

The Art of Wrestling: 85 pieces
to the honorable and gracious Electors of Saxony
by Fabian von Auerswald.

1539.

English Translation copyright 2005 by James Klock.

Fabian von Auerwald.



Vorrede.



Vehren vnd vnterthenigem gefal-
len / dem Durchleuchtigsten vnd Hochgebornen
Fürsten vnd Herrn / Herrn Johansen Friderichen/
Hertzogen zu Sachsen / vnd Kurfürsten etc. meinem
gnedigsten Herrn / Dabe ich Fabian von Auerswald /
für mich genomen / die alte Ehrliche vnd Adelige
Kunst / des Ritterschimpffs / des Ringens / wie ich bey Regierung / weis-
land des durchleuchtigsten Hochgebornen Fürsten vnd Herrn / Herrn
Ernstens / Hertzogen zu Sachsen / vnd Kurfürsten / seliger vnd Christ-
licher gedencknis / solchs von der selben weitberühten Ringmeistern /
die dazumal bey seiner Kurfürstlichen gnaden zu Wese gewesen /
vnd die Jugent / als meine gnedigste vnd gnedige Herrn / seiner Kur-
fürstlichen gnaden Söhne / vnd andere Fürsten / Grauen vnd Herrn /
vnd die vom Adel vnd mich gelernet / Vnd inn solchen Ritterlichen
vnd Adelligen Künsten / vnterweiset / zusamen gezogen / vnd mit art-
gem vnd lustigem Gemelde / vnd schrifftten / inn Druck bringen laß-
sen / welches auch die rechte art vnd Kunst des Ringens ist / vnd vor-
mals der gestalt / nie an tag komen / Welches ich auff hochgemelts
meins gnedigsten Fürsten vnd Herrn begern / mit verleihung Göt-
licher hülffe volendet / Vnd vielen ehrlichen vnd guten Leuten zu nutz /
ehren vnd fromen / zu Ernstlichen vnd Ritterschimpfflichen sachen /
habewollen ans liecht bringen. Vnd ist mein vnterthenigs / dienst-
lichs vnd freundlichs bitten / an wen / von hohen oder nidern Stand /
solche meine arbeit / mühe vnd vleis / komen vnd gelangen wird /
Erwölle die selbig von mir zu gnaden / gunsten vnd freund-
schafft annemen / vnd mich vnd meine Kinder im be-
solhen sein lassen / Sonderlich dieweil ich nu
mehr ein alter vorlebter Man / Denn ich bin
im vierzehenhundert vnd zwey vnd sech-
zigsten jar geborn / Vnd hab solche
meine arbeit / nach Christi vn-
fers lieben Herrn geburt /
1537. jare zu Witem-
berg verfertiget.



Guter Besell nicht verzage /
Bis keck vnd ring wol die wage.

forward.

In hope that it should please / the honor of the illuminated and highborn sovereign and lord / Lord John Frederick / Elector of Saxony / my gracious Lord / have I, Fabian von Auerswald / taken upon myself / the honorable and noble art / and the knightly virtue of wrestling / which I have, by the authority / of the wise and illuminated, highborn sovereign and lord / Lord Ernest / Elector of Saxony / blessed and Christian in his thought such as from the same widely-famed wrestling masters / as have instructed the Elector and the young men / of my gracious Lords / the Electors' sons / and other sovereigns Counts and Lords / who have from those noble men and myself learned.

And I have, in the same knightly and noble art / instructed / and drawn together, and in an artful and systematic report / and text / brought into print which is also the righteous art of wrestling / and previously the figure of it never came. / Which high report I also beg my gracious sovereign and lord with God's help I have been bestowed / and from which many honorable and good people may profit / honorably and with piety / to honorable and knightly causes it will be brought to light. And it is my hope / my humble and friendly prayer that when / any so high or low in station / should my work and labor / encounter or acquire / That he would take from me the same gracious friendship and aid / and keep myself and my children in his aid / Now that I am an eccentric old man / for I was born in 1462 / And have this work in the Year of Our Lord 1537, in Wittenberg, completed.

The greatest companion is good balance,
wrestling boldly, and never faint hearted.



1.

firstly, look and see
if your opponent comes to you high or low
If he is high / you must not worry
and may from these techniques,
as your senses guide you,
freely take
But if he is low
then have yourself in greater caution



2.
The first is
that one makes a short wind for the hand,
left and right
Thereby you shall see
how the opponent will respond to a hold



3.

The other technique of lock-wrestling.

Here I bring my left arm over his left, obstructing it
and heave him up by his left leg, winding in above the knee
and step with my left thigh, obstructing his right.

The trap and the step must be one thing,
so quickly do they go together. And this goes for both sides.



4.

This piece is called the weakening of the arms
that you pull in on his left hand with your right
near the fist
so that he must bend.



5.

When you see / that he has bent himself
then take his left hand with your left
Thereafter, stretch your right hand under his chin and through
and while stretching
you must spring with your right leg
to obstruct his left thigh
then you are totallly powerful over him.



6.

The shrugging of the opponent.

When I have wound him
 then I come with my right hand on his right hand
 and with my left hand on his right elbow
 and cause him to shrug up for me / And during that shrug
 I sweep my left hand under his right arm and through
 And during that shrug / I step my left thigh behind his right
 Then I heave him up with my left hip / and am totallly powerful over him.



7.

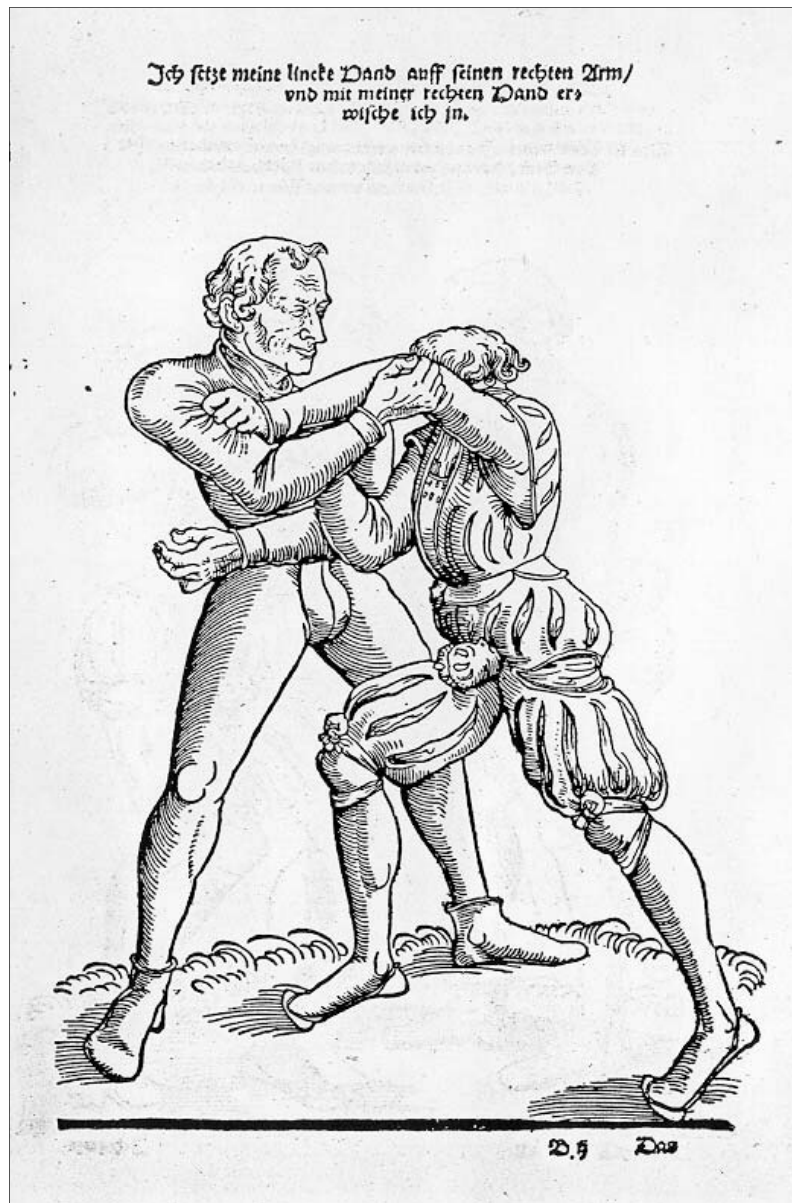
Running through under the arm.

In the assault I catch his left hand with my right
and lift it over him
and run through under his left arm with my head and body
and step my left thigh behind his left leg
and right myself up
so that I have him powerfully on my left hip.



8.

Winding over the arm with one hand
This is only a figure or note about winding over the arm
which comes in the next piece.



9.
I set my left hand on his right arm
and with my right hand I catch him



10.
Wheeling the opponent
Here I step with my right thigh as wide as I can
behind his right thigh



11.

