

On nietzsche, the ubermensch and the simpsons



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On Nietzsche, The Ubermensch, and The Simpsons The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is well-known for the shock value of his works. His philosophy is of the extreme form of critique, characterized by the rejection of Platonic absolutes and values, culminating in the notion of a self-affirming, authentic agent that is the Ubermensch. In a seemingly parallel light, Bart Simpson of The Simpsons animated series initially appears to be an embodiment of this Nietzschean Ubermensch. However, Mark Conard proceeds to argue otherwise. In his article, Thus Spake Bart: On Nietzsche and the Virtues of Being Bad (2001), Conard points out that Bart Simpson, in the latter's rejection of traditional morality (73), does initially appear to be consistent with Nietzsche's idea of the transvaluation of values, that is, the critique of an external source of morality. However, Conard rightly argues that upon closer examination, Bart is not being the active Ubermensch that creates, but is rather a merely reactive agent that in fact needs help in order to define himself (75). More importantly, his capacity to fashion a self depends precisely upon the existence of those whom he goes against, namely, authority. Without authority, Bart is unable to find an object for his rebellion, and so loses his identity. In the end, Bart falls short of the Nietzschean ideal of the "artist, the self-overcoming, self-creating individual, who forges new values, who makes an artwork out of his life" (Conard, 73).

Work cited Conard, Mark T. "Thus Spake Bart: On Nietzsche and the Virtues of Being Bad." *The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D'oh! Of Homer*. Eds. William Irwin, Mark Conard, and Aeon Skoble. Popular Culture and Philosophy Volume 2. Chicago: Open Court, 2001. 59-77.