

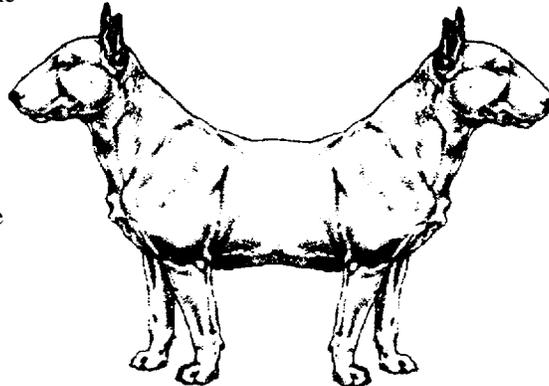


As a novice in the world of show dogs many years ago, I deemed it essential that I become totally conversant with the AKC Standard defining my breed of choice. Not only was I to become expert on canine anatomy and the special terms used in the field, but I felt it important that I memorize all the essential elements of the standard. I was somewhat taken aback very early when I came upon the phrase "symmetrical in outline" in the general description of the breed. Since I worked as an applied mathematician and wrote and published technical articles in the field, I was sure that I knew what was meant by the word, symmetrical. So here was the



puzzlement! Every large animal on earth possesses what is called bilateral symmetry, while some few smaller species are radially symmetric and some microorganisms are even spherically symmetric. Why state the obvious! Unless the dog was horribly deformed, it had bilateral symmetry the same as every other dog, that is, its right side was essentially a mirror image of its left side.

However, there is another meaning for the artist and composer than the mathematician means something like well-proportioned means that sort of unity of several parts whole.¹ Beauty is bound up with this sense that the words are used in the



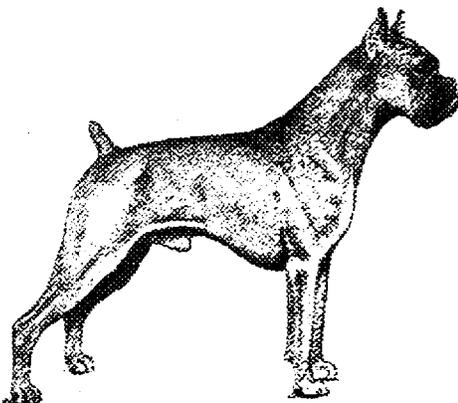
word symmetric more common to the mathematician. In the broader sense symmetric, well-balanced, and symmetry which integrate into a balanced sense of symmetry, and it is in this standard.

According to Nicholas, symmetry (in the layman to understand than type.

sense of balance) is far easier for the

Balance in dogs, as in everything else, means proportion. A well-balanced dog possesses neither glaring faults nor one outstanding feature. He pleases the eye by his nicely proportioned appearance. The various features of the well-balanced dog are in correct relation one to the other, height to length, neck to back, head to neck and body, length and width of skull to foreface, all fitting to each other in the manner described by the standard. Balance is an invaluable asset to a show dog, attracting and appealing instantly by its look of rightness.²

Of the various elements that make up balance in a dog the easiest to depict is that of angulation where we assess the match of front to rear. Good angulation is essential to long, effortless stride and smooth action. Nonetheless, a dog with poor angulation, but in balance front and rear, may often move better than a dog with better angulation that lacks balance.



We examine the balance of three of the various Boxers depicted in Enno Meyer's 1945 book. First, presented as the ideal male showing both the proper type and balance, is the dog depicted on the left. This dog manifests the robust build and distinct musculature which is not exaggerated or overdone, presenting the proper balance and symmetry that is demanded of the working dog. Working dog structure requires that all component parts contribute to the exercise of the required activities. Both the front assemblage and the rear are well angulated and balanced.

References:

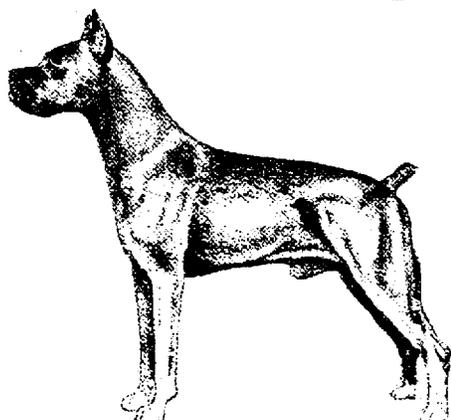
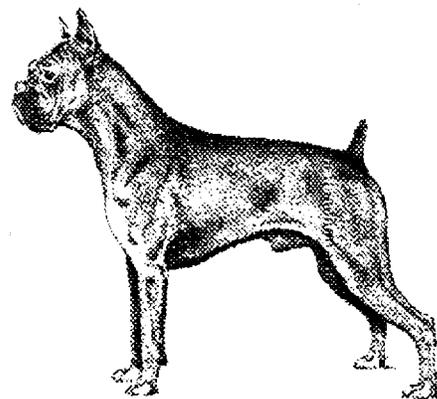
¹Weyl, Hermann, "Symmetry," in *The World of Mathematics*, vol 1, p 671, Newman, James R., ed.

²Nicholas, Anna Katherine, *The Nicholas Guide to Dog Judging*, p22, 3rd ed, Howell Book House, New York, 1989

Meyer, Enno, *Judging the Boxer*, 1945, as quoted by Nicholas



The boxer depicted on the top right, on the other hand, is of fair, overall squareness, but with easily apparent faults, the most noticeable of which is the over-angulation of the hindquarters. As a fault of conformation, this mars the general outline of the dog, and more than that, it may impede the movement and staying power of the working dog not endowed with the long body needed to help compensate for the unmatched drive from the rear.



The Boxer on the bottom left, though somewhat lacking in Boxer type, is of good, sound stance and conformation. More nearly showing the terrier type with a straighter front and corresponding wider angles at the stifle. Nonetheless, this specimen is in balance, front and rear, and as such can be expected to show better movement and greater staying power than his less fortunate brethren lacking the balance he possesses.