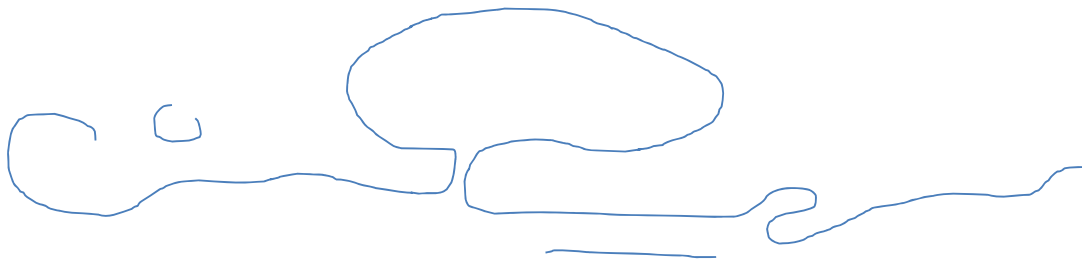


ATCK: Finding a work of art, an exercise in panoptic thought

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For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

The plot of this text:



God, Pushkin (but then without the second) and the technology of vision

God, (...) can you see me? Of course he can; God sees everything. He *must* see me. But *how* does He do it? *How* does He manage to see everything? What techniques does He have up his sleeve? What technology of sight? All-seeingness is a difficult concept to grasp at the best of times; like unity-in-variety or perfection-within-this-vale-of-tears-called-life; both of them concepts that are difficult to understand from the point of view of a human philosophy of technology which after all, looks for progress and, therefore, difference and imperfection. God sees everything and he does so *by definition*. After all, a God that cannot see everything is hardly worth the investment; he would be imperfect, less than ideal. The rest, apart from perhaps ubiquity, is not so difficult; we can all separate and order, we can make water into wine, walk on water, fly, you name it. We don't have the miracles of the old world available to us, but those of the new: technology, industry, production and process management. However, the ability to see everything at once is of a different order to changing water into wine. Perhaps that is a good thing, otherwise we'd be playing gods before long and I don't think we have the skills, requisite technology or the experience. Even so, Nicholas of Cusa had found a compelling answer to this difficult question. In his *De visione Dei sive de icona* from 1453

he explains how it works.¹ If you have ever wondered how the eyes of a painted or photographed portrait keep following you, regardless of where you stand and however many people are looking at it simultaneously, you'd be on the right track. The portrait looks at everyone and everything looking at it simultaneously! In that way, says Nicholas of Cusa, God sees everything. Clever really, a nice idea. It was during the renaissance that this kind of diagrammatic spatial thinking became possible through developments in observation and the systematic representation of space. The figures from before the renaissance never physically transgress their own world to penetrate ours; apart from a few wayward exceptions, they stay well within their own virtual space. And then, from the renaissance onwards, figures begin to jump from two to three dimensions with conviction and confidence, try to creep into our world in all sorts of ways; real space and virtual space form a single continuum, each covering their own side of the spectrum. Nicholas of Cusa's theory poses two problems. The first is that the whole idea rests on a relatively simple device, an illusion, a trick of perspective. This might make us think that an all-seeing God might Himself be the product of an illusion, a trick of perspective? If however, God turns out to have been made in our image, as a portrait-come-sounding-board or visual echo chamber for our own questions and despair, then that gives us our second problem: who or what is a God, that keeps on staring at us like that? Hasn't he got something better to do?

AT-CLUB-K

Topp & Dubio have started a club. I have become a member. I did not want to become a member, but my opinion wasn't asked. Membership is the purpose of their club; it constitutes a purpose in itself. An opinion regarding membership is of no interest to them. One is not a member of their club for a reason, in order to do this or that, or to enjoy this or that privilege; one is a member in order to be a member; membership is a strictly circular affair, a fact in itself. It doesn't cost anything, nothing is expected of you and membership doesn't actually lead anywhere, it serves no purpose beyond being one. Membership of their club is as impotent as the all-seeing stare of a blind portrait: it is all there is, all there is, is the trick, the trick is all there is and if you feel uncomfortable about it, then that is your problem. There is a selection process: anyone and everyone who has witnessed one of the clubs events is automatically a member, although this rule can easily be waived. As a witness, membership of their club is as inevitable and inescapable as existence itself. We didn't ask to be born, but we were; we did not ask to become a member of their club; but some of us are. It is of that order. If you do not want to be a member and are prepared to make a fuss about it your membership acquires specificity and emphasis as well as a certain tragic potential. For example, people who, as a result of the inescapable nature of their membership, become aggressive are not given the option to give up their membership, life is not that simple. Instead their membership is treated with great discretion: all reference to it is carefully avoided all evidence is destroyed and your membership becomes purely virtual. It is in a sense the ideal club for people who are not- and do not want to become members of a club. The club has no purpose once you are in it and it has no borders separating those outside from the inside. The wonderful thing is that their club is not at odds with logic, it contains no insurmountable contradictions or any existential inconsistency whatsoever; it is a club that is possible and because of its possibility, it exists. I like that. It is tidy. It is good to know that there is a club for everyone, anyone, anything and everything. I shall have to

¹ Sloterdijk, *Sferen*, Deel 1 Bellen, Microsferologie, hoofdstuk 8 Mij nader dan ik zelf, Theologische propedeuse voor een theorie van het gemeenschappelijke binnen, Amsterdam, Boom, 2003, 362 en verder

remember to ask them whether the club, which is after all a corporate body, an institution, can have itself as a member. If so we shall have done with Russel's silly paradox. (I'm not going to explain that, look it up) This club of which I have become a member against my will and at the cost of a great deal of suspicion and distrust on my part, is called the Art and Tennis Club of Kaliningrad, or the Aey Tee See Kay. If you say it quickly enough it sounds like ATTACK!

I do not play tennis, I do not make art and I have never been in Kaliningrad nor do I have any ambition to go there. Nevertheless even I have to recognize that tennis and art constitute important activities. Tennis is as important as art and everything else. In economic terms both tennis and art are major industries, each with an annual turnover of billions. In political terms, as part of the generic world of *sport, culture and leisure*, tennis and art often share a government department and are equally often represented by the same minister or secretary of state. Art and tennis are thus made to belong to each other, and this can be no accident. There must be a philosophical basis to it. My theory is that this twinning has come about because art and sport both measure man and his world. This requires a technical explanation. But first I want to say something about the art of Topp & Dubio.

