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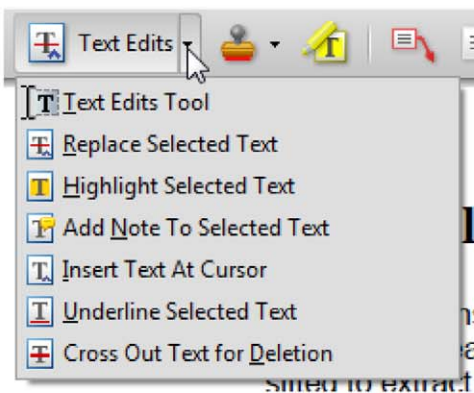
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On the logic of soccer patronage

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Silvio Berlusconi once remarked that ‘soccer is a metaphor for life’. Taking this claim at face value, the essay explores some of the logics at play when soccer is linked to other domains. In particular, by considering the circumstances of three Italian clubs, the essay throws light on different ways the image of a patron may be mirrored. A preliminary philosophical apparatus is introduced in the first part of the essay, clarifying the notion of a metaphor and how the authors see this applying to the case under consideration. Afterwards, such apparatus is put to use to explain the instances of Juventus FC, AC Milan, and US Città di Palermo.

Soccer is a metaphor for life: from Milan’s success people realized that mine is a winning philosophy.¹

Silvio Berlusconi  remarked, while celebrating the third consecutive *scudetto*, ‘soccer is a metaphor for life’. In this essay we intend to take this claim seriously and explore some of the logics at play when soccer is linked to other domains. In particular, by studying three different Italian clubs, we aim to show different ways the image of a patron may be mirrored. We start off by introducing a preliminary philosophical apparatus clarifying the notion of a metaphor and how we see this applying to our case study. Afterwards, we will employ such apparatus to analyze the instances of Juventus FC, AC Milan, and US Città di Palermo.

Soccer as a metaphor

Metaphors stand to language as pitons, karabiners, and ropes stand to a rock-climber: they nail down and guide most of our exchange of information. Clearly they come in handy when we talk about things such as love, power, and food; yet we have come to recognize them also where you would not expect that much rhetoric, namely in most (if not all) scientific models, such as those representing chemical compounds, gases and light.²

Soccer can be thought of as a metaphor too, from multiple angles and for different purposes. Indeed, its usage is so widespread that – despite its importance – it

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has come to be an unanalysed commonplace. Here we wish to start offering a philosophical analysis of this topic; we will do so by digging deeper into the logic through which club patrons put the metaphor to use. To do this, we shall first attempt to spell out what renders soccer a particularly suitable vehicle for metaphorical representation; then, we will introduce a model for the logical structure of a metaphor that we will employ to construct our analysis.

Soccer and life

Soccer metaphors typically rely on particular features of the game that in some way resemble aspects of *normal life*. The list of features is for practical purposes undeterminable. It includes items such as a player's sacrifice of personal gain in favour of the interests of the team; the due respect for a coach's deliberations; an individual player's creativity; the importance of virtuous conduct. Here we will limit ourselves to three features enabling the link that are key to our discussion.

(A) On a par with life, soccer is unpredictable

This may be recognized at different levels:

(i) *Game unpredictability*: The peculiar rule that forbids touching the ball with hands and arms – for everyone but the goalkeeper – shapes the interaction between the player and the ball, so that the movements of the former have to be constantly responsive to the position and movement of the latter. Also for this reason, while scoring a point is a prosaic occurrence in most sports, in soccer it becomes a magic moment. Additional unpredictability comes, moreover, from the tactical complexity of the game: no matter how thoughtful the formation, a team's overall performance is vulnerable to a player's failure to keep her role even just for a few seconds. Thus it is impossible to fully control our actions in the field – as in life.

(ii) *Player unpredictability*: Soccer is surely a peculiar sport where, unlike American football or ice hockey, it is quite common to find a great player who does not possess an extraordinary physical structure. A list of the greatest players of all times includes several possessing average or even deficient bodies. The great Garrincha had several birth deficiencies: his spine was deformed, while his right leg was bent inward, and his tremendous dribbling was due – partially – to his left leg being six centimetres shorter and curved outwards. Rather than preventing him from being a fine player, these features arguably contributed to make him one of the greatest of all times. Lionel Messi, *blaugrana* forward, at the age of 11 was diagnosed with a growth hormone deficiency, and he stands now at only 1.69 metres. Nevertheless he scored a headed goal in the Champions League Final on 27 May 2009. In a soccer field – as in life – everyone has possibilities that are not fully determinable by looking at the initial conditions. As Solon brilliantly taught Croesus, initial conditions do not determine what we do and who we become.³

(iii) *The unpredictability of fortune*: Luck is an ingredient that everyone into soccer quickly – and often bitterly – comes to learn. Even a first-rate team, playing a great game, could lose because of a series of unlucky events. Netherlanders may have no difficulty grasping this point, remembering the match against Italy in the semi-final of Euro 2000. It is even superfluous to underline that in life something

of scarily similar happens: often an unlucky event can produce disastrous consequences.

