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Sport – Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?

Introductory Remarks

1. Contemporary sport: Just aestheticization, or even the status of art?

‚Aestheticization' – the topic of this symposium – is a complex issue. It requires, above all, differentiation and a close look at the phenomena concerned – instead of rushing to wholesale judgments. Having written broadly about the issue in recent years,[1] I thought it appropriate to present a case study here. I chose sport – contemporary sport, because it obviously represents a striking example of today's aestheticization of the everyday. My intention was to analyze the aestheticized constitution of postmodern sport.

However, when I talked my ideas over with a friend, she asked: Why don't you go further and consider sport to be art? My immediate response was negative. Intuitively it seems clear that sport isn't art. Most people would agree with the idea that contemporary sport is highly aesthetic; but very few – if any – would say that sport is art.

But when I started arguing against sport's potential art status, I found myself – to my surprise – in ongoing trouble. For every argument which came to my mind, I found a better counter-argument. Step by step the conventional arguments turned out to be unconvincing and insufficient. Instead I got more and more convinced that sport can, for very good reasons, be viewed as art. The following considerations are a report and result of these reflections.

My hunch is that the modern transformations of the concept of art in particular allow sport's to be viewed as art, and no longer allow this to be denied. So, in the foreground, the following reflections are about sport, while in the background they pertain to the concept of art.

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[1] Cf. in particular my »Aestheticization Processes: Phenomena, Distinctions and Prospects«, in: *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1997), 1-32.

2. Phenomenal and conceptual transformations – the possibility and admissability of novel categorizations

Of course, if the structure and concept of sport, of the aesthetic, of art were invariant, then sport could not be viewed as art – except mistakenly. But then it could not even be considered as aesthetic. For traditionally – and for understandable reasons – it was not. It was considered to be more of an ethical enterprise, with the ethical being understood as being opposed to the aesthetic. So sport's shift to the aesthetic already demonstrates that we are not dealing with invariant structures here. Hence a further shift of sport to the artistic is not impossible in principle. Such an occurence, however, would presuppose phenomenal as well as conceptual changes – with respect both to sport's constitution and the concept of art.

In the course of history it has often been the case that something originally not labelled as art later came to be considered as such and is in the meantime quite naturally viewed in this way. Artefacts – of occidental or other cultures – which were designed for ritual purposes were later designated as art. When you attend an auction of Indian art at Sotheby's none of these precious objects was originally meant to be art and yet they are quite naturally considered as such today. The concept of art is a flexible – and voracious – one.

So in order to answer fairly the question as to whether sport can be viewed as art, we have to take into account the flexibility of the concepts involved and to analyze whether phenomenal and conceptual changes might justify this claim. In the following I will try to argue for this claim. – A last remark beforehand: in my analysis I will focus on high level sport and take it as a phenomenon incorporating both the athletes' and the spectators' point of view.

I. Sport's Shift from Ethics to Aesthetics

1. Ethics as constituting the traditional framework of sport

Let me start by considering sport's contemporary shift from the ethical to the aesthetic. In earlier times, sport was praised as demonstrating and realizing the domination of the body by the mind and will. Sport was a kind of profane triumph of the metaphysical conception. Man was to be governed by mind and, to do this, had to subjugate the body's weakness and desires. Sport was to discipline the body and to make it fit to support the mind and its ends. In this sense Hegel praised the Greek Olympic games as being demonstrations of freedom in transforming the body into an »organ of the

spirit«.[2] In modern times, sport was praised because of its benefits for self-control or for heightened productivity. The ideological formula read »Sport builds character«. But already in 1971 a sport study found no evidence at all for this claim and recommended »If you want to build character, try something else«.[3] Today, faced by athletes like the basketball player Dennis Rodman – who, significantly enough, published a book entitled »Bad As I Wanna Be« – nobody can believe in sport's affinity with ethics any more.[4]

2. Shift to aesthetics

a. Well-known developments

Instead sport has developed striking new affinities with aesthetics. This is obvious from the new style of sport clothing (some athletes, like Carl Lewis, have in the meantime even become professional fashion designers), the increased attention to the aesthetic element in performance (even the alteration of rules today is often motivated by aesthetic considerations), through to the spectators' aesthetic delight – sport having become a show for the amusement of the entertainment society.

b. From the subjugation to the celebration of the body

The most revealing point, however, is the new relationship to the body. Previously, so long as the mind was to be the commanding master and the body the obedient slave, the triumph of an iron will over the body was praised; today nobody would employ this rhetoric any more. Sport has, on the contrary, turned into a celebration of the body.

Not only do we admire the female and male athletes' perfect bodies, the athletes themselves tend to exhibit them. After Linford Christie's victories didn't we always wait for the moment when he lowered his running suit to the waist, revealing his impressive shoulder, chest and stomach muscles? This dotted the i of his victory. And who could fail to have admired Merlene Ottey's grace and beauty – and therefore have regretted that she never won an Olympic gold medal? (But Gail Devers isn't bad either.)

But what is perhaps more important is the following: aesthetic perfection

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[2] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in: *Werke* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986) vol. 12, 298.

[3] Bruce C. Ogive and Thomas A. Tutko, »Sport: If You Want to Build Character, Try Something Else«, *Psychology Today*, October 1971, 61-63.

[4] Dennis Rodman (with Tim Keown), *Bad As I Wanna Be* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1996).

is not incidental to sporting success, but intrinsic to it. What is decisive for the sporting success, is perfect performance. And it is this feature, above all, which is aesthetically appreciated in sport. We admire the elegance of a high-jumper clearing the bar or a runner's power towards the finish – and this is why we enjoy looking at these bodies during as well as after the event, in order, say, to understand better their achievements or to be surprised that the runner shows so little sign of exertion after having crossed the finish line. In this sense we, as spectators, are right to focus on the body; and athletes are right in seeking perfection of their body and in demonstrating this both when performing and when exhibiting it. In sport the aesthetic and the functional go hand in hand.

c. Parallels with the original project of aesthetics

The new emphasis on the body and sport's shift from the ethical to the aesthetic seems to me to be of great interest – also with respect to the professional aestheticians' reflections. For aesthetics, when first established as a philosophical discipline by Baumgarten, strove for an emancipation of the body and the senses. Of course, this intention was inscribed within an epistemological perspective: it was to improve our sensory capacity for cognition. But under this epistemological cover aesthetics obviously tended to free the body and the senses from old metaphysical constraints. And Baumgarten himself became increasingly aware of (or was increasingly prepared to point out) the far-reaching consequences of his project, which indeed aimed at a radical cultural change, with the body and the senses becoming just as important as intellect and reason.