The trap

Thereafter I spring with my left thigh behind
this is called the trap
and I give a little in the balance
this is called the wheeling of the opponent.



12.

Lock-wrestling

I come over his left arm and trap it with my left arm
and step with my left leg, obstructing his right foot
and lift him over my right knee
This can be taken left or right.



13.
This is the winning step.
I step with my right thigh
close into his right
Thereafter hold yourself
as shown in the following figure.



14.

Step with the left thigh, obstructing his right leg
and come in with your left hand under his chin
and stretch him thereby
thereby you win his back
and the winning step is completed.



15.

While winding, I spring with my right thigh, winding it around his left leg
and take the half-hip



16.

When I have taken the half-hip,
and he has begun to break out of it
then I step with my right thigh entirely behind
so that I have my left hand on his shoulder
and pull him entirely over



17.

Here we come to the wheeling of the opponent
where one arm is over and the other under
my right arm must be under
and my left over
and I put my left hand on his right thigh



18.

Thereafter I must, with my left leg,
step, winding around his right foot
and glide my left hand around to his butt cheek
and lift him up by his right side
that is the wheeling of the opponent

Wenn ich meine lincke Hand steme an seinen rechten Schenckel/so stellt
er widerumb seine rechte Hand an meinen lincken Schenckel/So
mus ich mit meiner lincken Hand/ihm seine rechte Hand aus
reißen/Und im ausreißen/trete ich hinein/so kom
ich zu den vorigen stücken/die da zu dem
Redlin vnd dem außschlagen/dienen.



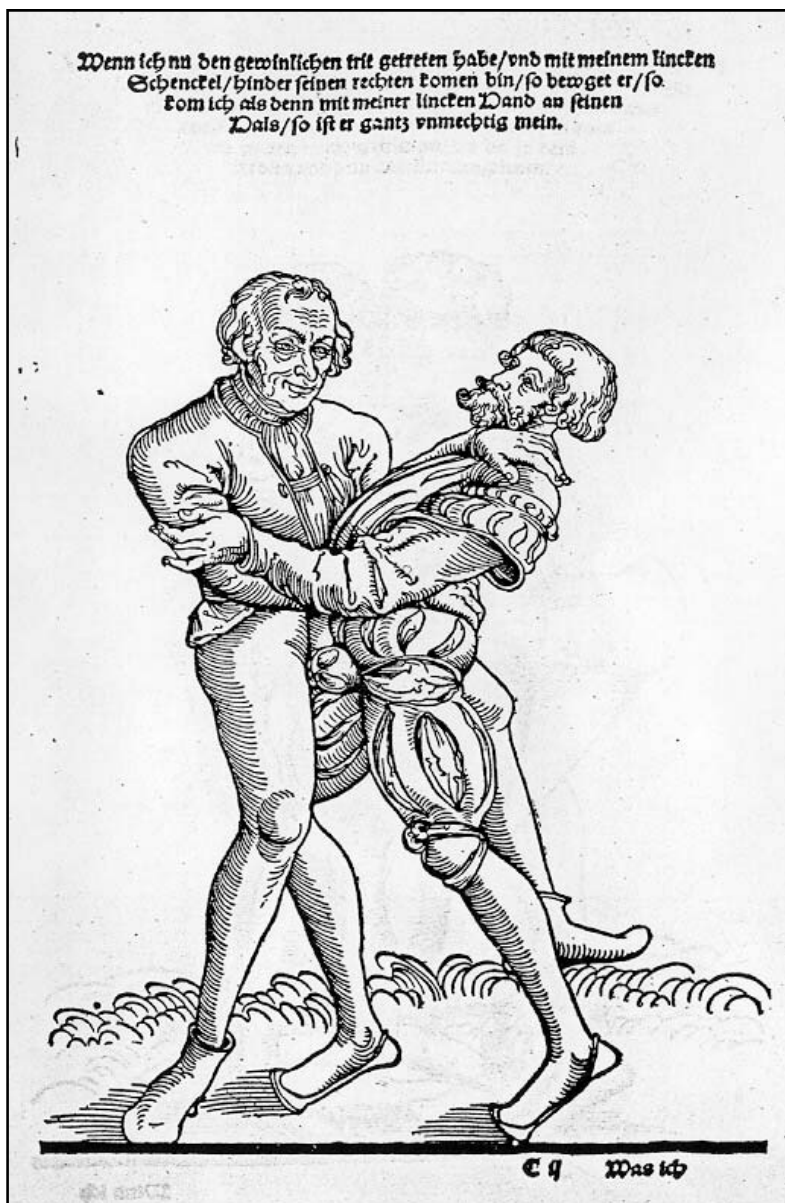
19.

When I place my left hand on his right thigh
then he should respond by placing his right hand on my left thigh
Then I must use my left hand / to remove his right hand
And as I do so, / I step backward
then I come to the precise piece
from which came the wheeling of the opponent,
himself.



20.

This is the winning step by the opponent
here must one arm be under
the other over
and my right arm under
then I step the winning step with my right thigh between his legs
and with the left obstructing his right



21.

When I have stepped to the winning step
and with my left thigh
have come to obstruct his right
then he bends
then I come with my left hand against his throat
so that he is powerless against me.



22.

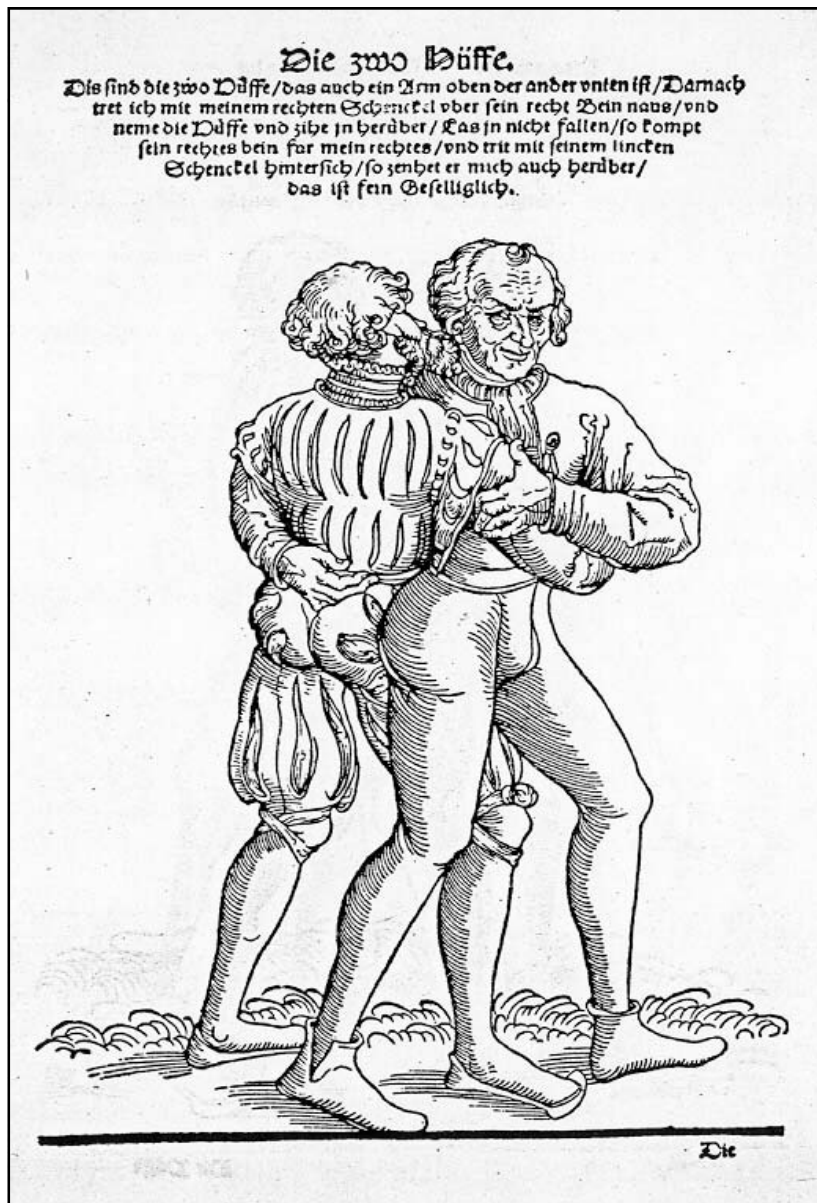
What I lift up I shall lay down.
There must be one arm over
the other must be under
and when he would press me to himself
then I step forward with my right leg, obstructing his left
and, winding my left arm to his right thigh, heave his right thigh into the air
and give a little over backwards
then I am totallly powerful over him.



23.

Benedict's technique

here again must one arm be over
the other being under
and I press hard forward with my chin, next to his neck
And when I detect that he has bent
then I come with my left arm / between his legs
and pull him into me / If my chin gets through over him
then I have him where I want him.



