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THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE VOLCANO
ON THE ANTIQUE SOURCES OF NIETZSCHE'S ÜBERMENSCH

Babette Babich

Happy and blessed one, you shall be a god
instead of a mortal.

Empedocles

It has traditionally been observed that the figure of Empedocles is key to Nietzsche's Zarathustra. But the nature of this significance is less commonly detailed: in part this is Nietzsche's fault, as and although he includes Empedocles in his notes for the Pre-Platonic Philosophers, Nietzsche excludes Empedocles from his Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks—both of which are unpublished. Similarly unpublished and a bit less widely known are Nietzsche's drafts of the Death of Empedocles which tend to interest Germanists who are themselves usually more interested in Hölderlin's substantially more developed drafts for his own Death of Empedocles. For my part in what follows, I read Nietzsche's Zarathustra as an echo of Empedocles' as orator or speaker but also in terms of Empedocles' esoteric Katharmoi or Purifications. This means that I read Zarathustra in terms of the eternal return of the same as the teaching of going to ground, that is: death and rebirth (and I argue that death is present at the start and already at work as I later show, in the section entitled The Adder's Bite: indeed, I show that this is explicitly at work as the teaching of the overman). For Nietzsche's Zarathustra tells us, like Empedocles, that the human being is something that should be overcome, and thus it makes a difference that we hear Zarathustra proclaim this teaching as the tightrope walker begins his doomed dance over the marketplace and that Zarathustra's fate, at least immediately, concerns the downward fall of this overman overcome by the danger of his calling. This same teaching conjoined with Zarathustra's diagnosis of ubiquity of the will to power, especially among the weakest, also underlines an arch or parodic turn and even mockery.

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Hence and in order to get to Empedocles, I argue that it is necessary to read Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra as an overtly Menippean satire as Nietzsche refers to this tradition. Inasmuch as the satires attributed to the cynic Menippus of Gadara happen to be lost, I read Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra via the second century AD Lucian’s "high” or serious, i.e., truth-purposing (as the ancients described it) kind of parody—where Lucian relates to Menippus, at least in some part, as Plato does to Socrates.

In addition, it is useful to note that there are obvious parallels between some of Nietzsche's more characteristic loci and Lucian's favorite images, including Nietzsche's references to truth and Lucian's True Story [Alethe Diegemata] which includes the paradoxically Cretan claim that "not a word" he will utter is "true,” and that what makes his account distinctive is solely that he will be a more "honest liar than his predecessors.” Thus we read Lucian's preface to the reader: “I too have turned to lying—but a much more honest lying than all the others. The one and only truth you’ll hear from me is that I am lying. By frankly admitting that there isn’t a word of truth in what I say, I feel I am avoiding the possibility of attack from any quarter.” Lucian could not make his warning plainer: “I am writing about things I neither saw nor heard of from a single soul, things which don’t exist and couldn’t possibly exist. So all readers beware, don’t believe any of it.”

The tonality is not Nietzsche's to be sure, but the point is hardly foreign to Nietzsche who famously wonders about our preference for truth rather than lies. Where, so Nietzsche argues, some truths are deadly, we survive or live by means of life-saving illusions or lies. In addition to Nietzsche's reflections on the language of "laws" in nature and in science and on the kind of philosopher who is impressed by physicists,
there is also Nietzsche's satirical comparison of
human beings to insects at the start of his On
Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense where the
perspective view from atmospheric heights
above the earth is indebted not only to the Stoics'
cosmic or higher perspective but also to Lucian
who is also important for Nietzsche as it has long
been argued that Lucian's Kataplous, is the
source for Nietzsche's term Übermensch or
Overman. A dialogue of the dead, the Kataplous
addresses the representation/perception of the
\( \text{hyper-anthropos} \) in the here
and now by contrast with the afterlife or under­
world. Here it is significant that the context of
Lucian’s Kataplous (Downward Journey),
including its thematic focus on the tyrant in the un­
derworld contrasting with this life and the per­
spective on human glory and its inevitable
reversals, offers a contextualization of
Zarathustra’s teaching that the human being is
something that ought to be overcome. But for
this reflection on death, as on birth and rebirth,
there is a needed reflection on Empedocles inasmuch as the doctrine of recurrence is Empe­
doclean, articulating an older Orphic tradition
that also inspires Heraclitus, Pythagoras,
Parmenides, and Anaximander.

By proposing such a reading, I join those
many scholars who argue that Nietzsche’s
Zarathustra is parodically modeled on some­
thing—be it the Bible, or Plato’s Republic, or
Wagner’s Ring. Although I think there are intrinsic limitations to all such parallels and I am by no
means seeking to reduce Nietzsche to either
Lucian or Empedocles for that matter, I do ar­
gue—rather radically as we shall see—that in
Nietzsche’s case we must also include a clear ref­
rence to Lucian both for his own picture of
Empedocles as well as for his satires or paro­
dies. Thus we note Nietzsche’s emphasis in
Twilight of the Idols of the enduring importance of satire for his own style from the start of his
writerly life and throughout (TI, What I Owe the Ancients §1).

I cannot explore this here beyond a first
sketching but we may also note the relevance of
Lucian’s The Dead Come to Life or the Fisher­
man, a dialogue in which the original and centu­
ries dead Athenian philosophers gain a reprieve
from the underworld for a single day to return to
life in order to harry Lucian for his mockery: “Let
him reap the fruit of his revilings” cries the tem­
porarily resurrected Socrates.

The satirical parallel concerns the perplexing
“Honey Sacrifice” that introduces the patently
parodic and “fourth” book of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, originally only for private circula­
tion (and so much was Nietzsche opposed to pub­
lication that he subsequently sought to reclaim
the printed copies from his friends to have them
destroyed). Here the coincidence between
Empedocles and the “honey sacrifice” invoked
Nietzsche’s Zarathustra-text could not be more
evident as Empedocles writes of sacrifices in an
original or “golden age” as follows:

Among them was no war god Ares worshipped nor
the battle cry, nor was Zeus their King . . . but
Cypris Aphroditel was queen . . . propitiated with
holy images and paintings of living creatures . . .
pure myrrh and sweet scented frankincense,
throwing to the ground libations of yellow honey.
(Empedocles, Katharmoi, DK 128; KRS 411)

As we know, the doxography details that
Empedocles was known both for his high stand­
ing or family wealth and for the nature and kind
of his donations to the public benefit, including a
large ox made of barley cake, figs, and honey—
not that this was necessarily received as a “good
thing” for an ancient Greek public that tended to
expect certain gifts from the noble classes in the
classical form of a decent barbecue or “animal
sacrifice” if only because ancient Greek culture
with all its problems with bloodshed made it
more than ordinarily difficult to simply shed
blood at will, that is: one needed to practice
slaughter not only “with a prayer” (Empedocles,
Katharmoi, DK 137; KRS 415) but a very
specific ritual.

The Empedoclean language of the honey sac­
ifice also has an echo in Zarathustra’s Prologue:
“Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee
that has gathered too much honey; I need hands
outstretched to take it,” but the parody I trace here
responds to Lucian’s language in his Piscator
or Fisher, where Lucian cites baited fish hooks as
a means to test the waters for the appropriate fish as it were particularly its reference to Zarathustra’s “golden fishing rod.”

