

Original Contributions - Originalbeiträge

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Morphological Sports Analysis. On the Morphological Analysis of Sports Using the Example of Football

Gestalt as a concept for analysing sports

With the concept of Gestalt, psychologists at the beginning of the 20th century developed a radical alternative to the sensory-physiological theory of association in psychology. An elementalist understanding is contrasted with an object formation that makes Gestalten as wholes the basis of the experience of reality. A wide variety of research projects and experiments have impressively demonstrated how Gestalt works and how the laws of Gestalt formation shape the experience of reality (cf. Baßler 1988; Fitzek, 1994; Fitzek & Salber 1996). A whole is more than and different from the sum of its parts. This most well-known insight of Gestalt psychology and its historical precursors is impressively proven empirically. Within psychology, the Gestalt model design has created the possibility of understanding phenomena of reality from their holism and form.

Wilhelm Salber further develops the concept of Gestalt by extending the psychological Object formation of Gestalt from perception to everyday life as a whole. “In the sense of morphology, Gestalts are the vivid and experiential units of psychological transformation that represent and express themselves in the manner of a living being” (Salber, 1986, p. 35). In the psychological process of cognition, Gestalt and the metamorphosis of Gestalt (transformation) are simultaneously elevated to being the basis of psychological understanding.

Open to all areas of human reality, Salber meets the phenomenological requirement of considering natural units in the human construction of reality. Everyday phenomena should thus be psychologically reconstructable in their gestalt, just as we encounter them in everyday life and shape everyday life. The morphological perspective in psychology thus follows the claim of wanting to understand a whole and not to divide it into parts in order to then examine the connections between them. The explanation of a phenomenon is provided by the Gestalt itself and not by bringing together functional parts such as cognition, emotion or volition.

In contrast to the not dissimilar systemic approach (cf. Luhmann, 1995), Gestalt in Salber’s morphological psychology is understood as *sensory* formations and

not as mere constructions attached exclusively to the subject. Forms are concrete and sensual. They are not imagined and exclusively subjective, but rather formations developed from everyday contexts and their demands, as well as from the necessity of basic psychological construction. Their function lies in the development of concrete, liveable solutions for psychological construction. According to a Depth psychological understanding, the psyche is constructed paradoxically (cf. Freud, 1974b). Polar structural relationships create the necessity for the formation and elaboration of concrete, sensual formations as solutions to the paradoxical constitution.

Similar to the understanding from systems theory (cf. Maturana & Varela, 1990), the psyche treats itself through the formation of shapes in its mental construction. It does this by forming temporary shapes as liveable units. The Gestalt as mental formations are therefore not simply the surface or the physical substance of something in which an animated entity, such as the soul or the brain, would have to be considered. The psychology lies in the formation of Gestalt itself – entirely in line with Klages: the psyche lies “not in the brain, but in the form” (cf. Eckstein, 1956, p. 89). The concrete form formation of the Gestalt of everyday life are therefore the units that are to be examined in their concrete construction and according to their construction plan.

For a psychological understanding of sports and their forms, the morphological concept is the obvious choice as a method of investigation. Sport consists specifically of different kinds of sport, each of which has a specific form or formation. If one wants to understand the sport in its Gestalt and structurally in its psychological effect, it makes sense to look at this form itself. The focus of the analysis is not on the individual itself with its functional areas of motivation, emotion or cognition, but on the sport and its form itself. This applies to both team sports (football, handball, basketball, hockey, etc.) and individual sports (tennis, table tennis, athletics or swimming disciplines, etc.). Each kind of sport is a unique Gestalt. It is defined in its structure by specific rules and certain movements.

Sport as a form of sport

A conservative estimate puts the number of different kinds of sport at more than thousands. The number and variety do not seem to be coincidental. The sheer number of sports is interesting in itself. It reflects a diversity that may be rooted in a necessity and desire for formation. At the very least, human movement seems to hold the potential for an incredible diversity of formation. The combination with the medium of the ball alone gives rise to a wide variety of unique forms of play that are highly attractive to many people, such as football, handball, basketball, volleyball, golf, squash, badminton, table tennis and tennis, to name but a few.

Of course, this process of formation does not appear to be complete. Different sports suffer the same fate as natural formations. They are born; they change, adapt, transform into a new form or even go extinct. Dealing with the conditions of nature in winter sports on ice, snow, with wind on the water or on the beach, with speeds in vehicles on the ground, in the air or under water provide further incentives for the development of sports. Not to mention the disciplines that were developed in cultures many thousands of years ago to be competed in in competitions. At the top of the list here are various forms of competition, such as wrestling, fist fighting, running, discus and javelin throwing, whose inclusion in the Olympic Games was even used to bring about a pacification of cultures, at least for a time. Their origins in warfare seem obvious, although the achievement lay in redesigning the sport in such a way that it promoted cooperation rather than conflict. Sports forms thus exhibit a context of cultivation in their formation. Despite intense combat with an opponent and although the opponent is struck aggressively, this should be done in such a way that they are not seriously injured. The javelin and discus are not intended to hit anyone, but to fly far. Boxing or wrestling are intended to defeat an opponent, but the means to do so are restrained by rules. Perhaps this note of cultivation, which is effective in every sport, refers to the artistry that characterises every sport. There seems to be something artistic and artificial in the structure of sports, which points to the construction that is realised in every sport. Sports capture human aspirations and give them their own form. In this sense, they are artistic and artificial.