(B) Soccer means winning and losing

As a corollary of what we said about the unpredictability of soccer, every player knows the bitter taste of a loss – even an undeserved, unfair or maybe unjust one. Even the greatest players of all times such as Pelé, Maradona, Garrincha, Cristiano Ronaldo, Van Basten, Best, Messi have had in their careers astonishing victories, but also heartbreaking defeats. Along the same lines, an undeniable dialectic between winning and losing characterizes everyone's life.

(C) The referee

The theme of the unfair or unjust loss introduces a feature that greatly contributes to render sports (soccer as well as many others) a good metaphor for life: the referee. The authority of the referee is almost indisputable⁴ and the need to accept and respect authority – beyond personal interest and opinion – is considered one of the most valuable pedagogical features of soccer. However, peculiar to soccer, it's the fact that referees always have to be in the middle of the action, so much so that they can in fact not just touch the ball, but even unintentionally score a goal.⁵

Metaphors in the soccer domain

These, then, are three major features of soccer that render it a particularly suitable metaphor for life. Before seeing how such a metaphor has been put to use in the context of contemporary Italian soccer, we shall introduce the theoretical apparatus through which we aim to analyse the logical structure of metaphors.


What renders A a metaphor for B? Roughly, it is an appropriate transfer of meaning from the first to the latter. In order to provide a more exact account, we introduce the notion of *sphere of discourse*, which stands for any subset of a language that is employed to represent a certain portion of reality. We shall deliberately keep this notion informal and vague, so to embrace any multifarious use of language. Typically, such a portion is individuated through a certain functional role that it plays in our lives. Thus, for example, music, fashion or the wine-making business are all portions of reality with a peculiar corresponding sphere of discourse.

Sometimes, two different spheres are juxtaposed. Among the modes of juxtaposition, in a metaphor, one or more expressions belonging to the first sphere are employed to transfer part of their meaning to expressions belonging to the other sphere. Typically, this operation is performed by an identity claim, such as 'Diego *is* a night owl' or 'Juanita *is* an angel'. Two key features of a working metaphor are its opacity and its degree of inter-subjectivity. No metaphor expresses a literal identity; for instance, the above claims are both false, as they do not purport to claim, respectively, that Diego is *literally* a night owl or that Juanita is *literally* an angel; they simply draw parallels between the two. Nonetheless, a competent speaker wouldn't find that claim a nonsense. And yet it is utterly difficult (if not impossible) to spell out exactly under what respects Diego is like a night owl and

Juanita is like an angel. This is due in part to the fact that a sentence may be used to convey different meanings as uttered in different contexts, and in part to the respects of similarity being potentially infinite. It is this opacity that renders the metaphor a ductile tool, one of the most apt to recurrently transfer meaning from a sphere of discourse to another. The other remarkable feature of a metaphor is its inter-subjective character. The efficacy of a metaphor largely depends on a shared linguistic competence and on a mutual agreement on the purported juxtaposition (and on its grounds).

In the present essay, the relevant spheres of discourse will be labelled respectively *the sphere of soccer* and *the mundane sphere*. Our aim will be to study different ways in which these two spheres are juxtaposed. We will distinguish three major players within the sphere of soccer – the *team*, the *supporters* and the *patronage* (which includes the owner and the president with all his collaborators) – all of which are part of a *club*. Within the mundane sphere we include all sorts of things, especially those that may influence or be influenced by soccer. Nevertheless there is one entity within this domain that calls for some introduction, namely what we label as ‘bare individual’. With the expression (which we borrow from contemporary metaphysics), we intend nothing more than the bare existence of a person (think of it as his/her proper name), which functions as placeholder for any quality whatsoever.

In our reading, the bare individual corresponding to the owner plays a key role in the mirroring process. It is our idea that spelling out such role is pivotal to uncovering the logic of the metaphor embedded in contemporary soccer. Here is the illustration of a typical case of metaphorical transfer between a soccer patron and his public *persona*: (i) the name ‘Donald Duck’, which picks out a bare individual in the mundane sphere, is correlated⁶ to the owner of the club in the soccer sphere; (ii) within the soccer sphere, the owner is then linked⁷ to the other parts of the club, which enrich its image; (iii) such image is then projected⁸ onto the *persona* of Donald Duck, an individual of the mundane sphere with all the qualities that are transferred to him, in multiple ways, via the different parts of the club. Thus, what initially was a mere name within the mundane sphere becomes at the end of a mir-



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roring process a full-fledged persona, which crucially passes through the soccer sphere (for an illustration, see Figure 1). 5

Naturally, most everyday cases of patronage involve individuals that are *a little more* than bare individuals; moreover, mirroring processes from other spheres often play a relevant role. Even so, today clubs typically offer a peculiarly powerful mirror because of two emerging processes: (i) The increased media coverage of soccer events and the advent of pay-per-view. These have transformed the relation between supporters and their clubs, whose popularity – in its social, economical, and political dimensions – has reached an unprecedented level. (ii) The progressive decline of traditional forms of structured aggregation for young people – such as politically oriented groups or religious communities. This has transfigured the role and the nature of organized groups of supporters, both in their self-understanding and in the way in which societies at large deal with them. 10 15