ART &-TCK I: finding the assignment

They phoned me on a winter evening; they had lost something they said. Could I perhaps find it for them? Of course, I said, I find all sorts of things. They turned up, we had a good time. They had founded a club, the ATCK, and had organized all sorts of events under its auspices, 18 in all. But now that it was all over, they had discovered that they had, amidst all those activities, in fact *lost the work of art*. I was reduced to silence. To have lost a work of art while one still has possession of all its constituent parts takes skill. During the silence I began to see the problem. You can see it like a cloister garden: a beautiful and elegant building with impressive galleries set around an empty garden, in other words, lots of stuff around the edges and nothing in the middle. And yet the empty centre *makes* the fullness of the whole. It was the most beautiful assignment I had ever received. A philosophy detective: To find a work of art that is lost within the things and events that make it. It was not just a banal question of finding coherence in the mess, a single line within the heterogeneity of the 18 separate events; it could be nothing as simple as that. I was asked *to find* a work of art. We spent a few pleasant evenings during which they told me stories; I saw the remnants and ruins of these stories in the shape of announcements, posters, flyers, bits and pieces, abandoned fragments that were gradually becoming absorbed within the geological layers of their studio and thus, removed from their original purpose and context started telling new stories that had never been told. In fact this process of finding the work of art became one of the events, the nineteenth perhaps.

And so I began to look at *finding* as an activity. What does it mean to find something? The problem of finding something is, from a philosophical point of view, interesting. I tried it out on my students, I told them. "I have been given the assignment to find a work of art". I tried to say it as casually as I could. That was difficult, admittedly, as I like to look people in the eye when testing them. The first student immediately grasped the sensitive nature of the assignment. "Do you mean *to find* in the sense of *seek and thou shalt find*," she asked, "or do you mean *to find* in the sense of *discovering a point of view and claiming it as your opinion about something*?" That seemed a good beginning, a clear distinction: I simply had to choose which kind of finding was required of me and proceed to the

task. But this was not as easy as it looked. I soon lost confidence in the distinction; I could not find a real difference in these two ways of finding. It seemed easy enough; one finds a wallet on the street and one finds that one has become slightly overweight. If I merely had to find something in the sense of holding an opinion about something, I would still have to find what it is that I would want to claim as my opinion, I would, figuratively speaking still have to find the wallet and work out my alternatives before deciding on one of them. The '*what*' would have to be sought out, looked for and then carefully given a place in my collection of ideas about the world. The finding of *seek and thy shalt find*, is no different even though I did not know what it was I would find, even if I have found it. What is a work of art?

Without doubt that what I was looking for had left traces which might be of forensic value. It would certainly make things easier to find. But can one trust these traces? What is it one finds through forensic investigation? One might be tempted to answer: *what happened*. But it isn't as easy as that. One finds *what happened as presented by a set of traces*, a set which one has oneself elevated to the status of a set, a collection, a club. To do this one decides that these traces share something in common, namely that they all belong to the same story. But traces are rarely to be trusted fully, so that what one finds might, without ever being found out, be transformed into something bigger and less accurate something belonging to the world of manufactured history, myth. The greater one's experience at these things the better one gets of course. But is my experience up to it? If one is no good at finding things the work of art will become larger, smaller or fundamentally different to the original they lost. In this way possibilities grow exponentially. The search would become schizophrenic as the work of art would proliferate and transform in the act of looking for it. It goes without saying that accuracy is the aim, and it is a good one. After all that which was lost was worth looking for. So we do not really want to find something that wasn't there, that didn't happen. Accuracy might hold the key to my search. But even this is worrisome. Historical accuracy, the reconstruction of *what happened* is subject to the vagaries of perspective and point of view. This does not mean that there is no original to be found, it does however mean that the original has an infinite number of aspects; it can be approached from an infinite number of points of view and framed within a limitless number of perspectives.

To find something is treacherous. It is also risky, after all that which I find, builds me in my relationship to my body and my environment; it manufactures my *self*. My *me* is no more than a loose collection of standpoints, points of view, attitudes, not rarely inconsistent and sometimes even blatantly contradictory. Attitudes shape the body in its environment and encourage the body to reshape the environment in order to bring the two together in a search for freedom or, which comes down to the same thing a genuinely harmonious coexistence. The more care is given to forming and curating the collection of opinions one builds up over a lifetime the better one's *I* will preserve itself and keep itself fit for the *you* it is directed towards. In finding their work of art, I was agreeing to potentially transform myself into nothing less than an aspect of their work of art. Anyway, I was soon settled in my mind to find a work of art one needs carefully constructed opinions about all sorts of things, including the act of finding and the nature of a work of art; that finding a work of art is no different to searching out and holding an opinion. That opinion might well constitute the face of the work of art, its recognisable and coherent façade in my finding. To find something *about* something is to place it in my world, or rather in my portrait of that world.

If a work of art is lost, it is the relationships that tie things to us that have become lost. That much is clear from the difficulties that Topp & Dubio had got themselves into. All fragments, stories, things and memories were in their possession, and they had their studio. They had only lost the work of art as a numinous realisation, much like the realisation that one has found a wallet in the street, the secret of life, the solution to a difficult problem, the girl of one's dreams, true love, and so forth. And to ask me to find it, they were asking me to find it by building a carefully constructed view of all these disparate things into a single event which could then later proliferate into many.

When the object, or rather *the thing*, a painting for example, is lost, it is only the thing that is lost, the canvass with its surface of dried paint, but not the work of art. The thing and the work of art have a relationship similar to the body, its environment and the person. The work of art lives on, perhaps inadequately in its reproductions, in memories, in descriptions, just as a person lives on in the third person after his first person singular has long gone. I find a work of art by finding my relationship to anything. My finding is an art. Now finding something is a lot easier when the thing is there in front of me to find. In this sense they haven't made it easy by making the work of art so diffuse, so volatile and ephemeral, by not having *imprisoned* the work of art in a single thing. Having said that, their thing -the entity tying everything together- *is* the club. The club ties together events, witnesses, things, stories, very small insects, melted snowballs, aeroplanes and a lot more. A club is a set of things sharing something common. This all-encompassing nature of the club makes it in fact easy to find their work of art. I can find it even in my own imagination. That is of course bizarre: I have to find *their* work of art and find it in my capacity to find. That sounds like a trick of perspective, an illusion: a work of art in my image. I may be having you on. At the same time this way of finding something is more sophisticated than one might think. The sentence: *I find this painting beautiful* holds the key. The finding of beauty is simultaneously a discovery and an act of investment. In fact a discovery implies investment. After all, things have always been there, to discover them means therefore something curious, an uncovering of that which is already there and an endowing that which has been uncovered with a particular value. I may not yet have said *what, or how much of it* I invest or what it is I am investing in and to what purpose. But the ability to put things into words is a different talent to *discovery as investment*. Saying *I find this beautiful* does not yet say *how* the investment of something with beauty works or whether it will bring me dividends. The word beauty indicates *that* I have discovered and invested in beauty; the word is no more than an IOU for a loan that I pay back when I manage to *explain* how this finding worked, *what my discovery was and what my investment*. The problem is not that beauty is hard to explain, although it is of course. The problem is that we do not train ourselves adequately in the task. The word beauty *means* very little by itself. The word beauty is merely a judgment delivered. That judgment is itself not the trial of which the judgment is the final product. In other words it cannot perform the task of the story that it merely has the job of signposting. Something about *this painting* or *that landscape* has managed to find me: the beauty of it and this beauty is my investment in the discovery. So the question *What is its beauty?* Is answered with: *That which I managed to find beautiful*. I can become an athlete of beauty.