A brief look at a sport such as golf may make the artistic and artificial aspects somewhat more visible. One may confidently ask who came up with the idea of digging small holes in a landscape and setting the goal of hitting them with small balls. A large vastness with small balls – an initial artificial as well as artistic constellation. In addition, the small ball is not to be thrown with the more accurate hand, but with a club whose point of contact in the swing at is extremely small. Minimal changes to the point of contact have devastating consequences for the ball's trajectory. The associated difficulty compared to throwing the ball with the hand would be another artificial element, the mastery of which can lead to world-class skill. A third artificial element now further intensifies the execution of this activity. The individual holes should be hit with as few strokes as possible. It is difficult to imagine more artificial, not to say unnecessary, problems. It must have been someone who was a bit bored with their life if they had the space to fill their free time with so many artificial problems. As a player, you can only fail at this construction. It is rarely possible to maintain constant success over the 18 holes.

A psychological approach to the different kinds of sport suggests that a specific sport can transform a concrete mental movement into a Gestalt. Polar aspirations such as attacking – defending, creating – destroying or uniting – separating can

be grasped, lived and dealt with in a dynamic Gestalt within the framework of a sport. In this respect, the analysis of the concrete forms of sport opens up access to the psychological world of effects contained therein.

Analysis of the sport as a method

In sports psychology research, sports are primarily studied through the actors, i.e. the athletes or players. In addition to physiological data relating to the sport itself, the focus of research and the subject of investigation is primarily on psychological constructs such as motivation, emotion and cognition. From this perspective, the focus is therefore on the stresses and demands placed on the individual during activity, such as stress or pressure (cf. Jones, & Hardy, 2005; Kehlmann, & Kölling, 2010). It goes without saying that stress and pressure are higher in competitive situations than in meaningless situations such as training. The focus of the research perspective is clearly on the individual and the demands placed on them during sports activities. The sport itself is only considered as a form of activity that represents a certain strain on the participant. From this perspective, it is considered as a trigger for certain intrapsychic reactions.

In many action psychology concepts (cf. Heckhausen, 1991; Kuhl, 1983; Nitsch, 2000), the significance of the sport in the mental organisational forms are also modelled in this way. The organisation of the psyche is shaped by their action and behavior in a sport. While action psychology models such as those developed by Nitsch (1986) are still oriented towards faculties such as thinking, feeling and volition, and place these in a context with the environment, Salber's concept of action units (cf. Salber, 1986) incorporates the respective action into the formation of a specific mental organisation. By playing tennis, the mental organisation is shaped according to the psychological structural conditions of this sport. The focus is thus not on intra-individual processes, but on the entire mental organisation involved in playing or watching sport.

From a morphological point of view, the psyche of a person who enters the world of football organises itself according to the Gestalt logic of football. The same person can be different in their mental organisation in the world of football than when they are in the world of tennis. The mental organisation changes with the world of the respective sport. In terms of morphology, such a change is possible. It also corresponds to empirical evidence when people report how they transform into fans on their way to a football match, how they get in the mood with friends and beer, how the loud, aggressive roaring and singing takes over and tries to determine them. This contrasts with the enforced calm of a tennis match, which one must integrate oneself into, which is also demanded by the umpire's consistent "Quiet! Please". Tennis evokes a different emotional state than football – in one and the same person!

The morphological analysis of the sport and its conditions of Gestalt can be approached from the concrete form and design. The sport itself, in its conditions, rules and dynamics, becomes the empirical basis for the morphological analysis of sport. The description of the sport serves as the empirical basis for the analysis. The specific form of the sport, its organisational forms and rules are described. Heubach performs this type of form analysis on things (cf. Heubach, 1987). The thing itself, in its conditions, becomes the empirical basis for the analysis of its Gestalt. Of course, a sport can also be reconstructed by describing it through surveys such as in-depth interviews (cf. Marlovits, 2000). The morphological form analysis of the sport broadens the methodological spectrum and also opens up access to content and effects that may be difficult to describe.

The morphological analysis of a sport is conducted in four stages:

- **Features of the Gestalt:** In the first stage, the structural Gestalt features that determine the form of the sport, its structure and the dynamics possible within it are described. These are the rules and the resulting formation of Gestalt, the time structure and spatial arrangement, and the arrangement of the participants, which together form the organisational structure of the sport.
- **Effect of Gestalt features:** In a second stage, the Gestalt features are reconstructed in terms of their effect on the design of the sport. This involves a psychological analysis of the Gestalt features in terms of their effect. How do the individual Gestalt features work? How do they shape the sport psychologically through their effect? What does each individual Gestalt feature set in motion? What role does it play in the specific structure of the sport?
- **Establishing connections and gestalt dynamics:** In a third step, the focus is on establishing connections between the individual gestalt features. This involves the typical structure of the individual gestalt features for each sport. In establishing connections, the gestalt dynamics that characterise each sport in its unique form of expression and allow it to be experienced can also be reconstructed.
- **Psychological sense:** In the fourth stage, the Gestalt structure of the sport is examined for its psychological sense. This reveals the value that a sport has for the participant and opens a different approach to the motivation to perform or watch it over and over again. This fourth stage reveals the concrete Gestalt response of the specific construction theme. For which construction problem does the sport represent a form of treatment and solution? The latter provides an understanding of the insatiable appeal of sports for participants and spectators.

