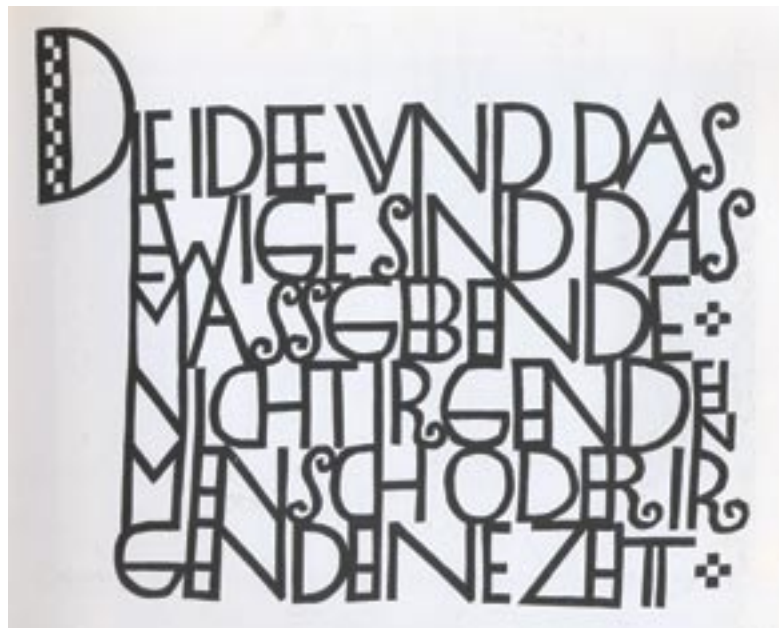


Tschichold v

Jan Tschichold is born in Leipzig, Germany, the son of a sign painter. As a young man, he studies calligraphy at the Leipzig Academy, and begins his career as a calligrapher.

1900

1902



Left, Lettering, 1923. An example of Tschichold's early work as a calligrapher, the interweaving of the letters is amazing and successful.

Below, Joseph Albers, inspiration from the Bauhaus exhibition in 1923.

Bottom, a letterhead done by Tschichold in a style strikingly similar to the Albers.

Tschichold

The essence of the New Typography is clarity. This puts it into deliberate opposition to the old typography whose aim was "beauty" and whose clarity did not attain the high level we require today. This utmost clarity is necessary today because of the manifold claims for our attention made by the extraordinary amount of print, which demands the greatest economy of expression. The gentle swing of the pendulum between ornamental type, the (superficially understood) "beautiful" appearance, and "adornment" by extraneous additions (ornaments) can never produce the pure form we demand today. Especially the feeble clinging to the bugbear of arranging type on a central axis results in the extreme inflexibility of contemporary typography.

In the old typography, the arrangement of individual units is subordinated to the principle of arranging everything on a central axis. In my historical introduction I have shown that this principle started in the Renaissance and

has not yet been abandoned. Its superficiality becomes obvious when we look at Renaissance or Baroque title-pages. Main units are arbitrarily cut up: for example, logical order, which should be expressed by the use of different type-sizes, is ruthlessly sacrificed to external form. Thus the principal line contains only three-quarters of the title, and the rest of the title, set several sizes smaller, appears in the next line. Such things admittedly do not happen today, but the rigidity of the central-axis setting hardly allows work to be carried out with the degree of logic we now demand. The central axis runs through the whole like an artificial, invisible backbone: its *raison d'être* is today as pretentious as the tall white collars of Victorian gentlemen. Even in good central-axis composition the contents are subordinated to the "beautiful line arrangement." The whole is a "form" which is predetermined and therefore must be inorganic.

We believe it is wrong to arrange a text as if there were some focal point in the center of a



"BUGRA" (International Exhibition of the Graphic Arts) in Leipzig was an important event, and the "Hall of Culture," which remained open after the main exhibition closed, laid the foundations of Tschichold's education.