So, to get back to my task of finding their work of art, what will I find? I began my search with precious little to go on. There were no paintings, I was given some brochures and other literature, I was given a story which was the story of that moment. (Had they come the day after I might well have been given another story.) There were photographs. After our first conversation it was suggested that I should visit their studio. That would help. However, their studio, however beautiful

and valuable it might be as an archaeological site, is not the work of art they wanted me to find. It might be a part of it, but it is at the same time also another work of art. The work of art I was looking for in fact grew in our minds as we conversed and chatted about the club and what they had done. It originated in my ability to form a picture of *what had happened* in my imagination, which, after all, is the right place for forming pictures. The work of art originated as I rummaged through their studio, in my mind, in my thought, in my conversation with them. If you, the reader, choose to read this thinking in the following story, the work of art will regrow according to its own parameters in your thinking, your imagination. It will be uniquely yours. I found the work of art in the universe they built for me and in which I wandered around looking in places they did not even know they had made. The work of art is a measureless space in which the act of measurement, the game of measurement constitutes it. It is a game where everything can be brought up for discussion, where everything is conditional upon everything else. The work of art is the portrait of the idea of the world in which I picture myself, a self-portrait that I have constructed in finding their work of art, which now contributes to my portrait of the world as a whole, thus unifying my experience of it. Each portrait is a double portrait, a portrait of me in the other. The work of art forms itself in the relations we maintain with the things we see, hear and touch, the photographs, the booklets and leaflets, the left-over posters, the stories and the fragments and shards that do not disclose more than what we find, even though they are infinitely rich. And what do we find? That is the difficulty. What we find grows exponentially, it quickly becomes such a large, all-encompassing thing that has the capacity to absorb my whole existence. This is the result of their artistry. Perhaps because it contains my existence, thus determining myself as I try to negotiate a world between my body and my environment, I am able to take this work of art with me as if it were a light feeling, however large it is. Whatever it is, I have found myself a wonderful work of art in the events organized under the auspices of their club.

The word event is not actually the right one to use with reference to their work. The right word is history or research. That the product of this history, this research, is presented in the form of an event is no more than self-evident, nevertheless it needs to be emphasized that the event is a product of the research. Topp & Dubio research conditionality. They measure the immeasurable world of man and seek out the conditions of possibility. Apart from one exception they do not focus their research on the darkness that humanity is drawn to or on sensationalizing the vulgar and the horrible in the way so many artists do in their pietistic conviction that they thereby reveal a deeper reality of the world. Topp & Dubio do not need horror or repugnance; their research is concerned with what one might call the rhyme of the arbitrary, the contingency of the frame, of structure, spaces, periods and appearance, the delight of purposes discovered, of combinatorial mutations. It appears as if something that rhymes has escaped the arbitrary in that it reveals structure. But the opposite is the case. Rhyme, however it is realised, forms structures which, miraculously, become useful because of the rhyme. Consonance or *fitting* is the precondition for use. The resulting *poem* or creation, achieves significance as a result of its rhyme, its music. It is the happy meeting where a gathering becomes productive, and whose happy sounds resonate as purpose within the acoustically well-appointed room of our memories. A poem is the attempt to cause a small crack in the world of universal coherence. The rhyming structures that form the subject of Topp & Dubio's research they find everywhere and anywhere. At this moment they have found them in the meeting between Art, Tennis and Kaliningrad in one club. These rhyming structures are made the subject of discussion in which the exploration of the idea of system itself constitutes their system. In this they reveal the

working of society, reality, in which systems constantly subvert each other. I shall come back to this towards the end. First I want to give a technical and anthropological analysis of tennis as a divine game which, like everything else has developed in a constant dialogue between the body, its scale, abilities and limitations relative to its environment and the rhyme of the arbitrary which finds uses in the strangest places.

A-TENNIS-CK

Tennis is a game played within a game-space according to game-rules. Within these the game proceeds with the use of game-tools within a specific period which we shall call game-time by framing and determining the spatial behaviour of bodies. The bodies, human bodies, balls, rackets, tufts of grass, move about and do things stochastically directed towards a single purpose, to win the game by playing well. The game-time is indicated by an appointment or mutual agreement to begin the game. Within the game's duration, the game-space, the game-rules and the game-tools fall under the spell of the game, which we might call game-magic. This flux reaches a climax at the moment of its denouement, the victory of one player over another through beautiful play. Each game is followed by an evaluative phase in which the game and the particular behaviour of participants such as, onlookers, special guests, ball boys, linesmen, the referee, the players, organisers, club personnel, the groundsman and his team are made into one or several stories, thus becoming part of the fabric of biography and history. Each game is similarly preceded by a phase in which the whole life of the participant is either implicitly or explicitly braided into the game. I shall explain that by asking a single question: how did this person get to be present? A game of tennis is, as such a node serving to bind what was there before to what comes after. A node is always a beginning, an end and the middle of something. In this way each game has the potential to become one of the coordinates of history. Not perhaps the history of nations, although one should not ever underestimate the power of sport, but certainly the history of the game and the individual participants rehearsed in sentences such as: "Oy dad, dya remember when you were thrashed by that fat man who didn't like oysters...what was his name?"

The way the points are scored follows its own logic where the arbitrary and the necessary (langue and parole) combine. Scoring is a method whereby a progress can be measured and calibrated. But the naming of the points does not necessarily coincide with the traditional sequence of the count. In tennis one begins with *love*, a crypto-allegorical point zero said to originate with the French word *l'oeuf*, the origin of everything which also looks like a zero. The scoring ends after a carefully prescribed sequence with a non-numerical point called *game* which comes after the forty or indeed after something called an *advantage* which comes after a levelling of the scores at point forty when the assignment of numerical scores stops and only the point difference between the players starts counting. This levelling of the scores is called *deuce*. The naming of these points, as we saw, has a story but the story is not needed to play the game. What is important is that one needs just four points to win a game starting with love: 15, 30, 40, game. Fifteen what? Forty what? One cannot say, points, seconds on the clock-face, who knows. The naming of the points follows a historical calibration, which to all intents and purposes is arbitrary, a matter of arbitration. It could just as easily be different, but isn't.

A game is won by the last player to hit the ball within the magically activated game-space, that is within a certain set of lines on either side of the net, which itself is the only line to which a third

dimension is added to create a narrow rectangular plane jutting out from two dimensional x and y axes of the game-space and mirroring the axes the players try to maintain with regard to their own bodies and the ground. The game-space changes subtly with each phase of the game. During the initial service different lines and planes within the game-space are activated to the rally which immediately follows the service. After a game is played the game-space does not become neutral and homogenous except perhaps for birds and small insects, but the nature of its sacrality does change. It now has to follow the rules of lawn maintenance and ground care that are quite separate from, although ultimately in the service of, the game itself. The court during non-play can be declared *out of bounds* in order to give the grass time to recover, but also to remind people that it concerns a special place, not to be drawn into the everyday. In one example I saw a winning player eat the grass of the court after the game so that his body and the court could metaphysically become one. Alternatively the court can be given over to the imagination of children who can make the court into anything they have the capacity to come up with. In this case the game-space proliferates into the space between planets, a cowboy high-street in Arizona, an Indian camp, a battlefield, hospital, wabe or burrowgrove.

