

## TRANSHUMANISM IN INFERNO

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### Abstract

*The modern World, today, is confronting social, political, cultural and religious problems, despite of the substantial development in science and technology. On one hand science and Technology is playing a vital role in the development of many physical facilities of man and on the other hand it is leading to the obliteration of mankind. The hazards like global warming, pollution, population explosion, diseases are rampant. Man's desire to overcome such problems and to improve physical and Geographical, inspired him to search for things which help him to master over nature. The present paper aims at exploring the adventures of Transhumanist's utopianic ideas which lead to the improvement of man's condition .Transhumanism only aims at improving man's condition. Dan Brown used the theme of transhumanism in the novel Inferno. The Inferno brings about with the protagonist Robert Langdon's adventures and efforts to explore and interpret the puzzle and undo the clandestine of the deadly Virus created by Bretrand Zobrist, a genius scientist, who determined on solving the future hazards of over- population throughout the world. WHO and Consortium find it objectionable as it causes forcible sterility among humanbeings. At last Zobrist succeeds in releasing the virus in Istanbul near Hajia Sophia in a vast underground cistern. As a symbolist, Langdon succeeds to decipher the puzzle and find out the place where Zobrist will execute his plan. Through Inferno, Dan Brown encourages the great understanding among the organizations rather than oppositions, for building up a healthy, happy and harmonious society in the future.*

**Key Words:** *transhumanism, population explosion, diseases, science and technology, rationalistic ideas.*

## TRANSHUMANISM IN INFERNO

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The modern World, today, is confronting social, political, cultural and religious problems, despite of the immense development in science and technology. On one hand science and Technology is playing a vital role in the development of many physical facilities of man and on the other hand it is leading to the destruction of mankind. It is creating desolation and remains trouble shooting. Some of the problems are apocalyptic which lead to the destruction of the entire human race. The hazards like global warming, pollution, population explosion, diseases are rampant. Man's desire to overcome such problems and to improve physical and Geographical, inspired him to search for things which help him to master over nature. The great scientists like Isaac Newton, John Locke, Bacon and Darwin emphasized on science and contributed to the health and life of man. The invention of medicines and vaccines improved the quality of life of man. The immense progress in science and technology has helped man a great deal in his development. And this gave rise to rational humanistic or Transhumanistic ideas which reflect in the science fiction.

The present paper aims to discover the adventures of Transhumanist's utopianic ideas which lead to the improvement of man's condition. It is said that Transhumanist's go against the nature and interfere with nature's law. If man is going against the nature, is he doing it right? If he is right, why Transhumanism is considered a bane by many? Primarily, it is very important to know the definition of Transhumanism. It is defined as "An international philosophical movement that advocates the transformation of human condition by developing and making widely available technology to greatly enhance human intellect and physiology." (wiki/transhumanism) As the definition advocates, Transhumanism only aims at improving man's condition.

The word 'Transhumanism' was used by a biologist Julian Huxley in his work '*Religion without Revolution*' in 1927. He writes, "The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself- not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there is another way- but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature."(www.nickbostrom)

Transhumanism, has become popular in the literature especially in the science fiction. The writers like Robert A. Heinlein, A. E. Van Vogt, Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clark put forth the theme of Transhumanism in their fiction. Dan Brown is one of those writers, who used the theme of transhumanism in the novel *Inferno*. In this novel he, Dan Brown endeavored to suggest the apocalyptic results of the world's population explosion. He believed that population explosion is one of the crucial problems of many countries in the world. But his prophesies are not liked by the religious people who believe in the religion rather than science and technology. Several communities who are mostly fanatics opposed his rationalistic ideas. Consequently, Brown's *Inferno* is a conflict between the spiritual and rationalistic groups.

The *Inferno* initiates with the protagonist Robert Langdon's adventures and efforts to explore and decipher the puzzle and unfasten the clandestine of the deadly Virus created by Bretrand Zobrist, a genius scientist, who determined on solving the future hazards of over- population throughout the world. As a humanist, Zobrist believed in the betterment of human beings. According to him, over- population in the world leads to devastation. Nevertheless, the virus created by Zobrist was considered against the Utopian ideals and was opposed by Langdon. At the end of the novel, Zobrist's attempts to spread the virus prove successful despite, the opposition of religious and spiritual organizations. The virus leads to the sterility of one third of the population. In the novel, the writer expounds the existing but very crucial problem next to the pollution. The population explosion, according to Brown needs to be checked by the people themselves. He reminds people about their responsibilities, which they owe towards the society.