The Orpheus of soccer

There is an elegance which is not deliberated, but it is owned or interpreted once that wonderful shirt is put on.⁹

They call it *La (vecchia) signora*, the (old) lady. The nickname is a pun on its Latin name, which means ‘youth’. With its 51 trophies, Juventus FC is not only the most successful Italian club, but it also boasts the largest collection of supporters: around 12 million in Italy, and 173 million all over Europe.¹⁰ The ‘Lady’ sets the standards of Italian soccer in many other regards as well; *stile* is what interests us here. It is because of this primacy that we shall start our analysis from Juventus. 20 25

The so-called *stile Juve* functions exactly like a brand, instantly transforming the understanding of whatever falls under its scope. Being *juventino* is endorsing a certain ideal: a mix of natural elegance (described by Boniperti in the quote opening the section) and serene pose. ‘As to be *juventino* is just this: to live with serenity through any transitional phase,’¹¹ as Darwin Pastorin once said. Such attitude developed under the guidance of the Agnelli family, who took control of the club in 1923, and whose distinctive public behaviour became a model for the club’s members and its supporters. 30

The elder Giovanni Agnelli – whose *persona* was associated with the image of Juventus for decades – probably moulded that style more than anyone else. Over decades, he set peculiar standards for a soccer patron, never losing his detached and calm look in spite of the team’s performance. Among other behaviours, he was renowned for leaving the stadium at the end of the first half, no matter the result and the importance of the game; he used to give nicknames to the team’s stars borrowed from *highbrow* spheres, such as art history or literature: thus, Alessandro del Piero was ‘Pinturicchio’ at the peak of his career, and ‘Waiting for Godot’ when his performances became less brilliant. This *haute bourgeoisie* attitude was expressed by a member of one of the most wealthy and prestigious Italian families (who controlled, among others, the car-making company Fiat). Unlike contemporary protagonists of the soccer patronage sphere, for the Agnelli family the process of construction of a well-rounded and renowned soccer brand had to grow slowly over decades. This was the time, indeed, when the soccer sphere was not dramatically overexposed to public attention by the mass media. 35 40 45

It would be quite reductive, however, to associate the *stile Juve* to the Agnelli family alone: nearly all the foremost figures who contributed to the image of the 50

club embodied it. Here, you may list players that distinguished themselves for their elegance and serenity in and outside of the field, such as Giampiero Boniperti, Omar Sivori, Dino Zoff, Michelle Platini, Gaetano Scirea, Roberto Baggio and Alessandro del Piero – just to name a few. Or you may list team presidents and managers, such as (once more) Giampiero Boniperti, Vittorio Caissotti di Chiusano, Giovanni Cobolli Gigli or, finally, coaches such as Giovanni Trapattoni and Carlo Ancelotti.

Through the models provided by its patrons and its most distinguished representatives, the *stile Juve* secured for itself a powerful, well-rounded, and long-lasting metaphor, which instantly transforms the image of the person or group associated with the club. Within the mundane sphere, the domain of applicability of the Juventus's metaphor has basically no boundaries: for this reason, we can think of the *Signora* as one of the most wide-ranging and classic club metaphors in contemporary soccer. As Orpheus enchanted its audience with his lyre, Juventus charms any fan (and often any opponent too) with its style. For example, the benefits of this transformation have been felt – or simply sought, with different results – by key figures in the world of politics and business; but ordinary supporters can often appeal to (and at times even draw benefits from) such a distinctive style. However, the *stile* originally reflects upon the Agnelli family, who greatly contributed to create it.

To sum up the logic here at play: from the mere name of the *Agnelli family*, the image of a stylish team and patron was created; such image powerfully reflected on the members of the family, giving a decisive contribution to creating its myth outside of soccer, well into the business world (especially the car-making industry) and public life; but the image also ethically shaped the *personae* of the players out of the field, of the supporters when not talking about soccer; and, perhaps, of Italian soccer as well (see Figure 2 for a scheme of this logic).

In bringing this section to a close, we cannot ignore what happened in July 2006, when Luciano Moggi – at the time the club's general manager – was expelled from FIGC (the Italian soccer federation) for bribing referees and orchestrating a system aimed at favouring Juventus's team and some of its players. The accusation

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was backed up by an impressive amount of phone conversations, involving Moggi and a number of other high-profile managers and administrators of *Serie A* clubs and of the refereeing organization. At the time of writing, *La Signora* is struggling to promptly reaffirm the old metaphor, which greatly contributed to the development of our soccer. Meanwhile, the Italian soccer scene acquired some new protagonists; to the main one we shall now turn to see how the soccer metaphor, fostered by the new media, was able to create a different mythological feature within a very short time span. 5