Games follow each other and accumulate into sets. The first player to win 6 games wins the set as long as the difference in games won is more than one. If the difference is just one game, the set carries on until one of the players has built up a two game difference with the other player. If that fails a further set of rules obtain which I would prefer to ignore. The sets end in a match, the last point to be played in a match is called matchpoint. If that point is coincidentally the last in the championship, it is called championship point. After the winning of the match or championship point the behaviour of the two players as well as that of the other participants tends to follow certain patterns. A single point won or lost encourages the baring of teeth and grunting and making a pulling movement with one's right or left arm. After the championship point players dance about, kneel, lie down and start throwing their clothes and other game-tools into the crowd of onlookers. Eventually the players shake hands with each other over the net and walk towards the umpire/referee who sits on a high chair overlooking the game-space at one end of the net at the exact centre of one of the longer sides of the oblong game space. The loser shakes hands first with the umpire and the winner does so last.

The rules evolved against the mind and experience of the players somewhere deep in Renaissance France and were later adapted to be formalized in Nineteenth century England, after which the game's evolution becomes part of a historical account which can take in as much detail as one might wish. Everybody appears happy with the rules as they are. They will continue to evolve of course, but for what it is worth they are accepted as a given, just as the world might be accepted as a given when one is born into it. The rules might change a little; were they to change a lot over a short space of time, the resulting game might be a lot of fun but it could not legitimately be called tennis. Arguments concerning tennis seldom, in my limited experience of such things, involve the rules of the game itself. Arguments tend to be about the way the rules have been applied in a particular situation: was this ball in or out? How do you measure such things? The in-ness or out-ness of the ball is crucial and shows up the difficult conceptual gab between a line as approximated by a paintbrush on the lawn and its abstract original which has, because it is purely conceptual, no thickness, so that the in-ness or the out-ness of the ball could by definition not be an issue. But with such a rough and crude representative as a line painted onto grass, the in-ness or out-ness of the ball is frequently at issue and moreover not infrequently the subject of character defining conflict.

The geometrical exactness possible in the world of virtual space, is approximated by the rule that the ball is always in if it has touched the line on the first bounce. But how do we know that the ball hit the line? Here there is redemptive scope for modern technology. The linesman who used to be fully trusted with the ability to judge these matters on the basis of his sharp eye and the white paint dust that would be scattered when the ball made contact with the line has now been supplemented by technology capable of seeing everything. That the exact placing of a ball can affect people's tempers to a surprising degree teaches us that the game-space and the game-rules are in a peculiar way sacred: they matter. The lines outlining the game-space represent a *tenemos*, *chora* or sacred place, in which specific actions are privileged other declared taboo. The referee concerns him or herself primarily with the scoring of points and is the judge of behaviour on court. The referee is especially important in mediating between players during conflicts about the in-ness and out-ness of the ball. The referee's judgments are infallible, definitive and irrevocable.

The lines defining the game-space and the geometry and morphology of viewer's stands as well as the routing through the complex together make up a metaphysical set of rooms in which a sub-state with its own laws, its own economic subsystem and its own politics is given the authority to rule. This state, also called club, is autonomous in so far as it limits itself to the organization, execution and maintenance of the game at hand. Other matters are generally referred to the greater spheres of law: local law, national law and international law. In this way the British *Lawn Tennis Association* as a club, does not find it acceptable that a tennis player treats his game-tools disrespectfully by making aggressive movements designed to express a player's frustration, anger or dissatisfaction with a decision by the referee or by behaviour of others or himself. Aggression against game-tools cannot of course be the concern of state or international law. Such greater spheres of law rule that the game tool is the property of the owner, who can do with it what he likes as long as he does not hurt others in the process. In this way every sport represents a kind of federalism in which the rules individuals live by, game-rules, local government rules and state rules coordinate themselves along ever increasing circles of corporation. Tennis here represents a federal and multi-national power within and beyond a larger state, with reasonably well outlined areas of responsibility, which however do not go completely uncontested.

The game-space and game-rules, the game-time together determine the behaviour of the players and to a lesser extent, the onlookers. The game-space, the game-rules and the game-time all rest upon silent assumptions such as the fact that a match concerns two human bodies involved in rivalry, a potlatch of excellence within a set of well-defined boundaries. These silent assumptions are crucial as they determine aspects of scale such as height, width, weight, length and duration of the various elements of the game. Contingencies such as passing birds, insects, people drawing attention to themselves for reasons unrelated to the game are as much as possible ignored. Furthermore the game assumes the continuous relevance of forces such as gravity and electromagnetism such as obtain on earth generally. In a spaceship or indeed on a planet of a different size to ours, the game would have to undergo considerable changes unless the conditions as they obtain here upon earth can be satisfactorily simulated. At the risk of stating the obvious a game of tennis in space, on the moon or on Jupiter would look very different if one were to take the body and the way it relates to its environment as the starting point. The measurements of the gamespace, the size, weight and shape of the game-tools and the proportions of the game-space's geometry including the height of the net would have to change radically to fit our bodies into their new environment, never mind the prostheses necessary to be able to survive in such radically different conditions, which in turn would

be affect the body's movements considerably. Rarely do we consider the possibility of playing tennis with creatures that are different to people considered average or *normal* in terms of height, weight, width and bodily configuration. Tennis for the different nowadays knows its own Olympic games, but aliens and other animals are generally excluded from participating. Which is just as well as the game-space, game-rules and game-time assume the human body as it manifests itself ranging between its own familiar extremes. Similarly the game-rules are tacitly directed toward a psychology of human being, that is, a pattern of expectations as to what one might expect from an average human being. And this is important as differences as small as a centimetre or less can constitute the difference between an explosion of triumphal aggression celebrated with wild and tense bodily movements or a resigned wave of the hand attached to a loose arm which might whip the game tool to the ground with an elegant gesture of submission and recognition that the winner stands at the other side of the net. There are possible variations in this behaviour of triumph and loss.

The word *tennis* derives from the French *tenez*, the imperative of the verb *tenir*, meaning *take that!* or *here!* The game derives from the possibility of hitting one object with another in such a way that this stroke gives another person the chance to hit the ball back. Were that to be the only rule, the court would no doubt be narrower and lines would matter far less. The excitement in the game rests on a carefully designed balance between hitting the ball in such a way that your opponent can return the ball and hitting the ball in such a way that you can prevent your opponent from hitting it back, without breaking the rules or ruining the spirit of the game. The game-space, game-rules and game-tools have been so developed to make the return possible even when the hitting player does not want the other player to be able to hit the ball back. This is where the rivalry becomes possible and where our animal psychology is given free reign.