Dr. Sinskey, a senior official working for World Health Organization (WHO) holds very central views about the inference of the growing population. On many occasions Dr. Sinskey expresses her concern over the failure of the policies, schemes initiated by WHO. But she never entertains the dystopian ideas of people for controlling the fast growing population. Dr. Sinskey's conversation with a pro-transhumanist, a Silhouette, gives a lucid image of the growth in world population. "The earth's population is increasing day by day. The history of earth's population shows that in 1800's the population was one billion and in 1970's the population doubled to four billion. Every year the population is increasing to a large extent".(Brown,101) The transhumanistic ideals of a Silhouette are evident when he warns Dr. Sinskey about the implications of overpopulation:

Think of implications. As you know, your World Health Organization has again increased its forecasts, predicting there will be some nine billion people on earth before the midpoint of this century. Animal species are going extinct at a precipitously accelerated rate. The demand for dwindling natural resources is skyrocketing. Clean water is harder and harder to come by. By any biological gauge, our species has exceeded our sustainable numbers. And in the face of this disaster, the World Health Organization- the gatekeeper of the planet's health- is investing thing like curing diabetes, filling blood banks, battling cancer.... And so I brought you here to ask you directly, why the hell the World Health Organization does not have the guts to deal with this issue head-on? (Brown,102)

As a futurist, the writer's ideas about the population on earth are obvious. He also makes it quite clear about the approaching peril which follows it like a contagion. For instance the entire human race has to face many problems for the scarcity of natural resources, which is going to be more fatal for the human race. And it becomes clear from his words to Dr. Sinskey, "I brought you here to work with you. I have no doubt you understand that overpopulation is a health issue. But what I fear you don't understand is that it will affect the very soul man. Under the stress of overpopulation, those who have never considered stealing will become thieves to feed their families. Those who have never considered killing will kill to provide for their young. All of Dante's deadly sins- greed, gluttony, treachery, murder, and the rest- will begin percolating . . . rising up to the surface of humanity, amplified by our evaporating comforts. We are facing a battle for the soul of man."(Brown,103) Here Silhouette's statement is thought provoking as it suggests that the consequences of over population will be like a battle for the soul of man. The fastest growing population will enhance greed, treachery and sins as the science and technology is failing to eradicate superstitions and conventional beliefs among people.

Zobrist's wife Sienna Brooks is also a transhumanist. She secretly involves in releasing biological agent. But the WHO and Consortium find it objectionable as it causes forcible sterility among humanbeings. At last Zobrist succeeds in releasing the virus in Istanbul near Hajia Sophia in a vast underground cistern. As a symbolist, Langdon endeavours to decode the puzzle and find out the place where Zobrist will execute his plan. But it was too late, as Zobrist was done with his

mission. But does the attempt of Zobrist suits the objectives of a transhumanist? If 30% of the world population becomes sterile, does the problem of population explosion gets solved? Does the Science and Technology prove helpful in changing the mindset of people?

As a humanist and a creative thinker, Dan Brown suggests the importance of use of science and technology for the development of the society but not for the destruction. He also advocates that if transhumanism aims at the utopian advancement it should be welcomed by the people and if it supports dystopian ideas, it should not be welcomed. In Brown's *Inferno*, many organizations and religious people do not support the apocalyptic ideas. The Consortium, WHO, SRS and other organizations, with the help of Langdon, hunt for Zobrist, for stopping him from the dispersion of the water soluble virus in the World. Eventually, they find the water soluble virus in the Cistern and the whole World gets infected with it.

Dan Brown's *Inferno* is in fact the struggle between the transhumanists and the believers in religion. There is a need to understand that both transhumanists and the believers in religion aim at the growth and betterment of the society. Both encourage utopian ideas, but their advances are different. Through *Inferno*, Dan Brown encourages the great understanding among the organizations rather than oppositions, for building up a healthy, happy and harmonious society in the future. Further, he advises that it is the necessity of the day to change the mindset of the people, as things cannot be forced upon them. They need to change their psychology regarding population growth. The population explosion will surely cause hurdles in the development of human race. It results in the scarcity of water resources, land for residing, and grains for food. Once Bertrand Russell, an educationist and a writer, presumed that the third World war may take place for the scarcity of water resources. Saving the nation should be the motto of every citizen. Accordingly, every citizen should play a crucial role in the expansion of science and technology. People around the world should enable themselves to understand the future problems and extend cooperation rather than counter, for the betterment of mankind.

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