Tschichold attends the first Bauhaus exhibition, held in Weimar, and is deeply impressed by the work of Gropius, Klee, Kandinsky, and others from the Bauhaus and Russian Constructivist movements. The exhibit has a profound effect on his own work.

1914 1916 1919 1920 1921 1923

Student Teacher Training College in Grimma, near Leipzig

Worked in School of Arts and Crafts, Dresden, under Heinrich Wieyneck, and was then appointed assistant in charge of evening classes in lettering at the Leipzig Academy, by Walter Tiemann, whose special student he became.



Double spread from Die Neue Typographie. The book was set in a non-artist-designed sans serif. Printed on off-white matte text paper, the book was meant to be a practical working guide, but as everything Tschichold designed, was elegant and original. The last sentence on p.14 reads in English: 'That is why printers today have a duty to concern themselves with these questions. Some have forged ahead with energy and creative success: for the rest, however, it seems that there is still almost EVERYTHING to do!'



Lower left, a left-hand page in the Leipzig printing periodical *Typographische Mitteilungen*, 1925, containing Tschichold's basic four principles for the new typography. Note under '4' the emphasis on sans serif showing the five main variations in the type.



Middle, *Die Frau Ohne Namen* (The woman without a name) film poster for Phoebus Palast Cinema, Munich, 1927.

Top right, invitation notice for a lantern lecture by Tschichold in 1927.



Freelance work in Berlin.

Married Edith Kramer. Invited by Paul Renner to German Master Printers' School, Munich, to teach typography and calligraphy.

Birth of son Peter.

Nazi arrest Tschichold and his wife in their apartment, accusing him of creating "un-German typography." After six weeks in custody, Tschichold is released, and he and his family emigrate to Basel, Switzerland. He works there as a book designer.

1925

1926

1927

1928

1929

1930

1933

Tschichold designs a 24-page insert into the typography journal *typographische mitteilungen* called "Elementare Typographie," it explains the principles of asymmetrical typography to typesetters, printers, and designers.

Tschichold publishes *Die Neue Typographie* (The New Typography).

line which would justify such an arrangement. Such points of course do not exist, because we read by starting at one side (Europeans for example read from left to right, the Chinese from top to bottom and right to left). Axial arrangements are illogical because the distance of the stressed, central parts from the beginning and end of the word sequences is not usually equal but constantly varies from line to line.

But not only the preconceived idea of axial arrangement but also all other preconceived ideas like those of the pseudo-constructivists are diametrically opposed to the essence of the New Typography. Every piece of typography which originates in a preconceived idea of form, of whatever kind, is wrong. The New Typography is distinguished from the old by the fact that its first objective is to develop its visible form out of the functions of the text. It is essential to give pure and direct expression to the contents of whatever is printed; just as in the works of technology and nature, "form" must be created out of function. Only then can we achieve a typography which expresses the spirit of modern man. The function of printed text is communication, emphasis (word value), and the logical sequence of the contents.

Every part of a text relates to every other part by a definite, logical relationship of emphasis and value, predetermined by content. It is up to the typographer to express this relationship clearly and visibly, through type sizes and weight, arrangement of lines, use of color, photography, etc.

The typographer must take the greatest care to study how his work is read and ought to be

read. It is true that we usually read from top left to bottom right but this is not a law.... There is no doubt that we read most printed matter in successive steps: first the heading (which need not be the opening word) and then, if we continue to read the printed matter at all, we read the rest bit by bit according to its importance. It is therefore quite feasible to start reading a text at a different point from the top left. The exact place depends entirely on the kind of printed matter and the text itself. But we must admit that there are dangers in departing from the main rule of reading from the top to bottom. One must therefore, in general, not set a following body of text higher than the preceding one assuming that the arrangement of the text has a logical sequence and order.

Working through a text according to these principles will usually result in a rhythm different from that of former symmetrical typography. Asymmetry is the rhythmic expression of function design. In addition to being more logical, asymmetry has the advantage that its complete appearance is far more optically effective than symmetry.

