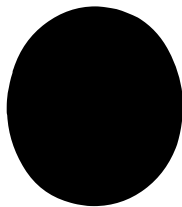


1.1

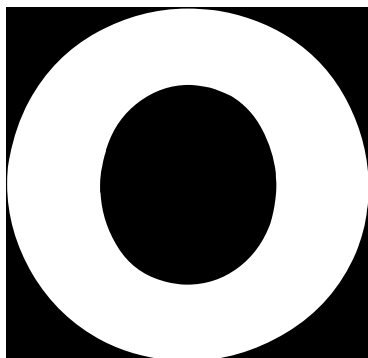


A letter is two shapes, one light, one dark. I call the light shape the white of the letter and the dark shape the black. The black consists of the regions of the letter that enclose the white. White and black can be replaced by any combination of a light colour and dark colour, and light and dark can switch roles, but the intriguing effects of these permutations lie outside the scope of this book. Thus I will call the strokes the black of the letter and the enclosed shapes the white of the letter, even in the case of figure 1.1, where I represent the white shape with a dark area. The black shape cannot be altered without the enclosed white shape changing and vice versa.

In figure 1.2 the letters from figure 1.1 appear on 'white' rectangles. In all three cases the exterior shape of the o has the same surface area. The surface area of this white does not change when the black shape undergoes changes, but the relation of this surface area to the surface area of the interior shape does change. In the third rectangle the perceptual significance of the exterior shape is much greater than in the first rectangle because in the first rectangle the exterior shape is overwhelmed by the large interior shape.

In practice a free-standing letter on a small rectangle is a rarity. A word usually consists of two or more adjacent letters. Figure 1.3 is a simple schematic of this. The white space between the letters in the second combination is identical to that in the first, but the perceptual significance of this white is so much greater that it drives the letters apart. In the third combination the bond is restored by the drastic reduction of the space between the letters. Maintaining the equilibrium in the white shapes makes all the difference. The white of the word is my only holdfast.

1.2

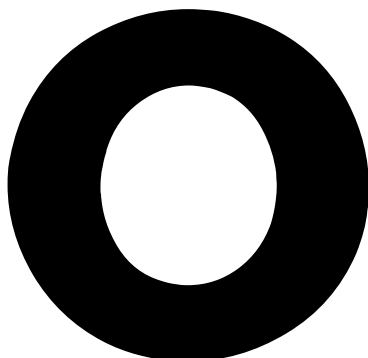


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1.3



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