



NIETZSCHE'S IDEA OF 'GOD IS DEAD' AND 'SUPERMAN' IN DAN BROWN'S INFERNO

¹Syed Qasim Shah, ² Muhammad Bilal (Ph.D Schloar), ³ Nasim Ullah Khan

^{1,2,3} Lecturer, Department of English, Bacha Khan University Charsadda, Pakistan.

Email: 1qasimshahpmd@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

Abstract : The study is carried out to unveil how Bertrand Zubrist is the shadow and reflection of the Mad Man who declares the death of God in The Gay Science of Nietzsche. The research attempts to explore Nietzsche's idea of 'God is dead' in Dan Brown's *Inferno*. It shows the notions conveyed in the novel about the disappearance of divinely inspired morals and human's derivation of their own rational values in life. Further, it brings forth the fragile state of history, where mankind cannot tackle the issue of spiritual collapse. The research also aims at the question that how human beings are on the verge of becoming gods themselves. Dan Brown says that humanity needs a person who possesses power and zeal for changing the old-fashioned thoughts into the glimmering notions of modernity and technology which can make people live a better life. He feels the necessity of a superman who can take drastic measures against the conservative notions of Christianity.

Key Words: Superman, Divine Clash, Values, Life, Humanity.

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INTRODUCTION

Dan Brown is a famous twenty first century writer with outstanding works like Da Vinci Code, Angels and Demons, Digital Fortress and Deception Point etc. Dan Brown went to Phillip Exeter Academy for schooling where his own father was a math teacher. He graduated from Amherst College in 1986 in Massachusetts. He wrote his first book by the name of *187 Men to Avoid* which was a romantic guideline for women and published in 1995. Brown published his first novel *Digital Fortress* in 1998 which was inspired from a true story of his own life. His second novel *Angels and Demons* was published in 2000 where he has introduced the character of Robert Langdon for the first time who attempts to save the Vatican City from the Illuminati, a secret society. Robert Langdon appeared in the novel *Da Vinci Code* where he explores the hidden messages behind the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci and portrays the possibility that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and was the father of a child.

Inferno was published in 2013. In this novel Robert Langdon is hired by the World Health Organization to locate the deadly virus. The virus has been produced by a crazy character named Bertrand Zubrist who believes that technology should be used to overcome the problem of overpopulation because he thought that overpopulation leads to all other social and moral crisis. Bertrand Zubrist leads WHO to the notion that a plague has been created by Zubrist, which Sinskey (head of WHO) thought should be located before the virus spreads throughout the world.

The plan of reaching the virus is obstructed by the person known as the Provost who works for Zubrist, who kidnaps Robert Langdon and intoxicates him with a drug that removes the memories of his past two days. They tell him that he is suffering from amnesia. They also created an artificial reality for him where he was make understood that Sinskey's people, who were chasing them, want to kill him.

Using the mysterious symbols left by Zubrist for Sienna to locate the virus, Robert Langdon works with Sienna Brooks and finds out the virus placed in Turkey in a tourist spot. Before reaching that city, Langdon and Sienna are separated where Langdon is captured by the men of Dr. Sinskey who tell him about the whole reality and his created-amnesia. Langdon comes to know that the Provost has also joined the WHO's team to trace the virus. Langdon is given the video that Zubrist wanted to be released on a specific date and he is assured that they didn't want to kill him.



Langdon is bewildered by coming across the fact that Sienna Brooks was actually, the lover of virologist Bertrand Zubrist and wants to release the virus in the water where the water-soluble bag is kept. Langdon discovers the place which is a cistern in Istanbul where Zubrist had arranged a symphony orchestra to play the Inferno of Dante, to attract a huge sum of tourists. Langdon knows that the virus has already been spread because the bag is torn apart. He chases a woman in black veil who is obviously, Sienna Brooks because he thinks she has ruptured the bag.

Sienna after a long run stops and informs Langdon that the bag was dissolved before her arrival. She says that she knew the type of virus Zubrist had created and wanted to stop it but all in vain. She did it by herself because she did not trust the WHO. The Provost is taken for interrogation and WHO's team leaves to sort out any solution for the virus which does not kill people but can make the half population sterile.

Human beings are worshipping animals in nature. One of the important event history presents in human history was the discovery of god. Yoval Noah Harari says that human have created gods for themselves; because humans love fiction stories. Therefore, he declared that "Homo sapiens is a story-telling animal" (Harari, 2014). Human beings needed religions not in order to believe in some cosmological cycle but to unite human beings and lay out some moral conducts for their lives. Scientific revolution and enlightenment has corrupted the role of religions in the life of man. Nietzsche (1974) says, "God is dead" which means that the fundamental truth that people considered being the sublime one is no more with us. Human beings are on the way to becoming gods themselves. They went out of the jungles of Africa and reached the moon, discovered the mass of electron, introduced the internet and brewed the artificial intelligence. The cosmological questions, fundamental truths, origin, end, and purpose of life (if there is any) are now dealt not by religions (especially Christianity), but science and rationality. Are we heading in the right path by making man as the supreme power of not only the world but the whole universe?

Significance of the Research

The study proves how nihilistic view of world, which is the meaninglessness of life, the disorder in life, the death of God and the epistemological loneliness of human beings, still influences people belonging to the age of technology, internet and artificial intelligence. It provides a general insight to the views of Dan Brown how he thinks of the world as at the fragile state of history. This research paves the way for the future researchers to easily understand the overlooked horrific teachings of Dan Brown.