Hence the predominance of asymmetry in the New Typography. Not least, the liveliness of asymmetry is also an expression of our own movement and that of modern life; it is a symbol of the changing forms of life in general when asymmetrical movement in typography takes the place of symmetrical repose. This movement must not however degenerate into unrest or chaos. A striving for order can, and must, also be expressed in asymmetrical form. It is the only way to make a better, more natural

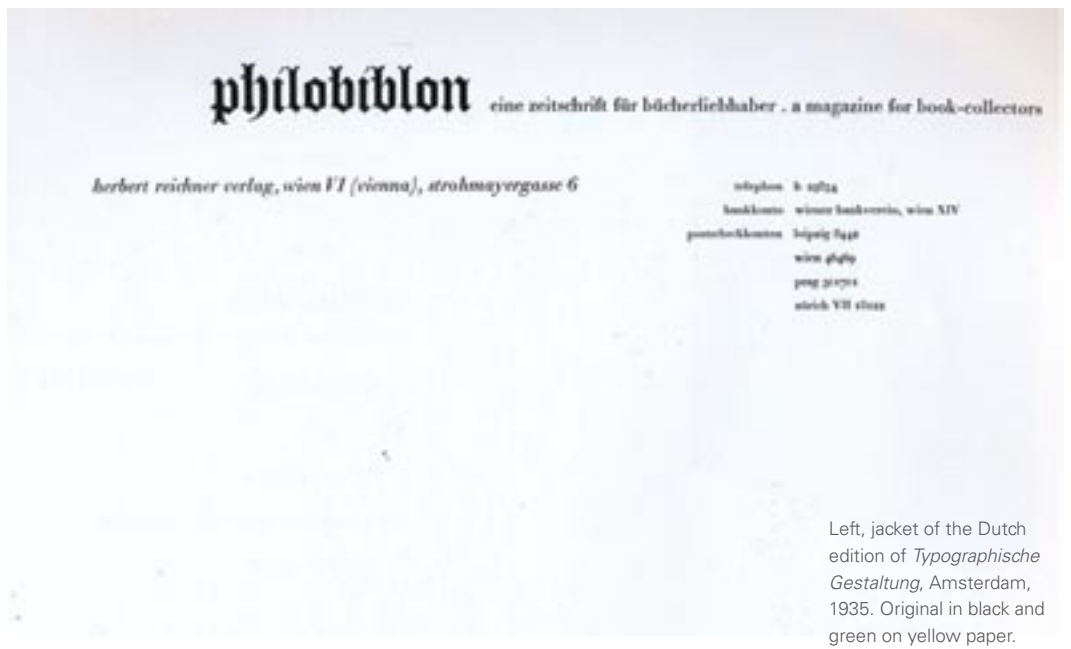
order possible, as opposed to symmetrical form which does not draw its laws from within itself but from outside.

Furthermore, the principle of asymmetry gives unlimited scope for variation in the New Typography. It also expresses the diversity of modern life, unlike central-axis typography which, apart from variations of typeface (the only exception), does not allow such variety.

While the New Typography allows much greater flexibility in design, it also encourages "standardization" in the construction of units, as in building. The old typography did the opposite: it recognized only one basic form, the central-axis arrangement, but allowed all possible and impossible construction elements (typefaces, ornaments, etc.).

The need for clarity in communication raises the question of how to achieve clear and unambiguous form. Above all, a fresh and original intellectual approach is needed, avoiding all standard solutions. If we think clearly and approach each task with a fresh and determined mind, a good solution will usually result.

—from *Die neue Typographie*, 1928
by Jan Tschichold



Left, jacket of the Dutch edition of *Typographische Gestaltung*, Amsterdam, 1935. Original in black and green on yellow paper.

Right, letterhead in the new typography for the Bradford printers Lund Humphries, 1935.

Part-time work for publisher Benno Schwabe in Basel.

1935

1936

1937

1940

Exhibition of Tschichold's typography in the London office of Lund Humphries Printers. Publication of *Typographische Gestaltung*.