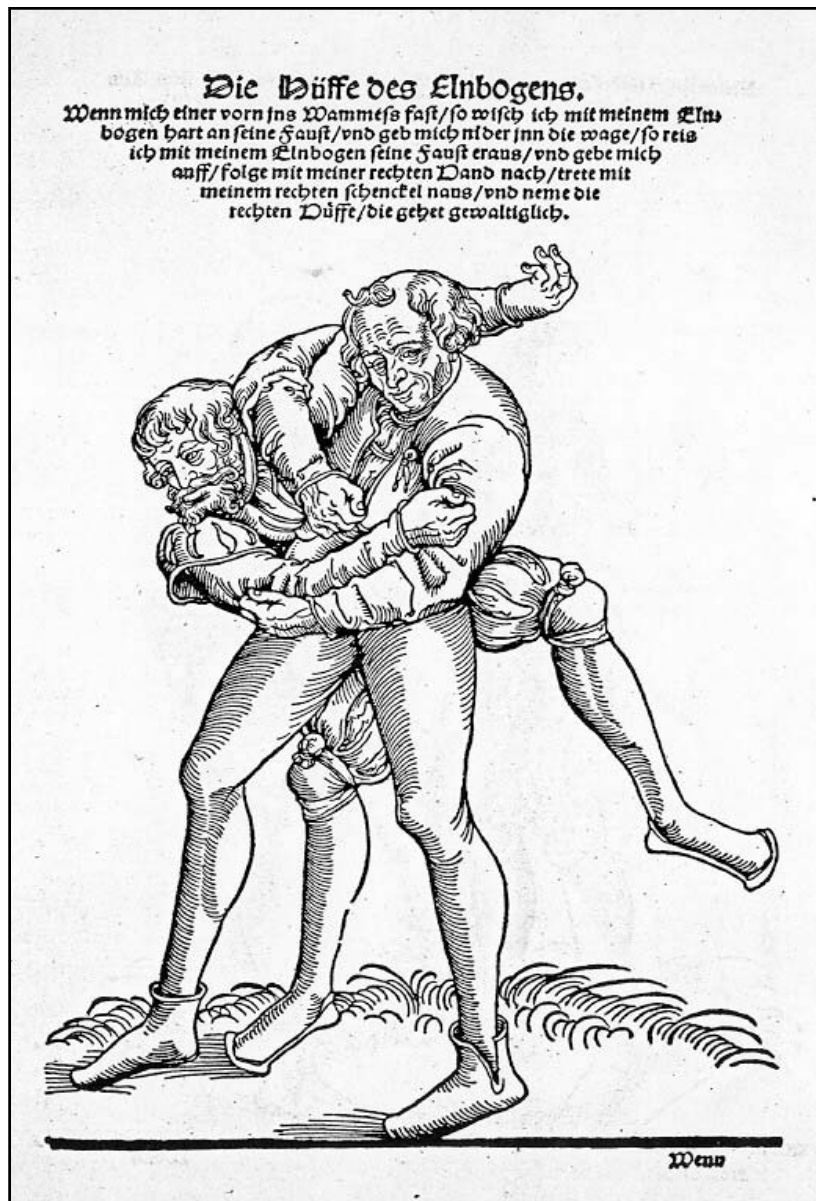
24.

The two hips.

This is the two hips / where again one arm is over, the other under
Then I step with my right thigh, over and behind his right leg
and take the hip and pull him over.
If he would not fall, / then he will bring his right leg for my right
and he steps with his left thigh behind it
then he also pulls me over
this is his threat.



25.
The following figure
applies to the next.



26.

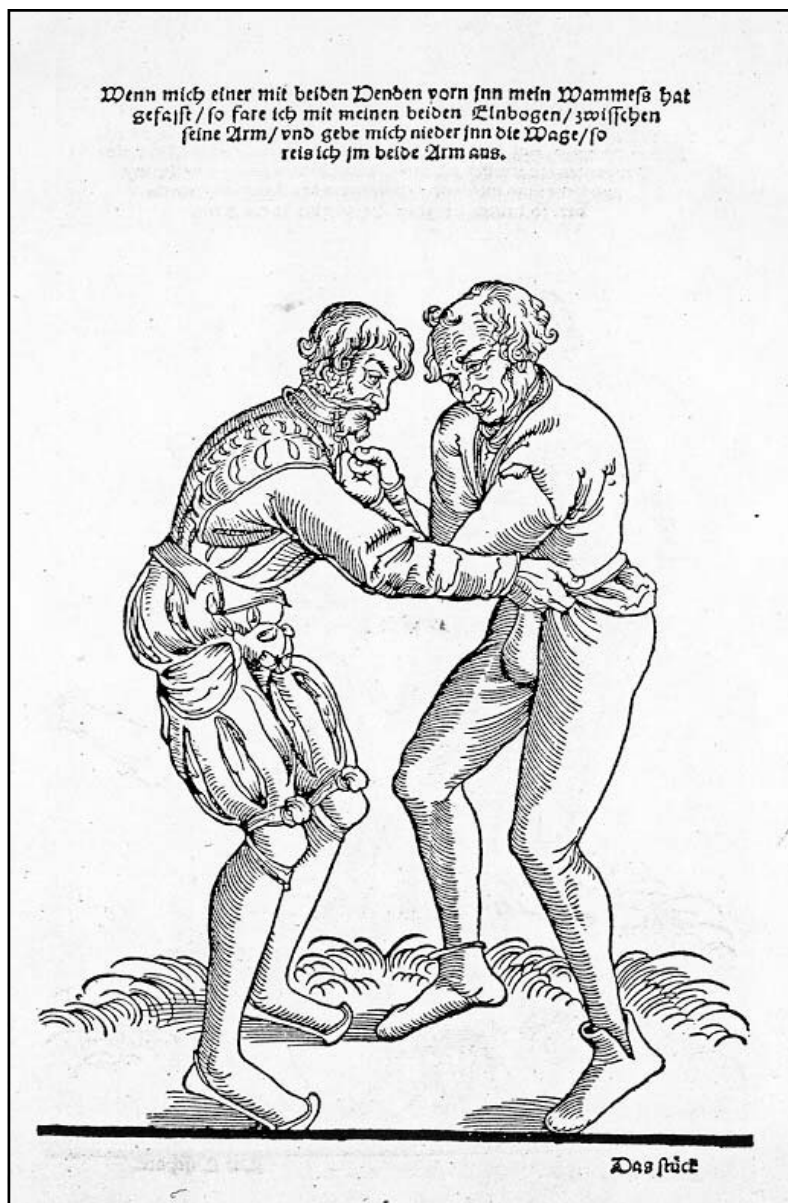
The hips and elbows.

When someone grabs the front of my doublet
 then I brush him off, with my elbow hard on his fist
 and I sink low in the balance / so that my elbow sends his fist away
 and as it gives off of me / I follow after with my right hand,
 step through with my right thigh
 and take the right hip,
 which goes powerfully.



27.

When I wish to make a trap
then I come with both arms over his arm, gathering him under
and heave him up by the arms
and with my right thigh I pull his left
thus is this trap so often wed to him



28.

When someone grabs the front of my doublet with both hands
then I come with both of my elbows
between his arms
and I sink low in the balance
so that I send both his arms away



29.

This piece is called breaking in with both elbows
When I have removed both his arms
then I have both of my arms under
then I grab both of his legs with my two arms
and have them in to me
and go for one of them with my knees
so that I bring his leg over my knee.



30.