Parodying the fate of his own parodies in the face of the philosophies he puts up for sale in his dialogue of the same name, Lucian’s Fisher we encounter the “fishing rod” baited appropriately and its function as proving the mettle of philosophers, as a touchstone for sounding them out and for finding them true or not, and, obviously, mostly not, before the judgment of the personifications of Truth herself and of Philosophy herself as well as the reanimation of the plain speaking, because patently plain-living, Diogenes of Sinope. Lucian’s comparison of a “test” is instructive in a Zarathustran context:

young eagles are supposed to be tested by the sun, our candidates have not got to satisfy us that they can look at light, of course; but put gold, fame, and pleasure before their eyes; when you see one remain unconscious and unattracted, there is your man.

The problem with philosophers as one finds them, is indeed that although “professing to despise wealth and appearance,” they “take pay for imparting” what they teach and “are abashed in the presence of the rich, their lips water at the sight of coin; they are dogs for temper, hares for cowardice, apes for imitativeness, asses for lust, cats for thievery, cocks for jealousy. They are a perfect laughing stock with their strivings after vile ends, their jostling of each other at rich men’s doors, their attendance at crowded dinners, and their vulgar obsequiousness at table.”13 Thus to test the true from the pretended claimants to philosophy (note again in the presence of Philosophy and of Truth, in the flesh as it were), the dialogue proceeds:

—“if the priestess will lend me the line I see there and the Piraean fisherman’s votive hook,”
—“You can have them; and the rod to complete the equipment,” baited with a “few dried figs and a handful of gold.”

The first so-called “fish” caught in the sight of Diogenes, the original Cynic, is

—Salmo Cynicus: good gracious what teeth . . . why the hook is bare; he has not been long assimilating the figs, eh? And the gold has gone down too.”

The Cyniscan fish is followed quickly by a Platonist, a sham Aristotle or Aristotelian, and so on—all “fishes” summarily judged as lacking by the same original philosophers themselves who had initially returned to life to give Lucian what for, but found at the end that his denunciations perfectly fit the philosophers philosophizing in their names.

Like Lucian, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra combines or mixes the language of classical literature and classical gods with the language and the singular god of the New Testament with Nietzsche’s own paradoxical, parodic, musing touch with regard to his own search for those to whom he might speak, for readers, for human beings:

Especially the human world, the human sea—towards IT do I now throw out my golden fishing rod and say: Open up, thou human abyss! Open up, and throw unto me thy fish and shining crabs! With my best bait shall I allure to myself to-day the strangest human fish! . . . Until, biting at my sharp hidden hooks, they have to come up unto MY height, the moleyst abyss-groundlings, to the wickedest of all fishes of men. (Zarathustra IV, The Honey Sacrifice)

“Mocking Lucians”

In the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche characterizes the ancient satirists, as “the mocking Lucians of antiquity” [spöttische Lucian des Alterthums] (BT §8), but only as satirists faute de mieux, grasping after “discolored and faded flowers” long scattered to the winds, grasping that is to say in the wake of the “final effulgence” [letzten Aufglühen] that had been the origin or birth of the Dionysian spirit in musical tragedy (BT §10).

Thus by the time you get to Lucian in the second century AD, tragedy, as Nietzsche speaks of it, has already long perished by its own hand (this death begins for Nietzsche in the third century BC with Socrates and Euripides and indeed the New Comedy). Although commentators whether these be theorists in a philosophical or philolo...
gist’s/classicist’s modality, almost uniformly fail to advert to this emphasis, Nietzsche’s point for his own part in his discussion of the “Origin” of the tragic artwork was a sustained detailing of the consequences of the transition from spoken or sung performance to the written text. This same emphasis had also inspired his inaugural lecture in Basel on the famous Homer question, and his several public lectures on music and tragedy in Basel, an emphasis that has similarly gone unheard (perhaps because we continue to be impressed more by Wagner whom we assume we understand than by Aeschylus or Sophocles when it comes to reading Nietzsche’s first book on tragedy).

We would seem to be on different ground when we ask who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra? For we are then thinking of Persians not Greeks, yet let us not forget the Syrian Lucian (or the Syrian Christ). Nietzsche’s Zarathustra is first and foremost a speaker and above all we should bear in mind that the tale of Zarathustra is a tale of down-going. Both the language of a speaker, Heidegger says “an advocate [ein Fürsprecher]” and including Zarathustra’s temperament, parallels Empedocles as orator, with all his own moodiness and Hölderlinian impatience. And the teaching Empedocles comes to teach, especially as articulated in his Katharmoi is the teaching of death and that means for mortals, the teaching of birth and rebirth: i.e., the eternal recurrence of the same.

Where Heidegger observes that “Zarathustra speaks on behalf of life, suffering, and the circle” (NII, 212), we also find ourselves on Empedoclean ground, defined as Heidegger defines all three as “the selfsame,” invoking the solid circle (in similarly Hölderlinian terms) as the ring-dance of love, as the wedding dance. Thus Heidegger echoes Empedocles’ sphere: “’Circle’ is the sign of the ring that wrings its way back to itself and in that way always achieves recurrence of the same.” (NII, 213) For Empedocles, who emphasizes the συγκόλοκτον, that which conjoins the disjoint, the “wheel-shaped Sphere is held fast in the close obscurity of Harmony, exulting in its joyous solitude” (On Nature, KRS 358; DK 27; trans. modified).11

This same wheel-shaped sphere corresponds to the golden ball Zarathustra throws, as the year throws the leaves (or the birds as Rilke says), seasons of life. Hence Nietzsche’s Zarathustra teaches that the “human being is something that shall be overcome” (ZI: Prologue §3), proclaiming: “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under.” (ZI: Prologue §4), a claim followed with a string of metaphors for death and perishing: “Life itself confided this secret to me: Behold it said I am that which always overcomes itself . . . where there is perishing, a falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself—for power” (ZII: On Self-Overcoming). This is the meaning of Nietzsche’s will to power which he finds, so Zarathustra tells us, everywhere, even in the smallest, even in the weakest, and indeed, as will, especially there.

In the Katharmoi fragments as gathered together (an editorial tradition, Nietzsche tells us, that goes back to the Alexandrian grammarians), we have the perfect (and perfectly literal) rhetorical topos. Thus Empedocles addresses his audience:

Thus beginning, O friends, ὦ φίλοι — Empedocles goes on to tell of himself, to offer his own transfiguration as exemplar, saying I:

εγώ ὦ μῦχος αἰμβρότος . . . (But unto ye I walk as god immortal now, no more as a man, On all sides honored fittingly and well, crowned both with fillets and with flowering wreaths). (Ibid)

Thus Spoke Empedocles. Literally and this matters for Nietzsche’s writings which was the point of the above reference to The Birth of Tragedy, thus Empedocles writes, thus he tells us himself.

It is as rhetorician, as a speaker, that one first attends to Empedocles and this same speaker’s, orator’s, rhetor’s element characterizes Also Sprach Zarathustra. Nietzsche begins his inaugural lecture in Basel on “Homer and Classical

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Philology” by noting the critical importance of the person both in antiquity and as it persists as an issue in the themes of then-current scholarship. But where Empedocles is engaged in “self-presentation,” like the philosophers we cited above as Lucian mocks them in his Philosophers for Sale, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra masks himself.

The Overman can be the man who walks as does Empedocles, as a mortal no more, and the overman is also and at the same time in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra very much the image of Lucian’s overman, the tyrant before his own going to ground.