However, the times, it seems, were not prepared for this. The subsequent transformation of aesthetics into a philosophy of the arts is an indication of this. It reversed the critical impulse of aesthetics, fell back on the metaphysical pattern, and once again declared our sensory capacities to be an organ of the spirit – this time drawing on purported evidence from the arts. Aesthetics became an enterprise of cultural discipline again, which instead of bringing to bear the rights of our sensory capacity, turned against sensory experience and widely made the »war against matter« its (declared or concealed) maxim.[5]

[5] So Schiller, for instance, in his conception of what he paradoxically named an »aesthetic culture« (Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. R. Snell, Bristol: Thoemmes 1994, here 23rd Letter, 112), called sensory experience a »dreadful foe« which is to be »fought« against (ibid.); he praised the mechanical and fine artist for not hesitating »to do [...] violence« to matter (ibid., 4th Letter, 32), and declared »the real artistic secret of the master« to consist in »his *annihilating the material by means of the form*« (ibid., 22nd Letter, 106). Similarly, Hegel was to allow the sensory aspects in the work of art to appear only »as surface and *semblance* of the sensory« (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge, 2 vols, Frankfurt/

So what is occurring today in sport's emphasis on the body in a way reinstates the original – and subsequently lost – intention of aesthetics. Another attempt at the emancipation of the body is being made. Contemporary sport is, with respect to the body, clearly an emancipatory rather than a disciplinary enterprise. Foucault's perspective on modernity's disciplinary strategies might apply to modern sport, but it no longer does so to postmodern sport.

d. The erotic element

Today's uncovering of the erotic element in sport, in contrast to its traditional oppression, is another case in point. According to the traditional disciplinary model, sport was associated with ascesis.[6] As sport was to serve to keep bodily desires in check, its inherent erotic connotations were to be kept quiet too. Today they are allowed to come to the fore. Contemporary sport is one of the spheres where the intrinsic relationship between the aesthetic and the erotic is allowed to manifest itself.

e. Sport and health

A further example for sport's shift from an ethical to an aesthetic perspective is health. For a long time sport was said to enhance health. This was understood as an ethical aim, because a healthy body would, on a metaphysical view, ideally serve our spiritual tasks and would, on a modern view, serve the fulfilment of our working duties and thus match the new ethics of economic efficiency.

But the gap between this ideology which connects sport with health and what's actually happening is more than obvious. Modern high performance

Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt n.d., vol. 1, 48), art bringing forth »from the sensory side, intentionally, only a shadow world of shapes, tones and intuitions« (ibid., 49).

[6] We should not forget, however, that the English term 'sport' – in contrast, say, to the old Greek term 'gymnastics' – originally had a hedonistic meaning. The word 'sport' originated in the mid fourteenth century and, until the end of the seventeenth century, designated 'pleasant pastime', 'entertainment', 'amusement', 'recreation', 'diversion', 'taking one's own pleasure' (*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, ed. Lesley Brown, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, vol. 2, 2999). In the late sixteenth century, it even had the particular sense of 'lovemaking', designating sexual intercourse viewed as a game (ibid.). In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for example, Jago says when vilifying Desdemona that »the blood is made dull with the act of sport« (II,1,230). »Venus sport« was a common expression at that time. Only later did the concept of sport shift from pleasure to discipline. Nietzsche was, in this respect too, an exception, when he called »sexual love [...] a kind of sport« (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente. Herbst 1885 bis Anfang 1889*, in: Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, eds Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980, vol. 12, 482 [autumn 1887]).

sport is an enterprise which systematically produces young invalids. Take Marc Girardelli as an example, who with five overall World Cup wins was the most successful skier ever. In the course of his career he underwent knee surgery fourteen times. When he got up in the morning he had to exercise for half an hour in order to be able to walk in a straight line. Already at the height of his success he was officially acknowledged as a 30 percent invalid. Today no high ranking decathlete can realistically hope ever to be completely free of injury when going into a competition and the injury rate of soccer players is known to everyone. High performance sport and health simply don't go together.[7]

But now, it seems, I'm in trouble. Doesn't this tendency to produce invalids contradict my thesis that today's sport is an emancipation and celebration of the body? Doesn't sport rather ignore and destroy the body?

Today's athletes are adopting a different attitude.[8] They refuse to disregard the body. Mika Myllylä, the Finnish world champion in the 50 km cross-country race in 1997, Olympic champion in the 30 km in 1998 and world champion in the 10, 30 and 50 km in 1999, is a telling example. He practices a new type of training, rejecting the usual scientific training and coaching where a precise plan is established which one then has to follow, no matter how the body feels. He avoids this old-fashioned type of training which is still shaped by the ideology of mastering the body. Myllylä relies instead on his own knowledge and feelings. When he trains he listens to his body and tries to find out what it wants and needs. And he enjoys this new type of training. He even insists that for him »the greatest enjoyment comes from training, not from winning«.[9] With this method he manages not to be exposed to injuries and to be extremely successful at the same time. This novel type of training respects the body and does away with the old ideology of mastering the body, which in most cases ended up in the Girardelli-trap. Many athletes see Myllylä's (and others') way as a promising model of future training. – The point is very important. Sport is changing one of its basic features. Whilst some people say that in today's sport everything is getting worse, in fact one of sport's most

[7] Already in 1928/29, Bertolt Brecht had stated: »Great sport begins long after it has ceased to be healthy« (Bertolt Brecht, »Die Krise des Sportes«, in: *Werke*, vol. 21, Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992, 222-224, here 223).

[8] In fact, the old claim that high performance sport would improve health has – while this ideology dominated – always been mistaken. When a weight-lifter's heart increased in size through permanent over-exertion, this caused him lifelong problems, and many weight-lifters died significantly prematurely of heart attacks. The former anti-body ideology of sport simply hid this contradiction. As the body was to be dominated for 'higher' goals, its repulsion was just not to be taken seriously.

[9] Source: http://www.slu.fi/hiihtoliitto/myllyla.html.

threatening problems is solved. The new body-focus of sport engenders a new care for the body.