The Mars of soccer 10

The rise of a new domain

Mr Berlusconi is the paradigmatic case of patronage for our study, if not the origin itself of the contemporary way of understanding the property of a soccer club and the image that can be derived from it. To recall just some of his many titles, he is the main shareholder of Fininvest, one of the country's ten largest privately owned companies that operates in media and finance; the founder – with Ennio Doris – of Mediolanum bank; the main shareholder of Mediaset; and last but not least he is the leader of PdL.¹² Berlusconi's group controls three of the six Italian national television channels,¹³ several magazines and newspapers, and at the time of writing he is acting as the Italian Prime Minister. 15 20

Mr Berlusconi acquired the property of AC Milan on 20 February 1986. Just a few weeks later, on 24 March, he became president of the team and set to change the world of soccer. Since the earliest years of his management, Mr Berlusconi grasped the potential alchemy between mass media and soccer. Especially through television, he reconstructed the sport's visibility, its relation with the supporters and the image that patrons were gaining through those. The culmination of this revolutionary process was the broadcasting of live regular-season matches, starting with Lazio v. Foggia on 31 August 1993. The channel was Tele+, the first European pay-tv, then controlled by Mr Berlusconi, Vittorio Cecchi Gori,¹⁴ Leo Kirch and other smaller business partners. 25 30

Even though Berlusconi acquired wide notoriety since his acquiring of the club and his taking it 'to the pinnacle of the world game',¹⁵ it is at the moment of his debut in Italian political life that the significance of his patronage and, at once, his *public persona* was transfigured. It was only 15 years ago when the 'Cavaliere'¹⁶ decided to enter the political *field*: 35

Italy is the country I love. Here I have my roots, my hopes, my horizons. Here I have learned, from my father and from life, how to be an entrepreneur. Here I have also acquired the passion for liberty. I have chosen to *enter the field* and become a public servant because I do not want to live in an illiberal country, ruled by immature forces and by people who are well and truly bound to a past that proved both a political and economic failure.¹⁷ 40

During this famous speech – the first of his political career – Mr Berlusconi chose to employ soccer jargon in order to secure a metaphorical link between his extraordinary success as patron of AC Milan and his political activity, being sure that most Italians would have been able to understand it immediately (albeit unintentionally). To say that soccer played a very special role for Mr Berlusconi is confirmed also by other interviews released shortly after that first speech. For example, the day 45

after the foundation of Forza Italia (his first political party), the PdL's leader declared: 'If I will enter in the political life, I will resign from every other role but the presidency of AC Milan.'¹⁸ More noteworthy words came just a few months later, after his party's victory in the elections: while greeting the Italian national team about to leave to compete for the 1994 World Cup, Mr Berlusconi declared: 'My political mission is like building a soccer team.'¹⁹ Finally, during the celebration for the third consecutive *scudetto* – again, just a few weeks after his party's electoral victory – Berlusconi addressed a selected audience of AC Milan players and supporters with the following questions: 'Are we tired of winning?' – 'Nooo' they answered; 'Will we win again?' – 'Yees'; 'Everywhere and anyway? Under our guidance, will Italy become like Milan?' – 'Yees.' And he hence concluded: 'Then, we shall cut the cake, being assured that there are going to be lots of cakes for everyone!'²⁰

When compared to the construction of a *stile Juve*, Mr Berlusconi's case is striking for its brevity. Within a few years, he succeeded in creating a new image for himself and Italian soccer. The new media were a crucial component of this process, and Mr Berlusconi had a long-standing relationship with them. He was indeed the first to explore and understand the commercial potential of private television in Italy: in 1978 he bought a small local television – *Telemilano* – and just few years later the holding he had founded to run his business was controlling several channels, spread all over the country, thus being able to broadcast nationwide. This was a formidable achievement, especially when considering that national television was at that time a state monopoly.

It is not an accident that the first major event Berlusconi decided to broadcast on his network was the 1980–1 *Mundialito*, a soccer tournament played in Uruguay during Christmas time. The teams involved were former world champions, Italy being among those. He had thus foreseen the novel alchemy – in terms of profit – between television and soccer: within less than ten years, Fininvest (nowadays Mediaset) became the only competitor to RAI in the Italian television market.

Mr Berlusconi's connection with soccer, however, is not limited to commercial aspects. In April 1994, the Cavaliere himself marvellously expressed how that sphere is related – and specifically as a patron – to his public *persona*: 'Soccer is a metaphor for life: from Milan's success people realized that mine is a winning philosophy, that by working hard ambitious goals may be reached.'²¹

At first sight, the metaphorical link between AC Milan and Mr Berlusconi's *persona* may come through as commonplace. But unravelling the logic behind it, we become aware yet again of a lengthy and continuous process of meaning transfer from one sphere to the other. The story, however, gets more interesting than this. Not only was Mr Berlusconi a forerunner in the use of soccer as a metaphor throughout the mass media: what is peculiar is that the connection he puts to work relies on the surgical removal of certain elements of the soccer sphere, so that – as the Greek god Mars – at any turn of bad fortune, *they* disappear.

45 Reshaping the metaphor

To understand Mr Berlusconi's peculiar use of the soccer metaphor, we will build on features (A) and (B) mentioned earlier – (A) *On a par with life, soccer is unpredictable*; and (B) *Soccer means winning and losing*. Let us start from the latter.