**Death of Zarathustra and Nietzsche’s Sketches for the Death of Empedocles**

Nietzsche planned to write a drama on the model of Hölderlin’s several drafts of the Death of Empedocles. Nietzsche’s project follows Hölderlin’s, composing several drafts which he does not bring to fruition.

In a section titled, “The Philosophers of the Tragic Age revealed, the world as tragedy” (KSA 7, 527), Nietzsche sketches “The tragic human being,” outlining three acts of his plan for the “death” of Empedocles, the parallel with Zarathustra, even at this early stage, is patent. Both Empedocles and Zarathustra are compared with the divine and both are simultaneously absorbed with mortality. Indeed, Empedocles accedes to divinity by dying, elected or “staged” as such (his refusal of kingship is part of this accession), as he had already characterized himself as an outcast in these terms “Of these I too am now one, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having put my trust in raving strife” (KRS 401: DK 115).

David Allison and others have reminded us that Nietzsche’s original plans for his Thus Spoke Zarathustra also included Zarathustra’s literal death. But one might go still further, as I do, even beyond the figurative and, as I have already suggested, take the Lucianic reference to Zarathustra’s downgoing in Zarathustra’s Prologue as announcing the literal eventuality or “fact” of Zarathustra’s death in the first book of the published text where Zarathustra succumbs to a snake bite under a fig tree (nothing like one metaphorical cliché after another): “Your way is short the adder said sadly, ‘my poison kills’” (Z I, The Adder’s Bite).

The bitten Zarathustra has the adder “take back” his poison (nothing like successfully teaching the will to will backwards). Thus we read that the adder falls upon his neck a second time. Yet, and this is the lesson of teaching the will to will backwards, adders do not “take back” their bites however we may will such a replay or taking back of the past and however much we may imagine it. But if the second bite is fantasy, part of the delirium induced by the adder’s venom, the entirety of Thus Spoke Zarathustra becomes a dream before dying—another philosopher’s dream to be added to the array of such and the interpretation of the same.

The focus on downgoing, the experience with the tightrope walker as we shall, see together with the death-springing, ear-whispering dwarf and so on, is part of a constant engagement with death as background and theme throughout the text. Indeed, we read in the section On Free Death of “the death that consummates,” where Zarathustra describes death as a “festival.” And we have yet another fairly explicit echo of Lucian’s True Story (Aléthe Diegemata) offered in the title of On the Blessed Isles, titled as Lucian does after Hesiod and Pindar as well as Plato and so on. The Lucianic references include figs and Nietzsche invokes the afterlife, where Zarathustra describes himself as “a wind to ripe figs,” emphasizing that rather than salvation or redemption or eternal life, it is “of time and becoming that the best parables should speak: let them be a praise and a justification of all impermanence” (Z II: On the Blessed Isles).

Quite explicitly, now paralleling Empedocles, Zarathustra reflects: “Verily, through a hundred souls I have already passed on my way, and through a hundred cradles and birth pangs. Many a farewell have I taken; I know the heart rending last hours” (ibid.; cf. DK 31). But “thus my creative will, my destiny, wills it. Or, to say it more honestly: this very destiny: my will wills” (ibid.). In addition, Empedocles’ teaching of rebirth echoes in the language of the ‘nuptial ring of rings,'
the ring of recurrence” (Z III, The Yes and Amen Song).

Zarathustra teaches the Übermensch, as the transition that is the overman and the eternal recurrence of the same. But by speaking of the human being as “a rope over an abyss,” Nietzsche’s Zarathustra gives a sermon in the marketplace against the backdrop of a dynamic tableau (the tightrope walker and his balancing act) of which Zarathustra seemingly notices nothing until it crashes down around him. Thus Zarathustra’s words are illuminated for his auditors who see what transpires above and behind him. It matters indeed that the people to whom Zarathustra speaks did not come to hear him, just as the Agrigentians seem constitutionally incapable of attending to what Empedocles teaches them, thus the Purifications are addressed to Pausanias: this is the earmark of the few and the many, as Heraclitus complains: for the most part, those who hear a teaching are the same both before they hear it and after hearing it (DK 1). It is the fate of most teachings that they go in one ear and out the other.

Zarathustra begins his oratorical discourse, just as the tightrope walker “began his performance,” a staging which renders the entirety of the speech an inevitable (if also involuntary) commentary on that “performance.” We thus discern, and the Straussians have made nothing but hay from this depiction, a patent dramatization of above and below, esoteric and exoteric. It is in this context, as the tightrope walker makes his way above the crowd, producing a tension that seemed to Zarathustra to offer the kind of attention that permitted him to expand upon his account, describing the human being as “a dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping,” that Zarathustra teaches the overman. Thus Zarathustra’s sermon on the “rainbow bridge” of life is offered as a life and death drama proceeds above him, step by careful step:

I love those who do not know how to live, except by going under, for they are those who cross over.
I love the great despisers because they are the great reverers and arrows of longing for the other shore.

Many readers take the point but commonly assume the reference to be nothing other than that of the Christian teaching of dying to the life of the world or the body.

Yet we also know that Nietzsche’s Zarathustra teaches the “great reason” of the body, urges us to be true to the earth and to a self that “wants to create beyond itself” (Z I: On the Despisers of the Body). Thus Zarathustra here affirms not only the “rainbows and bridges of the overman” (Z I: On the New Idol) but declares “I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes.” (Z I: On the Way of the Creator). This teaching should remind the reader of Nietzsche’s shadow discourse in the book appended to his Human, All-too-Human, The Wanderer and his Shadow, where the shadow turns, vanishing as it does at the end. Thus Nietzsche writes of the human being as a small overstressed kind of animal, which—happily enough—as also had its day; life on earth as such, the blink of an eye, a detail, an exception without consequence, something that remains insignificant for the general character of the earth itself, like every star, a hiatus between two nothingness, an event without a plan, reason, will, self-consciousness, the most wretched sort of necessity; the stupid necessity” (KSA 13, 16 [25], 488). Like the great year of the ancient philosophers, the great noon is the turning to the new and it is also associated with Heraclitean fire and with the sun as a consummation: “that is the great noon when man stands in the middle of his way between beast and overman and celebrates his way to evening as his highest hope: for it is the way to a new morning” (Z I: On the Gift-Giving Virtue).

Inasmuch as Zarathustra teaches what philosophy teaches—namely, the art of living—Zarathustra teaches the overman as “the meaning of the earth,” thereby teaching that the human is
"something that shall be overcome" (Z I: Prologue §3). The point is literal enough: the art of living as we have recently required Hadot and others to remind us, is the art of dying. The art, in Nietzsche's words, of dying in the right way and, indeed: for the right reason, "at the right time" (Z I: On Voluntary Death).

"Love and Kisses to All the World": On Meat-Eating, Encroachment, and Purification in Empedocles and Nietzsche

This work is Lucian's, who well knew The foolishness of times gone by, For things the human race finds wise Are folly to th' unclouded eye.

Erasmus

It is still common to assume that Nietzsche's Übermenschen corresponds, more or less coincidentally, more or less historically, to Hitler's fantasy, the evolutionary apex of human development: a superior human being (and that is also to say, with Plato and Aristotle and even Alasdair MacIntyre, a superior warrior or perfect soldier): the fruit of science or at least good breeding, by which one means a family of a certain economic wherewithal, thereby heir to a certain "good" education, nutrition, environment, travel, etc. Indeed, the whole of technologically oriented society via the fantasy of genetic engineering and associated nano-fixes as well as the fantasy life that is the internet and the media in general—just think of Kurzweils' supposedly incipient "Singularity"—presupposes the same vision of the human per se and in general as supreme, as other, as "higher," in Nietzsche's words. If Nietzsche opposes Darwinism in one thing, namely in the conviction that today's species represent improvements or developments over past species, he shares the values of Darwin in associating humans and apes, here specifically following Pindar's sardonic comparison.

