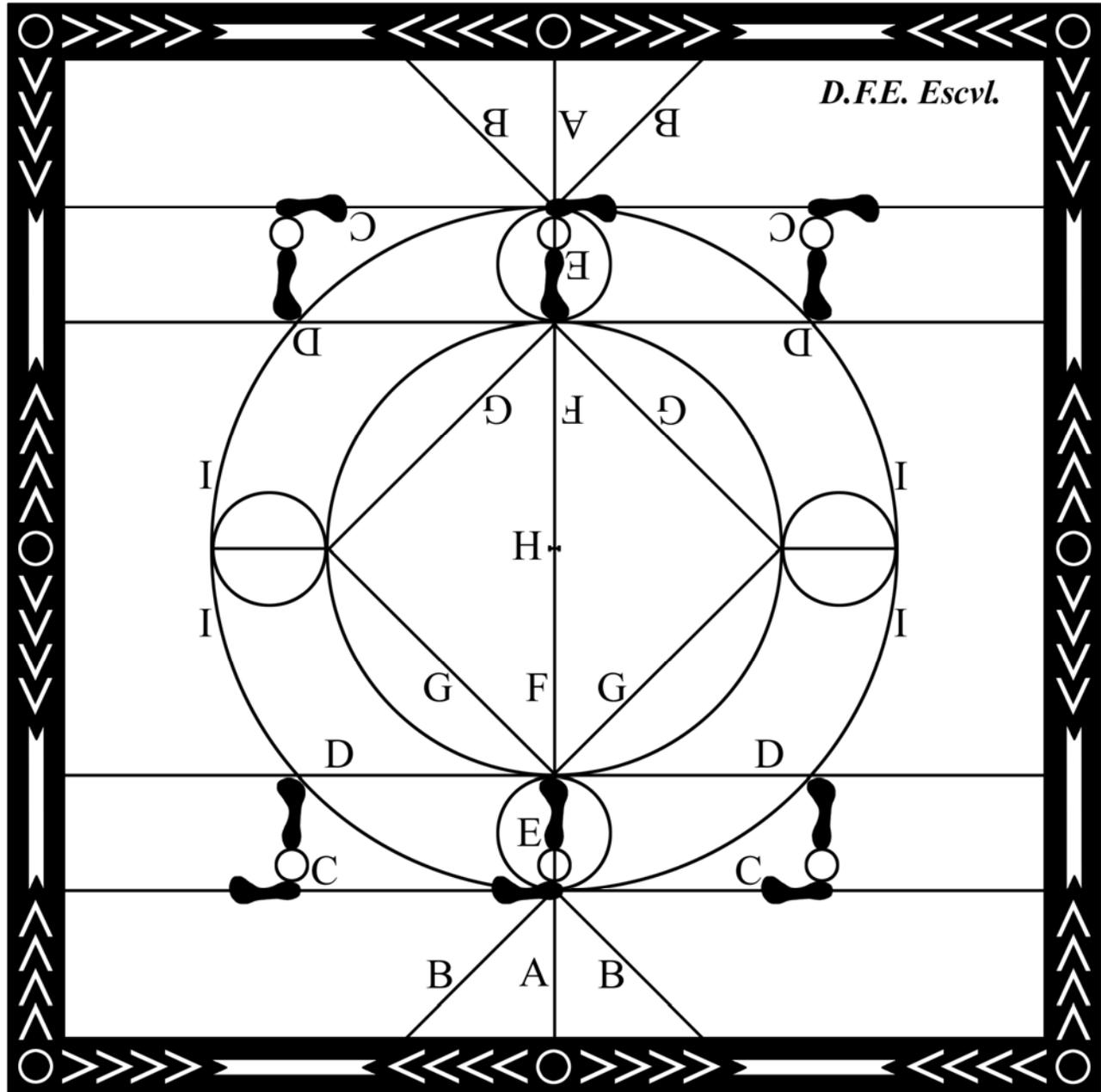
Chapter IV

Concerning the Definition of the Steps and Their Types.