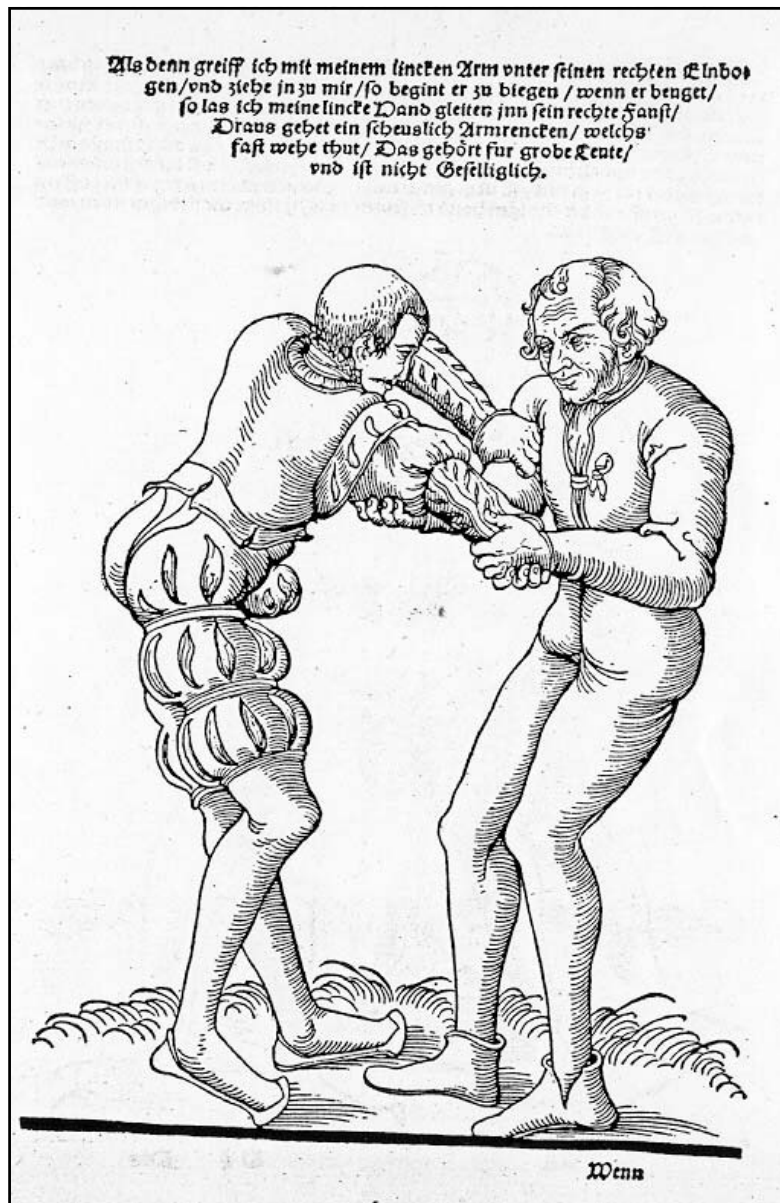
The Misthack

When someone has both arms under
and presses me to himself with power
then I come with my right hand under his chin
and push it through him, away from me

And in pushing through
I come with my right leg, into the back of his left knee
This piece also goes left and right.



31.
I place my left hand on this right
as close as I can
then comes the following piece



32.

Then I grip under his right elbow with my left arm
and pull him to me / then he begins to bend
when he bends / then I slip my left hand to his right fist
Then comes a horrific wrenching of the arm
that is woeful to behold.
This is for rough people
and is not gentlemanly.

Wenn einer mit dem kopff in den an die b.ust kompt/und kan sein nicht ledig werden/
sondern er boyet hart zu einem / Das ist ein zeichen das er nichts kan / oder nemen
wil/allein er wil sich sein auffhalten/So mus einer trachten/das er jm mit beiden hen
den inn sein Koller oben an seinen hals kompt/und mus inn der wage zu rückt sprin
gen vnd mit zücken/so felt er auff die Enie/Dat er aber kein wammes an/so musu acht
haben/das du beide hende oben an seinen hals kriegest/und schloest die fest zusamen/
spring inn der wage zu rückt/so ist es gleich eins/ Setzet er aber den kopff dir auff ein
seiten/ so greiff mit der selbigen hand an seinen hals/springe zur selbigen seiten/und
zucke in auff die Erden.



33.

When someone drives his head into my chest / and you cannot dislodge him
because his force is unusually strong / This is a sign that he cannot
nor will take anything / but he will only keep up his push / then one must
step / with both hands on his collarbone, above his neck / and spring back in
the balance, and suddenly / so that he falls to his knee / But if he is not
wearing a doublet / then you must take care / that you embattle both of
your arms over his neck / and bring them tightly together, / springing back
in the balance / so that it is as one / But if he sets his head on you to either
side / then grip his throat with the same hand / spring to the same side
and slam him to the ground.

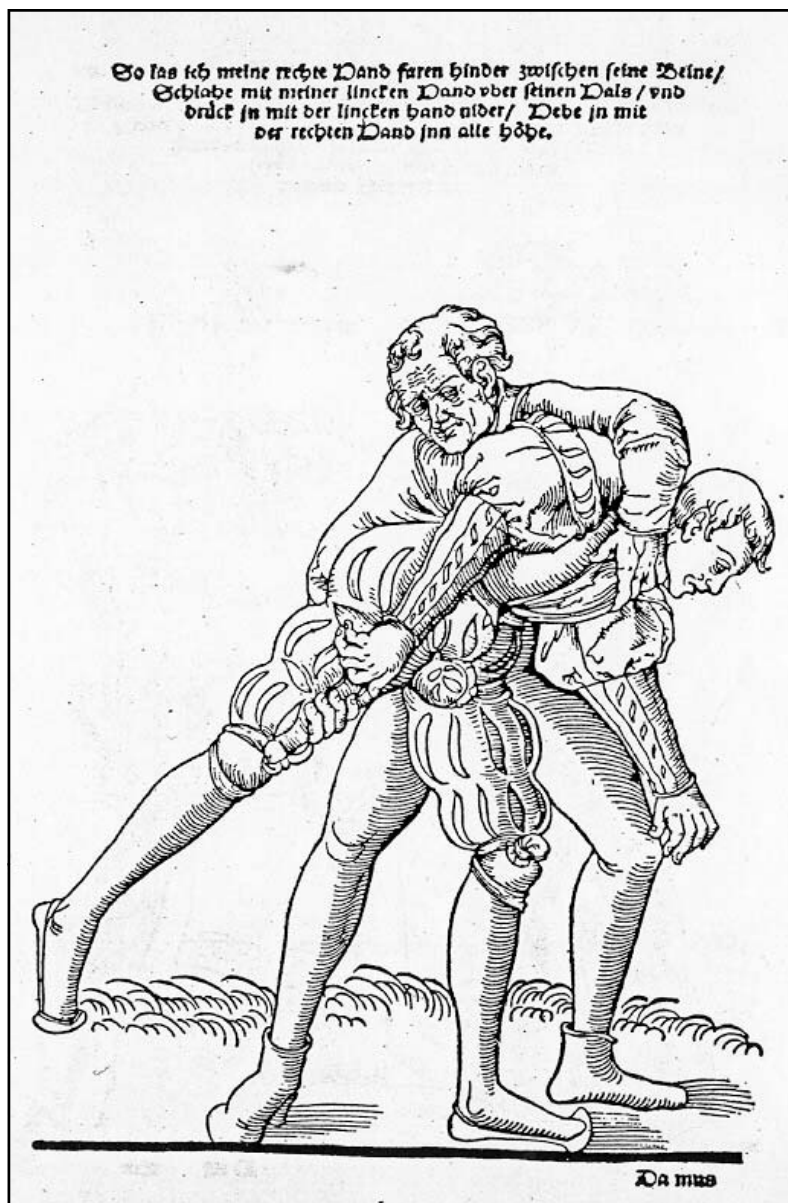


34.

Running through under the arm
here I take his left hand
which I turn over
and slip my head under his left arm and through behind
and step with my left leg between his legs
Then my left hand comes between his legs
and I right myself up
and lift him all up in the air.



35.
With my left hand
I twitch his left hand to me
and come in with my left hand under his right elbow
Thus he gives me his entire back.



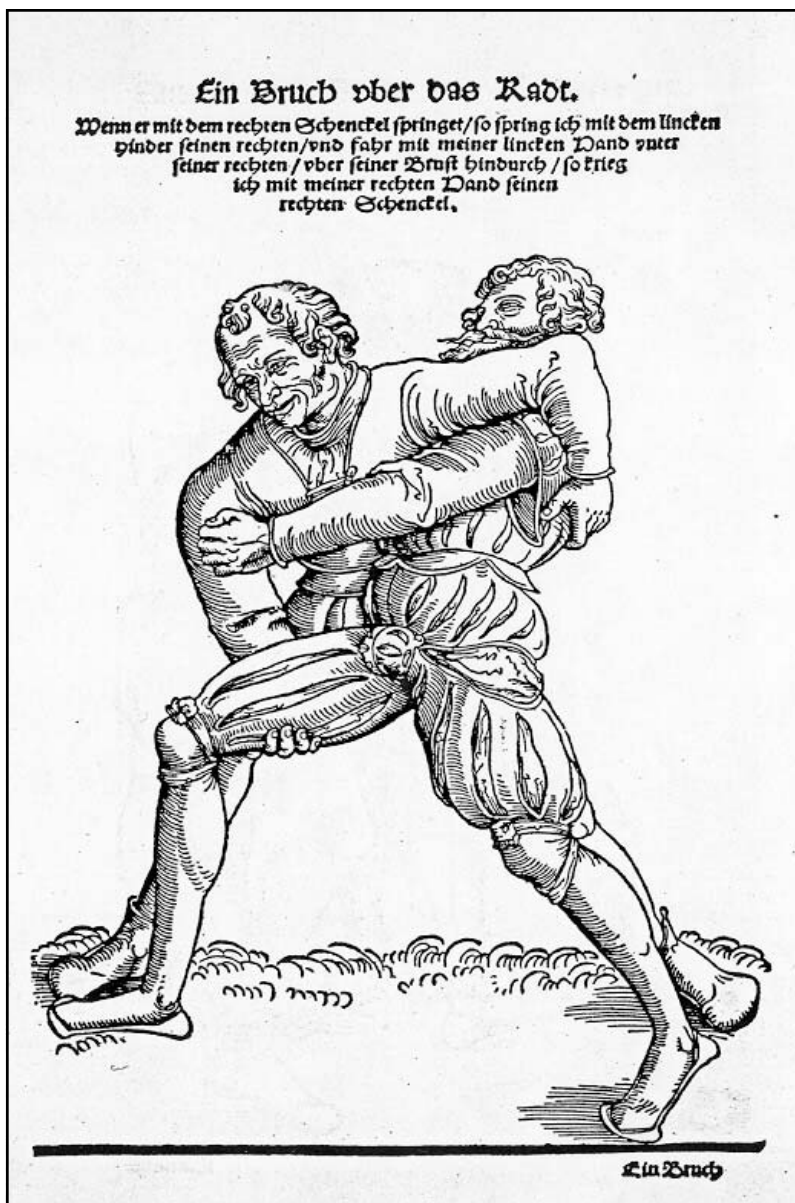
36.