Rank ordering presupposes a developmental progression, but Empedocles also invokes a kind of evolution, if not a progressive one: dispersal in time, abandonment or expulsion, as expiation. Here we recall the ethical parallel with Anaximander, for a crime, that is for the bloody violence of dealing death and eating meat.

Empedocles supposed that our age is the age of extinction, the time of strife or hatred, precisely because of our creativity and diversity one from another but also because of the killing that we cannot seem to stem. If being born and taking form against and by contrast with the apeiron is an encroachment on other possibilities, as it is for Anaximander (and this is the reason Nietzsche names him the first ethical philosopher), think what it is to practice injustice actively, to kill or to shed blood? And we all do this, with our every breath, our every step and in addition we have made an industry of such injustice: we eat the flesh of animals, the beings we "care" for from birth (this is domestication), and whom we raise in order to kill in order to cut slices from their bodies and limbs to roast and boil and steam, sometimes we eat them raw, sometimes before they are born. Wild animals or domestic, we kill them all. All this is unchanged since Empedocles' day:

The father lifts up his own son changed in form and slaughters him with a prayer, blind fool, as the victim shrieks piteously, beseeching as he is killed. But he deaf to his cries slaughters him and makes ready in his halls an evil feast. In the same way son seizes father and children their mother, and tearing out life they eat the flesh of those they love. (KRS 415; DK 137)

Empedocles is speaking, as Nietzsche would speak (this is the ontological meaning of the will to power), of the fundamental relatedness of all living things. We are not "other" than animals and we are certainly not—consider only what we do!—"higher." The animal you barbecue is your
brother, physiologically, biologically speaking, not a one that could be in some spiritualist sense, your literal (i.e., human) brother, or son. This that you do to the least of your neighbors, the least of your brethren, this you do to the Christ.

We have already noted the relevance of Empedocles’ purification thematic in our discussion of the metaphor of honey at the start of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as well as with reference to the language of the “honey sacrifice in Book IV. As Empedocles writes, the problem is the problem of “defilement” and thus the title of the poem, Katharmoi: “Their altar was not drenched by the unspeakable slaughters of bulls, but this was held among men the greatest defilement — to tear out the life from noble limbs and eat them” (KRS 411; DK 128).

Dwelling as commentators do on Empedocles’ egregious egotism, they tend to dismiss his reflections on carnivornism and thus I find it useful to read Nietzsche’s own commentary for both its dispassion and its precision:

Empedocles sought to impress the oneness of all life most urgently, that carnivornism is a sort of self-cannibalism (*Sichselbstverspeisen*), a murder of the nearest relative. He desired a colossal purification of humanity, along with abstinence from beans and laurel leaves.

The need for a “colossal purification of humanity” has to do with what is human, all too human and in this case it is not simply, as Nietzsche interprets a matter or prohibiting violence against those related to us by blood, but beyond consanguinity it is a matter of, and here Nietzsche echoes Hölderlin, our relatedness with everything that is. This is key to the Pre-Platonic Greeks as Nietzsche reads them. In addition, we can add Nietzsche’s reference to beans as they are part of this same purification (and are among the Pythagorean’s taboos). Similarly, laurel leaves are associated both with Apollo and the traditional victor as well as with tyrants. Setting aside the question of kingship as already addressed above, the Pythagorean question of rebirth is common to both Empedocles and Nietzsche in the doctrine of eternal recurrence.

As Nietzsche who always emphasized simplicity with reference to ancient doctrine reminds us, that a good deal of what was regarded as moral practice in antiquity is “currently treated as medical” (KGW III/4 Herbst 1873, 31 [4], 360), whether with regard to matters of physical or else of mental health, and Nietzsche notes that where we often lack self-control, the Greeks regarded moderation as part of “retaining mastery over themselves.” (Ibid., 361). And Nietzsche makes it plain that he prefers the ancient “care of the self” to “the talk of modern moral philosophers who take the human being to be a marvelously spiritualistic essence; it seems almost indecent to them that humanity should be treated thus naively-antique and to recount their many needs even indeed their baser necessities. Their embarrassment goes so far that one would believe that the modern human being has no more than a apparent body [*Scheinleib*]” (ibid.). It is in this context, although this must be understood in connection with Nietzsche’s life-long scientific interest in physiology and nutrition, that Nietzsche confesses: “I believe that the vegetarians, with their prescription to eat less and more simply, have been more useful than all new moral systems put together” (ibid.).

It is thus, after speaking of the need for purification in the Empedoclean sense, that Nietzsche’s Zarathustra asks “What does your body say about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and dirt and a miserable ease. In truth, man is a polluted river” (ibid.). Zarathustra reflects on greatness as opposed to the image of such. “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is going-across and a downgoing” (Z. Zarathustra’s Prologue, 4).

But like the people to whom Zarathustra speaks, like the Agrigentians to whom Empedocles speaks, his words are not for our ears. Hence Nietzscheans and anti-Nietzscheans alike believe in the idea of the overman as a “superior” being. And we also assume that we all are or that we could be and indeed that we should be overhumans, posthumans, or, to use the latest
language, transhumans, at least potentially. After all, think of Nietzsche’s modern moral philosophers: we are the dominant species in comparison with the ape (and every other living being). Or if not yet by ordinary or natural evolutionary means, then certainly on the model that some scientist must currently be developing using the latest genetic or stem cell technology, further transforming us in the same direction that we already find ourselves going.

The human, all-too-human is the overman.

Disagreeing with both Nietzscheans and anti-Nietzscheans, Nietzsche demurs, as I have said, suggesting that the overman or the human ideal, may be less than we suppose. To see this we need to take the classical scholarly “step back” just and inasmuch as such a backstep often changes one’s perspective.

Zarathustra’s Übermensch and Lucian’s ὑπεράνθιστος

Every Nietzsche scholar seems to know that Nietzsche’s Übermensch is a coinage taken or derived from Lucian, in particular, from the Downward Journey or Journey to the Underworld [ΚΑΤΙΠΛΟΤΣ Η ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΣ]. Every scholar “knows” this because Walter Kaufmann tells us so and nearly every account I have read duly cites Kaufmann (the citation is easy to find and very simple, "Kataplous, 16"). Kaufmann does not offer a context and this may have been because he was simply interested in the coinage per se (and Kaufmann’s interest would seem to have set the tone for the positivism of source scholarship to this day). But Lucian’s A Voyage to the Underworld or the Tyrant offers an intriguing insight into the notion of the “overman.”

In his monograph on the ancient Greek novel and its antecedents, Nietzsche’s friend Erwin Rohde emphasizes the importance and the odd significance of the idea or notion as such of “traveling in the underworld, for the sake of gaining philosophical knowledge.” And this very subterranean undertaking appears in both Nietzsche (Zarathustra) and Lucian, and it is of course the transfiguring point of Empedocles’ leap into the Volcano. And we are familiar with the idea in Dante as elsewhere.