A Step is a Movement that the body makes when it leaves one place to occupy another, and for greater clarity, it is true that taking a *Compás* is the same as stepping. This is a category with five simple types, which are the Forward, Curved, Transversal, Lateral, and Backward. There are two other Mixed Steps, the Lateral-Backward Step and the Transversal-Curved Step, but to better explain this footwork, we need the Illustration of the Circle that is imagined between the two Combatants. Then, we will easily define each of the aforementioned simple types and afterward explain the Mixed Steps—the Transversal-Curved one and **[page 51]** the Lateral-Backward one—with the appropriate details. First, it is necessary and essential to explain the layout of the present figure.

- (A) Straight line for the Backward Step.
- (B) Intermediate lines.
- (C) Infinite line of the left foot.
- (D) Infinite line of the right foot.
- (E) Personal Center.
- (F) Line of the Diameter.
- (G) Straight lines that form the Right Angles of the Square.
- (H) Center of the common measure.
- (I) Line of the Circumference or the periphery.

[page 52 blank]



v.

Layout Considered in the Inferior Plane for the Use of the Steps.

[page 54 blank]

[page 55] The Forward Step is made along the Line of the Diameter that crosses and divides the Circle in two equal parts, as is indicated by the letter (F) in the Illustration. Start it with the right foot and follow with the left.

The Curved Step is made along the circumference on the Curved Line to either side and is indicated by the letter (I). This step can be made with either foot, each one to the side that corresponds to it.

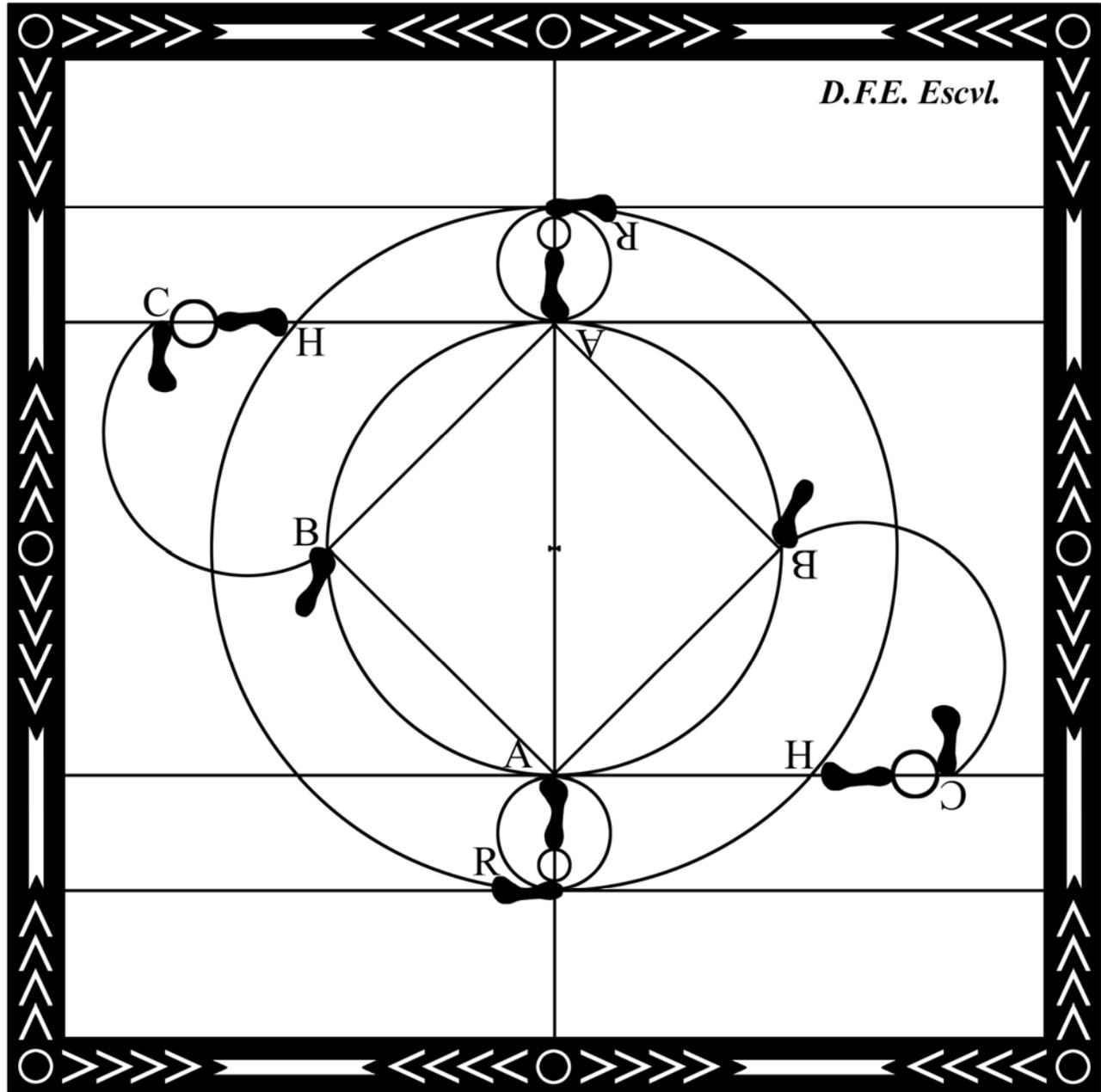
The Transversal Step is made only with the right foot along either of the Straight Lines that form the Right Angles of the Square. It is indicated by the letter (G), and it can be made to either the right or left.

