

Prelude

Well, I found it. The long lost manual for the common man. I will admit that there may be people who can not appreciate the finer points of discussion contained herein, but I leave it to you, dear reader, to determine for yourself exactly how useful this document might be in furthering your education

*Presented in it's most complete form this 18th day of August during the reign of Pieter and Nan Astrid by
Baron Adam Comyn*

How to Put the Pointy End into the Other Guy

by Guletera Gnostyl

I. Introduction

By my count, there are a tremendous number of men who claim to be a master of the art of the sword. Every single one of them claims to have some Perfect Theory by which he can defeat any opponent. The sweet Siren song of Logic dictates, nay demands, that there is no way all of these statements can be true. Unless, of course, these so-called Masters makes a point of never facing off against each other. As it is readily recognizable that each Master suggests using a different set of movements, and as it is equally clear that each Master lists movements that are guaranteed failure against his technique, it thus becomes apparent that the Master has some subset of techniques he has perfected which will work very well provided one stays within that subset. Undoubtedly, the Master has also chosen to not teach one particular attack or defense, the ignorance of which guarantees his success against you. Claiming knowledge of perfection, they then demand their students refrain from fully exploring their own potential. You can be perfect, they say, provided you are willing to limit yourself. Hogwash.

Aside from their bravado, the other problem with these Masters is their complaint that there are too many members of the unwashed masses who pick up a blade and call themselves skilled. Learn my subset, they say, and you can beat that rabble. If we but remember that noble Muse, Logic, who does never steer her adherents falsely, we note that every Master claims their technique can beat the rabble, yet we have already shown that no Master can claim to be the Best. The only thing that all these Masters

have in common is their common abhorrence of that one technique they wail about and struggle against. Which means this one technique must therefore be the best technique available.

I will now distill years of painstaking research on this technique into a short treatise on the subject. While I will not claim to have invented the form, I am the first to codify it, and it seems only fair to name it after myself. Gnostyl has proven to be singularly effective against every other method that has been described to date. That it has survived in spite of the combined efforts of generations of these erstwhile Masters should be proof enough of its potency. Without all those messy woodcut drawings that nobody can figure out anyway.

II. Picking a Blade

This part is easy. Find a blade. Pick it up. Done. Whatever you find yourself comfortable with is what works. Some people like a blade that's really long (>36") and others like one that's really short (<36"). The truth of the matter is that the majority of the blades that are out there are 36" long, plus or minus a bit, and will thus be the easiest thing to find. Recognize that the people with blades longer (or shorter) than you are probably compensating for something, and are expecting that the change in reach will confuse you and your style. Since Gnostyl is easily accessible to any person who cares to use it, simply remember that it is not the size of the blade that counts, but how you use it.

III. How to Stand

On the assumption that you have learned how to move without crawling, most everything that might be said here is moot. On the further assumption that you are seated while reading this, I would now recommend that you stand up. There is precious little more to teach that might improve upon this, your normal standing position. Congratulate yourself on being of stronger mettle than the beasts. Feel free to sit down again if it improves your ability to absorb further truths.

At the most basic level, you can not fight with Gnostyl unless you are also holding a blade. A blade, being longer than it is wide, is akin to a finger on your hand. As the most commonly used extremity for pointing, it can be easily seen that striking with the point of the blade is equivalent to a poke with a finger, but from several additional feet away. Remember that, as unless you have a dagger drawn or are of a mind to grapple, standing too close in is barely more useful than standing too far away.

The odds favor an attack against as large a target as possible. Thus, you should present the minimum amount of your body to the other guy, keeping your blade as

close to his body as you can. Contradicting this statement is recognition that a profilic stance removes any useful action on the part of that half of your body most distant from the other guy. True practitioners of Gnostyl will agree with both statements without arguing details and pick something that feels comfortable. A 3/4 of the profile is what most use, making it a good place to start.

Crouch a little, but not in the wrestling fashion. Bringing your head so far forward is a good way to lose an eye. Bring your legs and hips into a bit of the sitting position you started this chapter with, but make sure you can still walk around. There is much discussion given to the idea of rolling your pelvis forward to lower your center of gravity. This is nice enough, but remember the basic tenet of Gnostyl: that which makes no sense to you is of no use to you. If you can not move while in a position recommended by those men who boast of being your betters, remember the glories of those nameless giants who used Gnostyl with great success and remove these recommendations from your repertoire.

IV. How to Hold the Blade

Easier than the chapter about picking the blade since in the process of picking one up you must now be holding the thing. There you go. If you grabbed the sharp end, go get a bandage and then grab the other side where the obvious gripping part is. Aim the pointy end at the other guy. That's pretty much it. Oh, you might want to hold your arm more or less bent so you have some room to move it around, and if you have quillions then you might find that one or two fingers above them will give you more control, but that gets pretty complicated. Remember that the idea is to use the blade as if it were a big finger so you can poke your opponent, and most other things will fall in just fine.