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So in various aspects – from its aesthetic appearance and appreciation through to its emphasis on the body in performance, self-presentation and training – contemporary sport has largely turned aesthetic.[10]

II. Modern Changes in the Concept of Art Allowing Sport to be Viewed as Art

But this move to aesthetics represents only the uncontroversial part of my essay. What, however, is highly disputed is that for this reason – or others – sport could be viewed as art.[11] So let me turn to this controversial claim which – to my own, initial surprise – I am now going to argue for.

As I said before, the legitimacy – and even the plausibility – of this further-reaching claim depends, first of all, on the concept of art one has. My main point is that during the twentieth century the concept of art has undergone

[10] A valuable case study of sport's aesthetic status is: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, »Die Schönheit des Mannschaftssports: American Football – im Stadion und im Fernsehen«, in: *Medien – Welten – Wirklichkeiten*, eds Gianni Vattimo and Wolfgang Welsch (Munich: Fink, 1998), 201-228. Cf. also Gunter Gebauer and Gerd Hortleder, »Die Epoche des Showsports«, in: *Sport – Eros – Tod*, eds. Gerd Hortleder and Gunter Gebauer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 60-87.

[11] There was already discussion of whether or not sport is art in the 1970s and 1980s. It was triggered by Pierre Frayssinet's investigation *Le Sport parmi les Beaux-Arts* (Paris 1968) and was continued above all in the English speaking world, with authors such as L.A. Reid (1970), P. Ziff (1974), J. Kupfer (1975), David Best (1979, 1980, 1985), S.K. Wertz (1984) and Christopher Cordner (1988) participating. The answer given was for the most part negative: in spite of numerous obvious parallels sport should not ultimately be seen as art. I do not want to go into these arguments in detail, but to note that obviously for sensitive minds a tendency towards sport's potential art status was already taking shape which in the meantime has made its breakthrough. It is just that the reaction then was predominantly academically cautious and conceptually conservative – although many arguments (for instance those of Roberts and Cordner against Best) might have suggested a different outcome (cf. David Best, »The Aesthetic in Sport«, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 14, no. 3, summer 1974, 197-221, reprinted in: *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier, Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 2nd ed. 1995, 377-389; David Best, »Sport is Not Art«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, vol. XII, 1985, 25-40; Terence J. Roberts, »Sport, Art, and Particularity: The Best Equivocation«, in: *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, 415-424; Christopher Cordner, »Differences Between Sport and Art«, ibid., 425-436).

transformations which open up new chances of sport's being viewed as art. I will discuss four aspects. Later, in the third section of this essay, I will have to explain how contemporary sport actually makes use of these new opportunities.

1. Art, instead of defining the aesthetic, has become an instance of the aesthetic

Firstly, a reversal of the relationship between the artistic and the aesthetic is to be observed. Formerly, the artistic provided the basic definition of the aesthetic. The realm of the aesthetic was certainly broader than that of art, but the concept of art was meant to provide the core concept of the aesthetic. In recent times, however, things have changed. Now art is considered as just one province of the aesthetic – certainly still a particularly important one, but nonetheless just one. While art has lost its privileged definitional status for the aesthetic, this has rather been assumed by *aisthesis*.[12] So the definition of the aesthetic is no longer to be taken from art, rather art's definition is to be established within the framework of the aesthetic: preferably, for instance, conceiving of art as an intensification of the aesthetic.

An obvious consequence of this change is that now everything which is emphatically aesthetic has better chances of counting as art than before. For this reason sport, being a novel and obvious instance of the aesthetic, might well enter the predicational sphere of art.

2. Modern art as striving for interpenetrations with life

Many of modern art's variants strive to transcend the art sphere, to achieve interconnections with the sphere of life. The poles of this tendency are marked by attempts to draw elements of the everyday into the artwork (say through collage, montage) on the one hand, or by trying to dissolve the artwork within life on the other hand (think of the Living Theatre or of the claim that good art and design should be unnoticeable and invisible).[13]

[12] I have developed this in more detail in »Aesthetics Beyond Aesthetics: For a New Form to the Discipline« and in »Aestheticization Processes: Phenomena, Distinctions and Prospects«, in: *Undoing Aesthetics*, 78-102 and 1-32.

[13] Cf. *Design ist unsichtbar*, eds Helmuth Gsöllpointner, Angela Hareiter and Laurids Ortner (Vienna: Löcker, 1981). – Remember in this context also the old Schillerean project of art's transformation into the »art of living« (»Lebenskunst«; Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, 15th Letter, 80) and Nietzsche's polemics »*against the art of artworks*«: this »so-called actual art, *that of artworks*«, he said, is »merely an

Regrettably enough, modern art's striving for connections with the lifeworld often suffers from utter misunderstanding. After Joseph Beuys, during and after the *documenta VII*, planted seven thousand oaks in Kassel and its surroundings, his devoted followers today undertake to preserve every single one of these oaks and produce extensive documentation of what they indeed see as a very innovative artwork, but which they treat as an absolutely traditional one. What was meant to transform art into life and nature is – in a complete misunderstanding of Beuys's intention by these devotees – being fetched back into the realm of art. Understandably enough, it is above all the art market which still wants art to be a clear-cut concept; this serves to distinguish art and to make it a marketable product. But the marriage between art and market is tenable only at the cost of an ongoing disregard of modern art's own initiatives. Unfortunately, many theoreticians also follow the art market's demands rather than art's impulses; they eagerly try to establish a clear-cut concept of art – whose only purpose today seems to consist in serving the market.[14]

Wherever the art world definition of art remains binding, of course, nothing other than the items distributed by the art market has a chance of counting as art. Redistributions between art and sport then simply cannot occur. But if art's impulse to be transformed into life – which is one of the strongest impulses of modern art – is taken seriously, then aesthetic forms beyond the realm of art could be seen as corresponding to art's own initiative, and in this sense be appreciated as instances of a fulfilment of art's intention, as a novel kind of art which modern art's impulse gave birth to. – This is a second line which might allow us to consider contemporary sport as a major new candidate for ‚art'.

appendix«, not »the actual«; one should not, as the artworld thinks, fit out a bad life with artworks, but deploy artistic energy directly for the improvement of life (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister. Zweiter Band*, in: Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, 453 f. [1 174]). According to Nietzsche, artworks are legitimate only when also serving an art of life.