No mirror provides an *exact* copy of reality; however, some mirrors distort more than others. In search of a reassuring answer, the Queen in Snow White's fairy-tale asking 'Who is the fairest one of all?' can only content herself with the answer she desires. Analogously, Berlusconi aims to receive the cunning answer he desires from his team: no defeat. This wish clashes with a very basic fact: as any team is bound to come across victories and defeats, its metaphorical correlate will be accordingly mirrored. It is hence remarkable how Mr Berlusconi systematically tries to escape this logic by avoiding having his name linked with AC Milan's bad fortune. That is why we argue that – in associating himself just with the wins of AC Milan – Berlusconi is doing something peculiar: he is creating a 'winning team' by *fiat*, which would suggest that he is a winner because – indeed – *his team* is a winning team.²²

The question, then, quickly arises: 'How can Berlusconi remove the defeat as constitutive element of the story of his team – and of soccer *sans phrase*?' The answer is: 'By removing unpredictability' – that is: 'By denying (A)'. This is achieved through a surgical and deliberate selection of the episodes in which the metaphor should be put at work; the effect is to create the image of a president who is able to overcome the power of any adversary and any fortune (as the prince portrayed in Niccolò Machiavelli's masterpiece). Here are some excerpts from Mr Berlusconi attesting to this point:

The problem of Milan is that I do not take care of the team in person any more. Because of politics I had to abandon the team. I have to think about the country and not about Milan, you are ruining me.²³

Milan is not winning any more because, since he entered politics, its president is not taking care of it any more.²⁴

Milan is Berlusconi's model: Roma defeated. A goal by Leonardo and two goals by Shevchenko: but it is a triumph of the Cavaliere too, in that he always asked Zaccaroni for a four-man defence.²⁵

No one talks about Berlusconi's Milan, but Sacchi's, Zac's, Ancelotti's one. However, I am the one who decided line-ups for the last 18 years.²⁶

Berlusconi obviously cannot deny the fact that his team sometimes loses. What he does is subtler. He simply understands and explains Milan's defeats as caused by his absence or by some kind of lack in the fulfilment of his directions. In Berlusconi's terms, the failed observance of his 'winning ideas', or the impossibility of producing and communicating them, is the reason for AC Milan being defeated. He endorsed this philosophy even as Prime Minister of Italy and, thus, as a representative of the Italian national team. The day after the clamorous defeat of the *azzurri* in the final of Euro 2000 versus France, Berlusconi officially declared during a press conference:

For the love of my country, I wanted to stay silent. Instead, I have to say that we could and we had to win. Zoff made shameful decisions: Zidane was always free to move and play, it was impossible not to notice that. Even an amateur would have noticed that and we would have won. Someone like Gattuso could have been the right choice. . . . It would have been enough to win.²⁷

5 It is not just due to the attribution of responsibilities to coaches or to lamentation over his lack of involvement (because of more pressing duties) that Berlusconi can avoid being identified with the (actual) defeats of his team. AC Milan possesses a very weird set of managers: paradoxically, Silvio Berlusconi is not the president of A.C. Milan,²⁸ but no one else holds – and can hold – this position. Adriano Galliani is executive vice president and managing director, while Paolo Berlusconi (Silvio's brother) and Gianni Nardi are vice presidents. Thanks to this legal arrangement, the Cavaliere can deny being the president who – sometimes – loses, but he always claims to be the president who has won the most in the history of Milan (and maybe of soccer). Like Mars, the Roman god of war, every time he enters the battlefield, he cannot lose.

15 Finally, we wish to briefly consider the intricate relationship between Mr Berlusconi and AC Milan's supporters. The latter have been unusually critical of the management (regretfully, in violent ways too),²⁹ a striking fact when juxtaposed with the impressive number of competitions recently won by the team. The reasons for the conflict may be at least partially found in that very same mirroring process that helps in the constitution of Mr Berlusconi's public persona. A handy example is the transfer of Kakà to Real Madrid. Faced with vehement protest from the fans, Mr Berlusconi readily denied any involvement in the trade: 'If it would depend on me, I would keep him.'³⁰ This suggested that the player and the executive management – i.e. Adriano Galliani – were responsible and that, once more, there was no defeat for Berlusconi. However, Galliani in turn blamed the global economic crisis: 'Transfers of this kind are going to be commonplace in the next few years,'³¹ suggesting also that the ultimate reason for the transfer is to be found in some special fiscal laws that would favour Spanish teams over Italian ones. Unfortunately, the supporters' distress was not relieved by these comments and, ultimately, the *public persona* of Mr Berlusconi was negatively affected.

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The logic of divinity

We are now in a position to summarize the logic of metaphor underlying Mr. Berlusconi's link to AC Milan. As represented in Figure 3, the *bare individual* 'Silvio Berlusconi' is connected with the 'president' of AC Milan. The peculiarity of this process of mirroring is that the 'president' is *connected directly* to the subset of the team – the *winning team* – and just indirectly to the *losing team*, through the mediation of 'collaborators' (e.g. Galliani and Leonardo). Since the relationships are loaded with value, we can identify the first one (president-winning team) as a *positive relationship*,³² the indirect relationship between him and the *losing team* (losing team-Galliani ~~and co.~~ president) as a *negative-relationship*. The supporters are directly related to the team, directly related to Galliani ~~and co.~~ and indirectly related in a *negative-relationship* to the 'president'.