I set my right hand drive between his legs and behind
strike his throat with my left hand
and press low with the left hand
heaving him with the right hand, all into the air.



37.

Here I must come upon his right thumb with my right hand,
with the left hand I come in behind his shoulder
Thus I bring him into the wheel.



38.

When he springs with the right thigh
then I spring with the left, obstructing behind his right
and drive my left hand under his right
over and through his breast
thus I embattle his right thigh with my right hand.



39.

A break of lockwrestling
When he falls behind me with his right hand
then I take the left hip
This can be taken left and right.



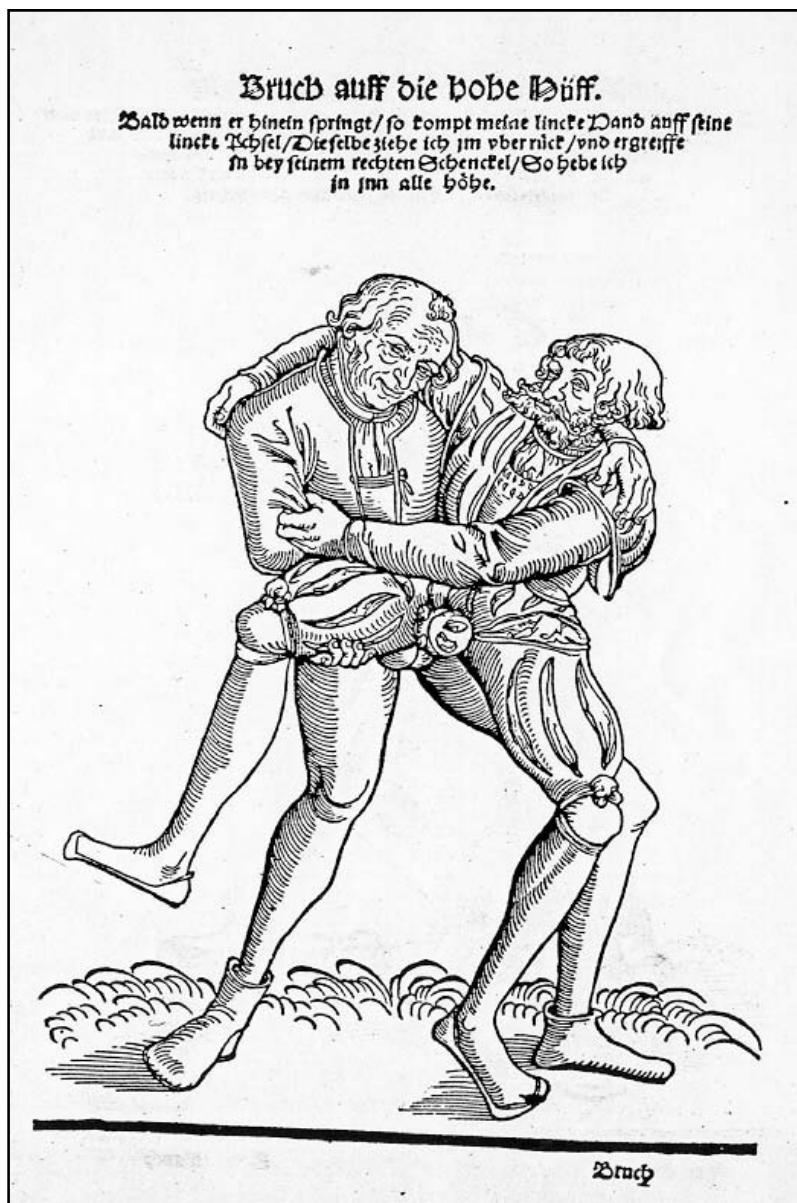
40.

Another break against lockwrestling
When his right arm falls over his left
then I fall upon his neck with my left arm
and spring forward with my left thigh
and take the left hip
which goes completely freely.



41.

Break against the short hip
When he steps in with his left thigh
and takes the half hip
then his foot comes winding on my right foot
Then I trap him behind the knee with my right knee
and press low in the balance
then his is brought low onto his knee.



42.

Break against the high hip
Just when he springs in
then my left hand comes to his left shoulder
At the same time, I pull him over backwards
and grab him by his right thigh
Then I heave him all into the air.



43.

Break of the rejected hip

When he springs out with the hip

then I come with my left arm over his right shoulder and onto his neck
 and bring him into me with my left hand

Thereafter I wind my right hand in and grab his right thigh
 and heave him up and in, onto the left side
 then I am his master.



44.

Break of shrugging the opponent.

When he shrugs me, with the left arm forward,
then I step out with my left leg, obstructing behind his right
and with my left elbow I bring him over backwards
and catch him between his legs with my right arm.

This piece goes left and right.

[Note: the woodcut shows the technique with the sides reversed]



45.

Break of the hook that is called "Ausschupffen".

When someone has me in a hook
then I force his right thigh out with my left thigh
and at the same time I catch him with my right arm
Lift him up
then I am powerful over him.



46.

This is a break against the break that is Ausschupffens.
That when he would use the Ausschupffens on me
then I rapidly take the bar
It is a good help if he is smaller than me.

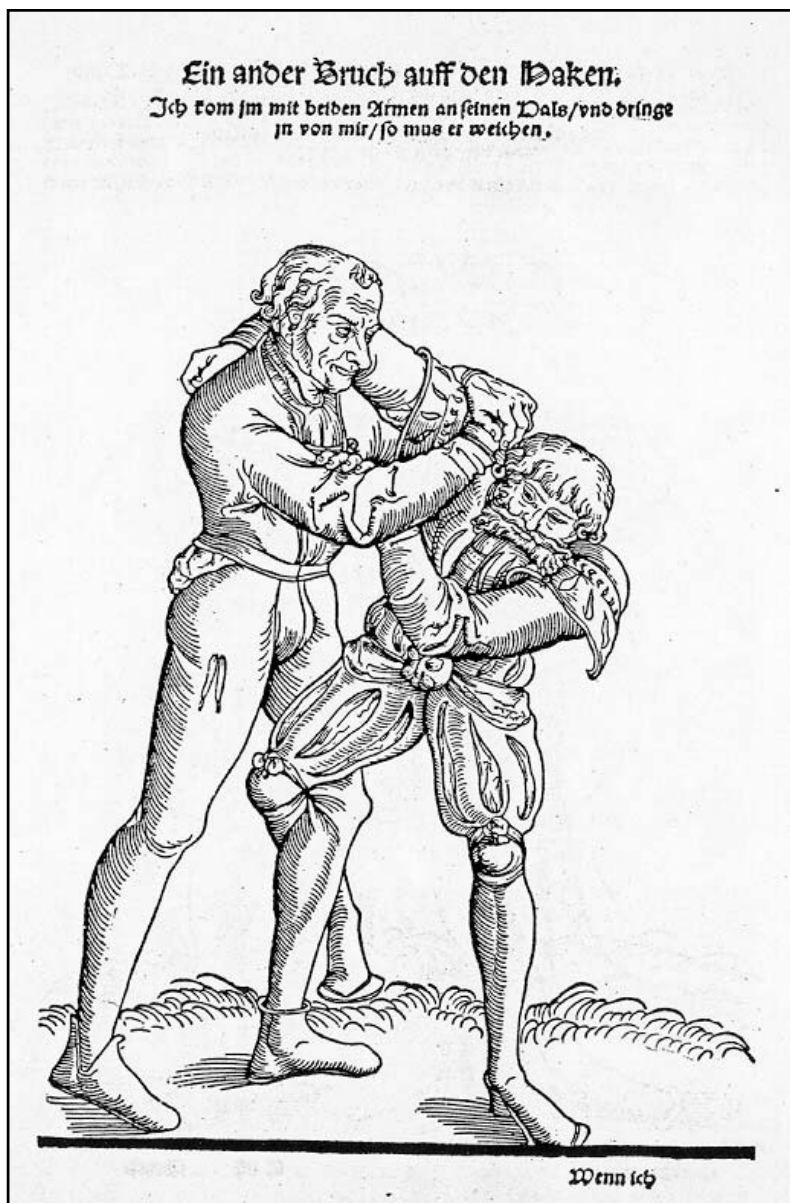


47.

