

A Vision Of The “Urbemensch” In Popular Imagination: A Study Of Death Note

Author

Abstract

A Japanese television series adaptation *Death Note*, directed by Tetsuro Araki, portrays a student who takes justice into his own hands and thinks he is chosen to bring order to the world. The student named Light Yagami, by chance of fate, finds the ‘Death Note’, a mysterious black notebook that ends anyone’s life once the person’s name is written on it. With this notebook, he carried out a mass killing of those he considered immoral and took on the role of a ‘God’ to create a crime-free world, using “Kira” as his alias, which is just the transliteration of the English word “killer”.

His perspective is thought provoking and perhaps reminds the readers of Nietzsche’s idea of the *Urbemensch*. Hence Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will act as a tool to understand “Kira’s” character more in depth, or rather “Kira’s” way of thinking. However, the concept of the *Urbemensch* is a western-originating theory that denotes a transcendental being upholding the development of his own ethical framework and creating his own good and evil. “Kira” in his own selfish way thinks of himself as the “chosen one” and even decides to establish his own “utopian society” to make the world a better place and make every person strong and disciplined.

Asia and Europe being two socio-culturally diverse regions, there are bound to be differences in their approach to this philosophical perspective. But with “Kira’s” character development can it be said that his ideals develop on the Nietzschean concept of the *Urbemensch*? Can it be considered an act of usurpation of power or a complete misuse of power? The author of the series said “No one should play God”, but he himself created such a character which seems to go against these words. Is “Kira” then a critique of this Nietzschean idea? Or is he a celebration of the same?

Keywords: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Urbemensch*, *Death Note*, anime, morality, ethical, power, God.

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