The picture shows that the *public persona* of Silvio Berlusconi (who is the Prime Minister of Italy, the founder of Mediolanum bank, the major shareholder of Fininvest and Mediaset etc.) is – at least in part – shaped through the mirroring process originating in 'being-the-president-of-AC Milan'.

The Leonidas of soccer

In the last two decades, the sphere of Italian soccer has seen the rise of another patron offering a different perspective on our analysis. When in the 1980s Maurizio Zamparini attempted to acquire Udinese Calcio, his name didn't ring a bell to most Italians. Nowadays, the owner of US Città di Palermo is one of the most visible and controversial figures on the scene. Like Silvio Berlusconi, Mr Zamparini is a self-made man and a successful entrepreneur who gained a leading role in the soccer sphere in a short time span. And, like Mr Berlusconi, Mr. Zamparini primarily relied on the new media to develop his public persona. However, while the former is the correlate of Mars, the latter embodies Leonidas for his non-negotiable appeal to virtue and morality.

In a sense, Mr Zamparini is the nemesis of Mr Berlusconi. He has been seeking to build a new course for Italian soccer, thus calling for a dramatic change in a number of its contemporary aspects. First of all, while Mr Berlusconi wishes to link his image to the one of a winning team, Mr. Zamparini has stressed multiple times that, in order to save Italian soccer, what matters is to set 'democratic rules': 'I idealize sport as an activity where we are all really on a par and the best of us is the winner.'³³ In this regard, his greatest achievement was the introduction of an agreement that more equally redistributes the profits that come from the TV broadcasting rights of soccer games. Democratic zeal was supposedly also at the heart of Mr Zamparini's quarrel with Mr Galliani (AC Milan vice-president) for a more democratic management of the *Lega Calcio Serie A*, a public discussion which at times became very acrimonious.

Mr Zamparini's appeal to virtue and morality was made visible in other contexts as well. He has repeatedly and energetically demanded more secure stadiums. On the tragic night of Catania v. Palermo, when a local policeman was fatally injured in a riot, he declared: 'Nobody won tonight, but everybody lost'³⁴ urging the necessity for an improvement in security measures inside and immediately outside the stadiums.³⁵ The most recent changes in stadium management – for example, the stricter controls over ticket sales and the exclusion of police from stadiums – are in

This figure is not available in the currently published version of this paper.

AQ5 Figure 4.

keeping with Mr Zamparini's proposals, and probably owe much to his zeal. Remarkable also were the open letters that the president of the *Rosaneri* wrote to the Cavaliere. In these unusual documents, Mr Zamparini publicly discussed both what connected and what separated the two powerful businessmen.³⁶ The missives, clearly linking Mr Zamparini's persona to the one of Mr Berlusconi, prove quite clearly that what is at stake is not just soccer, but also politics, hence revealing how close in the present time is the link between the two spheres. But, in one of them, our Leonidas reprehends his nemesis: 'Next time you go to San Siro do not sit in the tribune but in the curve. There you'll hear the true voice of the people'³⁷ stressing the overtly detached behaviour of Mr Berlusconi and the need for patrons and teams to close the cultural and behavioural gap severing them from the supporters.

On the other hand, over the past two decades, Mr Zamparini's business has grown along with his visibility. After owning Pordenone Calcio for a few years, in July 1987 he purchased Società Sportiva Calcio Venezia, which was on the verge of bankruptcy (and which he immediately merged with its long-standing rival Calcio Mestre); but, when in July 2002 the occasion to acquire Palermo arose, he took it, even if that meant 'abandoning' his native region and taking precious financial support away from it. In the meanwhile, he has made about one hundred million euros' worth of investments in Sicily, creating about one thousand jobs.³⁸ His name has also been associated with the Moggi *affaire* in 2006 and a corruption scandal for tax evasion in 2007.³⁹ Are we thus really facing a Leonidas of soccer? While it may be advisable not to pursue this issue further, the elements at hand suggest that he partially succeeded in securing a moralized image for his persona.

To sum up, what to most Italians was a bare particular – 'Maurizio Zamparini' – came to be linked in due time (and within the soccer sphere) with the patron of two *Serie A* clubs (Società Sportiva Calcio Venezia and US Città di Palermo); acting in this role, in a short time and with the aid of the new media, Mr Zamparini created a public *persona* in the mundane sphere, which acquired notoriety and success.

AQ2 In concluding our analysis, a few remarks need to be made. First of all, our analysis was limited to a few notable examples of patronage. There are other kinds of cases deserving close study.

(i) *Shareholding clubs*, such as F.C. Barcelona and Real Madrid A.D. The mirroring mechanism is here quite complex, because of the legal and managerial structure of the club that prevents the affirmation of a figure who may emerge as the ultimate keystone of the team. 5

(ii) *Supporter-owned clubs*, such as Spezia Calcio. In these cases, the image of the club directly reflects the spirit of a town, whose members decide to represent the team also financially.