Just as the dwarf leaps after the tightrope walker or “overman” at the start of Zarathustra, and then similarly threatens to drag Zarathustra down to hell, the story Lucian tells in his play on the tyrant’s rather literal downgoing, articulates the edifying, that is the instructive morality tale of those who appear in everyday life in an apparent or supposed guise as “Higher-Men.” Lucian’s provocative contrast in his Downward Journey highlights the superficial vision of the overman or man of the power class, a wealthy, or “higher” man who towers above others regarded as lower, or lesser, in this life, and the self-same man once translated or transposed into the afterlife, a contrast illuminated, as it were, in the darkness rather than the light of eternity: “The ‘superman’ [ὑπεράνθιστος] is the superior man, a king among men, a man of power like a tyrant.”

These political attributes allow the speaker to regard the tyrant (and this is the subtitle of Lucian’s satire) as “a superman in my eyes, someone thrice blessed, nothing short of an Adonis, a foot and a half taller than the rest of mankind.” ὑπεράνθιστος τις αὔρη καὶ τρισοβίς μοι κατεφεινέτο καὶ μονανυχί κυλλῶν καὶ υψηλ. ὀπέρος ὅλω πῆχει βασιλικέν. But, so Lucian’s satire continues, “when he died and had to take off his trappings, not only did he look ridiculous to me, but I had to laugh at how ridiculous I was. Imagine—I had stood in awe of that trash and had jumped to the conclusion that he was divinely happy on the basis of the smells from his kitchen and the color of his robes.” And after the complaints of the tyrant in hell, Lucian goes on to mock the moneylenders, and so on (and on).

The notion of Zarathustra’s downgoing as a tale of going to ground as an account of Zarathustra’s dream before dying, just as Empedocles explains that death itself is such a dream, as is life, entails that here are other parallels between Empedocles and Zarathustra. Thus in Rhode’s Psyche, we read of “the method of Incubation, or temple sleep,” by which questions might be put to a number of daimones and heroes. Rohde explains that this mantic
nique “was based on the assumption that the daimon who was only visible indeed to mortal eyes in the higher state achieved by the soul in dreams, had his permanent dwelling at the seat of the oracle.”34 In this chapter on “Subterranean Translation,” following the previous surface or lateral “translation” to “The Isles of the Blest,” Rohde argues that the particular “daimon” is yoked to a particular place: “That is why his appearance can only be expected at this particular place and nowhere else. Originally, too, it was only the dwellers in the depths of the earth who were thus visible in dreams to those who lay down to sleep in the temple over the place where they had their subterranean abode.”35 If David Allison who for his part is not speaking of either Empedocles or Rohde, rightly remarks that Zarathustra spends an inordinate amount of time, counted in days rather than hours, sleeping “as one dead,”36 one can assume that Zarathustra’s “dropping off” echoes Rohde’s language of the mysterious “incubation-oracles.”37 Beyond Rohde’s Psyche and beyond Lucian’s antiquity (and note that it is not Rohde who emphasizes the concept of the overman in Lucian), how are we to understand Nietzsche’s overman, as this notion is arguably one of the most popularly influential of all.

In its Aryan configuration, set into what some claim to have been its original constellation in Nietzsche’s Der Wille zur Macht (that infamously “invented” book), the idea of the Übermensch is held to be the causal factor in not only Hitler’s war but also the first world war.39 Talking about Nietzsche’s Übermensch, we seem to be talking about the philosophy that generated the language of the master-race, i.e., the Übermensch as opposed to the Unter-Mensch as Nazi terminology also speaks of it.

Nietzsche uses both terms. Yet the reference to Lucian suggests that Nietzsche’s Zarathustra also teaches the Übermensch in a parody fashion. The overman is therefore (if it is not only this) a satiric notion. This does not mean that Nietzsche’s Zarathustra does not teach the Übermensch—of course he does that—but it is easy to fail to note (certainly even many sophisticated and sensitive Nietzsche scholars do so) that the elusive doctrine of the eternal return, the doctrine that Zarathustra comes to teach, the teaching that the over-human himself or herself is meant to be the passage toward, is the eternal return of the same. And this is Empedocles’ “truth” of rebirth. Thus Nietzsche’s Zarathustra teaches that the human is charged to overcome or to get beyond or to get over the human.

On Death: Zarathustra, the Isles of the Blest, and the Descent into Hell

Yet more than Empedocles’ caution against carnivorism, and its reference to the doctrine of birth and rebirth and of his cosmological cycle, it is often seems to be the tableau of the volcano and the philosopher’s voluntary death that strikes us most powerfully. And then too there is the dramatic detail of a single bronze sandal, tossed up and back to the land of the living by the same volcano. Would it not have been vaporized or melted? This is so even where Diogenes Laertius begins with a veritable catalogue of the various ways Empedocles was said to have exited this world.40 Why just one? This is, so scholars remind us, always a sign. One sandal, one bronze thigh, one eye.

But a sign of what and to whom, for whom? And what is the significance of the volcano?

C. G. Jung refers to an account of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra in his lecture course on Zarathustra that apparently echoes this constellation of death. Whether self-willed or not (and therefore an image of death in life, at least as set together with Lucian’s Kataplous), Jung himself does not explore. Jung’s own emphasis is reasonable enough for a psychoanalyst in a Zarathustran context. In a passage that could not be more Empedoclean uttered in terms of Nietzsche’s reflected motivation of the need to go beyond good and evil,41 Nietzsche’s Zarathustra tells us: “Let us speak of this ye wisest ones, even if it is a bad thing” (Z Of Self-Overcoming).42 And Nietzsche goes on, as Jung emphasizes: “To be silent is worse; all suppressed truths become poisonous” (ibid.)43 This is a talking cure. Zarathustra speaks.

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As his point of departure, Jung's discussion engages "The Blessed Isles" and "Of Great Events" as these appear in Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra. We could have already encountered the tapas of "The Isles of the Blest" as the subtitle of Wilhelm Heinse's Ardinghello, to whom Hölderlin dedicated the first section on "Night" of his longer poem Bread and Wine. The geographic contours of these two accounts, with Heinse offering the recollections of Ardinghello, a wanderer in Sicily, and Hölderlin of Hyperion, the hermit in an idealized and archaicized vision of modern Greece, is critical to both and both point to a locative longing. In addition to the local "setting" of German literature, there is also a metonymic association to be made to the darkly dramatic Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), Nietzsche's contemporary Basel inhabitant. Although Böcklin also painted in 1888 a version of the "Isle of the Blest," the Lebensinsel or Isle of Life, his most famous painting is the Toteninsel or Isle of the Dead, of which the painter created several variants between 1880 and 1886.

Most of us will recall the Zarathustran passage in question: it's weird and not just because Jung says so, if Zarathustra scholars rarely remark upon this wackiness, and I remember reading it for the first time or for however many hundreds of times I have read it, but always without much sense. But it is worth thinking about such things, especially with reference to Nietzsche who spent his life engaged with oddities often unquestioned by supposedly critical scholarship.

Together with the above reading of Lucian, together with the suggestion that Nietzsche retells the purifications of Empedocles along with the death of Empedocles with his Thus Spoke Zarathustra (and I have been attempting here to make both claims), the constellation in question loses much of its oddness. To do this Jung adds a ghost story.