These four stages will now be tested using football as an example.

Morphology of football

There is no need to resort to extensive statistics to demonstrate the impressive impact of this type of sport. In a 90-minute game, football has the power to bind and unite people, from small communities (villages) to large ones (nations). Football matches excite and entice, allowing everything else to be put on hold because they demand to be watched and experienced. National football events can lead nations to happiness or collective despondency. Football can set hundreds of thousands of people in motion week after week. Football matches do not leave people untouched. The weather and football are always topics of conversation. How does football manage to move, touch, seduce, wear down, make people deeply sad and blissful? How does football, in which scoring a goal rarely leads to a 'sense of achievement' – unlike in basketball, where almost every attack ends in a successful basket – manage to move people so profoundly? How can the impressive impact of football be understood?

If you look at the situation of a football match in a completely sober manner, there is little attractive about the whole scene. The circumstances of a match alone present particular difficulties. It can be cold or hot in the stadium. People gather in large crowds and stand close together. Visibility of the pitch is often limited, and the distances are sometimes so great that part of the action can only be seen from a greater distance. The game itself can be 'lacklustre', 'boring' or 'uneventful'. Goals are usually 'in short supply'. Games can end in a draw or be decided after just a few minutes. Some drag on for the entire 90 minutes. Others, on the other hand, manage to ignite 'fireworks' and build tension until the very last second. Other sports are much more attractive in this respect. In basketball, points are scored constantly, and in handball, the 30-goal mark is usually reached. Many sports take place in indoor venues and watching them is much less challenging than watching football.

1. Stage: Gestalt features of football

A football match consists of two teams, each with 11 players, competing against each other on a marked playing field. The pitch usually measures approximately 110 x 85 metres and is divided into two halves by white lines, as well as two penalty areas. At each end of the pitch is an aluminium goal measuring 7.32 x 2.44 metres.

In football, the rule is that a ball may primarily be touched and played with any part of the body. Playing actively with the hand and arm is prohibited. The ball is therefore played predominantly with the foot, and in rare cases with other parts of the body. Special rules apply in the penalty area. Within this special area, the goalkeeper

is allowed to use their arms and hands. Outside this area, the goalkeeper changes from a hand player to a foot player and is subject to the same rules as the field players. Each player has a specific role, with the basic formation consisting of three basic positions. The line-up consists of defenders, midfielders and forwards, as well as the special position of goalkeeper.

To differentiate between the teams, all players of one team wear identical jerseys, with the exception of the goalkeeper, who wears a jersey in a colour that clearly distinguishes him from all other players. Each player on a team is identified by a unique number on his jersey. The game itself lasts 2 x 45 minutes with a 15-minute break. The game is decided by the number of goals scored. A goal is scored when the ball is successfully moved into the goal or goal area by permitted means. The team that scores more goals wins the game. If the score is tied or neither team scores a goal, the game is considered a draw.

2. Stage: Effect of Gestalt features

- **Transformation of kicking**

The very clear rules in football lead to the shifted focus of play to the lower extremities, the legs and especially the feet. Foot-ball, in other words. Although the ball may be played with the whole body except the hands and arms, the focus of activity is on the feet. They are used to stop, guide, dribble, curl, pass and shoot the ball.

The ban on the use of arms and hands, introduced by the Football Association (FA) in 1871, gives legs and feet a prominent role, because everything in the game is done with the skill of the feet. Hands and legs are excluded from any formative moment. Their active use in shaping the game is severely punished. In football, hands and arms are reduced to walking and running aids. The “action” and the entire significance of the game is shifted to the legs and feet and accomplished through them. The better and more skilfully the ball can be “handled” with the feet, the more important and valuable a player is. Those who are particularly good at playing with their feet are the most valuable players. There is almost no limit to their remuneration.

The ‘walking organ’ becomes the centre of playing and forming in football. Legs and feet primarily serve to keep us upright and to move around when walking and running. In football, these forms of movement form the necessary basis for the game. However, in football, the foot is required to perform a specific function. The foot is used to play the ball. To do this, the ball must be kicked. Kicking something is aggressive in nature (Latin: *aggredi*). Kicking is also used in fighting to harm or defeat another person. Kicking another person is an expression of extreme aggression.

When kicking the ball, however, football does not remain stuck in its raw expression of violence. The ball is to be played by kicking it and therefore requires sensitive, measured handling. If you want to play the ball, cross it or shoot it accurately, it must be handled with care. Aggressive kicking is transformed into skillful handling in football. Aggression is transformed into a pass, a cross or a targeted shot through the sensitive *handling* of the ball. This moment of transformation from aggressive kicking to sensitive handling, which is necessary in every contact with the ball, comes into effect. What is normally done with the hands must now be done sensitively with the feet – *handling* the ball.