[14] And if a theory is ever proposed which effectively questions the concept of art, then this theory can – paradoxically – be highly esteemed among art market people while its content is not taken at all seriously by them. Arthur Danto's indiscernibility thesis would, taken literally, be disastrous for the art market – it states that there is simply no such thing as an 'artwork', hence one cannot sell any. The only artworks, according to Danto, consist of interpretations (as developed by critics and philosophers, and by Arthur Danto in the first place) – so at least books can still be sold.

3. The tendency towards a fraying of the arts

A third aspect is modern arts' tendency to merge into one another. Adorno has described this as the fraying of the arts.[15] »The borders between the artistic genres are flowing into one another, more precisely, their demarcation lines are fraying.«[16] »It is as if the artistic genres, by negating their firmly outlined forms, were gnawing away at the concept of art itself.«[17] Adorno interprets this fraying of the arts as a consequence of their attempt to escape their autonomy-centered ideological constitution, an attempt which he calls »the vital element of all actually modern art«.[18]

This tendency to neutralize the borders of art – among its genres in the first place, but also between art and the everyday – is, of course, another reason why an entry of non-art into the realm of art becomes possible in principle.

4. From highbrow to lowbrow –
the advancement of art and aesthetics towards the popular

The increasing insecurity about the borders of art leads to a fourth point: the revaluation of popular art. The distinction between high and low is increasingly being rejected – by art as well as by its aesthetic reflection. Pop Art was the decisive event in the field of arts, and, with respect to aesthetics, I'd like to remind you of Richard Shusterman's »defense of popular art« and his demonstration »that works of popular art do in fact display the aesthetic values its critics reserve exclusively for high art«.[19] – This opening of the concept of art towards the popular clears a further path for the inclusion of sport, this highly popular aesthetic phenomenon, among the arts.

[15] Theodor W. Adorno, »Die Kunst und die Künste«, in: Adorno, *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 168-192. Cf. also Arthur Danto's more recent description of »contemporary artistic practice«: »It is a practice in which painters no longer hesitate to situate their paintings by means of devices which belong to altogether different media – sculpture, video, film, installation, and the like« (Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, XII).

[16] Adorno, »Die Kunst und die Künste«, 168.

[17] Ibid., 189.

[18] Ibid., 191.

[19] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 171 f. and 200. Shusterman points out in particular »that popular art has those formal qualities thought to distinguish high art as aesthetic: unity and complexity, intertextuality and open-textured polysemy, experimentation and foregrounded attention to medium« (ibid., 200).

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In this second section, I have pointed out four reasons why possibilities arise through the development of the modern concept of art itself for sport to access the notion of art. When, for something to be art, its aesthetic character is more important than a specifically artistic one; when art itself strives for transformation into phenomena of the everyday; when art tends to blur its borders; when, finally, the popular is increasingly being recognized as art – then sport becomes a good new candidate for being viewed as art.

III. Sport as Art

Now let me turn to the decisive question: does sport actually make use of these possibilities? Does it fulfill at least some – and perhaps enough – of art's criteria to be considered art? – From now on I will go through the common objections to sport's potential art status step by step in order to examine critically and refute them.

1. Does sport – by aiming for victory – lack art's requisite character as an end in itself?

One basic objection says that even if contemporary sport exhibits the four shifts mentioned, it can nevertheless not be art because it runs counter to two other basic conditions of art: its symbolic status and its being an end in itself.

This objection is based on the assumption that sport is merely a profane activity aiming at victory. Hence sport falls short of symbolic meaning as well as of being an end in itself. – Let me discuss the various errors inherent in this apparently plausible line of thought.

a. The symbolic status of sport as well as art

Sport is as distant from ordinary life as is art. When Othello smothers Desdemona, this is a symbolic act, the actress will survive. Likewise sport's relationship to life is at most symbolic. Many sports originated from types of aggressive action in ordinary life, but being practised as sport, this remains only as a symbolic background to them. In sport the struggle is »raised to the level of imagination«.[20] Or as Santayana put it: »Sport is a liberal form of war stripped from its compulsions and malignity.«[21]

[20] Cordner, »Differences Between Sport and Art«, 432.

This is why sport, viewed (and sometimes ironically assessed) from life's perspective of necessity, often appears absurd: Why do marathon runners enslave themselves so? Why do sporting marksmen compete with such embitterment when all they're shooting is useless clay pigeons and not real pigeons that one could roast afterwards? Isn't it simply idiotic to constantly drive in a circle at high speed (as Niki Lauda said when retiring from Formula One sport)?

The following point also makes the difference between sport or art on the one hand and life on the other hand evident. If Othello were to carry on smothering someone in normal life, after having left the stage, he would be arrested, as would a linebacker who continued hurling all his weight into brusing tackles away from the football field in the streets. Sport as well as theater take place in particular spaces, separate from the everyday world. What the stage is to theater, the playing field, boxing ring, or the race track are to sport. Art as well as sport are, compared to life, symbolic activities in terms of their structure. – I will explain what comprises the symbolic nature of sport later on.

b. Sport's oeuvre: the performance

But another difference still seems to remain: sport is said to be about winning, while art is about the creation of an artwork.

But let's be careful when talking about a ‚work'. Of course, in painting works are produced which have an independent existence after the act of painting. Not so, however, in theater, dance or music – in the performing arts. Nor in sport: when the competition is over, garbage may remain but no work.

Yet there is a different type of work implied in those artistic as well as in sporting performances: the performance itself. That painting produces a work in the sense of an object might make painting's status even dubious instead, for in doing this it does not (as it does in other respects) raise itself beyond the level of a craft to the higher level of art.[22] Whereas the performing arts and sport do. This even makes them comparable to those activities which, ever since Aristotle, have been considered to be our highest ones, precisely for the

[21] Ibid., 432.

[22] Hence in the past arts like painting and sculpture were pursued under the heading »artes mechanicae«, that is alongside, for instance, agriculture, ironmongery and weaving. Indeed – precisely because what mattered to them was the resultant product and not the process – they were not counted as »artes liberales«. This original classification can still be seen in the reliefs of the Florentine Campanile (representations from around 1340 and 1437-39): architecture, sculpture and painting figure amidst the mechanical arts – below the liberal arts which are represented above them.

reason that their proper work is immanent to the process and not something achieved at the end and remaining as a result, an outcome, a product, a work-entity. Aristotle pointed out the difference between activities producing a work and those which constitute ends in themselves. The acts of seeing, reflecting or thinking have their end in themselves, not beyond, they are fulfilled in themselves.[23] They are distinguished by the immanence of the work – which is nothing but the process itself – in the process. Here we are concerned with activities which are exemplary as ends in themselves.