Another break of the hook.

While he is entering,
I force my left thigh to displace his left foot
and put him back with my left hand.

This technique
cannot be caught by many.



48.
Another break of the hook.
I come with both hands to his throat
and bring him in before me
then he must weaken.



49.

When I bring him before me with both hands
then I lay my right hand on the back of his neck
and press him low with it
Thereafter, grab between his buttcheeks with my left hand
and turn him right over
just as one would take the wheeling of the opponent.

Bruch vber Bruch des Hakens einlauff.

Ich bleib vnten inn der wage stehen / vnd schlahe mit meinem rechten Arm seinen lin-
cken aus / vnd thu gleich / als wolt ich in inn Haken lauffen / vnd bleibe mit meinem
Reinen stehen / Daraus lerne ich / ob er den bruch des einlauffs des Haken kan / Kan
er in / so kompt er selbst / so kom ich mit meinem rechten vber sein brust / vñ bring in vber
mein recht Enie vberrück / Kan er in aber nicht / so nem ich den haken mit sein gebülffen.



50.

Break against the break of the entering hook / I stay under him in his bal-
ance / and with my right arm I force his left arm out / just exactly
as if I would run him into the hook / but stay standing with my legs
Thereby I learn / if he can break the entering hook / If he can,
then he comes to it / then I come with my right over his breast
and bring him back over my right knee / but if he cannot
then I take the hook with his help.



51.

A Break against the hook and bar. / When he has run me into a hook
 then I stretch my left leg / so that he must take the bar
 If he stays in the bar or runs me into the hook
 then I step with my left thigh out and behind, obstructing him
 and give myself completely low in the balance
 and grab his left leg with my right hand
 above his ankle / that that he has no more help

Bruch vber den Kiegel im Haken.

Wenn er mit im Haken steht/ vnd ich meinen lincken Schenckel strecke
so wischet er mit inn Kiegel/ vnd im neinwischen/ als bald gebe ich
mich mit meinem lincken Schenckel hinter ihn hinaus/
vnd gebe mich gehling nider inn die wage/
so ist im der Kiegel zubrochen.



52.

Break against the bar in the hook.
When he stands with me in the hook
and I have stretched my left thigh so that he wishes me to the bar
and if he does not wish it
when immediately I give with my left thigh, out and behind him
and as I go I give low in the balance
so that his bar is broken.



53.
The left hip is again an entry to the hook.



54.

This is winding into the wheel.
Here I must wind my right hand over his left arm, and to his body.



55.

This is the break before the entering hip.

That is what this piece is called.

have good caution with it

and it is called the bar of the left arm. If he would make an entry of the hip

See it here:

that you take the bar with the left arm

under and through his left arm

and presently set yourself in the balance on the left side.

Und ob er mi. schon inn Daken kompt / so hab achtung drauff / vnd wende
deinen rechten fuß mit der Zehe hinauswertz / so kan er zur Partzen
Nufft nicht komen / Als denn mus die hohe oder die anschlage
Dufft genomen werden / so thue deine lincke Hand zu /
vnd setze im hart an seine seiten / vnter seinen rechten
Arm hindurch / vnd gib dich auff die lincke seite
ten inn die wage / vnd erwische mit deis
nem rechten Arm seinen rech-
ten Schenckel zc.



Vnd ist

56.

And if he has already come to the hook / then have caution for it
and wind your right foot with the toes outward
so that he cannot come to the short hip
After that he must take the high or rejected hip
so with your left hand to you / and set it hart on his side
under and through his left arm
and give in the balance onto the left side
and catch his right thigh with your right arm.



57.

And step, winding your left leg into his left foot
 then heave his right thigh up with your right hand, and with your left hand
 bring him over backwards
 then he cannot come back with his left leg
 then he falls over backward.



58.

The entering of the hook.

I pull his left arm in with my right hand
and come in over the ankle
and run in with my right thigh against his right leg
then I am right in the hook

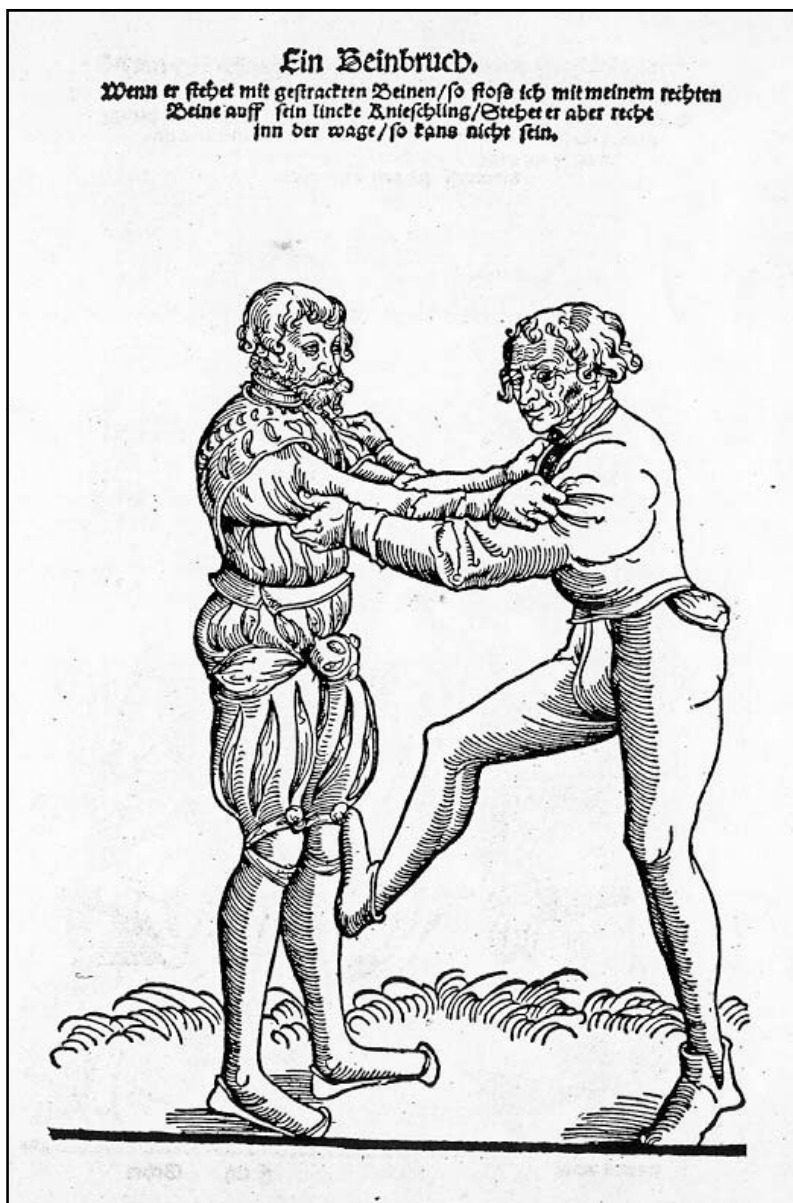


59.

Lockwrestling

from which comes an armbreak.

When I come with my left arm over his left arm
then I must come with my arm high between his legs
then I stretch his left arm over it
then it must break
or be trapped.



60.

A legbreak.

When he stands with straight legs
then I thrust my right leg onto his left knee
But if he stands rightly in the balance
then I cannot do this.



61.

The winding of the hips and the hook.
Here comes the backward thrown
when I have someone with my arm
then I go with my right arm over him
and wind my right hip forward / no
and run him into the hook
and stay with my left foot against him
Then the backward throw is fast and sure.



62.

If he comes at you with his hands out front
then you will take a piece of his fist
If he gives you the right hand
then you give him the left
If he gives you the left
then give him the right
And always with your thumb in the middle of his hand
As you see here.



63.

from this technique comes an armbreak
here I come with my right arm over his left arm, from a wind outside in
behind his left elbow
And if the arm does not break
Then with my right thigh I pull out his left.



64.

Backward throw from the hook.

When I am in the hook
then I wind my left foot into him
here must the hook and the hips be fast into him
after this I give behind him
and take the backward throw powerfully.



65.

The slant.

from the other hook goes the slant
thusly

When he has me hard in the hook
then I grab his right thigh with my left arm
and heave it up

Thereafter I step with my right thigh behind his left
Then I am his total master.

Wenn er mich hat aus dem Haken gestreckt/so kom ich mit meinem
linken Arm vber seine beide Arm/vnd thue gleich/wie ich
den Schragen nemen wolt/vnd neme die
lincke Hüfte dafür.



Die Bild

66.

When he has stretched me out of the hook
then I come over both of his arms with my left arm
and do the same
as I would to take the slant
and thereby I take the left hip.