The game was standardized into something resembling the current game by Major Walter C. Wingfield. He, a man of his times and enamoured with the Idea of the great gift that Greece brought the world, namely standardization of everything, wanted to call the game *Sphairistike*, a pseudo-Greek neologism which would have meant something like *good with balls*. The French and the English were, after the Greeks, the great standardisers of all sorts of things, including games, but what interests me, as a Dutchman, is that the point scoring system of the game has resisted all attempts at pseudo-rationalization, something we are very fond of in our country, witness the many wonderful attempts to change the spelling of our words so that we now no longer enjoy reading the earlier productions of our literary heritage because it takes too much effort. In this sense tennis is a particularly fine example of the rhyme of the arbitrary, where the relationship between sign and signified, and the folding and moulding of means and ends has been beautifully exploited to fit the sublimation of the human urge to compete within the carefully delineated limits of the human body. The standardisation of the game has emphasised the game's role as an instrument of measurement. Until now we have primarily talked of instances where measurement has affected aspects of the game itself, its rules, its space, the design of its tools. The evolutionary history of the game is a story about the internal consistency of the game: the rhyming of the arbitrary with the limitations and possibilities of the human body in its world. The game itself, however sophisticated has never in fact produced more than a winner and a loser. But the way the winner and the loser are produced has known a considerable development. The evolution of the game, and this contains a universal truth about evolution, has never in fact concerned the object of the game but only the way that object is reached: the measurement of and the exploration of means of winning. The athletes themselves, their coaches, books, simulation methods, special programs for body and mind have been single-

mindedly devoted to furthering the effective behaviour for winning before, during and after the game. Where measurement used to be rough and ready, modern technology and management systems have made that measurement extraordinarily sophisticated, first employing an army of game slaves: ball boys, linesmen, referee's, groundsman etc. now supplemented by computers, kinetic architectures, machines for throwing balls during training sessions and the like, making the sport into a highly coordinated and exact game of measurable and manipulable movement and the control of causal chains. However, the increasing measurability of the game has started leading its own life, has become as it were, its own little game, in that each game translates itself into a range of products, the most important of which, apart from the several stories about the game or its participants, is the portrait of statistics that can nowadays be generated through the all seeing eyes developed by technology. It is now possible to generate at the press of a button beautiful maps of impact where the ball has hit the surface, the distances run by the players during play, numbers of backhand errors, unforced errors, the exact speed of a serve, its exact placement and even the spatial pattern of its ricochet during a rally. All this is now added to the more traditional lists which have concerned themselves with developments in weight, medical history, emotional disposition, sexual biography, sensitivity to fashion, dental care, sponsorship, annual earnings and parental relationships. The history of each player is carefully tabled in matrices. His biography becomes a synthesis of stories about his youth and the statistics of the relevant aspects of his body, his size, strength, speed etc.

A game then, is an act of measurement. But what exactly does a game measure? Does it measure how good a player is? Well yes, in relative sense. It measures whether one player is better than another. But such an act of measurement only becomes interesting when the players are equally good, when there is little in it. When that is the case it measures only a player's performance on the day. But even that is only the beginning. There is more which one might be tempted to disregard as peripheral but which is in fact central to the game: ability to withstand stress, to emerge from a difficult situation, graciousness and much, much more. The peripheral quickly takes up the centre. The problem is that any action can be measured from almost any perspective one chooses, and the choice is itself an act of measurement, or at least the product of such an act. Walking through a door requires measurement, as does finding the right words to say farewell to a girlfriend. As such it is very difficult to determine what exactly is being measured at any one time, impossible in fact. We can at least say that the increasing exactness of the measurement within the game of tennis has changed nothing with regard to the game as an act of measurement. Despite all the new technology there is still no more and no less than a winner and a loser and a beautiful game. These things may be better packaged in their statistics and their biographies, they may have arrived at their status with greater confidence in the accuracy of the act of measurement, but there is no more, what is being measured is still a mystery. At the same time there is lots more. There is the game of measurement itself, measurement as a game: the heaps of statistics, beautifully and strategically dosed as well as the immeasurable precision with which aspects within and around the game are measured: the fashionableness and appropriateness of the outfits, the numbers of people, their behaviour, the loves and passions of participants, the numbers of them, all these count as part of the climate and landscape of the game.

The know-how that is able to provide such a totality is called *expertise*. Our enjoyment of the game might well be the measure of our expertise. The enjoyment of expertise is the production of social space. Only when the behaviour of our environment becomes meaningful is space produced. And to

find meaning, one has to be expert at finding things. Statistics, facts, myths and legends become the stuff of our social intimacy around which the conversation assembles and prepares the story that the match will eventually become, reduced over time to small misshapen patches recalled with words like: "do you remember when Björn...?" In the experience itself our immediate space is universal, all-encompassing, later, reduced to a memory it becomes part of the furniture of our space. In this way the experience of a game of tennis has the potential of growing infinitely. It comes to include the whole universe a person is capable of conceiving. That exponential growth of experience requires concepts and words, thus making the enjoyment of the game a question of training similar to playing it. Expertise is beautiful, I have been reduced to silence and have developed a great love for statistics, statistics not just as information, but through its information, as metaphysics, as art, as the portrait of god ourselves, we who are beginning to see everything with the help of our imagination.

Tennis, together with all other sports by the way, has always appeared to me as a completely absurd activity, a victory of self-reference, *l'art pour l'art*, or rather *structure pour la structure, le système pour le système*. It is as absurd as it is ingenuous. Above all it looks weird: formally it is about a ball that is propelled from one side of a geometrical pattern to the mirror image of that pattern on the other side of a net. The players perform the negative of each other's actions. This is done with an aggression, an elegance, a conviction that indeed makes it more serious than life and death. The interesting thing is that tennis as an emblem of the absurd and tennis as a game of potlatch rivalry are incompatible. One cannot enjoy the game *and* laugh at its absurdity. The game only becomes fun when one forgives it its absurdity, its apparent nonsense and commits oneself fully to its binary oppositions, its symmetry, its intense but measured rivalry. To become fully absorbed in its bipolarity is a primary condition for the act of measurement to succeed, to thereby generate a world of ingenuous meaning. At the same time the cancellation of the distance in which the absurdity of the game manifests itself and the resultant excitement of combat and rivalry, is not without its dangers. In order to become a subject of the magic of the game one has to allow oneself to become seduced into choosing a side without having a very convincing reason for doing so. What is a good reason to be for the one and against the other? Of course one can select on bodily elegance and ball-handling skills and let that determine your choice between player a or player b. But such an intellectual attitude is not equal to the absurdity that makes itself felt in such rationalisations: what are those people up to? What are they doing, why are they doing it? Why should I admire a person that can move his body and its prostheses with such precision if all it does is propel a ball pointlessly to the other side of the net? Tennis by concentrating solely on bodily movement and ball-handling skill, becomes ballet. But tennis is not ballet, it merely participates in ballet in so far as one looks at movement and elegance. It is the polarity in the game that must take a large role. The rivalry, the act of measurement constitutes the overriding purpose of the game. The onlooker cannot resist the pressure to choose for one or the other if he allows himself to become absorbed. The happiness of absorption has choice and commitment as its precondition. If the onlooker manages to resist the pressure of commitment in the rivalry, he remains outside the game and the game regains its absurdity and quickly loses its fascination. The fact of its absurdity is enough to enjoy that absurdity, one does not need to dwell over it. Naturally the erotic appeal of power and speed, lightning reaction and bodily elegance together constitute a strong magic force, but curiously enough these do not always determine the choice of player the onlooker commits him or herself to. The rival we commit to and who is invested with our support, hope and loyalty is a person who has been reconstructed into an image which in that situation and to that person appeals on the basis of a