Sport, just as the performing arts, is of this type. The sporting performance has, above all, its end in itself. In principle it does not serve outer purposes.[24] Of course, all self-purposive activities can have outer effects too: thinking can make you a lonely person, musical performance can make you famous, and sport can make you rich. But it would be wrong to declare these secondary effects the primary thing and, so doing, to overlook these activities' inner character as an end in themselves, whose excellence is the condition for these outer effects being able to take place. Of course, all self-purposive activities can have outer effects too – thinking can make you a lonely person, musical performance can make you famous, and sport can make you rich – but the decisive point, which one should in no case omit is that these activities, in the first place, bear their sense in themselves, whatever the additional effects may be.

Bearing this in mind we might be in a position to disprove the objection that sport is about winning whereas the arts are not. If ‚winning' means that one tries to do what one does as well as one ever can, then this is common to all these phenomena – to sport as well as to art. If ‚winning' implicitly connotates ‚money-making', then again this can apply to both of them. The main point, however, is that in sport the aim of winning cannot be reached *directly* but only *through the sporting performance.* It is the superiority of one's sporting performance that leads to victory. So the proper work of the athlete is in any case his or her performance, which then may result in a win.[25] In this, it seems to me, sport and art are completely alike.[26]

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[23] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX 6, 1048 b 18-36.

[24] Sport's character as an end in itself is often rendered by emphasizing its play characteristic.

[25] A similar structure is typical for mountain climbing. The popular formula »the way is the goal« gives a good account of this. Sure, you want to get to the summit. But don't forget that you also have to get back down afterwards. The satisfaction arises from having done all this well – not just from having reached the top. Ultimately all the challenges of the route including the altitude of the summit are an integral part of the process, of the climber's successful performance.

[26] The common objection to contemporary high level sport (in particular to basketball,

And, interestingly enough, many athletes today emphasize the value of performance more than that of winning. Even when they have lost, they can be very happy with their excellent performance. They did their best, and this is satisfying – though it was not enough to win. Sport is more about the best possible performance than about winning. And some athletes go even further. For them pure performance – that of training, which is exempt from competition and victory – brings the greatest enjoyment. As Mika Myllylä said: »Winning brings a feeling of success, it is a reward for a job well done, but the greatest enjoyment comes from training. Competition is not the main thing.«[27]

2. Sporting performance: determined too much by its rules to be counted as art?

Another objection against sport's potential art status runs as follows: sport lacks creativity. Because it simply runs through fixed schemes within a strict set of rules. Art on the contrary problematizes and transcends rules.

This is true. Art – and modern art in particular – does not simply follow a given set of rules but questions and changes the status of art and develops new paradigms, each of which may establish a peculiar set of rules for art's existence and meaning and for the artwork's construction as well as reception. This characteristic of art, its not being led by rules, was already expressed by the traditional formula of »*Je ne sais quoi*« and clearly comes to the fore through the modern prominence of reflective judgment. Sport, on the contrary, presupposes definitely established rules. As soon as ambiguities arise here – when, for instance, a hammer thrower suddenly wears ankle weights – the rules are added to. Art creates its rules, sport follows rules.

a. Sport does not exhaust itself in following rules

But does this mean that sporting performance does not contain an artlike potential at all? By no means. The performance is regulated, but not *determined* in every aspect by the respective rules. Great memorable competitions are

soccer and other highly-paid sports) that the athletes only run after money is much too simple. Excellent performance is the indispensable condition for whatever may follow from it: a series of wins, earning immense amounts of money, or being overexerted by permanently being the best. And this applies to sport as well as to art. The prospect of additional earnings may make tenors sing more often – but if the level of their performance drops, so too does their reward.

[27] Source: http://www.slu.fi/hiihtoliitto/myllyla.html.

such because something happened which went beyond the mere fulfilment of rules. If following the rules were everything, all competitions would have to be more or less the same. In actual competition and performance something more enters in: the event and occurrence, drama and contingency, good or bad luck, success or failure, surprise and excitement. These elements make the sporting event a particular and possibly unique one.[28] – Taking a closer look at these surplus elements we will be able to discover the main reason for sport's artistic character.

b. Fascination with the event

Let us consider first the obvious parallel with the performing arts. While with painting or poetry what I said before holds (they establish rather than follow rules), theater or music constitute a different case: the actors or players are bound by the preestablished structure of the written play or the piece of music. Yet what makes their performance remarkable is not the rule-governed reproduction of the script or the composition, but the additional element of their performance, one which displays all kinds of personal skills, individual interpretation, and openness to the event they create (while creating it). None of this is straightforwardly determined by the given script or composition. It is these surplus elements which we appreciate and remember most. And whilst true for the performing arts, this is equally true for sport.[29]

What we appreciate is what transcends the sphere of mere rule-fulfilment. Or rather what supervenes while the rules are being followed: the event's unforeseeable dynamics. Ideally, the rules provide good conditions for an event of this kind. Indeed they are designed and often adjusted in order to allow for the ultimately unforeseeable dynamics of the event. They are boundary conditions for possibly great sporting events. Take soccer as an example. During the last World Cup the rules for the match between Brazil and the Netherlands were certainly the same as for the match between Iran and Germany – but what an enormous difference there was between the unforgettable soccer evening in the first case and the pitiful prodding around in the second! The rules don't make the game. The performance does, it creates the miserable or great event. Just as in the performing arts.

[28] And this is all the more remarkable the more memorable the event is. To a certain extent, however, it is to be found in every event.

[29] Note also that in the late sixteenth hundred 'sport' could signify 'theatrical performance', 'show', 'play' (*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, ed. Lesley Brown, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, vol. 2, 2999).

3. Sport's semantics: drama without script

But another objection still awaits an answer. What is the sporting event about? Does it carry with it any relevant meaning?