The Backward, or *Extraño*, Step is made only with the left foot along the Straight Line to the rear and is indicated by the letter (A).

The Lateral Step is made to either side along **[page 56]** the Straight Lines called the Infinite Lines, labeled with the letters (D) and (C). It can be started with either the right or left foot.

The Backward-Lateral Mixed Step is made along the Intermediate Straight Lines, indicated by the letter (B), that are between the Infinite and Straight Lines. It is called Mixed because it combines two simple types of footwork, and it can be started with either of the two feet.

The Transversal-Curved Mixed Step is used to execute the Movement of Conclusion, and it can only be formed to the Swordsman's own left side. The right foot both starts and finishes it. This Mixed Step is very important for the practice of the true Art, and because I do not want to fail to demonstrate how to do it, it requires a separate Illustration to make it easier to understand.



VI.

How the Mixed Step of Transversal and Curved Is Used.

[page 58 blank]

[page 59] The present illustration makes it easy to understand how to form the Transversal-Curved Mixed Step. As can be seen, it begins with the right foot making the Transversal Step along the Straight Line from Point (A) to Point (B) and then shifting one's weight to it. Next, the left foot passes, forming the Curved Step along the circumference from Point (R) to Point (H). This foot comes to occupy the opponent's Infinite Line with the weight shifting to it so that the right completes the Mixed Step by also forming a Curved Step that passes from Point (B) to Point (C). The right foot is placed behind the left, in the opponent's

same Infinite Line, and since its composition consists of two simple types of steps, it becomes Mixed, as is indicated.

I consider determining a fixed distance for the Steps to perform the proposed actions as extremely difficult (and even impossible). There are several reasons for this. First, **[page 60]** the Skilled Swordsman shortens his Step as much as his opponent lengthens his because the distances are in proportion. Second, because lengthening or shortening the distance is a voluntary action (instead of a required one) for the Skilled Swordsman and his opponent, a fixed point cannot be given to what cannot have one, since one could move five feet, four feet or even one foot. Only in one case could a fixed distance be obtained, and that would be if one of the Combatants did not move from his spot. By not changing the distances, fixed lengths could be proposed for the practice of the Steps in this situation. However, it is well known how unlikely it is to have an immobile opponent. I reassert my opinion about fixed distances even though our Master don Luis Pacheco de Narváez gave the Steps three measures, and to differentiate them he named them the Double Step or Geometric Step¹, the Simple Step, and the *passada*. According to him, the Double Step was five feet in length, with one solid foot (that is where the foot came to rest) and four empty ones. The Simple Step was three feet, with one solid foot **[page 61]** and two empty ones, and the *passada* was two feet, with one solid foot and the other empty. Overall, the steps could be six feet, four feet or one foot in length. With which I say absolutely that only the knowledge and ability of the Combatants will be able to measure the distances proportionately, and as a general rule, if the opponent takes long Steps, the Skilled Swordsman should take short ones. In this way, the one compensates for the disproportion of the other, and they will perfectly form the Steps. Now, there is nothing (related to this topic of the Steps) that I can say until later when we deal with them again. It will be good to next demonstrate and provide information about the division and graduation of the Sword because it is one of the most fundamental principles of this Science, and its understanding is necessary to achieve one's own defense and the offense against the opponent.

¹ Paso geométrico = measurement of five feet (or 1.393 m.) in a modern definition.