

Interlude 3 – Jump Man

Cadell Last

“The only thing my will wants is *to fly*.” (Third Part, 4 – Before Sunrise)

Nietzsche’s Zarathustra offers us a window into the soul of the will, and he is clear that the will of the soul, at its core, *desires flight*. This “desire for flight” needs to be understood as the *new becoming other* to the *becoming under the cross*. Even Jesus flies (qua resurrection) after the cross, after all. We cannot escape this will of the soul, even if it is buried, unconscious, expressed on the surface only through supernaturalistic distortions of something that must be conceived as immanent to the essential concept of our being.

The question becomes, how are we to *read this desire for flight* in the actuality of human spirit, over a century after Nietzsche’s Zarathustra sacrificed his being for the future global overhuman empire of 1000 years? The first and most obvious approach can be perceived in the scientific-technological universe. Here we see that the human species has constructed for itself a global flight network that operates continuously, connecting virtually every major population on the planet. Here we also see a global telecommunications network, composed of satellites orbiting the planet, guaranteeing instantaneous communications virtually everywhere. Finally, we also see the extension of our artefacts throughout the entire solar system, orbiting Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and even further to the outer reaches of our “Great Stars” gravitational influence.

But Nietzsche surely would like us to *read this desire for flight much closer to the body*. Here I would suggest that philosophy turn its attention to another remarkable emergence in the 20th and 21st century: *the essential appearance of large scale professional sports leagues*. The active participants in large scale professional sports leagues, especially the *greatest* among them, display all the qualities of the overman: they *courageously strive in the abyss*, they *appear like a lightning strike from above*, they *expand the limits of human possibility*, and through dedicated drive introducing difference, involving standing, walking, running, climbing, dancing... they not only *learn how to fly*, but *show us how it is to be done*. No wonder they so powerfully attract or even spontaneously command our gaze.

When it comes to *icons* of the greatest professional sports leagues, we cannot help but mention the greatest of the greatest. In baseball we have the legend of Babe Ruth passing on to our contemporaries in figures like Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani; in hockey we have the legend of Wayne Gretzky passing on to our contemporaries in figures like Sidney Crosby and Conor McDavid; in football we have the legend of Joe Montana, passing on to our contemporaries like Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers; in soccer we have the legend of Diego Maradona, passing on to our contemporaries like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi; and in basketball we have Michael Jordan, who is perhaps recognised as the greatest among the greatest. That is to say, although all of these players have left their mark on human consciousness, as symbols of greatness, of achieving something that was perhaps not even thought possible before their existence (think of Babe Ruth basically inventing the home run), Michael Jordan, is the perhaps best representative of the human body *in flight*,

perhaps the best representative of the human body as in-forming the *soul's will to flight*.³⁴²

Consider the ubiquity of the image of the *jump man*. There is no continent on the planet where this image will be not instantly recognised, if not deified as an icon, for the peak of human performance and athletic ability. The image is not simply a representative of American or African American greatness, inspiring the next generation of Kobe Bryants' and LeBron James', but of human greatness period, perhaps now best represented in "global figures" like Luka Dončić, Nikola Jokic, Giannis Antetokoumpo and Joel Embiid. Michael Jordan, through the image of the jump man, literally passes on the ball to the next global generation. These individuals have become *images of flight* and the soul's deepest desire: *to fly in the sky*.

At the same time, the extremes of a Michael Jordan, and the way he revolutionised our concepts of the human body in flight, should also be extended in metaphor to all the previous sports: Mike Trout *flies* around the diamond or the outfield, Conor McDavid *flies* around the ice-rink, Lionel Messi *flies* around the football pitch, and Tom Brady *makes the ball fly* across the field. The most general phenomenon is *the essential appearance of large scale professional sports leagues which embody the soul's desire for flight in a repetitive drive for greatness*. Their organisation as a phenomenon must be *thought* philosophically.

The point here is not to reify the icons of flight (from Ruth to Jordan to Brady), but to understand what these icons represent for the *immanence of the human soul on this*

³⁴²The basketball legend Larry Bird was perhaps the first to immortalise Michael Jordan's dominance in stating: 'I think he's God disguised as Michael Jordan.'

Earth. The future human beings of this planet *strive for flight*, and in the image of the jump man, we see the emergence of a new paradigm for the overcoming of man, not a becoming under the cross, nor a supernaturalistic resurrection, but a *becoming in the impossible-limit qua sky of our socio-historical organisations*; not a becoming under a dead God's community of believers, but an actual becoming of godliness in the expression of the human body's most dramatic potentialities.



Photo credit: Getty Images/mbolina



Photo credit: Ballislife.com