67.

The fork in the hook.

With my right thigh, I go high, so high as I can
and wind to the left with my body
staying up with my thigh high in the air
then I fall on top of him and he below.



68.

When someone falls upon me with both hands at my throat
Then I take his neck and arm together
rise up
and take the fork.



69.

The short hip.

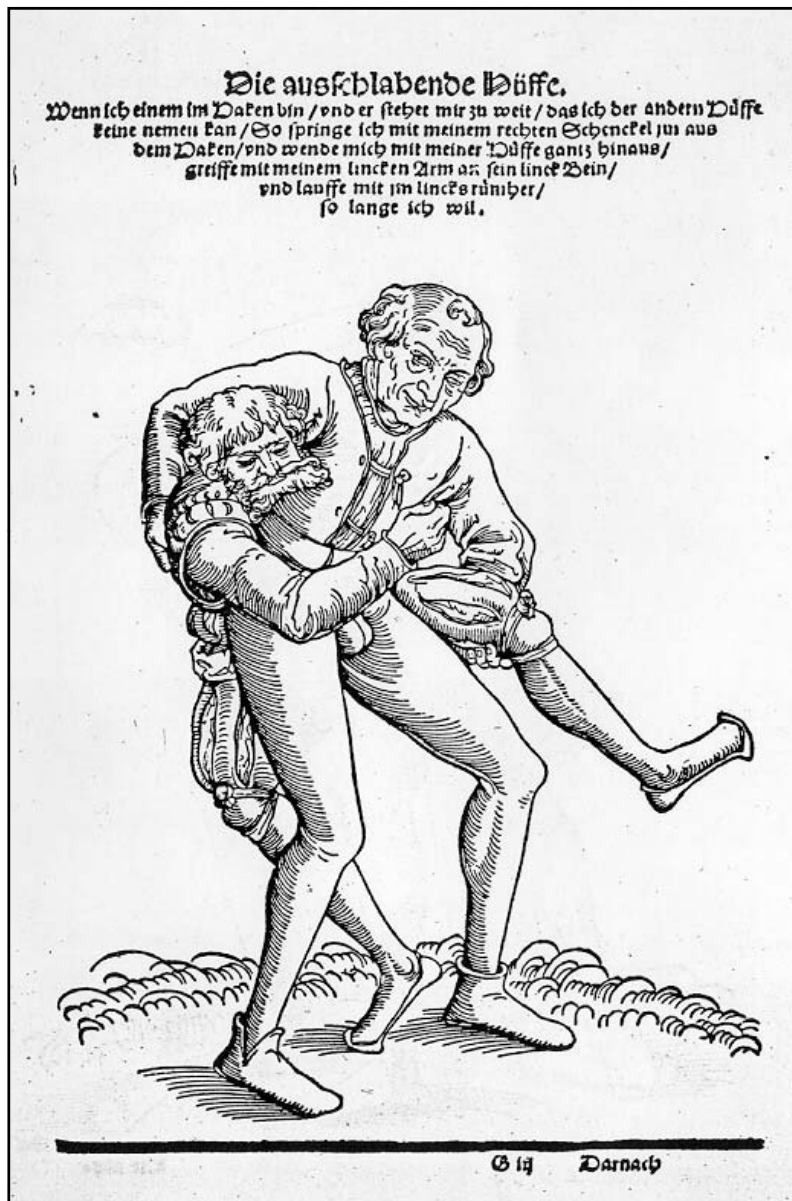
When he stretches my foot out of the hook
then I step with my right thigh, winding out against his right foot
and stretch my thigh.



70.

The high hip.

When I am in the hook
 and my opponent stands wide against me
 Then I spring for him with both of my legs
 and as I spring, give myself low in the balance
 and right my rear up
 thus I have power to pull him up and over.



71.

The rejected hip.

When someone puts me in a hook
and he stands too wide against me
so that I cannot take the other hip
Then I spring him out of the hook with my right thigh
and wind entirely out with my hip
grab his left leg with my left arm
and run with him to the left / as long as I wish.



72.

Thereafter I let my right hand go to his head
and at the same time grab his left leg up from under
Thus I make him into a sackpipe.



73.

This technique is called the back press.
 When someone would bring me in to him
 and I cannot take the hip
 then I step out of the hook with my right thigh
 as wide as I can
 and press into the middle of his back with my right elbow
 so that he must be trapped under me.
 This is my threat.



74.

This is the outer hook.

When we sweeps under my right arm with his head
Then I take the backward throw
as I also put him in the right hook.



75.

This is the underhook
that my right arm comes above his left
After this comes the backward throw.



76.

Whoever has this done to him
and would deny the backward throw
then I step with my right thigh outside of his left
and take the technique called the slant
he goes into the backward throw.



77.

This is also a technique from the underhook
that is called the half hip.

**Sie sehet sich an : wie man vor-
zeiten im Grublein gerungen hat.**

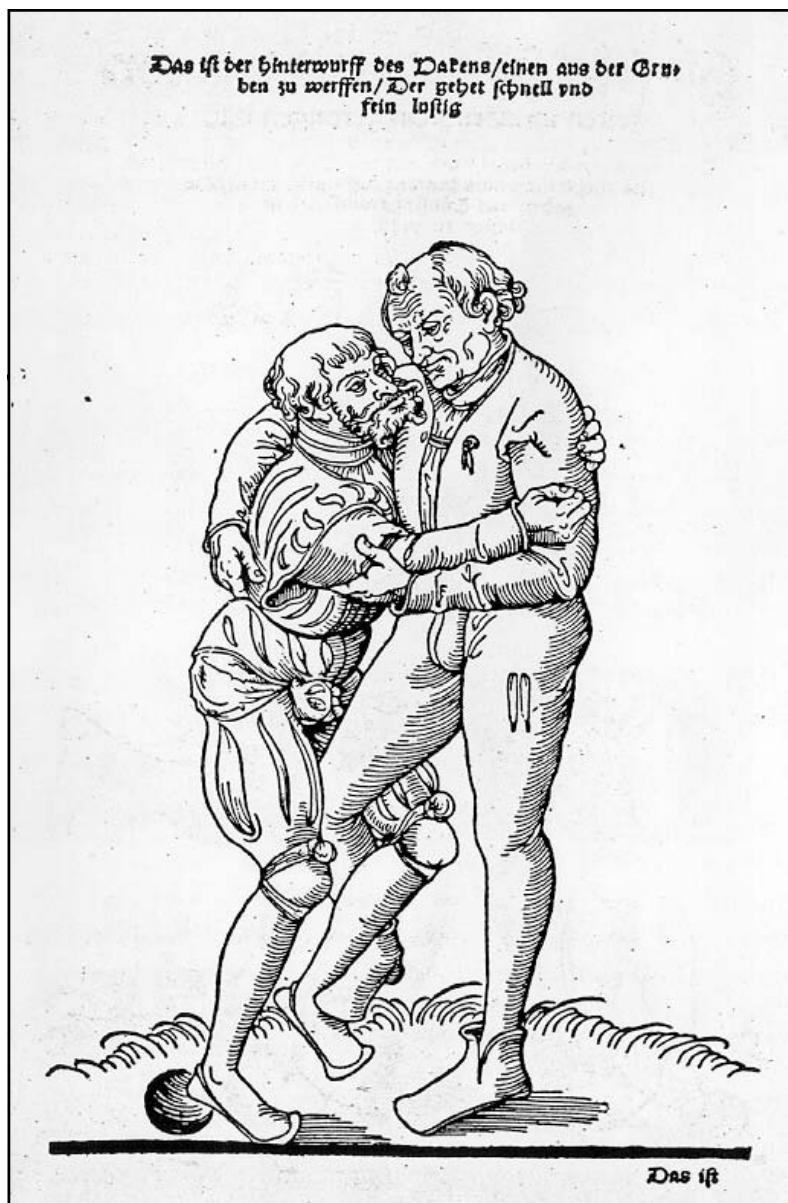
Der jnn der Gruben stehet/darff mit dem Beine nicht heraus/vnd
sein Gegenman mus huckten auff einem Beine/Da
gehen viel Künste darauff/vnd ist
lustig zu sehen.



78.

Look, thou, and see: how men in the past would wrestle in the hole.

One stands in the hole
and may not remove his leg from it
and his opponent must hop on one leg
Much art comes of this
and it is funny to see.



79.

This is the backwards throw from the hook
to throw him out from the hole
It goes quickly and is very funny.



80.

This is the hip and the back of the knee
which is also good when someone tries to throw me out from the hole
Then I come with my right thigh into the back of his knee
and wind to the right side.



81.

This is a technique to throw someone from the hole
it is called the Misthack
Here I come with my left leg into the back of his right knee
and bring him over backwards.



82.

This is a free technique from standing in the hole
When he enters into hooking me
Then I sweep through under his right arm with my head
and my right arm comes over the back of this neck
and my left arm comes between his legs
and runs him to the right
and I stay the whole time with my left thigh in the hole.