Paper read to Double Crown Club, London



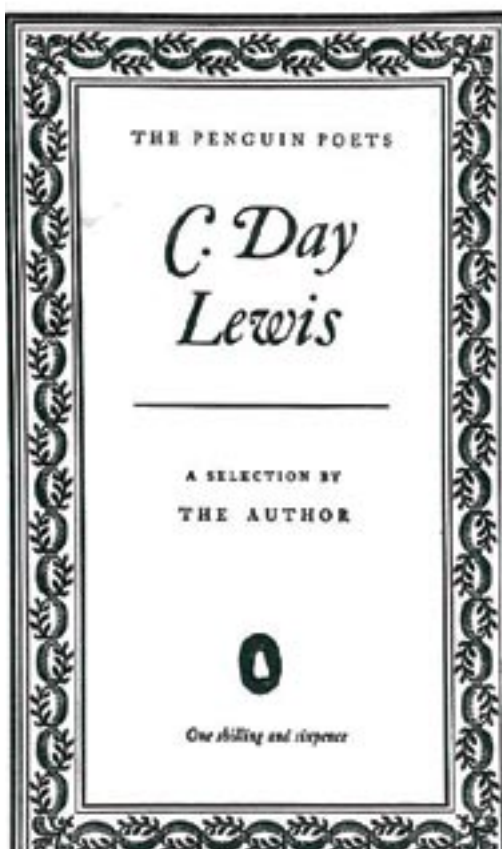
A Return to Tradition

The younger generation of composers cannot easily imagine the condition of German (and Swiss) typography around 1923, before the advent of the New Typography. The average display advertisement and printed job used a variety of type-faces inconceivable today and was uninhibited by any rules of order. The New Typography...attempted a clean-up by returning to the simplest forms and rules. We saw aesthetic models in industrial products and, believing the sans serif to be the simplest type-face (wrongly, as it turned out), we declared it to be the modern face. At the same time we, a group of artists, attempted to use asymmetry to oust symmetrical design, which was hardly ever employed in an intelligible manner. Everything symmetrical was unthinkingly assigned to the propaganda methods of political absolutism and declared obsolete. The historical value of these efforts toward a typographical upheaval derives from

the removal of dead elements from typography, the acceptance of photography, the modernization of typographical rules and many other new stimuli, without which the appearance of today's typography in German-speaking countries would not have been possible. The tragedy was that this truly ascetic simplicity soon reached a point where no further development was possible. It was a recruiting camp for newer developments, needed at the time, but to which no one wanted to return.

The derivation of typographical rules from the principles of painting formerly known as 'abstract' or 'non-objective' and now called 'concrete' (Lissitzky, Mondrian, Moholy-Nagy) resulted in a valuable and temporarily novel typography. But it seems to me no coincidence that this typography was practised almost exclusively in Germany and found little acceptance in other countries. Because its impatient attitude

Before his arrival [at Penguin Books] the design of individual books had appeared cohesive, at least compared to those of rival publishers, but had varied with the views of the editor and printer. A firm believer in typographic systems, Tschichold designed a template for all Penguin books with designated positions for the title and author's name with a line between the two. He unified the design of the front, spine and back and redrew Edward Young's endearingly amateurish Penguin symbol in eight variations. Finally he produced a set of Composition Rules which, he insisted, were to be followed by Penguin's typographers and printers to ensure that the same style was always applied.



Left, title page of Tschichold's book on *Masterworks of calligraphy from four centuries*, Birkhäuser, 1945.

Middle, cover for C. Day Lewis, designed according to the rules outlined by Tschichold for Penguin Books.

Right, the opening page for the King Penguin on Edward Gortdon Craig, 1948.

Tschichold writes to Max Bill that the New Typography was a product of its time, a response to the conditions of German typography and politics, but that it is not universally appropriate. Believing that graphic designers should embrace the tradition and history of typographers past, his own work begins to turn back towards classicism and humanism, as evidenced by his typography for Penguin Books. He continues to work and write in Switzerland.

Elected Honorary Member of the Double Crown Club, London.