It was often said that while art expresses ideas, feelings, states of mind and therefore has a meaning, sport expresses nothing and therefore has no ‚meaning'.[30] Sport may, in its event character, be similar to theater, but while a play is about human conflicts or the drama of the *condition humaine*, sport is about nothing but running or throwing or sophisticated movements like the Gienger salto.

This assessment, however, is profoundly mistaken. It is based on a confusion about meaning and aboutness, assuming that only what is explicitly about something can be meaningful. The script of theater is about something, hence theater is meaningful, while sport lacks a script, hence it is meaningless – this is the line of reasoning here. Yet this misses the point insofar as artistic meaning is not necessarily and exclusively constituted by aboutness, but – even in its essence – by the artistic event itself. And this applies equally to sport. Considering the potential meaningfulness of sport one does not have to look for a script – there is indeed none – but for the typicality of the event.

Sport can display all the dramatic traits of human existence. In this lies its symbolic dimension. Think of a 10 000 meter race. You can witness the tactical battle between the opponents, the leading group's break away, the leader's coming unstuck or the tragedy of a Sonya O'Sullivan, the risk of taking the outer lane on the last curve, the dramatic closing spurt and the luck of a runner who is suddenly able to break through on the inner lane as it becomes free and wins. Or think of the unforgettable moment when, for the first time, in a 400m race a runner tried to win Olympic Gold by thrusting himself over the finish line.

The crucial point is that *all this is created uniquely by the performance and the event itself* – it does not follow from the implementation of a script. When

[30] This view, advocated for instance by David Best (»The Aesthetic in Sport«), is criticized by Christopher Cordner (»Differences Between Sport and Art«). Best claims that while »any art form, properly so-called, must at least *allow for* the possibility of the expression of a conception of life issues, such as contemporary moral, social and political problems«, the sporting performer does not »have the possibility of expressing through his particular medium his view of life situations« (386). To this Cordner objects that while »the representational arts seem to do so [...] the situation is different with the nonrepresentational arts«. Hence it would be better to say that »works of art manifest or enact or realize life-values« and are in themselves »most deeply meaningful or value-laden« (429). In view of this, however, »sports quite clearly can have meaning in a very similar way« (430).

we witness something dramatic, this – in the case of sport – is due to nothing but the event itself. The actual occurrence cannot be anticipated, the athletes' performance is creative in the highest sense. There was no script. Sport is drama without a script. It creates its own drama.[31]

In this respect sport appears more artistic still than many of the arts – more so, for example, than all the performing arts as these are based on a script, choreography or a composition. In sport, however, the drama is due to the event alone. The freedom and event character of sport's production of meaning is eminently artistic.

Sporting events act out most basic features of the human condition, and the way they do this is marvellously self-creative. In so doing sport is sport semantically intense and intrinsically artistic. In this respect I see every reason to view sport as art.[32]

4. Identification: the spectators' fascination with sport

My analysis focuses on the event and the spectacle of sport. The spectators, in my view, are an integral part of the event. But why do we admire athletic performances at all? Shouldn't we be envious instead – because we, the non-athletes, will never achieve this kind of perfection? How can the contemporary fascination with sport be explained?[33]

One essential point is that we take the athletes' performance to be not totally beyond our scope. We even take it to be ours in a way. There is a feeling

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[31] This might, however, provoke another objection against sport's potential status as art. One might say that art requires repeatability, hence sport can, because of the uniqueness of the sporting event, not be art. But again modern art does away with the argument. For it no longer subscribes to a general repeatability thesis. Happenings were and performances often are single events. Afterwards one can witness them only through photos or videotapes – just as in the case of sporting events too.

[32] It appears notable that Hegel linked the origin of Greek art with Greek sport: »The Greeks first made beautiful forms of themselves before they expressed such objectively in marble and in paintings. The harmless competition in *games*, in which each shows what he is, is very old« (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 297). Hegel is of the opinion that Greek sport preceded and prepared Greek art.

[33] That there is such fascination is obvious: today more than sixty percent of the population in western countries watch sport on a regular basis; the last soccer World Cup was attended by almost three million and watched on TV by thirty-seven billion the world over. – I have attempted an explanation in more detail in the paper »Just what is it that makes today's sport so appealing?« (Stanford University, Athletic Department, Colloquium »If You Want to Build Character Try Something Else: Ethics and Sports in 1997 and Beyond«, 16 May 1997).

of »mea res agitur« – like in theater where when we see kings or people of excellence we don't think they are of an ontologically different kind, but rather take them to be fellow human beings whose destiny confronts us with human potentials that are in principle relevant to our being and lives too. Athletes are perceived as human beings – even if we consider them to be somehow superhuman. It would be quite different if we were to see beings from a different planet. Sport is not science fiction. It's real and human. Something connected with human character is going on.

The athletes demonstrate a potential of the *human body as such* which is certainly factually unattainable for most of us, but is not in principle beyond, so to speak, the idea of our body. The athletes realize an outstanding potentiality of our kind of body. They are performing for us and instead of us. As they are actors of the human being, we can and do identify with them.

Nothing is simply beyond us – neither the bodies nor the activities nor the emotions -, everything is familiar to a certain extent. It's a fellow human being who is performing, suffering and winning or losing out there.[34] This makes the sporting event a shared event and the drama one which we too experience. From this it follows that the structure of sport comprises both athletes and spectators.[35] We are fascinated by the realization of an ideal

[34] It's not only the athlete's body which is within our comprehension as physical beings, but the activities he performs are also largely familiar to us. This is obviously the case with cycling, soccer, basketball, swimming, skating, car racing and the like – most of us have at least at some time in their life tried the respective activity or one similar to it, no matter how modest the level. And indirectly it is the case even if we haven't much experience with these kinds of sport, or none at all as perhaps with fencing or pole vault or the javelin. We are at least to some extent familiar with the motoric patterns relevant to these activities from our daily bodily experience, and if we aren't, as in the case of pole vault, we can still – by a sort of bodily empathy – imagine and even feel what's going on there. We always have at least some initial access to the *pattern* of activity, and this is enough to get in touch with it, whereas, on the other hand, it reinforces the distance between our own capacities and the outstanding event we are watching and are fascinated by. – The same holds for the emotional processes we witness and which are often so dramatic. We understand what concentration before the start is, or what it means during a long distance race to hold a good position waiting one's chance, and finally, when the second-placed runner attacks and takes the lead towards the end of the last curve, our heart starts beating with his. Or during a tennis match we not only admire the wonderful shots but also have some perception of the players' mental ups and downs and might be able to predict just by watching the body language of a player before and during his serve whether or not it will be good.

