

The Field of Religion

The contemporary era has diffused the meaning of traditional religion and bred a new concept so encompassing that it has surpassed Christianity's followers by more than a billion people. Soccer is the modern source of fanaticism that transformed and reinvented the theoretical and architectural manner through which religion is created and experienced. The 3.5 billion people of soccer fans have created a community with a new set of concepts, morals and obligation that define their view of society, life and the afterlife. This new form of social arrangement produces a collective memory of ideals that makes this religion the first example of a plastic and dynamic faith that develops through the mass experience and the fans.

Empirically, religion was initially conceived as a means to organize and establish certain principles, morals, and codes of conduct in a society as the order to elevate it from the benighted, dark times into a more civilized and systemized society. The main factor if this systemization was the production of a hierarchy of judgment, as a pyramid in which all members of the religion can locate themselves. In the case of Catholicism, the main entity is God, followed by his representation on earth: the pope, which follows the larger clergy and ultimately the mass followers of the religion. This hierarchy is

the same for all religions although the names and qualities of the characters are interchangeable; the key is that there is always 1. A phenomenological entity (or many), 2. Its representation on Earth (animal, human or object), 3. A group of people that institutes the codes or doctrines of the faith, and 4. The Laity, or mass followers (the “common people”). In parallel to this, football also follows this hierarchy. There is a phenomenological entity whose part is played by the game, followed by the adored player at the time (usually Lionel Messi or Pelé); they are the incarnation of all that the game represents. Immediately after come all the other players on the field, the referees, and the coaches; they form the frame through which the game is enacted and directed. And finally come the mass; the nearing 4 billion of fans that see football not as a mere sport, but as a way of living. It is in the fans that the religion gains its power; football shapes the way that fans understand the world, its colors, obligations and morals.

One of the major shifts that sets football apart as a contemporary religion is its adaptation of the architectural space into a new morphology; the field. Throughout time, religion has always has a deep relationship to architecture; whether it be in the Greek and Roman Temples, the Islamic Mosques, or the Christian centrally planned Church, religion through architecture was a predominantly volumetric and formal experience that narrated a story through its characteristics. The process of worshiping in football demand a different morphology and so volume and form are discarded for the concepts of field and space. A football game no longer requires a specific form or architectural volume to represent the “spirit” of the religion; instead, it requires the architectural delineation of a field in space with geometrical proportions. This act is the crucial distinguishing factor between static and dynamic religion. The worshipers to not attend worshiping of a past narrative that is commemorated through faith; rather, football introduces the worshiping of a present narrative that changes with time; one that is constantly activating the relationship between the game and the fans. It is the experience of this religion as an operative system that allows it to strive.

The afterlife has always been one of the

crucial questions in society that religion aims to answer; this ideals not only define what happens to the human “soul” and consciousness after death, but it can also affect the way that life can be led. Traditionally, there are three larger ideals of what happens to the soul after death; there is Heaven and Hell (or a version of the same), Reincarnation (a circular idea of life), and there is Darkness (an undescribed place of complete absence of consciousness). Football deals with the afterlife in a different manner; it is not concerned with the individual soul or consciousness and what happens after death. Rather, football’s approach to the afterlife describes a collective memory or consciousness to which all other fans or members of the religion tap into. In football, death is not considered and individual loss of consciousness; the worshiping of this religion suspends individuality in favor of an externalized mass consciousness of sensibility and emotion who’s phenomenological effects far exceed the death of a single body.

Football is the means through which its followers understand the world. The social, moral and ethical associations that people develop in relation to football determine how they interact with other people, the activities of their days and of their families as well as their obligations in day to day life. Football determines the legacy of a person; it defines the colors that children are brought up into and the prayers that they say –switching out the Holy Father for the Manchester City’s “Kolo, kolo kolo, kolo kolo, Toure! Yaya, yaya yaya, yaya yaya, Toure!”-. Contemporary religion is no longer a static equation that proposes a divine individual or an ideal life; it is instead the sum of the whole diverse group of individuals that form a collective. It places the single in relationship to the whole as a ways of producing a systemized society that both functions and develops in correlation to its religion. Football is the dynamic hyper religion that almost half of the world’s population follow; it is the new model of belief that transcends traditional religion in favor of one that seeks the betterment of society, not through the strict ordainment of rules and judgments, but through acceptance and inclusion of diversity as a way of generating civilization; a collective consciousness.