The extent of the transformation can vary. The perfectly measured cross, the diagonal pass over 30 metres, the chip over the goalkeeper, the bicycle kick or the dribble in which the ball seems to stick to the foot emphasise the artistry in handling the ball. The aggressive tone is most clearly visible in the powerful shot on goal. In football, this moment of transformation is intuitively understood. It is even addressed directly, without being aware of the great significance of ‘converting a free kick’ or ‘converting a penalty’. Football imbues the demands and possibilities of the feet with the qualities and possibilities of the hands.

2.2 The eleven as a whole

The second defining feature of football is the organisational form of eleven players. Eleven players form a team. The descriptions used for the players already suggest that the eleven must be a special entity. *Squad, team, troop – the eleven* describe more than just the interplay of eleven players. We are not talking about a group, but about a team, understood as an organism or entity in which the individual parts grow together into something greater through their interaction.

The fact that something comes into effect *between* the players and makes them more than just a loose association or group is described figuratively as *team spirit*. There is something spiritual and intangible between the individuals that connects them all and forms them into a body of action. As such a whole, as a ‘unit’, the team should act, according to the demand often made by coaches to their teams in the press. The psychological effect of unity is conveyed in the eleven as a structure. Eleven players should form a unit ‘as eleven’, with each player as part of the whole having to put their individuality in the background or even give it up for the sake of the whole. There should be no difference between the individual players, no top and bottom, nothing selfish or individual. Psychology has long been aware of the complex nature of unity and the special effect it can have. The so-called ‘oversummativity’ was scientifically proven by von Ehrenfels (1890) and Gestalt and holistic psychologists (cf. Klemm, 1934 1936; Koffka, 1935, 2008; Metzger, 1999; Wertheimer, 1925). A whole is ‘more and different’ than the sum of its parts. The part is related to the whole, and the whole is functionally related

to its parts. When the parts come together as a whole, the result is 'more', a unique quality in action that exceeds and determines the capabilities and possibilities of the individual parts.

The demand for unity is a very practical one and less attributable to football folklore. It arises from the size of the pitch and the number of players available. In football, if you want to reach the opponent's goal, you have to rely on your teammates because of the size of the pitch. One has to run for the other. All parts must relate to each other in their positions and do what is necessary to gain space through cooperation. In one form of organisation, pressing, this interrelation and action as a whole becomes particularly clear. In response to a common trigger (pressing line, pressing command), all players put massive pressure on the opposing players in order to win the ball. This formation only works if all players participate in their specific positions. The same interdependence and connectedness can also be seen in other actions such as active defending or various forms of opening play. All players are always meant to act as a cohesive unit, as a large body of action.

In football and professional football, this knowledge of the effect of a whole is firmly established and practised. A football team that actually becomes a unit in its play, a kind of collective or organism, therefore has a decisive advantage. Players feel and know the effect that acting as part of a larger organism allows them all to surpass their individual abilities. Teams that remain stuck in individuality and isolation weaken themselves. Even the best players in the world can only bring their qualities to bear if everyone else plays along. In every cup match in which an overpowering Goliath competes against an inferior David, the basic relationship between quality and unity can be experienced. This is what makes this competition so exciting and often leads to the irritating victory of unity over the outstanding but individually remaining qualities of a team.

Since creating a temporary collective unity and giving up or putting aside individuality in the context of a game is no easy task, numerous forms and rituals have developed to promote this. Travelling and eating together, the obligatory walk before the game, uniform clothing in suits and jerseys, warm-up rituals and so forth force constant engagement with others and establishes the team image as a requirement. Particularly noteworthy in the canon of educational tools are the team circle, which is usually formed in the dressing room with everyone before the game, and the *player circle*, which is then formed again on the pitch shortly before the kick-off by the playing eleven. Twice within a few minutes, everyone comes together in a circle. The circle, formed by many individual parts joining shoulders, is the symbol of unity par excellence. By embracing the neighbouring player and by everyone doing so, a unity is created among them that aims to bring about a becoming one. Body to body, arms around each other, all heads

turned towards the centre and downwards. In this image of the circle, the structure of unity becomes visible, as does the aspiration to become one. Eleven players are to merge into a unified structure. The players become one large, unified body, connected as parts of a whole and not as eleven individual players. What becomes visible to the outside world should also develop between the players. They want to be united, to see themselves as part of a whole and to use the special effect of unity.

The creation of unity is not only a voluntary act. The process of forming unity is inherently coercive, forcing the individual to open up and conform to the collective. The coercion inherent in the process of forming unity is also directly visible in the game, before the eyes of all spectators. In *goal celebrations*, one can observe how unity is necessarily briefly endangered, only to be restored with all one's might and, in some cases, force. There is no rule in the regulations of football governing how players should behave when a goal is scored. Nevertheless, there seems to be a form of goal celebration, a kind of choreography that is staged worldwide when a goal is scored. This form of goal celebration, which is so specific to football, is staged as a matter of course from the problem of unity formation. Of course, everyone in the team is happy about the goal. But is joy enough to understand the complex choreography of the specific goal celebration in football? After all, it is unique in its form compared to other sports. If we relate the goal celebration to the theme of unity, the choreography of the goal celebration becomes much more understandable than merely the expression of an emotion.