1941

1945

1946

1947

Typographer for Penguin Books, London.

1950



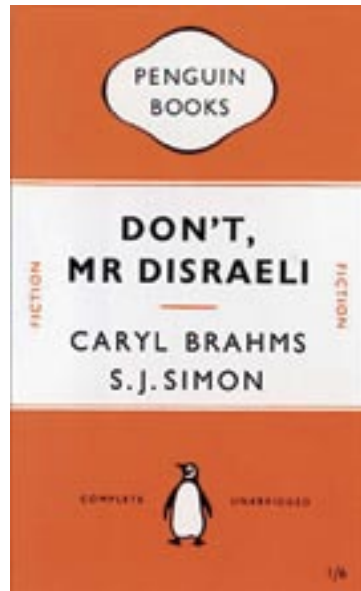
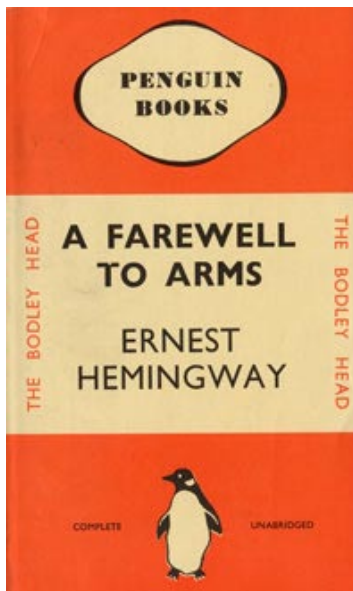
left, drawing for Tschichold's Sabon Typeface, 1965. The face was designed for German master printers who required that it should be produced in identical form for both mechanical composition by Linotype and Monotype, and hand composition in foundry types.



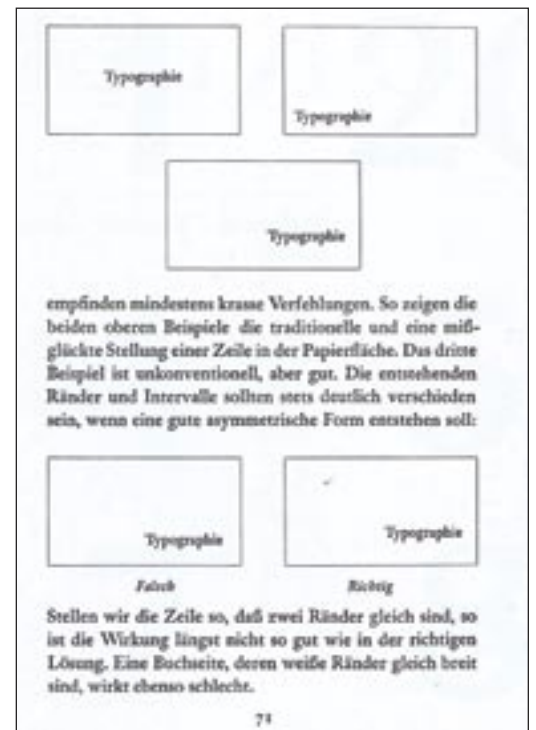
hier ist das normale c. Das Tropfen von unten. Bitte es entsprechend korrigieren.
 A nicht unversändert.
 Korrigiert
 Korrigiert
 Korrigiert

27.8.65 Tschichold

right, a page from Tschichold's *Erfreuliche Drucksachen durch gute Typographie*, (Pleasant printing through good typography), Ravensburg, 1960. He states: "Margins and intervals must always be clearly different, if a good asymmetric form is to be created. If the two margins are equal, the result is not nearly so effective as the example on the right, A page of type with equal margins will also look wrong."



At Penguin Books, Tschichold updated the design and standardized the layout of each book cover. Here you see the earlier style by the previous editor, and at the right is the redesign by Tschichold.



1954

1955

Typographic Advisor to the pharmaceutical firm F. Hoffmann-La Roche in Basel.