[35] Cf. Cordner's remark: »[...] it is arguable that our concept of sport, perhaps unlike that of our ancestors, is in part a concept of that which is to be seen and evaluated from a spectator's point of view« (Cordner, »Differences Between Sport and Art«, 426).

potentiality of the human being, one factually unavailable to us but actualized in the sporting event; in this sense we experience the event as being representative for us and enjoy and participate in the drama displayed.

5. Celebration of contingency

Contingency is another main point in sport's dramatic character and appreciation. Sport is not only the celebration of physical perfection, but also of contingency. This element may be difficult to describe – partly because contingency has never received adequate attention in our culture, which has tried instead to ignore or overcome contingency, so that adequate concepts are lacking – yet contingency is one of the most evident and appreciated aspects in sporting events.

A competition can take the course one expected. The superior athlete wins, perhaps even achieves a new world record, and this too may have been expected and supported – in long-distance runs for example by hiring »pacemakers«. So the time attained was great – but not the event, because nothing unpredictable happened. It just confirmed expectations, did not create a dynamics of its own, no contingency came in. Despite being a record-breaking run, *as an event* it was pretty dull.

How different if something unpredictable happens – if there is a real fight, if the result is uncertain during a race, if, finally, a new star is born; or when, in a Formula One race, the outcome is permanently incalculable – a slight lapse in attention, or a competitor's crazy driving when being overtaken, or sudden rain showers can change everything. In such cases the event creates its own course, and contingency is permanently in play. And we appreciate such a pure event, with the permanent emergence of possibilities and its self-organizational character more than a predictable result.

Or take soccer as example. Certainly, the skill and perfection of outstanding players' actions is part of its fascination. But we also expect the whole game to be exciting and – if we're lucky – can be fascinated by the way the players react at every moment to the course and experience the game has provided so far. Things are most fascinating when it's permanently touch and go, with both the game as a whole and almost every single action. Whether a 50-meter dream pass is in fact this, or a failure, can depend on 10 centimeters or a player's outstanding reaction. What can bring one team the decisive goal might also open up an excellent counter chance for its opponents. And when the pass is made, you have no precise idea what it will result in. Success and failure here lie unbelievably close to one another. Soccer, to me, seems to be

so fascinating because it is subject in the most intense way to contingency. It is a celebration of contingency. (And it's probably for this reason that many scholars and intellectuals like it – it demonstrates to them the insuperability of what in their professional work they try to outdo: contingency.)

But doesn't precisely this prominence of contingency hinder the declaration that sport be art? Isn't art a paradigmatic attempt to overcome contingency, with one of the first criteria of an accomplished artwork being that you cannot change an iota without destroying its perfection and extraordinary effect? Well, traditionally this opinion was held. Modern art, however, is (in some schools at least) characterized by a turn to contingency. Think of Marcel Duchamp who introduced contingency in many ways into art and, when his »Great Glass« (which he had declared »definitively unfinished«) was broken during transportation, called this »the happy completion of the piece« and made the cracks prominent elements of its final rearrangement.[36] Or think of John Cage, with whom the emancipation of musical contingency took place – with respect to sounds as well as to notation. The welcoming of contingency is part of modern art's aforementioned struggle against its traditional constitution. – Therefore the celebration of contingency which takes place in sport can certainly not be an argument against sport's potentially having an artistic status.

6. Intermediate summary

To wrap things up: I have gone through several constituents of the modern concept of art and discussed various traits of contemporary sport. Some of the new conceptual elements of art (the prominence of the aesthetic, art's striving for connections with the everyday world, the fraying of art forms, and the revaluation of popular art) proved favorable from the start for viewing sport as art; and the elements which at first glance denied such admission

[36] I am referring to the original piece, today located in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. There are, in the meantime, some break-free reproductions around in various museums. In my view they reflect the art world's resistance to the step made by Duchamp. One still prefers the illusion of necessity over the acceptance of contingency. Consider also that the break lines of the original piece not only correspond to the mechanical features of the work (marvellously so from the left to the middle in the lower part), but add a new semantic layer to the work; it now displays the breakdown of the mechanical attitude (and this as a consequence of a mechanical event itself) rather than the sophisticated usage of this attitude; we now witness the vulnerability and the overcoming of this ideal (which, decades later, took place in the cultural area in general).

(symbolic status and self-purposiveness, meaningfulness, striving for necessity instead of contingency), turned out on closer inspection to be either quite fulfillable by sport, or elements of a concept of art that has been surpassed by the development of art itself.

Perhaps sport does lack some traits constitutive to some kinds of art – but so do other kinds of art too. Painting and sculpture produce object-like works, the performing arts don't. Their type of work is different. And so is sport's. And if there are some traits of arts which sport lacks altogether this too does not necessarily mean that sport cannot be art. For the concept of art is a complex and open one. Nothing must, in order to be art, fulfill *all* the aspects which can be responsible for calling *something* art. A series of traits – differing partly from one genre to the next – is sufficient.[37] And sport meets a variety of those traits – and obviously important ones at that.[38] Therefore it seems highly plausible to me to view today's sport as art.

7. Contemporary sport: a postmodern art for everyone

Finally, sport has a big advantage over what is usually considered art: it is understandable and enjoyable for practically everyone. To be fascinated with sport you don't need a diploma – whereas for the enjoyment of modern, difficult art you apparently do. Of course, even in the case of sport some knowlege is required: you need to know, or to find out, the rules, and the more you are acquainted with a type of sport the more you will be able to

[37] With this, I am of course relying on Wittgenstein's concept of »family resemblances« which in my view constitutes one of the biggest breakthroughs in conceptual matters.