selective mechanism as complex as any. All sorts of small issues crowd in upon our choice, which is dependent on a much fuller conception of the player than his or her machinic ability to play tennis. I have been for tennis players for the strangest of reasons, but the strangeness of those reasons had everything to do with my imagination filling this reason out into something larger, a fuller person for example, or the simple fact that my son was for the other. I have been for a tennis-player because she made such wonderful noises with every return. I have similarly switched my loyalty halfway the match because the noise she was making began to get on my nerves. What kind of rubbishy reasons are those? If you the reader would then respond with the accusation that I am not a *real* tennis fan, I would have to admit that you are completely right. At the same time I doubt whether so-called real tennis fans mix their loyalties with less arbitrary nonsense. I have heard *real tennis fans* declare their loyalty to the one, because the other was considered *arrogant*. Another loves a particular tennis player because he has a good back hand. These are loyalties that do not deserve the label of rational; they do not address tennis as a whole, they are narrowly selective and where the one addresses the tennis player on his being a nice human being, the other addresses a tiny fragment of the game, which, like Proust's phrase, is somehow enough to set him off on an orgy of enjoyment. When one asks whether the person has ever actually talked to the arrogant tennis player and been able to confirm it first hand as it were, the answer is invariably negative. Why arrogance should be important when you yourself will never have to deal with it, is something that the tennis expert cannot even himself fully understand except by admitting that his loyalty has nothing to do with tennis and everything to do with humanity at large. So the question what does tennis measure becomes doubly complicated. How does tennis measure arrogance? How do we measure the quality of an arrogant tennis player? How do we measure the quality of a tennis player who has a great backhand? How do we measure the quality of a tennis player that has an appealing grunt that becomes unappealing? A good game of tennis measures more than the tennis itself, it measures everything, and nothing. The accumulation of points has to go together an image of what is good. And what is good? Well that first of all depends on what is on offer, what have you got? And what is on offer then has to be measured against a person's experience. The backhand is an important skill in tennis, but surely not the only one. In order to attach one's loyalty to a player on the basis of that skill alone is rather narrow. It shows our expert to be interested in an aspect of the game which cannot be representative of the whole. Or are people perhaps unwilling to share the full story of their loyalty? But why? In any case it is now clear that tennis is an act of measurement but that the object of its measurement cannot be simply reduced to a single dimension apart such as winning or losing, arrogance or gentility, gentleness or harshness, backhand or forehand, service or return, bodily elegance or primeval abandon.

Tennis measures first and foremost itself as everything. But what then is tennis if it measures itself? To what purpose does it measure itself? And what do we get out of it? As a virtual entity of space, rules, tools and duration, it measures its actualisations in real games and these gradually furnish the coordinates of its evolution as a virtual thing called a game. Because tennis is a measure of itself, we can speak of a mirror act. Tennis, as an act of measurement, measures tennis as a portrait of man and his world. Tennis is just another act of portraiture. Perhaps this is the reason that art and sport go together so well in the administration of a state. Sport is an art, like mathematics and poetry. It belongs to the art of portraiture. Tennis offers a portrait of man in which man learns to look at the godliness of man within the strict limits that he can cope with. Godliness is infinite and each onlooker, unable to himself cope with the infinite, selects from that infinite an aspect to which he

can attach his judgment, his loyalty. But this produces something weird. The portrait offered us is a portrait of god, but the person who can see most in that portrait is person who can look well. Tennis measures the whole by measuring a part. That part is determined by the game; the game sets the point of view from which the whole is looked at, it measures human being, being human. It measures *being* with the help of attributes and actions that have no relevance to daily life, the skills of a tennis player are not needed in the kitchen, the bedroom or the office. It measures man in a sanctified universe defined by a sacred, carefully delineated space-time. Man becomes a special collection of human attributes that are portrayed by being carefully disposed and related according to the concerns of the onlookers. If one tries to determine that special collection, one paints not just a portrait of *that* game or *that* tennis player, but above all a self-portrait in which the selection determines the self. That is how it is. And that is why tennis is fun to watch. It is the whole world in a miniature portrait, which is small and yet contains a sketch of the whole world quite comfortably from a particular point of view. Golf is the same but different. Golf is a sport in which a small hard elastic ball is given an extraordinary wallop with a specially designed metal stick with the sole purpose to make that ball disappear into a preordained hole with as few wallops as possible. That constitutes a universe of difference. Moreover the golfer does not expect anyone to return the ball, while the game-space departs from the graphic Cartesian model of the tennis court to become a highly crafted simulation of *the natural*. The two games differ in their spatial, judicial and technological make-up, they differ less in their socio-economic position and differ not at all in their cultural role with which they help to produce social space.

ATC-KALININGRAD

The word fun holds something vulnerable, something rather sensitive. Judging by the photographs and the stories there is very little of it to be had in Kaliningrad. It would seem to me a disaster area, filled with a degrading and disconsolate sadness intensified by the fact that it is considered a gambling paradise for the Russian credit-worthy classes. Gamblers are a melancholy lot, the descriptions of Dostoyevski of Russian gamblers are no doubt somewhat dated, but nevertheless present a group portrait of black holes that must be a good approximation of the truth. The word fun is beginning to echo in a growing emptiness: gambling as the small-minded and dismal pursuit of ends disguised as means. The word fun has acquired the character of dirty billboards and that is a good thing. It is a stupid word anyway. How is it possible to find Kaliningrad fun? And why should fun be the measure of a place? Kaliningrad is more than fun. Anyway, I have never been there and will most probably never go. I have some knowledge of Königsberg, a previous avatar of Kaliningrad. But I have never been there either. I might have gone there if it were still available. I am a great admirer of Königsberg's most famous citizen, Immanuel Kant. He was emphatically no citizen of Kaliningrad. Königsberg was a completely different city on the exact same spot. I believe it happens often. Every city is many cities simultaneously on one place but along unique routes and flight-lines that shape the day one spends there. Kaliningrad is a Russian post-war city which arose on the rubble where Königsberg stood, a much older Prussian city of which the traces are barely visible as a palimpsest under the cold disdain of Kaliningrad. Kant used to walk with geometric exactness through the streets of Königsberg. Time was sacred to him, just as was his health. When he walked passed a house it would represent a moment against which the day could be measured. His walks were a measurement of the city against the day. Actually, I would love to walk through the streets of Kaliningrad, perhaps even with that same geometric and chronometric exactness. But what that would serve I do not know. Photographs and prejudice, my image of Kaliningrad is the product of a

dangerous knowledge, that has only served to activate the prejudices that always lie ready. I know for example that Kaliningrad houses *a very ugly building*, a building so ugly that it is capable of calling into doubt all theories of beauty, even the one thought up by Kant. It is a building from which people derive pride as the *ugliest building in the world*. How strange and wonderful that pride sounds. It makes the building lovable. Kaliningrad is full of people who measure out their lives in small triumphs and teaspoons.