When a goal is scored in football, the scorer usually runs away from the goal – usually at high speed – towards the sideline or corner flag. On the way there, or at the end of their run, many players strike a celebratory pose that distinguishes the scorer in his or her individuality. A somersault, a half turn in the air, an arch formed with the arms, a hint of stirring a pot and so forth. The forms of expression chosen by the goal scorers are as varied as the goal scorers themselves. Each has their own unique style of movement. At the same time, the rest of the team begins to make their way towards the scorer at a sudden high speed. The scorer does not remain alone in their individual celebration pose for long but is caught by the rest of the team and often captured in a friendly, sometimes brutal, but always very decisive manner. A horde of players runs uninhibitedly towards the scorer, hugs him, puts their heads together, sometimes falls on top of him or forms a pile of bodies with flying jumps, burying the scorer beneath them. Everyone wants to participate. Everyone wants to touch the shooter, on the head, on the shoulder, with a heartfelt hug, with a friendly pat, sometimes even with a kiss. Then they break away from each other, orient themselves on the pitch and move into their own half of the field in a small group, some closer to the shooter, others a little further away.

When you look at the sequence of events, the first thing you notice is the goal scorer. He completes the team's attack by putting the ball in the goal. Then he detaches himself from the action and symbolically goes his own way. He had to step out of the unity at the moment he scored the goal. He brought something to a conclusion (Gestalt closure), which now makes him special and allows him to become individual or separate. In his own celebratory pose, he particularly expresses his elevation as an individual and thus his separation from the unit. He shows himself to be unmistakable, unique, elevated and special – he has thus briefly left the unit. The elevation as an individual part, the special feature in the whole, now flees from the goal to the side in order to be able to show itself in all its individuality.

The remaining unit reacts to the attempt to break away from the unity and stand out as a single, special element by storming the separated part. The unit intuitively knows about the danger that arises from the separation movement at the end of the goal and therefore seeks contact with the renegade at high speed. By touching, high-fiving, in a close embrace or even in a wild pile-up, the unit attempts to reintegrate the separated element. On the one hand, each member briefly becomes special themselves by touching and groping the special element, and on the other hand, they try to bring the individual part back into the unit, even through violent touching and blows. The individuality of the goal scorer is literally buried under the bodies of the players and only released again when the incorporation into unity has been successful.

The game of football allows us to experience the becoming of a unit. It symbolises the experience of merging into a larger whole and serves the soul's longing to find relief in it (cf. Freud, 1974a). At the same time, in its highest and most fulfilling moment, the goal, the game creates an experience of division and isolation that seeks to elevate itself to the individual and the special, only to be dissolved again into the commonality of unity. The condensation of this fundamental tension in a dynamic scene of action is moving and fascinating. It is reminiscent of complexes such as that of Oedipus (cf. Freud, 1974c), in which several mutually exclusive aspirations collide in a dynamic event, take effect and must find a solution. In any case, it seems to be so relevant to the functioning of the soul that it knows no satisfaction and wants to be experienced anew with every game. Goal celebrations therefore never feel old. Not even for fans of teams that are spoiled by success and are given multiple reasons to cheer in every game. The psychological construction of goal celebrations constantly recreates them.

2.3 *Physical contact as an experience of resistance*

Another feature of football as a sport is the direct contact between players and opponents. In football, it is permitted to touch and pressure opponents with

your own body and to tackle them hard in the fight for the ball. Direct physical contact such as pushing, shoving, blocking and sliding tackles are permitted. The aim of the “tackle” is ideally to win the ball or to get into a better position to the ball in order to gain control of the game. The opponent’s freedom of movement should be pressured, limited or hindered with one’s own body, thus preventing them from getting through smoothly. The disruption should take place as early as possible, ideally when the ball is received or in certain areas of the pitch. The closer the ball is brought to the penalty area, the more intense the direct physical contact from the opponent becomes and the more difficult it is to get through, as more players stand in the way of the attacker. Action and reaction are therefore primarily carried out in movement and physical contact. Physical challenges are an essential part of football. Historically, football has always been a rough game that did not shy away from intense physical contact. Football fans loudly demand that their teams fight and show a certain passion in challenges (“Fight! FC Fight!” or “We want to see you fight...”).

The psychological quality and effect that comes into play with physical contact makes it easy to recognise resistance or opposition. An essential feature of football is acting under resistance. The quality of resistance is very immediate, intense and sometimes painful. Resistance involves wrestling, pushing, kicking, shoving and checking. Sometimes the resistance manifests itself in brutal fouls, occasionally in hitting, kicking or biting the opponent. The experience of resistance is normal in football. This becomes clear when compared to other sports such as volleyball or tennis. In these sports, the execution of the action is not impaired by the direct influence of another body.