[38] Additionally, the question of kitsch might serve as a test case. In the realm of the arts kitsch is typically possible. So are there instances of kitsch in sport? My hunch is that above all the sports which directly strive to be aesthetic are in danger of producing events which for an educated sensibility come close to kitsch. Take ribbon gymnastics as an example. The playfulness, which stems not from bodily exertion but from interplay with a fancy toy, borders – to say the least – on kitsch. Or imagine a skier who only tried to ski beautifully and not efficiently: some might admire him, others would certainly recognize and despise this as kitsch. What was so marvellous with Ingemar Stenmark was that in his case aesthetic appeal and efficiency resulted from the same movements; further developments, in slalom for example, however hindered such congruence: once you were allowed to ski over, instead of around, the slalom posts (as has been the case since the introduction of flexible poles), your descent can still be impressive in its efficiency but no longer for its beauty. – If my guess is somehow correct, then – interestingly enough and seemingly paradoxically – the apparently 'aesthetic' sports would largely be exposed to the kitsch trap, whereas the `purposive' ones would be good candidates for 'art'.

enjoy the competition.[39] Modern art, however, is – despite the protestations of our art pedagogians – hardly accessible to everyone.

Whereas sport – for obvious reasons – is popular, art is – for equally good reasons – elitist. Many artists are aware of this and suffer from not having the support of the crowd, they share Paul Klee's complaint »no people carries us«.[40] From the other side, Arnold Gehlen gave the corresponding diagnosis: »We have all learnt to live alongside today's art.«[41] – But most of us have learnt to live with sport and to enjoy it.

Contemporary sport – in contrast to modern art – matches the *sensus communis*. It is art for everyone. It probably is *the* popular art of today. It is certainly the most social art form. The huge increase of public interest in sport is an indication of this.[42] Where art, by becoming difficult and a matter for experts, has turned away from common taste, sport fills the gap. It offers the extraordinary and yet understandable event. And with sport things are so obvious. In the case of sport you don't have to ask yourself critically whether what you enjoy is indeed art and whether your pleasure is legitimate or just mistaken because in fact you are a philistine who usually mistakes kitsch for art.

8. Sport as a neglected topic of aesthetics

My interest here is not to promote sport. Rather I would like to point out its artlike traits in order to show what a valuable topic it could be for aesthetics. Sport is usually neglected by the discipline; one just sees sport's aesthetic traits and judges these to be simply obvious and not an interesting

[39] And, of course, there are degrees of competence in viewing sport; not every spectator is a good spectator.

[40] Paul Klee, *Das bildnerische Denken*, ed. Jörg Spiller (Basel: Schwabe, 3rd edition 1971), 95.

[41] Arnold Gehlen, *Zeit-Bilder* (Frankfurt/Main: Athenäum, 2nd edition 1965), 221.

[42] Already in 1928 John Dewey noted »that the spread of sports and games is one of the characteristic features of existing social life« (John Dewey, »What Are the Russian Schools Doing?«, in: John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, vol. 3: 1927-1928, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press 1984, 224-232, here 225). In 1931 he commented with respect to newspapers: »Politics may appear on the first page and on the editorial page of newspapers, but the sport pages occupy more space, and the average reader turns to these pages with an eagerness which contrasts with the languid way in which he reads the political news and skips the editorials« (John Dewey, »Is There Hope for Politics?«, in: John Dewey: *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, vol. 6: 1931-1932, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press 1985, 182-189, here 182).

matter. The pleasure in sport is considered to be lowbrow or mass pleasure – one not worthy of positive consideration by aesthetics. But by neglecting the artlike character of sport we also fail to understand why it is so fascinating for a large public. In fact, the very fascination with sport derives from aspects which, in a different form, we are used to experiencing and admiring in the arts. Recognition of this is what I would like to promote. In sport elementary aspects of the human condition are at stake and are acted out – in a very direct and at the same time symbolically intense manner.

9. Art-art versus sport-art

With all this I am of course not saying that sport *replaces* art, or that it could or should do so. I am arguing only that it fulfills functions of art for a broader audience no longer reached by art.

And I'd like to suggest complementarity. Art, in my view, should remain difficult, elitist, and experimental. In other words: it should not succumb to popular taste. I don't see its future prosperity in competing with the abundant satisfactions which the demands of an entertainment and amusement society experience through current design, everyday aestheticization – and postmodern sport. Where art chooses to take this direction, it is at a disadvantage anyway and, more importantly, falls short of its genuine task. Unyielding art on the one side and arts of entertainment on the other side could be useful and appreciable in a complementary way. A distribution and differentiation of this kind would, in my view, constitute not the worst outcome of the modern transformation of the artistic.

Or, to be more outspoken on this point: after all the efforts of modern art to escape its golden cage of autonomy, to turn to life and to acknowledge and make us appreciate the aesthetic outside of art – a tendency which obviously furthers aestheticization of the everyday and which provides strong arguments for my assessment of sport as art – it might be time to reinforce the distinction between art in the proper sense and aestheticization of the everyday.[43] Avant garde art, revolting against art's autonomy and aesthetically sacramenting the everyday, has done its job. Its victory is obvious and has no need of any further proof. Art could return to its different task once again – one closer to its older

[43] Cf. my criticism – on aesthetic grounds – of many phenomena of aestheticization in »Aestheticization Processes: Phenomena, Distinctions and Prospects« (*Undoing Aesthetics*, 1-32). My formula for those failures is: hyper-aestheticization breaks into anaestheticization (cf. also my »Ästhetik und Anästhetik«, in: *Ästhetisches Denken*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990, 5th ed. 1998, 9-40).

aims, with the opposition to current aestheticization now being one of its constituents.[44] Sport best fills in for the everyday longings of art. But it cannot substitute for Schönberg, Pollock or Godard. Art's exception is to occur in a different way from sport's.[45]

10. Conclusion

Ultimately my intention was not to decide the question as to whether sport *is* art or not. This would, in my view, be phrasing the question too essentialistically. What I tried instead was to offer some reasons why – in today's conditions of art as well as of sport – many people find it highly plausible to call sport an art.

My hunch is that all objections against this are out of step with the modern understanding of art as brought forward by art itself. When, towards the end, I suggested complementarity between art and sport, I did not mean to question sport's status as art. Sport is *one* kind of art. Art (in the usual sense) is another one. That is all.

[44] Cf., as a case study on this, my »Contemporary Art in Public Space: A Feast for the Eyes or an Annoyance?«, in: *Undoing Aesthetics*, 118-122.

[45] Likewise Adorno's remark that »art that runs away from illusion, seeking refuge in play, actually ends up in a class with sports« (T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 148) did not mean to ignore modern art's contributions to an aesthetic revaluation of the everyday, but to emphasize that, notwithstanding all this, the proper task of art should not be lost.