ART &-TCK II: Found: a useful work of art

Topp & Dubio use their research into the rhyme of the arbitrary to uncover the bizarre gap between the purpose of life and the life of purpose. The first manifests itself invariably as a void which is filled, for a lack of anything better with mirrors and portraits of all-seeing gods, whereas the second is filled to the brim with a ready-to-use fullness of needs, desires, wishes, dreams, activities and strategies to respond to the demands of self-preservation and self-development. Purpose gives things their life and life finds purpose. Evolution concerns itself with this aspect of things; religion and its theologies with the first. In their research Topp & Dubio uncover the tenderness and tenacity of the organised, how patterns and structures found, small rhymes, acquire applications, meaning and thus, purpose, as soon as they are found. In this way patterns and rhymes participate in our lives with increasing emphasis and with what might legitimately be called self-confidence in that they appear to start leading a life of their own and thus start leading ours. They show how the organization and genesis of use is a precondition for meaning and not the other way around. Meaning is generated by a search for and discovery of the useful, whatever that use may turn out to be. Life is of no use, but use has a life and makes life possible. Topp & Dubio show us the sensitivity of structures and patterns that in their vulnerability as truths begin to direct our lives because we are so fond of playing the game, because we are so fond of measuring ourselves in games, so enjoy games as acts of measurement. Truth is a rhyme that has proved useful. The act of measurement invariably delivers such rhymes. Tennis is a wonderful example of this, it is self-referential, but in referring to itself it refers to itself as the universe of which it is in fact a part. As such it measures only what it measures by becoming the whole, which remains arcane and can only be grasped in the absurd nature of the self-referential: what does tennis measure? It measure the ability to play tennis, to be part of humanity, part of the world of relatively small minds, which we are. Tennis cannot be separated from human culture generally, from man as a part of the world. Culture cannot be separated from society, and society cannot be separated from the world. A game of tennis is a knot tying everything together, if you let it. Otherwise it is the mirror that makes our image of ourselves shatter into absurd shards. Tennis is no doubt a very small knot, a lightweight knot perhaps, easily ignored, but a knot nevertheless. Try to reduce tennis to something smaller and philosophical bankruptcy threatens. Tennis is an immeasurable work of art, so much more and less than a mere game, in that every game is a portrait of the world, showing no more than itself. More in that it measures the world, and less in that the world can be measured in countless ways, giving a result each time. It is also less in that every instance of progress in its evolution will never actually change its immediate purpose as an act of measurement, which is to produce a winner and a loser as the product of *a beautiful game*. Progress concerns the measurement of the game and never the game as an act of measurement. So, as soon as we pass over the meaning of tennis and concentrate instead on the game itself, simply because it is a good game to watch, the technological refinement of the balls, rackets, hawkkeye measuring equipment, special psychological training, special protocol, the highly refined architecture of the stadia come into sharp focus within the game's self-referential

fun. The schizophrenia of normality, the normal wish for progress, shows itself only absurd when it becomes possible to escape intimacy with the game, when we manage to impose a distance between ourselves and the game. At the same time, this distance immediately disqualifies us from being part of it, from enjoying it as a game. This schizophrenia of the normal is explored by Topp & Dubio in a way that resembles the fairy tale, which is weird, but never too weird to be beyond our wishes and nightmares. Their dreamy variations on the game of tennis become strong collages of association which achieve their effect not through the distance of sarcasm or cynicism or the obscene horror stories of in-your-face realism but by testing the madness of normality in the kindest possible way. Topp & Dubio are in a position to erode the coordinates of our inurement, the inhabitation of our habits and to force us, without undue trauma to reassess these habits in the light of the wonderful contemplation of our perfect world in which progress is a part of an unchanging game which will never be able to deliver more than a winner, a loser and a beautiful battle. Their art measures measurement itself and discovers the necessarily arbitrary nature of all measurement, the impossibility of ever knowing exactly what one has measured. It also discovers that measurement allows people to grow, because man creates his person and maintains it lovingly by measuring himself and his body within his environment. The rhyme of the arbitrary is a rhyme that in fact attempts to veil the arbitrary, which is doubly interesting as the arbitrary is a precondition for rhyme. All rhyme subsists on the wonderful surprise of consonance and the meaning that this makes possible and explores.

The subversive tradition of an art that looks for the conditions under which something becomes possible, is long. It begins at the moment that rules, lines, beginnings and endings, boundaries and the majesty of the correct are mobilised to enhance our ability to differentiate and structure space, when all sorts of human needs, within the capacity and limitations of the human body, we develop game-spaces, game-rules, game-times and game-tools: churches, palaces, tennis courts, religion, politics, art and sport; rackets, crosses, symbols and slogans, raised platforms and thrones, you name it. In this way the norms and standards are introduced that make the unorthodox, heresy, the heteroclyte and the heterotope possible, gives them the power to expose the absurd as long as one removes oneself from its intimacy and keeps distance. This tradition knows its milestones such as the confusing illusionism of Daedalos's honeycomb sculptures as well as his design for the unreadable space, the labyrinth, the nonsense of Lewis Carrol, E.T.A. Hofmann and DADA, the work of Daniel Charms, Marcel Duchamp, Annie M.G. Schmidt en Kurt Schwitters and many more. The twentieth century which was the bloodiest, most narrow-minded, most generous, cruel, pioneering and heroic century, was also the richest in this tradition. Why this tradition does well with children and intelligent people is because it recognises the conditionality of the world as we have organised it by exposing the very conditions that make our world both workable and vulnerable. Topp & Dubio do it by exploring the game-space of tennis, by introducing changes, transforming a game's tools, by sabotaging the rules, by setting out lines of flight whereby schizophrenic associations eventually end up in laughter, a divine laughter, the laughter of god who sees everything. They understand the depth that is revealed in a title such as *The tennis of art*. Should this phrase appear banal on first reading then beware, do not allow yourself the luxury of a quick and easy dismissal. Persevere; your dismissal merely indicates that you now have to be careful in the strategic mobilization of your prejudices and judgement. Prejudice has its uses of course, a life without prejudice is impossible. Without prejudice, or faith, which is another word for it, it would be impossible to trust the ground beneath your feet. Prejudice comes from the acceptance of the structures of the world as one finds

them, on face value. Just as art determines tennis in the legitimate phrase *The art of tennis* would incorporate the means and ends, techniques and technologies of the game, the techné of the game, or its art and craft. The phrase *the tennis of art*, which one comes across on one of their earlier flyers, is a call to see art as a toing and froing within the game-space of society with the purpose of winning, losing and delivering a beautiful struggle. What would be won is not clear, is not specified, is left to the weird game of art which knows no rules except the ones individual artists impose on their own work, whatever it is it requires concentration, commitment, hours of practice, technological refinement and so forth. At the end of it one has no more than a winner and a loser and if one is lucky a beautiful struggle. *The tennis of art* shows how art is a game of measurement, that it also measures everything without necessarily disclosing any information about what it is that has been measured and all the more about measurement itself as a technology for fashioning human beings from the crude if charming material of inexperience. Hölderlin and Heidegger had already said all this, be it differently. In many of the ATCK projects Topp & Dubio explored the game-rules, the tools and the space-time of tennis, sometimes human beings were the object of measurement and given the chance to be born again as something special.