In his seminar from 4 May 1938 Jung glosses the account in Zarathustra as the descent of Zarathustra into Hades. There is the volcano and the fire underneath, the entrance to the interior of the earth, the entrance to the underworld—there is even old Cerberus, the fire dog—and Zarathustra is now going down into all this. Psychologically it would mean that after all that great talk, there is an underworld and down there one has to go. But if one is so high and mighty, why not stay up there? Why bother about this descent? Yet the tale says inevitably one goes down—that is the enantiodynamia—and when one gets down there, well one will be burned up, one will dissolve.

Jung observes that Nietzsche would have had to have recognized this as the locus classicus of the Dorian city of Acragas but, as Jung reflects, Nietzsche's Zarathustran account does not allude to Empedocles. Nevertheless, as Jung rightly remarks, the story "has a very peculiar ring." It was so funny—the noon tide hour and the captain and his men—what was the matter with that ship that they go to shoot rabbits near the entrance of hell? Then it slowly came to me that when I was about eighteen, I had read a book from my grandfather's library, Blätter aus Prevorst by Kerner, a collection in four volumes of wonderful stories, about ghosts and phantasies and forebodings, and among them I found that story. It is called "An extract of awe-inspiring import from the log of the ship 'Sphinx,' in the year 1686 in the Mediterranean."

Jung's reference to the Blätter aus Prevorst is to a collection of spiritualist, mesmerist, and magnetic tales inspired by Erika Hauflle, the subject of Die Seherin von Prevorst. Erörterungen über das innere Leben der Menschen und über das Hereinragen einer Geisterwelt in die unsere, written by a Suabian poet Justinius Kerner (1786–1862). Let us recall the passage from the section entitled Of Great Events.

There is an island in the sea — not far from the Blissful Islands of Zarathustra — upon which a volcano continuously smokes; the people, and especially the old women among the people, say that it is placed like a block of stone before the gate of the underworld, but that the narrow downward path which leads to this gate of the underworld passes through the volcano itself. (Z. Of Great Events)
The passage could not be more obviously related to Lucian but (and this is adds to its importance for understanding Nietzsche) not less to Rohde's broader constellation of his exploration into *Psyche: The Cult of Souls & The Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks.*

The relevant bit from Nietzsche's account in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is as follows:

> it happened that a ship dropped anchor at the island upon which the smoking mountain stood; and its crew landed in order to shoot rabbits. Towards the hour of noon, however, when the captain and his men were reassembled, they suddenly saw a man coming towards them through the air, and a voice said clearly: "It is time! It is high time!" But as the figure was closest to them—or flew quickly past, however, like a shadow, in the direction of the volcano—they recognized, with the greatest consternation, that it was Zarathustra. (Z, of Great Events)

Jung goes on to cite Kerner's original text for his students' sake:

> The four captains and a merchant, Mr Bell, went ashore on the island of Stromboli to shoot rabbits. At three o'clock they called the crew together to go aboard, when, to their inexpressible astonishment, they saw two men flying rapidly over them through the air. One was dressed in black, the other in grey. They approached them very closely, in the greatest haste; to their greatest dismay they descended amid the burning flames into the crater of the terrible volcano, Mt. Stromboli. They recognized the pair as acquaintances from London.

Same story Jung says, a surmise he duly checks by asking Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche, who confirms that she and her brother found this book in the library of their own "grandfather, Pastor Oehler.

In addition to Jung's repeated invocation of this story as a demonstration of the working power of the unconscious—for this illustrative reason the story was one Jung had been telling since his inaugural dissertation, published two years after Nietzsche's death in 1902—Jung notes that "such stories are recorded because they are edifying." In the case of Kerner's ghost story, Jung explains that "The two gentlemen from London were big merchants and evidently they were not quite alright, because they are painted with the colors of hell which express sinfulness, one is black and the other grey, whereas they should be wearing white shirts which is court dress in heaven."52

Grügelgeschichten, tales of the dead, especially the unhappy dead and of things we do not guess in this life, as is Lucian's *Kataplous* in one vein and Rohde's *Psyche* in another are comparably "instructive" or edifying.

The ghostly dimension of Zarathustra's witch-like flight, as the reference above to Lucian and to Rohde now makes plain, is literal not literary. If Gary Shapiro is right to point to the geological significance of the contrast of this passage with the *Isles of the Blest* where Zarathustra "appears mysteriously on a volcanic island (where his Shadow seems to fly into the volcano itself),"55 Shapiro, along with most other commentators fails to note that Zarathustra's shadow, the shade in question, corresponds for the ancient Greek to the flattened dimensionality that is the only thing that remains of us after death, especially presuming what Rohde calls a "subterranean translation."

Hence with respect to the claim that it is, as Nietzsche's Zarathustra repeats, "high time," that it is therefore late—"it's time, it's time" as T. S. Eliot calls, as Gadamer once spoke of age as including so many "warning shots across the bow"—so, too, Jung explains that "This is the secret, this is the key to the meaning of that descent into hell. It was a warning; soon you will go down into dissolution."56

We have already noted that there are numerous explorations of the meaning of the overman.57 Given the context of Lucian's *Kataplous*, it may serve us to consider yet another rendering of the overman as an ironic or else in Jung's terminology, "instructive" construct. At the same time, the didactic purpose of Zarathustra's "teaching" becomes more rather than less elliptical and the overman rather less than an ideal to be pursued straightforwardly and *per se.*
Coda

What Nietzsche takes from Lucian’s *Journey into the Underworld, or the Tyrant*, is the provocative contrast between the values we have in our culture and our context and our tendency to take these values, à la Herbert Butterfield’s presentism, not only as universal but as timeless or essential. Writing that man is something to be overcome, characterizing the human lifetime in a discussion of artists of grand passion as constituting “— hiatus between two nothingnesses—” (KSA 12, 10 [34], 473), Nietzsche points to a perspective beyond the here and now, one which asks us to consider not the immediate, whether in terms of economic advantage or personal delight or pleasure, but rather the scope or scheme of the world.

Thus Nietzsche does not say *The little businessman is will to power and nothing besides, much less The German nationalist is will to power and nothing besides, but The world is will to power and nothing besides*—meaning thereby the collective whole of existence in the world (and indeed beyond the earth). In this sense, he has recourse to biological metaphors and from this same perspective he also emphasizes that the aim of life is expression not survival. Only, he says, rather unkindly, the Englishman strives for life at all costs.

Nietzsche’s own reference is to the *Urkünstler*, as Anaxagoras and Anaximander called mind or *noös*. If Nietzsche himself draws the parallel between both Empedocles and “Darwinian theory” with a certain materialism, Nietzsche might be aligned with those who argue for intelligent design in the sense not of the Judeo-Christian God and not of Gaia, but another schema altogether, one that Nietzsche once called *aeon*, reminding us that the child had kingship, playing with chance, playing with “chance forms” as he puts in his notes on Empedocles, playing that is to say, “every possible random combination of elements, of which some are purposeful and capable of life.”

Recalling my own references to chance, it is worth noting, as Robin Small remarks, that Nietzsche returns to a reading of Lucian (albeit in another locus, recounting Heraclitus’ playful playing upon the kingship of the child, in the worlds and words of *país, paízon, pessōna, sumpheromenos, diapheromenos*: “A child playing, moving counters, gathering and scattering.” Nietzsche reminds us, that with Empedocles—but let us also add with Newton and with Bachelard too—science “basically dissolves into magic.”