83.

This technique is done from within the hole
The trick is to take a hip
So I stand with my right thigh in the air
against him
And I stay with my left thigh in the hole
in the balance
is the trick.



84.

When he takes the Misthack against me
taking me on the inside with his left thigh
then I pull with my right thigh, winding inside his left
which is the break of the Misthack.



85.

Then I take the technique that pulls
with my right leg
I pull on his left leg
then he must go out against the Wisthack on the side
and he must fall.

Gedruckt zu Wittemberg
durch Hans Lufft.
M. D. XXXIX.

Printed in Wittemberg
by Hans Lufft.
A. D 1539.

Fabian von Auerswald's "Ringer kunst" :
Interpretation through language and organization
by James Klock

Having recently completed a modern English-language translation of a 16th century wrestling manual, I have begun to turn my attention towards understanding, interpreting and teaching the martial arts system described in that book. Along the way, two observations about the structure and linguistic content of the book immediately presented themselves. This paper attempts to justify, though an analysis of the word usage in the text, a very close and literal reading of the individual words, while also attempting to make sense of some potentially confusing organizational elements with respect to the order in which information is presented.

Context

Fabian von Auerswald's "Ringer kunst: funf und Achtzig Stücke" is one of the earliest printed books of wrestling, and has legitimate claims to a significant academic legacy: the eighty five plates described by the title, as well as the title plate and a portrait of the author, were created in the school of the notable painter and illustrator, Lucas Cranach the Elder. In addition, a note from the publisher, on the final page of the text, indicates that it was printed in Wittenberg in 1539, by Hans Lufft, who was also responsible for printing Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, in the same city and at about the same time.

However, this interpretation will not be concerned with the importance of the figures involved in the creation of the book, but will focus solely on its content, looking in particular at the language that is used, and the manner in which the book is organized. It is hoped that this analysis may both improve the reader's understanding of the system of martial arts described, and give some insight into the author's intention in writing the book.

Verbal Analysis

Purpose: In reading this text, it became apparent that von Auerswald was using a tightly limited vocabulary, with a very specific and careful choice of wording throughout. In order to test this idea, and look more closely at how the word choices influence the reader's understanding of the text, I

performed a basic analysis of the word usage, the results of which will be used to draw some conclusions about the significance of the limited vocabulary, and the specific words, that are used.

Methods: The verbal analysis presented here is based on the individual words used in the book. In order to focus on the technical material, I have discarded the forward, title plate, printer's mark and author's portraiture, including only the eighty five pieces of wrestling technique. The individual words in the text were considered, without reference to the context in which they appear: the individual words were collated into an alphabetically ordered list, without any indication of where each word appeared in the original text.

Different tenses and cases of each word were then convert into their root words (so, for example, the English words *eat*, *eaten* and *ate* would all be considered to be instances of the root word, *eat*), and root words were placed into one of six categories:

Verbs (which include all verbs, in any form)

Descriptors (which include words that direct placement, such as "in", "out", or "above")

Anatomical words (which refer to a specific part of the body : "foot", "hand", "leg", etc.)

Technical words (which refer to specific, named techniques, including locks, throws, etc.)

Timing words (which include any words that suggest when, in an engagement, an action occurs. Examples include "then", "when", "before", "while", "thereafter", etc.)

Miscellaneous words (including articles, possessives, and all other words that do not fit any of the above categories).

TABLE I: Results of verbal analysis

Category	Words	Tokens	Top 5 tokens, English translation (number of occurrences)
Descriptors	717	32	right (132), left (126), in (~80)*, to (45), on (43)
Verbs	524	74	come (39), take (35), step (31), go (28), trap (17)
Anatomy	360	24	arm (74), hand (61), leg (60), thigh (52), hip (~17)*
Timing	285	21	then (118), when (41), before (27), as (10), thereafter (10)
Technical	161	17	hook (37), break/counter (20), hip-throw (~17)*, balance (15), wind (14)

Results: The eighty five pieces of von Auerswald's book are annotated by 3,527 German words; however, when the text is collated into "tokens", or root words, as described above, there are fewer than 300 unique token words used. Of those, if we consider only the ten most common root words, (the, I, and, with, his, my, right, left, then, arm), they account for over 1400 words, nearly half of the words in the text. The results of this analysis are presented in Table I.

Known problems: Several words could not be reliably assigned to any category, without contextual clues, either because the same spelling was used to refer to two distinctive concepts, or because a single word may fit into either of several categories, depending on its usage. For example, the words "him" and "inside", in modern German, translate as *ihn* and *in*, respectively, but in von Auerswald's text, both are generally spelled as *in* (the same is true for the dative case, *ihm* and *im*). Also, some words may legitimately be placed in more than one category, depending on the context within which the word is used. For example, *Hüffe* (hip) can refer either to the anatomical body part, or to any of several hip-throw techniques (which are generally labeled with names such as "the short hip", "high hip", "half hip", etc.). *As an approximation, the results above count half the occurrences of any questionable word in each of its possible categories (so, for example, I assume that half of the uses of the word *Hüffe* refer to the hips themselves, and so are counted in the anatomical category, while the other half are assumed to refer to hip-throw techniques, and are accounted for in the technical category).

Conclusions: Von Auerswald describes his entire martial system using fewer than 300 unique root words (or "tokens"), and fewer than 100 words account for over 90% of the text. This does indeed suggest a precision in language, which may in turn suggest that a close reading of apparently similar words is appropriate: notably, the words *bein* (leg) and *schenkel* (thigh) appear with approximately the same frequency, and refer to the student's own appendages about as often as they refer to the opponent's. It is suggested, using this example, that the wrestling techniques described rely upon the accurate use of the upper and lower parts of the leg, depending on which word (*schenkel* or *bein*, respectively) is used (in other words, *bein* should be assumed to refer specifically to the lower part of the leg, as any action with the thigh may reasonable be assumed to be so labeled. At the same time, some indication of the important elements of the system can be gained, simply by examining the words that are used to describe it: the most common category of words are the verbs, and in particular, the verbs that refer to stepping, coming, going; this suggests a strong reliance on accurate footwork.

Organizational analysis

At first glance, “*Ringer kunst*” appears to have some peculiarities to its organizational system. Perhaps the most notable example is the sequence of “breaks against the hook”, that is to say, techniques that defend against a leg hook. Plates 45 through 49 describe three different breaks against the hook, while plate 50 gives a break *against* those breaks (ie, a counter-defense):

Break against the break of the entering hook
I stay under him in his balance
and with my right arm I force his left arm out
just exactly
as if I would run him into the hook
but stay standing with my legs
Thereby I learn
if he can break the entering hook
If he can,
then he comes to it
then I come with my right over his breast
and bring him back over my right knee
but if he cannot
then I take the hook with his help.

What is interesting about this sequence is that the hook itself is not described until *later* in the book (plate 58: The entering of the hook). In effect, what we see here is a series of defenses against a technique, as well as a counter-defense with the possibility of entering the technique, and only then the actual technique itself. The discovery of this sequence led me to create an index of the 85 pieces. Acknowledging that some techniques actually are described over the course of two or three pieces (each page of the book is described, by von Auerswald, as a separate piece), the index quickly reveals that all of the breaks or counters come in plates 38 through 57, and that the final eight plates of the book are a special reference to an outdated form of sport wrestling, where one player stands with his foot in a hole, and the other hops on one leg (other references to this are seen in Tahlhofer’s 1459 manuscript, as well as other sources).

With some analysis of the techniques that are described before and after the section on breaks, it becomes clear that the book is basically divided into several sections:

Plates 1-30: Entering techniques

Plates 31-37: Techniques for “rough people”

Plates 38-57: Breaks and counter-breaks

Plates 58-77: Finishing techniques

Plates 78-85: Wrestling in the hole

Taken from this perspective, the development of techniques in the original example becomes clear: the student of von Auerswald's system is expected to first learn the fundamentals of wrestling, including techniques that allow one to safely enter into engagement, to capture the opponent's hips and constrain his movement, and to manipulate his arms and legs. Having learned these basics, the student is then taught a few techniques for dealing with an overly violent opponent (interestingly, plates 1-30 and 38-85 all show the same, consistently recognizable player acting as von Auerswald's opponent, while plates 31-37, the rough techniques, use a different opponent from the rest of the book). After this, the reader is taught how to counter his opponent's techniques-- in most cases, we have not yet learned to execute those techniques, ourselves, but the descriptions of the counters give us adequate information to recognize the situation: it is not required that we be able to *perform* the hook, in order that we learn to *defend against* it. Then, at last, having learned to defend ourselves, we are taught finishing techniques, which will throw the opponent to the ground, or (in a few cases) break his limbs. Lastly, we are given a diversion into a historical style of wrestling (antiquated even in von Auerswald's time, according to his own comments on it).

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