Both when playing and watching, the resistance is very clearly noticeable. You feel the pushing forward and being obstructed. You want to move forward and realise that it’s not so smooth or easy. Once you’ve passed one opponent, the next one is already trying to prevent you from getting through. Even when receiving the ball, another player interferes. As a spectator, you experience how a clear path is blocked, how a dynamic desire to get through is suddenly hindered. You experience the frustration when the ball, ready to be shot, is kicked away at the last second, depriving you of the anticipated relief of shooting.

When watching and playing the game itself, the quality of the resistance creates the experience so typical of football of constantly being hindered and thus laboriously pushing forward. With every new attack, with every pass, there is a moment of beginning and hope of getting through, which is quickly and abruptly interrupted and frustrated. Here, football reveals itself to be a game that requires an extremely high tolerance for frustration, because only very few attempts to attack actually succeed. Constantly prevented, constantly thwarted or made impossible. Hopeful and creative attempts to move forward are constantly stopped. Therefore, with

every interrupted attempt to create something, the longing to 'get through' and 'be able to finish' builds up more and more. Getting through always has to reckon with opposition. The idea of free, self-determined will as the basis for one's own actions is vividly exposed as an illusion in football. Action arises primarily from the simultaneous forces of formation and resistance. In this way, football touches on an everyday experience familiar to everyone. Our actions and creations arise primarily under the influence of resistance – that of others or our own.

2.4 Formation on the field

Another formative factor in football can be seen in the arrangement and function of the players on the pitch. The players are sensibly distributed across the pitch in specific formations. Theoretically, all eleven players could be positioned on the goal line or on the centre line. The serious consequences of such linear formations would very quickly become apparent as inefficient.

In the development of modern football, a three-part division has proven to be a sensible basic formation, which is still valid in its structure today. Players in a football team are divided into the functional areas of *defence*, *midfield* and *attack*. In addition, there is the special position of *the goalkeeper*. This basic structure has become increasingly differentiated in recent decades and the understanding of the individual positions has been expanded (libero as a 'free spirit' in the defensive line; defensive and offensive midfield; full-back who acts up front and, depending on the game situation, also attacks or helps to bridge the midfield; strikers who take on defensive tasks in the front line through specific runs and so forth). At its core, a football team still consists of these three spatially arranged functional areas of defence, midfield and attack, as well as the special position of the goalkeeper.

The functional arrangement of players on the pitch determines the shape of a team. This is particularly clear at the start of each game, just before kick-off. The players calmly organise themselves in their functional areas on the pitch. They assume a shape or formation that begins to move and change dynamically at the moment of kick-off. Configurations are formed, situationally formed dynamic units composed of players and opponents. Sociologist Norbert Elias refers to these situational, dynamic, tense structures as "figurations" (cf. Elias & Dunning, 1966/1989, p. 108). Their tension arises from the tension between players from two sides and the resulting opposing actions and intentions. Players from both sides form situational formations on the field, which arise both from opposition and cooperation. The formation of situational game formations or figurations requires both one's own players and opposing players. They are conditioned by a cooperation that arises from opposition.

A large part of the coach's work consists of practising the most effective dynamic formations or figurations for the game. Modern football requires its players to constantly change these formations. No matter how dynamic or static a team's formations may be, it is always a matter of arranging players in an extended space that is occupied by a formation. Figurations are a Gestalt in motion. Situational intermediate shapes that are constantly forming and reforming and whose existence is often only fleeting. When the game ends after 90 minutes, the Gestalt of the game has emerged from a constant change of intermediate Gestalt through formation and transformation.

The structural positions on the pitch – defence, midfield, attack and the special position of the goalkeeper – can now be understood not only tactically but also psychologically in terms of their effect, as they shape the mental state of the players and at the same time set specific tasks for the game. *Defending* in football means not only tactically but also psychologically preserving and destroying. The aim is to protect one's own goal from threat and to prevent and destroy the opponent's attack. The task of defending is to preserve the status quo and destroy the intruder. At its core, defending is about changing impact to ineffectiveness through counteraction. This requires defenders themselves, but also all other positions that are supposed to defend in a situation-specific manner, to intervene robustly, to oppose decisively and to engage in tackling without compromise.

The *attack* is completely different. Its main task is to push towards the goal and finish off creative moves by scoring goals. The striker is expected to take surprising paths and make effective advances. An effective attack is one that overcomes the opponent's defensive lines through its impact, throwing the opposing lines into disarray and putting itself in a promising position. In modern football, a team's attacking play is more like a wild horde invading the opponent's defensive lines at high speed and tearing apart their order and attempts at control. Pressing and finishing are the psychological effects of the attack.

Unlike handball or basketball, football is played on such a large field that large spaces in the middle must be played as midfield. The occupation of the midfield, the large area between the defensive and attacking zones, is therefore very important. In terms of numbers, most players occupy positions in the midfield – centrally, on the left and right, and more offensively or defensively. In terms of tactics and psychology, the midfield is the place of balance and mediation. This is where the calm control of the defence and the urgency of finishing of the attack are negotiated. This constant mediation gives football its incomparable character. It is from this that attempts to move the ball forward into the opponent's half and, ideally, into a position from which a shot can be taken, usually develop.

