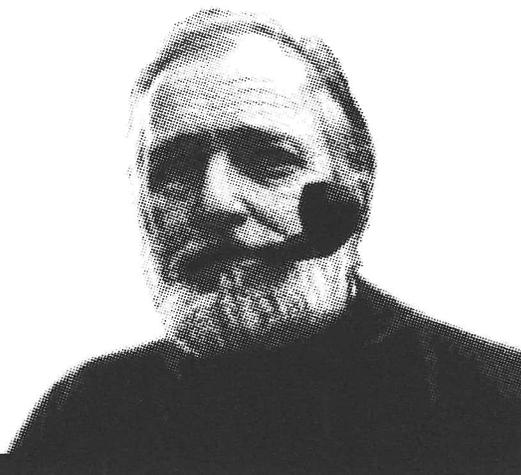


# Philosophy & Football: The Beautiful (3-sided) Game<sup>1</sup>

## ASGER JORN



PHILOSOPHER  
PAINTER  
PLAYER STRENGTH: **VISIONARY**

Fantasy	3
F.C. Old(ham) Athletic	1
Nowheresville	0

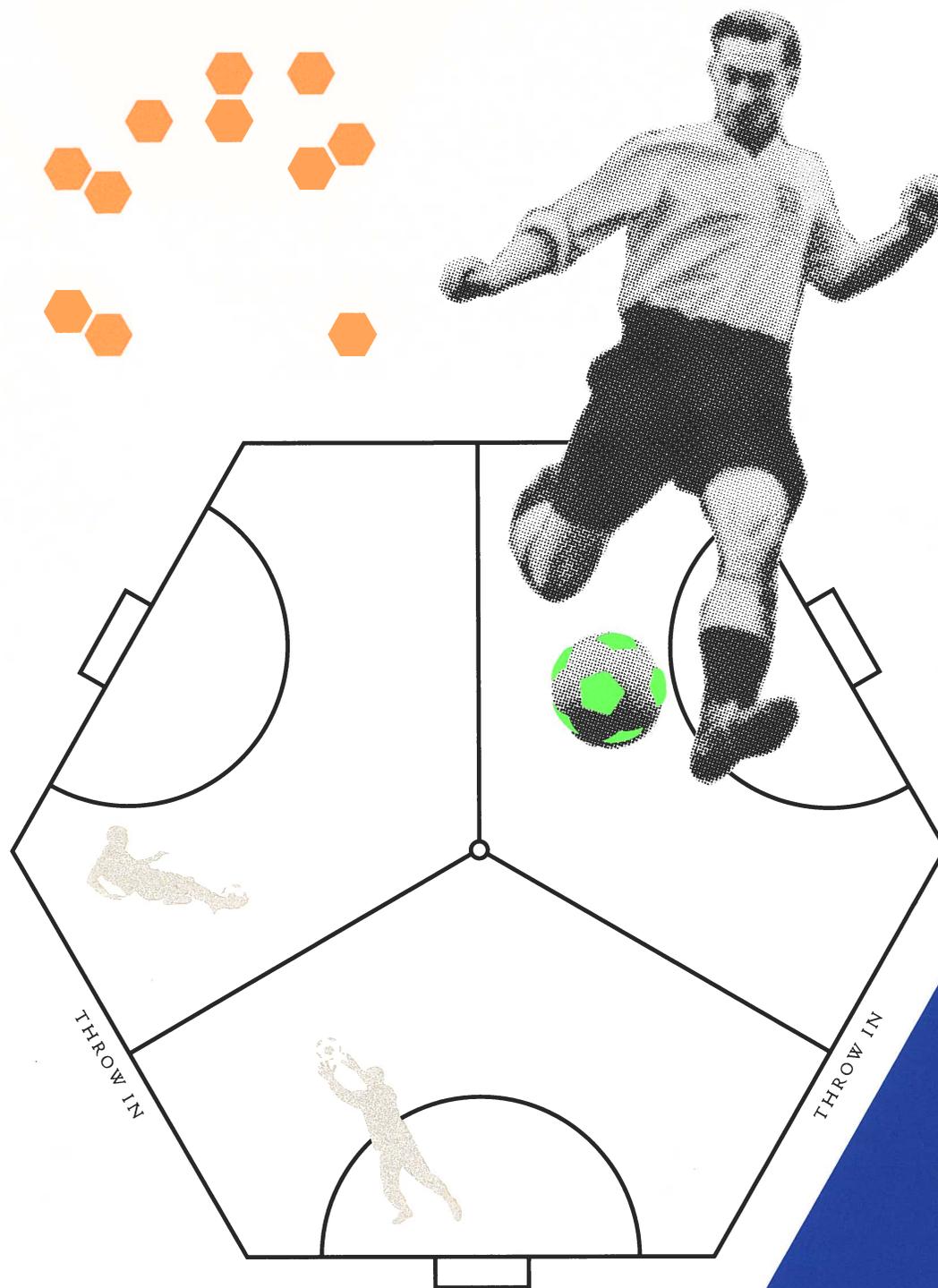
What happens when one of the most revered forms of modern cultural performance – football – and its iconic stage – the football pitch – are radically reinvented? Perhaps surprisingly, one person to turn to for an answer is the celebrated 20th century Danish philosopher painter Asger Jorn, a key member of avant-garde collectives COBRA and the Situationist International.

Three-sided football (3SF) Jorn dubbed this novel game, first described in his 1962 lecture-turned-book *The Order of Nature*. Buried between highly theoretical artistic interpretations of Niels Bohr's quantum mechanics and Karl Marx's historical materialism, 3SF emerges as an example

of what happens when such a fundamentally unchanging practice as football is reimaged.

Jorn thought about art, politics, and society by turning the hierarchies of 'folk' and 'high' culture on their heads. From carefully adding brushwork detail to mass-printed non-descript paintings found in people's living rooms, to continually revisiting his own work - most famously his monumental and multi-layered magnum opus painting *Stalingrad* - the artist reminds us that closure and conclusion might be obstacles rather than goals to strive for in creating culture.

To that very end, 3SF has three teams, not two. It has three goals, not two. It is played on a hexagonal pitch, not a rectangular one. Victory is secured by conceding the fewest goals, not scoring the most. It should not come as a surprise, then, that Jorn takes that most simple yet irresistible sport, football, and transforms it into a bewilderingly abstract [»](#)



<sup>1</sup>to paraphrase Pelé