1960

conforms to the German bent for the absolute, and its military will to regulate and its claim to absolute power reflect those fearful components of the German character which set loose Hitler's power and the Second World War.

I saw this only later, in democratic Switzerland. Since then I have ceased publicizing the New Typography... The New or functional Typography is well suited for publicizing industrial products (it has the same origin), and it fulfils that purpose now as well as then. Yet its means of expression are limited because it strives solely for puritanical 'clarity' and 'purity'...

But there are many typographical problems which cannot be solved on such regimented lines without doing violence to the text. Every experienced typographer knows this. Many jobs, especially books, are far too complicated for the simplifying procedures of the New Typography. And the extremely personal nature of the New Typography presents grave dangers to the coherence of a work when the designer cannot continually check each page and deal with all the minute problems that arise. For it has been shown that the apparently simple rules of functional typography are not common knowledge, because they spring from a special, in effect fanatical, attitude of conspirators into whose group one must first be 'initiated.'

Traditional typography is quite different: it is far from being unorganic, it can easily be understood by everybody, its finer points are not difficult to appreciate, it presumes no sectarianism and its application in the hands of a beginner does not produce nearly so many blunders as

the New Typography in the hands of the uninitiated....

Since nothing new remains new forever, the appearance of typography will continue to change, perhaps to the point where today's competitive economic system will have to give way to one based merely on what is needed. He who does away with surprise, the goal that puritanical, functional typography aims for, and would like to limit himself to a sober presentation of the message, will learn a lesson when he has to fulfil the sometimes unreasonable wishes of his customers. It is a notable deficiency of the New or functional Typography that it is not suitable for work which must reflect the character of an institution. It is forced to extreme solutions which are often far from practical (e.g. use of several colours, superfluous halftones, expensive paper). The lasting contributions of the New Typography are tight setting, better composition, better type-faces and the dissemination of useful rules:

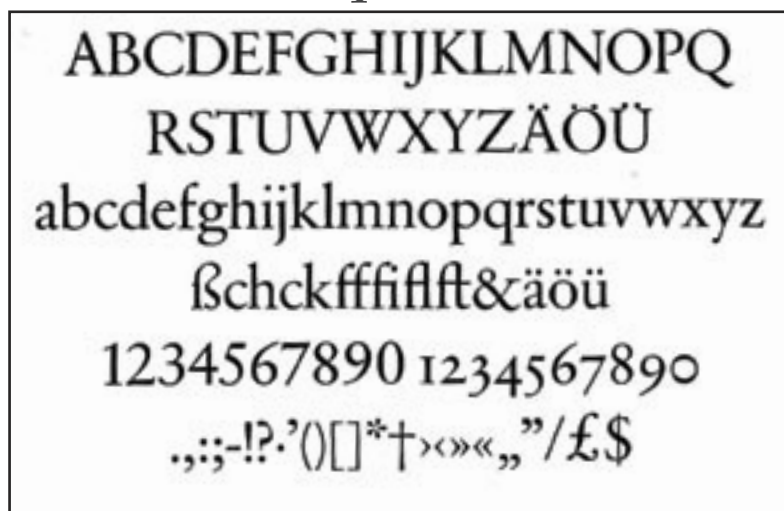
1. Fewest possible type-faces.
2. Fewest possible type sizes.
3. No letter-spacing of lower case.
4. Emphasis by using italic or bold of the same face.
5. Use capitals only as an exception, then always carefully letter-spaced.
6. Form groups no more than three.

— from a letter to Max Bill, June, 1946

Lasting Contributions of the New Typography

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6. Form groups no more than three.

Sabon Antiqua



Left, a full font of Sabon Antiqua, 1965

Right, title page of Tschichold's booklet on Chinese blocks; the origin of book printing, privately printed, 1972.



Typographic Advisor to the pharmaceutical firm F. Hoffmann-La Roche in Basel.

1967

1970

1974

1964

Began work on design of Sabon typeface

Tschichold dies. As the designer who brought modern typography out of the closed world of the Bauhaus and into the mainstream his legacy endures.