This is where the genius of players comes to the fore when they anticipate spaces or force them open with their movement. Teams that try to bypass the midfield with quick passing are considered weak in their build-up play. They often appear clumsy and limited in their options. On the other hand, teams that practise skillful playmaking from midfield through fast, creative passing are accorded the highest respect (e.g. FC Barcelona's tiki-taka). It is not surprising that midfielders, especially those who can play in the centre, are among the most valuable and expensive players on the market. They embody the role of playmaker like no other player. They are the "playmakers", turning defence into attack through creative solutions, bringing the ball into a promising position or playing the "killer pass" that makes a goal possible. They are the pivots in the structure, turning defence into attack and vice versa. They are creators in that they highlight one option from an infinite number of possibilities, thereby making a team's game a reality.

The goalkeeper has a special position in the line-up on the pitch. On the one hand, he is a symbol of preservation. He is therefore fundamentally assigned to defence. He is the goal-keeper. In order to guard and prevent, he is equipped with numerous special privileges that make him appear as part of the team, but at the same time as something else. His preservation is extended with special rights. He is allowed to do things that are forbidden to the field players. First and foremost, he is allowed to pick up the ball. Paradoxically, the goalkeeper is allowed to use the 'cultured organ of the hand' within a game constructed around the foot and its psycho-logic. This is precisely the opposite of the handball rule, which is strictly enforced in football. He is even allowed to use aids such as gloves to improve his performance and hold the ball in his arms for a long time before putting it back into play.

Psychologically, there is something contradictory about the position of goalkeeper. He embodies the paradox of being a different part of the whole. He is part of the team and yet wears a different jersey. He plays football with his hands. He is part of the whole and yet completely different. Goalkeepers often do not shy away from displaying their otherness in all its flamboyance in their outfits or even in their behaviour. Among players, goalkeepers often have a reputation for being a little "different" and "special" (cf. Reng, 2009). Their behaviour and expression are contrary to everyone else's, and yet – as a reversal – they are part of the whole.

3. Stage: Establishing connections and Gestalt dynamics

The third stage of analysing a sport seeks to establish connections between the Gestalt factors. How are the effects of the individual Gestalt elements related? How does the interaction of these elements give rise to the specific sport? Establishing connections makes it possible to reconstruct the effect of the sport on players and spectators. At the same time, it reveals the dynamics that determine a sport.

Gestalt dynamics arise in the practice of a sport. They qualify the sport in its uniqueness. It is the quality that can be experienced in active participation and spectating. It has an effect on spectators and participants. It is what makes the sport appealing. This offers a different understanding of motivation, since it is not intrasubjective motives such as the power motive or the affiliation motive that make a sport appealing, but rather the unique experience offered by each sport.

The starting point for establishing connections can be found in the focus on the feet, excluding the use of the hands. Only the feet are to be used to shape the game. Something that is severely limited in its possibilities (kicking) is to produce something artistic. At the heart of this is a transformation. Aggression, which is directed against others, is transformed into cooperation through the handling of the ball. In football, a against-one-another becomes a with-one-partner, the aggressive is cultivated – and all this under the constraints of a disability (hands) and limitation (feet). This is where the great fascination with football lies, especially for men. Football offers a concrete way of dealing with aggression in a more socially acceptable way. In this way, football in its form offers people a way of dealing with aggression. The Gestalt and cultivation of aggression must be achieved through the limitation of the feet.

The Gestalt of football expands the moment of transformation. The transformation of aggression is expanded by demanding the dissolution or subordination of the individual in favour of a greater whole. The aim is to create a unified body of action. Destructive aggression is thus further cultivated into a form of *related* coexistence. In its form, football demands a reduction or dissolution of self-reference. This is where the moment of fraternisation occurs, both on the field and in the stands.

This increasingly brings out the form that characterises football and makes it so attractive. The aggression that has already been transformed is expanded into a formation of unity. The limited, which refers to a togetherness and experiences an expansion and enlargement of unity, must now overcome resistance (large space, physical contact) in order to bring itself to completion and thus to fulfilment. If the conclusion is successful, this moment carries the seed of danger and destruction of this form, which is based on cooperation and selfless action.

This reveals how paradoxical and at the same time artful the construction of football is. A destructive kick is transformed within itself and, as such, elevated to a greater whole. Aggression is cultivated in such a way that it transforms its destructive direction into a form of playing together, in which, paradoxically, the individual becomes effective by dissolving into a greater whole. Football offers a concrete form of self-treatment of the destructive toward formation. It addresses precisely one of the major themes of human nature, the destructive nature of

(male) aggression, and offers it a concrete handle and thus cultivation of the same. The exciting thing about football is therefore always both – the basic tone is aggressive (even among the spectators) and at the same time cultivated (forms of togetherness such as fan chants, club colours, fraternisation, beer drinking). Football takes away the destructive effect of aggression by transforming it into togetherness through the handling of the ball. This is why football is particularly suitable as a sport that brings people together and enjoys global popularity, as the transformation of the destructive into the cultivated is a central task of every culture (cf. Elias & Dunning, 1966, 1989; cf. Freud, 1974c). Nevertheless, aggression remains a quality of the sport of football. Aggression constantly threatens cultivation, threatening to break through its sensitive framework. In this way, football creates a space for aggression in every game and also seeks expression there, the basic quality of which is immediately transferred to the spectators (cf. Gebauer, 2006, 2016). In the volume, the rough interaction and the shouting and roaring from the stands, in the cheering and insults directed at the referee and opponents, in the pyrotechnics set off or even in fights between fan groups. It is no coincidence that football matches are reminiscent of war and require a corresponding police presence.