(iii) *International patrons*, such as Roman Abramovich (patron of Chelsea FC) and the Abu Dhabi United Group Investment and Development Limited (recent patrons of Manchester City FC). The global market has recently seen the rise of wealthy individuals acquiring the property of high-profile foreign teams. For quite obvious reasons, in these cases the link between the patron and the public persona is established through the construction of a team of superstars, more than through the recourse to the cultural and historical heritage of the club; and – as for AC Milan – more attention is devoted to cultivate (through the media) a relationship with the far-sighted supporters rather than with the most historical devotee. 10 15

(iv) *Multi-club patrons*, such as Luciano Gaucci, Franco Sensi, and Massimo Moratti. The soccer scene also hosts patrons who own and manage more than one club at a time. Usually, the teams do not compete in the same league; they may, however, exchange players and staff. Such cases are relevant to our issue in that they usually muddy the image that their patrons are trying to establish through one of the clubs they own. Thus, for example, Franco Sensi's image as patron of AS Roma was negatively affected by the secondary relations he entrenched with other satellite clubs (Olympique Lyonnaise, US Città di Palermo). 20 25

Secondly, this is just a first step into the study of the logic within which the soccer sphere affects the way we perceive elements in the mundane sphere. Fortune, virtue, creativity, authority, loyalty, honour are just some of the additional themes that might deserve a similar treatment. Hence the present essay is expected to generate future forays of analysis into other such aspects of the soccer sphere. 30

Notes

1. 'Il calcio è una metafora della vita: dai successi del Milan la gente ha capito che la mia è una filosofia vincente'. This is a passage from Silvio Berlusconi's speech during the celebrations for the third consecutive *scudetto* of his management, held on 18 April 1994 at San Siro stadium, Milan. (The translation of this and all the following quotes from sources in Italian are ours.) 35
2. For an in-depth discussion of the theories of metaphor, see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation*. For an analysis of the role of metaphors in science see Black, *Models and Metaphors*; Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science*; and the essays included in Part IV of Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought*. 40
3. See Herodotus, *The Histories*, I, 29–33.
4. Recently, refereeing practice has undergone profound changes due to the development of slow-motion technology. For example, in the 2006 World Cup Final, Zidane was sent off because of images seen by an off-field official, rather than by the main referee. However, these situations are exceptions rather than rules. 45
5. We must acknowledge, however, episodes in which a referee intentionally scored a goal, as in the case of Brian Savill during the match between Wimpole 2000 v. Earls Colne Reserves on 22 September 2001 for the Great Bromley Cup. Yet, although Mr. Savill validated the goal, he was suspended for seven weeks. However, he refused 50

- AQ3 to accept the decision, and retired from refereeing. We remain open as to the correct metaphysical understanding of this relation.
6. We presume that this relation is different in its nature from the one occurring between the bare individual and the owner; however, as already mentioned, we remain open as to its correct understanding.
7. This is the relation peculiar to metaphorical speech; we surmise that its nature differs from the one occurring between the bare individual and the owner, and from the one between the owner and the other parts of the club; however, again we remain open as to its correct understanding.
8. The quote is from Giampiero Boniperti, reported in Palma, *Juventus: 110 anni di storia*, 305: 'C'è un'eleganza che non si sceglie ma si possiede, o si interpreta una volta indossata quella bellissima maglia'.
9. The source is *La Repubblica*, 30 Aug. 2008, available at <http://www.repubblica.it/2008/08/sezioni/sport/calcio/sondaggio-calcio/tifo-juve-inter/tifo-juve-inter.html>. See also 'Juventus Football Club SpA: Objectives and Strategies', http://www.juventus.com/site/eng/CLUB_obiettiviestrategie.asp, December 2008.
10. It was reported in 'Perché essere juventini è questo: vivere con serenità le fasi di passaggio, di transizion', Palma, *Juventus: 110 anni di storia*, 305.
11. 'PdL' is the acronym for 'Popolo della libertà' – in English 'Freedom people'.
12. The broadcasting system in Italy is undergoing deep modifications, such as the progressive substitution of traditional television with digital cable television. As a consequence, there will be many more national channels.
13. Cecchi Gori was the president of AC Fiorentina from 1993 to 2002.
14. 'History', available at <http://www.acmilan.com/InfoPage.aspx?id=37224>, 9 June 2009.
15. 'Cavaliere' (knight) is an order of merit of the Italian Republic, to which Mr. Berlusconi was elected in 1977. He is habitually referred to with this appellation.
16. This excerpt is taken from Berlusconi's public speech broadcast contemporary by all channels in Italy on 26 January 1994. Emphasis added.
17. 'Se entro in politica lascerò tutte le cariche, con una sola eccezione: la presidenza del Milan', 19 Jan. 1994.
18. 'La mia missione politica è come costruire una squadra di calcio', 6 June 1994.
19. See Alberto Costa, 'Noi del Milan, mai stanchi di vincere', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 April 1994, 41.
20. 'Il calcio è una metafora della vita: dai successi del Milan la gente ha capito che la mia è una filosofia vincente, che lavorando si possono ottenere risultati ambiziosi', 18 April 1994.
- AQ4
21. AC Milan is among the most successful clubs in the world; nonetheless it suffered incredible defeats, for instance in the memorable 2005 Champions League Final played against Liverpool.
22. 'Il problema del Milan è che io non me ne occupo più di persona. Per colpa della politica ho dovuto abbandonare la squadra. Devo pensare al Paese e non al Milan, mi state rovinando', *Sette*, 2 March 2001.
23. 'Il Milan non vince più perché, da quando è in politica, il suo presidente non se ne occupa più', *Ansa*, 6 Feb. 1998.
24. 'Milan modello Berlusconi: Roma a terra. Un gol di Leonardo e una doppietta di Shevchenko: ma è anche il trionfo del Cavaliere che da sempre chiede a Zac la difesa a 4', *Il Giornale*, 22 Jan. 2002.
25. 'Non si parla mai del Milan di Berlusconi, ma di Sacchi, di Zac, di Ancelotti. Però sono io che da diciotto anni faccio le formazioni', *Corriere della Sera*, 17 March 2004.
26. 'Per amor di patria volevo stare zitto invece devo dire che si poteva e si doveva vincere. Da Zoff sono arrivate scelte indegne: Zidane era sempre libero di creare gioco, non si poteva non vederlo. Lo avrebbe visto anche un dilettante e noi avremmo vinto. Si doveva mettere uno come Gattuso su Zidane. Un giocatore di quel tipo, che non lo lasciasse libero di scorrazzare a piacimento per tutta la partita. Sarebbe bastato questo per vincere. D'altra parte, l'intelligenza e l'arguzia o si hanno o non si hanno. Sono veramente indignato.' For a more complete list of Berlusconi's remarks on Milan's coaches, see Monica Colombo, 'Sartoria Milan: le forbiciate di Berlusconi', *Corriere della Sera*, 17 Aug. 2005, 48.