Only the true believers will be dismayed to learn this. For we need to go past the common convention that opposes science and magic (this Nietzsche never does, no more than he opposes religion and science), to ask what Nietzsche might have meant by inventing Zarathustra as a sage for a modern world and even more radically, by calling for not for salvation or redemption but and much rather and just to begin with: purification?

Fictitious Concluding Fragments

Tightrope walkers (overman above, underman below)

Two devils, one to jump over you, one to drag you off to hell

Widerwillens

German for: all of it against your will

Whereby any downgoing, any going to ground, counts as a descent into hell

To read Lucian, to read Dante, to read Sartre on Hell

Will always be to read about other people.

Question for Eliot: how many would you say death had undone?

Cut to:

Nihilism

Nietzsche’s idea of “Dying at the Right Time”

Empedocles and the conflicting accounts of his death

So very many postcards from the “edge,” like Nietzsche’s own.

Whereby Nietzsche’s little gloss

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“love and kisses to the whole world”
would be what?
a suicide note?
before an assumption into heaven? to prefigure or
to second-guess transfiguration?
Eternal return, everything, the same
No reserve; no exceptions
To give Empedocles the last word as a word on
purification:

"Will you not cease from the din of slaughter? Do
you not see that you are devouring each other in the
heedlessness of your minds?" (KRS 414; DK 136)
Or and to the say the same—and this is by far
my favourite—
Wretches, utter wretches, keep your hands from
beans. (KRS 419; DK 140)

Endotes

1. Lucian of Samosata was translated into Latin by
Erasmus, into English by Charles Cotton as early as
1675 as Burlesque upon Burlesque; or the Scolfer Scolf’d. Being Lucian’s Dialogues newly put into
English Fustian London, 1675; corrected in 1686,
and into German by Wolfgang Wieland in 1788. Al­
though Lucian’s name tends to be unfamiliar to to­
day’s readers, those who read him in antiquity and
throughout the era leading up to Nietzsche included
most European authors from Erasmus to Thomas
More but also Rabelais, Voltaire, and Jonathan Swift,
with Jan Kott, somewhat more recently, reprising a
long standing case for Lucian’s influence on Shake­
speare, and in philosophy, in addition to Montaigne,
we can name David Hume in particular who also
read the text that is discussed in this essay with refer­
ence to its influence on Nietzsche. For her part and
writing from an analytic, historical perspective on
Hume, Annette C. Baier observes (not without a cer­
tain irritation on her part) that “although Lucian was
widely read in Hume’s day, the overlap between
readers of Hume these days, and readers of Lucian,
seems to have been almost nil.” Baier, Death and
Character: Further Reflections on Hume (Cam­
bridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 103. As
Baier emphasizes, she owes her discussion of Lucian
solely to an email inquiry raised by Emilio Mazza
(110). Mazza’s question, and hence Baier’s question
is the specific title of the text from Lucian Hume was
reading on his death bed. For Adam Smith, accord­
ing to Baier, seems insufficiently specific in his re­
port “that when he called on Hume on August 8,
Hume was reading Lucian’s ‘Dialogues of the
Dead’” (100). The specific title in question is, coinci­
dently, the same dialogue to be discussed as rele­
vant for Nietzsche in the present essay, i.e., Lucian’s
Kataplous. For his part, Smith may well have been
characterizing the dialogue in general terms just be­
because the Kataplous is indisputably a dialogue of
the dead, as it is all about death and Lucian’s favorite
tropes on the same, including shades of Elizabeth
Kuhler-Ross, bargaining and stages of denial or pro­
test. Baier herself has recourse to James Fieser’s
Some Early Responses to David Hume, in 10 vol­
umes (London: Thoemmes/Continuum Press, re­
vised second edition, 2005 [1999 and 2003]).
Fieser’s collection includes a letter from Hume’s
doctor, William Cullen who offers a detailed account
of Lucian’s Kataplous. For the specific reference to
Fieser, see Baier, 103. For Baier, the difficulty of lo­
cating Lucian’s Kataplous deserves some remark as
it not always included in extant editions of "Lucian’s
much imitated and influential ‘Dialogues of the
Dead,’ at least not in editions of Lucian such as the
Loeb, or as far as I have been able to find out, in edi­
tions Hume would have used.” (Baier, p. 104) The
dialogue is available in different forms (see further
note 26 below), and the title is sometimes rendered
one way, some times another, so that translated as
“Voyage to the Underworld,” it features as the last di­
alogue in the first volume of the four volumes trans­
lated by the brothers Henry G. and Frances W.
Fowler, The Works of Lucian, complete with excep­
tions specified in the preface (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1905). Still the point of extant translations is
moot because, and as Baier herself observes (101):
Hume read his Lucian in Greek, just as Nietzsche
did.

2. Lucian is thus characterized by the fifth century
Eunapius as an “earnest” or truth-purposing or

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9. One usually speaks of parodies in this general sense. See for further references in English, Peter Wolfe, “Image and Meaning in Also Sprach Zarathustra,” MLN 89 (1964): 546–52 as well as, again, Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra als literarisches Phänomen, for useful references to an array of German and French literature.

10. See Graham Anderson, Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic (Leiden: Brill, 1976), as well as, for a discussion of Lucian and tragedy, Orestis Karavas, Lucien et la tragédie (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), and Bracht R. Banham, Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For discussions of Lucian, see the contributions to Adam Bartley, ed., A Lucian for Our Times (City: Publisher, year).

3. Lucian thus expounds upon his own deliberate prevarication as a variation upon the traditional misdirections or lies of other historians in his True Stories or True History (Aethe Diegemata).


5. Ibid.

6. His approach to truth runs throughout Nietzsche's texts, but see just in near textual proximity to this often discussed locus: Beyond Good and Evil § 4 and § 14.

7. This is by far the most common attribution and I address this further in the second half of this essay, in particular in note 41 below. Other attributions exist, of course. See Claude Pavur, Nietzsche Humanist (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), who reads the Übermensch in a renaissance humanist context. And one can also read the Übermensch à la Faust or à la Ayn Rand, or indeed as Robert Solomon has suggested via Aristotle's great-souled man, although as noted above, this is a paraphrase rather than a direct rendering and the philological reading I explore here takes as its point of departure Nietzsche's own formation as a classicist.

8. Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen points out that as “Menschenfischer,” Zarathustra is less to be compared to the disciples of Christ than to the Philosophical-Fisherman in Lucian's Piscator See Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra als literarisches Phänomen. Eine Revision (Frankfurt: Athenium, 1974), 127–28.