V. How to Move Your Body

1 - Footwork

Footwork is for chumps. You wanna go forward, go forward. Backward is just like forward but in reverse. Sideways is splitting the difference. Remember that the other guy is really worried about where he stands and which foot has to move first to get where he wants to go. He's expecting the same quantity of worry from you, and you can use those expectations against him. Make as if you were going to move one way, then go the other. Get really aggressive and stomp your foot as if to rush him, but refrain. You will learn a lot about the other guy's default reactions, which will make it easier to kill him when you commit.

2 - Armwork

Usually called "parries". There are two kinds, the one where you parry with the blade and the one where you parry with the arm that not holding the blade. Worry about blade parries in the next chapter. Just remember that whatever you can do with your blade, you can do with the arm not holding a blade. But a lot closer to your body, which means you will need to be quicker about anything that you want to do with your arm.

3 - Bodywork

This is everything that didn't involve your arms or legs. All the bits which can't attack, and which can't get you out of the way of an attack unless you're a snake and can dodge a sword thrust aimed at your midsection without moving your arms or legs. Remember two things about your body. The first is that your torso is the one part of your body that will always give away your movement. The other guy knows it, and a good one will ignore your feet and your arms and your head and kinda just watch your navel. Don't let him - Gnostyl recommends that you move around and back and forth and in and out to keep him guessing about whether your wild flailing is because you don't know any better, or whether you're doing it to be devious. Don't worry about whether you're devious or just clumsy; it is only necessary that you make him wonder. The second thing is that sometimes it is possible to dodge a sword thrust aimed at your midsection without moving your arms and legs. That part about the 3/4-stance? If you go to a wholly profile stance as his blade comes in, the odds of his attack go way down. And, because he's so sure he got you, the other guy will be well within your range for you to stick him. Feel free to do so.

VI. How to Move Your Blade

1 - Attacks

Pointy end goes into the other guy. Since everything boils down to this, don't bother worrying about how you got there. Just be sure you get there first. Getting there means you have to attack. There are two ways that happens - either you move first or he does. There are also two ways to execute an attack - directly or indirectly. That makes for a combination of four possibilities, which is plenty to think about for one steeped in Gnostyl. Let the other guy be convinced of their creativity with descriptions of a high line or some two-beat attack goofery. You just take the open shot (you move first) or make him open it (he moves first). When striking, go for the kill straight away (direct attack) or, if you have to convince yourself of your own safety, first make some parry or other (indirect attack). Everything else is detail. Read another book if it will help you sleep better; drill your favorite move if it will make you more confident; practice more often if you think it will improve your game. Or don't. Remember that every move you make is like a phrase in a sentence. If you don't know the language then there is no way the other guy will know what you're trying to say either.

2 - Parries

If you must parry, it is almost assuredly a sign that you have already blown it since the other guy is still moving around as if he were in control. Still, sometimes mistakes happen. The most important thing about a Gnostyl parry is that once you have contacted his blade with your blade, keep it there until you are ready to remove that contact and kill him. Assuming you feel like dragging the fight out, there are a lot of ways to put his blade into contact with yours. Most of the good ones involve making him move first. Remember the chapter on footwork: if you can make him think you're about to do something, he'll try to beat you to it, which usually involves the other guy initiating the attack. Let him. Heck, leave something really open that begs to be attacked. Since you know what you left open, you know where the attack is going to go, and with that it will be a piece of cake to move your blade to intercept. A good parry is one that makes contact with his blade and forces it to fail to contact you. There is much discussion about leaving the point on your opponent and parrying with the hilt end of the blade, but since that is not at all instinctive, don't worry about it unless you feel like it will make you a better man. Or woman.

VII. Final Remarks

- Talk while fighting. It confuses the other guy.
- Anybody who tells you he's "Old, Fat, and Slow" is probably only one out of the three, and maybe not even that much. Don't believe him. That said, all things being equal, old age and treachery only has 50/50 odds against youth and vigor.
- If it's just you against a guy with a gun, run away. If it's you and four buddies, run towards him. You've got pretty good odds that you won't be the target, and the guy only has one bullet.
- Just because the other guy can beat you 4 times in 5 doesn't make him better than you, it just means he had more practice. Come back in six months and watch the difference.
- Quillions are nice. If you have them they are like extra fingers on the extra-long finger that is your blade. Use them to push, bat, or block the attack that comes along your blade.
- Daggers are nice. They let you stab when you get too close to use a sword point.
- Put the pointy end into the other guy.