Free movement is severely restricted by the physical resistance of the opponent. A dynamic of constant pushing and being pushed back develops. One experiences a pushing that wants to assert itself and break free, but at the same time is limited and constrained. If necessary, even with a foul, an illegal action. In terms of Gestalt dynamics, a *crowd* forms in which people move forwards and backwards, in which they are pushed forwards and at the same time hindered. The players move in the tension between confinement and space, between being oppressed and liberated. The spectators move with this constant pushing and being pushed back at the same time. This happens constantly and repeatedly in the game. In the coaches' descriptions of the game they talk about tight or closed spaces and the open space that opens up when players move into spaces accordingly. At the moment a goal is scored, the tension that arises from overcoming resistance can be released in an expression. The scrum experiences liberation and redemption in the goal. Finally, the pressure can prevail and be completed. The relief becomes visible when you are lifted out of your seat and your arms are raised in celebration. The psychological demand for reunification that follows the goal is realised in the stands through hugs or high fives with your neighbours.

4. Stage: Psychological sense

The fourth stage of analysing a sport asks about the psychological sense of the Gestalt or formation. What does the Gestalt have to do with the psyche? What is being addressed with the formation? In morphological psychology, a Gestalt is

understood as paradoxical, tense structure that enable a lasting, livable solution for this structure.

As already indicated in the analysis, football, in its transformative potential, provides a highly relevant image for culture and cultural education in terms of transforming aggression. Culture as a form of coexistence requires the transformation of the destructive elements of aggression (cf. Freud, 1974c). Football offers an artful and at the same time simple opportunity for transformation in everyday life. Therefore, the contribution of football to a cultivated coexistence should not be underestimated. Where and how else would aggression be expressed? In the process of transformation, football makes use of an extension. The individual should merge into a (cultivated) unity.

With the experience of resistance, the game of football also picks up on the experience of the individual's actions in everyday life. Acting against the resistance of others, but also of oneself, is something we are all familiar with. Concerns, opposing opinions, prohibitions, restrictions and so forth constantly stand in the way of simple, smooth execution and success. Football thus enables a reflection of the everyday experience of action and offers concrete solutions on the field as to how action can still succeed.

"Gestalts *bind* the soul as a transition, as a contrasting unity, as a structure that twists and turns" (Salber, 1986, p. 9). Against the backdrop of this psychological analysis, the game of football appears almost as a prototype of Gestalt. The expansiveness of the action in a football match, visible and tangible in the vastness of the pitch, appears like a playground for mental construction. On the expansive pitch, Gestalt and Gestalt formation become visible as a functioning operation. The arrangement on the pitch in attack, midfield and defence is reminiscent of Freud's (1974b) construction of the psychic apparatus. Psychologically, it is about mediating opposing tendencies. The forward's urgent pressure, full of determination and force, stands in tense opposition to the defender's conserving and controlling tendencies. This polarity requires mediation so that formation can take place at all and a Gestalt can emerge from it. The game arises from the mediation in the spacious midfield. Freud finds the psychological instances of *the id* (urging, uninhibited), *the superego* (controlling, preserving) and *the ego* (mediating) for this tense relationship and its mediation. Thus, the constant attempt at mediation between paradoxical relationships is experienced on the expansiveness of the field. By watching a football match, we observe our own psychological construction and treat it at the same time – without knowing it. "The psyche is expansive and knows nothing of it" (Freud, 1941, p. 151).

Summary

Sports have traditionally been studied and understood through the human being and his functional areas such as cognition, emotion, or volition. The morphological approach makes it possible to focus on the sport itself – its form and construction. The Gestalt of a sport and its psychological impact structure are developed using a methodological procedure in four steps. This article demonstrates the application of this method using the example of football. In contrast to intrapsychic motivations, the reconstruction of the Gestalt of football in its very form reveals the attractiveness of this sport that moves so many people to become involved.

Zusammenfassung

Sport wird traditionell über den Menschen und seine Funktionsbereiche wie Kognition, Emotion oder Volition untersucht und verstanden. Der morphologische Ansatz ermöglicht es, den Fokus auf den Sport selbst – seine Form und Konstruktion – zu richten. Die Gestalt einer Sportart und ihre psychologische Wirkungsstruktur werden mithilfe eines methodischen Vorgehens in vier Schritten entwickelt. Dieser Artikel demonstriert die Anwendung dieser Methode am Beispiel des Fußballs. Im Gegensatz zu intrapsychischen Motivationen offenbart die Rekonstruktion der Gestalt des Fußballs in seiner Form selbst die Attraktivität dieses Sports, die so viele Menschen zum Engagement bewegt.

Keywords: Sports psychology, morphology of sport, sport forms, psychology of football

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