27. The managerial structure is quite complex to portray, with fluctuations over time in the official role performed by Mr Berlusconi, and there is no need to provide details here. However, for a discussion on this point, see B.A. 'Berlusconi dovrà lasciare il Milan', *Il Gazzettino*, 18 Feb. 2002; Riccardo Signori, 'Addio di Berlusconi alla guida del Milan', *Il Giornale*, 29 Dec. 2004, 1; Vincenzo Cerracchio, 'Berlusconi, ciao Milan', *Il Messaggero*, 29 Dec. 2004, 28; Nino Sormani, 'Berlusconi lascia la presidenza del Milan', *La Stampa*, 29 Dec. 2004, 31; Laura Bandinelli, 'E Berlusconi si riprende il Milan', *La Stampa*, 11 Aug. 2006. 5
28. See, for example, 'Tifosi rossoneri infuriati soprattutto con Galliani', *Il Messaggero*, 9 June 2009, available at http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo_app.php?id=18673&sez=HOME_SPORT&npl=&desc_sez=#. 10
29. Furio Fedele, 'Berlusconi: "Ronaldinho sarà il faro del Milan"', *Corriere dello Sport*, 9 June 2009, available at <http://www.corrieredellosport.it/Notizie/Calcio/70950/Berlusconi:+%C2%ABRonaldinho+sar%C3%A0+il+faro+del+Milan%C2%BB>. 15
30. 'La vita continua anche senza Kakà', *Televideo*, 5 June 2009, at 00:01, available at <http://www.televideo.rai.it/televideo/pub/notiziasolotesto.jsp?id=628976&pagina=203&sottopagina=3>. 20
31. It is positive in the sense that favours the construction of the 'winning' public image of Mr Berlusconi. 25
32. 'Lo sport lo idealizzo come un'attività dove tutti si è veramente alla pari e dove vinca il migliore', Saverio Lodato, 'Zamparini, Palermo e il Pallone lanciato contro Galliani & co', *L'Unità*, 2 Nov. 2004, 11. 25
33. 'Stasera nessuno ha vinto, ma abbiamo perso tutti', *Il Messaggero*, 3 Feb. 2007, 2.
34. See also Guglielmo Buccheri, 'Affidiamo agli ultras il compito di mantenere l'ordine nelle tribune', *La Stampa*, 17 June 2006, 12.
35. See the letters in *Libero*, 20 Feb. 2009, 13; 3 Nov. 2004, 14; 26 Aug. 2003, 1; and the interview that appeared in a local newspaper, *AGL Gruppo Espresso*, 22 Aug. 2003, 4. 30
36. 'Quando va la prossima volta a S. Siro non vada in tribuna ma vada in curva. Lì sentirà la vera voce del popolo', *Libero*, 20 Feb. 2009, 13.
37. See *Corriere della Sera*, 18 Jan. 2007, 24.
38. See respectively BDC, *Il Foglio*, 19 May 2006, 1 and Luigi Ferrarella, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 Jan. 2007, 24. 35

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