I was deeply moved by the story of Lunacharski, a young man from Kaliningrad, a boy really, who made small works of art, which his mother, after his premature death, had carefully stored away, in the way mothers do, in boxes, stacked in his bedroom in a drab flat in the immensurate drabness of Kaliningrad. Topp & Dubio gave a special force of active ATCK members in Kaliningrad the assignment to make contact with the mother. The works of art were brought to Holland and exhibited. I looked at the photographs and knew by the churning of my stomach that something special had occurred: not just the rediscovery of a man who made art and died young, but rather the discovery of art unfolded in the recreation of it in the work of Topp & Dubio, gifted photographers, who made the profoundly sad little handiworks live in their work and made them great. Lunacharski's work folded into theirs and became more. Topp & Dubio put these works in the light, revealed them, that is what photographers do. Photographers bring things to light, they measure things against the light and know which light *fits* the thing and in this way a work is generated that is more than it was *because it has been found* and revealed. Lunacharsky's mum should be proud of the son they fashioned for her in their art of measurement.

There is also the historical study of the most oblongated tennis court in the world. I saw it standing there, forgotten in their studio, a scaled model with a small house exactly on axis with the net, a live-in referee, and then two halves of a very narrow and elongated tennis court which also served as landing strip for airplanes. The book of photographs they compiled is a collage in which tennis loses all of its familiar coordinates in their schizophrenic search. That is where I discovered tennis as an art, the art of tennis; I also discovered it in the bottles each containing the water of a Russian and a Dutch snowball. The snowball is the archetype of the tennisball, a primal ball, an instrument of surviving the winter. And there they sit, these melted balls, in two beautiful bottles, in which their essence is preserved, like perfume, in the water, in the bottle, in the label

I spoke earlier of an exception in which Topp & Dubio did explore the darker reaches of human being. Just before the Second World War, a piece of furniture designed and made by the Russian Constructivist Klucis was destroyed by a group of extreme right-wing students in Brussels where it was being exhibited. Their aggression had been aimed at an abstraction called communism and thus hit the work of a communist. It often happens this way. People aim at abstractions and hit the

concrete. It also happens the other way around. The destruction of art is dramatic. From the point of view of my own admittedly misanthropic feelings about the abstract concept of human being, I sometimes feel the murder of a work of art of which I was fond, deeper than I do the murder of a grown man who was unknown to me. All men are guilty and this is quite a confession and I am certainly not proud of it, although my regular attempts at honesty require it of me. I would experience the destruction of the Mona Lisa, or any Vermeer as a peculiar form of genocide. In the destruction of art it is not a man who is being murdered but mankind, or rather, that which saves mankind from itself. By destroying the thing, you murder the object, not the work of art. But the murder of the work of art will inevitably follow, gradually it will become unstuck in our memory and the work of art will die in our memory of it because it no longer has a foothold in the thing. The work of art will die at the hands of deliberate destruction: man destroys his humanity which is his most vulnerable attribute and also his most valuable possession. Of course I don't approve of murdering people. I find it weak and contemptible. At the same time my fascination for and hate of violence is a product of my hope for man in his abstract form: humanity. Humanity contained within the concept of civilization is tender, as tender as a defenceless creature, as tender as a unique work of art. All men are guilty. Abstractions are innocent. Without knowing what civilization should look like in all its facets, I know it is vulnerable, thin, skin-deep and requires constant care. In the destruction of what man has made with great care, men show themselves at their most hateful, their weakest. The Taliban have shown how contemptible their view of the world by blowing up the giant Buddha's their country hosted; The Nazi's have shown their hateful side by attempting to humiliate the art they decided to dislike rather than being generous enough to accommodate it, which would have been a true sign of superiority. Instead they manifested their ideological bankruptcy even before they started out on their murdering spree. It should have been a warning, it probably was. Civilisation showed up the short-sightedness of modernists who wanted to realise their modernism on the ashes of the old. It showed up the hypocrisy of the English when they bombed Dresden and their systematic destruction of everything that made Germany beautiful. Mankind shows up mankind in its destruction of itself and its environment. What do Topp & Dubio show when they allow a reproduction of Kucis' work be destroyed as an artistic event? It is a curious question. I do not know the answer. I can say that I would have liked to have been part of that event. Perhaps then I would have an answer. Perhaps I would have given them the loan of my boots to help the process along a bit. I wouldn't mind feeling how destruction feels. Perhaps I have inadvertently answered my own question.

How do we find a work of art? Remember, nothing tangible had been lost. The situation was much worse, something noetic, something of the spirit had been lost, the play of relationships, which is purely a matter of feeling, of thought, of affection. The story had been lost. I was commissioned to find a work of art in a loose collection of things and stories assembled in a club of which I wasn't sure I wanted to be a member. It cannot be a work of art that can be reduced to the sum of its parts, a collection of works of art or parts of a work of art that make a bigger work of art. Each work of art as a work of art is, before it is measured, the same size. To call the Pietá smaller than the Borobudur, is to say precisely nothing. A work of art is not the thing, and so size does not matter, unless size is what the work of art is about. A work of art is not the thing by itself, just as I am not the body I inhabit even though I cannot do without that body and I die with my body, gradually. The work of art is what I find, and its potential lies in what I am capable of finding. That is not to say there could be a work of art without the thing in some form or other. I negotiate the relationship between my body

and my environment. A work of art is in this way a negotiated settlement, between my body and a thing both of which are a part of my environment. The work of art is an abstraction: the relation between a man and the thing that places the man in his self portrait of the world he has learnt to see and which stares back at him, wherever he is. A work of art is man's attempt at the divine, at panoptic vision. Just to be clear, a work of art is not abstract in the sense that a Mondrian painting is abstract, that is non-figurative, that is far too narrow a meaning for the word abstract. No, and abstraction is the thought about something that mediates between us and the things in the environment we have learnt to see and take account of. A work of art, a utensil, the object is abstract in the same way that humanity is abstract, it is the ethereal story about a series of events and points of view that remain of the world in the form of a divine portrait, a portrait of God. The 18 events, the fragments, stories and moments, create a work of art, because there is a club in which they are given the chance to play together. During my search for the work of art I came to the conclusion that my assignment, my task was different than I had at first conceived it. It appeared quite soon that the work of art could be found everywhere and anywhere I looked under the auspices of the club. After all I was now a member. My challenge was not to find a needle in a haystack. My task was to confront my universe and the panoptic view of the gods I had created in my image and reduce them to acceptable proportions: to a work of art. It wasn't easy. The work of art soon became everything and everything became part of the work of art: I had to concentrate on telling a single story, otherwise madness would overtake me. I did not succeed.

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