13. Ibid., 221.


17. Thus Nietzsche reminds us: “I believe in the old German saying, all gods must die.” (KSA 7, 124)


22. Like the duck that could be somebody’s mother in the children’s song “Be Kind to your Web-Footed Friends.”


25. This citation reproduces Kaufmann’s footnote in its entirety. See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, Amorically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 307n1. The footnote itself clarifies Kaufmann’s main text: “The hyperanthropous is to be found in the writings of Lucian in the second century AD and Nietzsche as a classical philologist had studied Lucian and made frequent references to him in his philologia” (ibid.). Erkme Joseph, *Nietzsche im ‘Zauberberg’* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996) duly cites Kaufmann in his notes before going on to detail the earlier appearances of the term Übermensch as such in German (271ff.). But prior to Kaufmann, see the entry in Rudolf Eisler’s *Handwörterbuch der Philosophie* (Berlin: Mittler und Sohn, 1913) as well as Ernst Benz: “Das Bild des Übermenschen in der Europäischen Geistesgeschichte” in his *Der Übermensch. Eine Diskussion* (Stuttgart: Rhein-Verlag 1961), 19–16. Similar details, drawn from Kaufmann, appear in Karen Jostes, cited below, and so too with reference to anthropology and the social sciences.
They left a great deal behind. That's why they take it

"This is terrible!" to which Menippus retorts: "It is not. But what you people used to do on the earth was. Making people grovel before you, lording it over free men, never giving the slightest thought to death. Well you can start whimpering because you've lost it all" (212–13). Cf. Nietzsche, Human All Too Human, Mixed Options and Maxims 1879 §408, and Erwin Rohde, Der griechische Roman und seine Vortäuffer (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1900). For Lucian's influence, see further Herbert Hunger, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner; Teilbd. 2: Philologie, Profandichtung, Musik, Mathematik und Astronomie, Naturwissenschaften, Medizin, Kriegswissenschaft, Rechtsliteratur (München: Beck, 1978), 151f., as well as Christopher Robinson, Lucian and his Influence in Europe (London: Duckworth, 1979), in addition to Manuel Baumbach, Lukian in Deutschland. Eine forschungs- und receptionsgeschichtliche Analyse vom Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002) and more broadly, Werner von Koppenfels, Der andere Blick. Das Vermächtnis des Menippos in der europäischen Literatur (München: C.H. Beck, 2007). A rewarding treatment is Francis G. Allinson, Lucian: Satirist and Artist (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1926) who for his own part refers to Rohde's studies and to Swift's patently "Lucianic" debt to Lucian. See too, very usefully, Brunan, Unruly Eloquence.

33. Ibid. (what is the ibid refer to here?)
34. Rohde, Psyche, 1:92.
35. Ibid.
36. Allinson, Reading the New Nietzsche, 168ff.
37. Rohde, Psyche, 93.
38. Thus perhaps we are right to read Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, and to esteem Nietzsche above Rohde as Alan Cardew argues, per contra, that perhaps we might invert the order. See "The Dionycus: Nietzsche and Erwin Rohde" in Paul Bishop, ed., Nietzsche and Antiquity (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 458–78.

40. This again is the point of departure for Chitwood’s Death by Philosophy.

41. “And he who hath to be a creator in good and evil…”


43. Ibid.

44. There are a number of studies of this theme, beginning with Eliza Butler’s Tyranny of Greece over Germany, but see for a recent account, Constanze Güthenke, Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism, 1770–1840 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70ff and Walter Seitter, “Der Deutsche Griechen-Komplex,” in Julia Wagner and Stefan Wilke, eds., “Die Glücklichen sind neugierig” Zehn Jahre Kolleg Friedrich Nietzsche (Weimar: Bauhaus Universitätsverlag, 2009), 232–53.

45. In his notes from 1881, Nietzsche praises Böcklin as an exemplar of the quality of contemporary Swiss (by contrast with German painters as a “pathbreaking” painter) (KSA 9, 536).

46. In general, when scholars say they are puzzled, they are usually halfway to dismissing the issue. The scholarly epoché brackets what does not make sense. Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy, by contrast, attempts to revive questions usually taken for granted, and in this case, fairly striking questions: why tragedy? Why the delight in the tragic, that is the enjoyment of tragic music drama?


48. Ibid., 2117.

49. Ibid. In his text, Jung refers to Kerner’s Blätter aus Prevorst, a series of volumes edited by Kerner and entitled Blätter aus Prevorst: Originalien und Lesefrüchte für Freunde des innern Lebens. See for a discussion, John R. Haucé, “From Somnambulism to the Archetypes: The French Roots of Jung’s Split With Freud,” The Psychoanalytic Review 71/4 (1984): 648–49. This is an arena that calls for further research (Robin Small has emphasized the actual historical elements of the account with respect to English history) but especially in connection with Nietzsche but also Hölderlin. The reference given by the compiler of Jung’s Zarathustra seminar is to Seeress of Prevorst (see following note). Although Jung was in the habit of citing the two together, the citation here to “Volume IV, p. 57” can only refer to the multi-volumed Blätter aus Prevorst. I am grateful to Robin Small for drawing my attention to the need to clarify this. The story is also repeated (here citing the Blätter aus Prevorst) in Jung, “Approaching the Unconscious” in Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, (New York: Random House, 1968), 1–94, here p. 24, citation in the note to p. 24, on p. 389. For Jung who included an illustration of the unconscious influence of advertising on the previous page, the story demonstrates the actuality of unconscious processes in Nietzsche’s recollection, as in musical compositions where a composer reprises a folksong from his youth, “an idea or an image moves from the unconscious to the conscious mind” (ibid., 25). I add here that Robin Small in his Nietzsche and Reed refers to Jung as well as to Kerner but does not make the connection with Lucian or Rhode nor indeed and for that matter Hölderlin/Heine.

50. Kerner, Die Seherin von Prevorst. Erörterungen über das innere Leben der Menschen und über das Hereinragen einer Geisterwelt in die unsere (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1963 [1829]). In English as The Seeress of Prevoist, trans. Catherine Crowe, (New York: Partridge & Brittan, 1855). It matters indeed, although this Jung does not mention, that as a medical student, Kerner had helped care for Hölderlin during his clinical confinement in Tübingen and was later to be influential in arranging the publication of Hölderlin’s collected works.

51. Reading Rohde can give us access to terminology Nietzsche took for granted and which some of us no longer know: beginning with the language of the isles of the blest, along with a certain expression of translation, across the surface of the earth, as of above and below the earth.

52. Jung, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, 1217–18.

53. Ibid., 2118. In accord with the fetishism that seems to attend the search for Nietzsche’s sources (whether to prove or disprove his originality), commentators can be expected to be quick to wonder whether Elisabeth was lying but the popularity of the book and the very coincidence of which Jung speaks between his own access to the book and the young Nietzsche and his sister’s access suggest that this is not something it would served purposes to lie about. Indeed, the coin-
cidence is plausible enough even without Elisabeth’s confirmation and Bennholdt-Thomsen notes, following Jung, that Nietzsche concerns himself with Kerner between the ages of 12 and 15.

54. Ibid. I thank Annette Hornbacher for noting that Jung’s invocation of this color distinction and significance is itself taken from Kerner.

55. Gary Shapiro, “Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands: Nietzsche’s Geophilosophy and the Direction of the Earth,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 35–36 (2008): 13. Restoring this emphasis however, an emphasis Shapiro conscientiously avoids, exposes us once again to what he identifies as the risks and dangers of “reading Nietzsche through the prism of Hölderlin’s Greek and German earth, in a Heideggerian mode, risks what Foucault called the return and retreat of the origin and the nostalgia and site fetishism that mar Heidegger’s thought.” (10.)


57. In addition, again, to numerous English readings in German studies as well as in philosophy, Rudolf Etsler’s *Handwörterbuch der Philosophie* (Berlin: Mittler und Sohn, 1913) repays reading with regard to the question of the Übermensch as a philosophical notion in particular connection with Nietzsche. For a general overview, see Ernst Benz: “Das Bild des Übermenschen in der Europäischen Geistesgeschichte” in his *Der Übermensch. Eine Diskussion* (Stuttgart: Rhein-Verlag 1961), 19–161, as well as Karen Joisten, *Die Überwindung der Anthropozentrität durch Friedrich Nietzsche* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994), esp. 172ff.


59. Ibid.