Problem Statement

Human beings have long since tried to know the purpose of their existence. They first thought (of course, many still believe) that they are part of a cosmic drama where every person is assigned to a specific role. But afterwards, human rejected the divine influence on man because man thought that now humans can lead the world with the power of his knowledge and rationality. Now humans should find meaning themselves for their own existence. The researcher aims at the hidden facts prevailing behind Inferno novel and explores the real thoughts conveyed in the novel.

Research Objectives

- To know the view of Nietzsche, "God is dead" in the novel Inferno.
- To know Nietzsche's idea of 'superman' reflected in the novel.



Research Question

- How does the novel *Inferno* reflect Nietzsche's view of "God is dead" and supports the idea of superhuman?

Theoretical Framework

The notion of Frederick Nietzsche "God is dead" and "Superman" has been used as a lens for the study of the novel 'Inferno'. F. Nietzsche thought that the fundamental being for values of life and the sacred truth is no more there in the lives of people (Europeans). He thought that a superman must come who would throw away the previous norms and customs and will derive his own morals by utilizing his intellectuality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Death of God

The first attack on the god's existence of Christianity came when Charles Darwin (1909) presented his Theory of Evolution in his book 'On the Origin of Species' and said that humanity does not descend from Adam but are the biological brothers and sisters of monkeys or apes which was harshly despised by Christian church. Moreover, another assailant was seen when Copernicus declared the sun being the center of universe than earth as bible claimed.

Harari thought that in middle ages we didn't know about morals, aesthetics and politics and couldn't we try because of god. But today, as an atheist (he says), he can tell what is right, good or beautiful. He proclaims that this was what Nietzsche meant by the 'death of God' (Harari, 2016).

Will Durant (2014) says that heaven and hell are places for him not in other world but the psychological states of human mind in this world distinguishing good from bad. He was deeply influenced by Christianity in his adulthood. He says if he gets a new life with same mind and intellect, he will not write philosophy or history but will try to establish a society free from theological influence. He argues that the declaration of 'God is Dead' by Nietzsche in 1883 was a grand event took place in history. He thought that there will be a time when people will study history as 'history before Nietzsche and history after Nietzsche'. Similarly, Durant was skeptic about 'crimes' caused by poverty and displacement of labor to machinery but he was confident that crimes increased due to the 'disappearance of hell and the death of God'. Meaning, he was certain about the fact that religions restrict people from committing crimes.

Friedrich Nietzsche was the person who beheaded Christianity by saying that 'God is dead'. He in his book, the Gay Science, clearly mentioned through the mouth of Mad Man. The Mad man goes to the market in bright morning and asks people about the location of god. All people who do not believe in god laughs at him and ask him mockingly whether what happened to god. He then cries and proclaims about the death of god. He blames the common people for the assassination of god. Then he does not know what he would do for the salvation of this heinous act. How would he clean his blood red hands? What holy games will he play to get salvation? Nietzsche's this idea has been used for the general study of novel by this thesis and the researcher has scrutinized how the death of god affects the existing society of human beings.

Super Man of Nietzsche

Nietzsche taught us about the superman or overman who will be a person revolting against the existing harmful norms and customs of society or religion. He will eradicate the

Christians notions about morality and in the end, generate his own morality which can guarantee human stability and peace.

“This superior man would not be a product of long evolution; rather, he would emerge when any man with superior potential completely masters himself and strikes off conventional Christian “herd morality” to create his own values, which are completely rooted in life on this earth.”

Super Man is ordinary person of flesh and blood but with tremendous qualities especially, mental qualities. By superman, Nietzsche does not want to replace God, but he wants to transform the existing society of Christianity. One of the critical writers, Professor Georg Simmel(1991) says “The Superman is nothing but the crystallization of the thought that man can develop beyond the present stage of his existence –and hence should.”

The Idea of ‘God is Dead’ in Other Literary Works

The death of god and the obliteration of divine authority are reflected in many literary works. Since this idea belongs to the whole universe, therefore, it is reflected in different works written by authors of different places.

‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’ comes first to one’s mind which is a tremendous work presented by Friedrich Nietzsche who paid for its publication himself. He sold only forty copies of it, while eight were given away. Not even a single person praised this work which can never be forgotten in human history (Durant, 1961, p. 317).

Zarathustra which is also known as ‘Zoroaster’ is the producer of Zoroastrianism which is an ancient religion of the Persian people. Nietzsche used his name to proclaim the death of god through the mouth of a person who once gave birth to god. In the long story of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, when Zarathustra comes down from the hill to preach people how should they live, he see a person walked on rope, fell down and died. Zarathustra takes him in his lap because he thinks the rope-walker was doing something great and living ‘his own life’. While coming down, he also meets an old hermit who tells him about the existence of god. Zarathustra tells himself “Could it be possible! This old saint in his woods has not yet heard the news the *God is dead!*” (Caro, 2006, p. 5). Through the mouth of Zarathustra, Nietzsche declares the death of gods and says that the holiest thing has now perished from the earth.

“What does the whole world know today?” asked Zarathustra. “This perhaps, that the old God no longer lives, the one in whom the whole world once believed.” (Caro, 2006, p.209)

Zarathustra then explains the death of divine morality and laughs at hermit. Zarathustra further says that there was a time when gods laughed at the death themselves but now they are perished from the earth.

“It has been over for the old gods for a long time now –and truly, they had a good cheerful gods’ end! They did not “twilight” themselves to death – that is surely a lie! Instead they just one day up and laughed themselves to death.” (Caro, 2006, p.146)

Another literary piece that shows the same tendency is the Stranger (also known as The Outsider in UK) written by Albert Camus. The death of God is evident in the character of Meursault who is the protagonist of the novel. When Meursault is asked about his religion by the Magistrate, he says that he does not believe in God and neither has he wanted to.

Ozyon (2012) says in *Camus’s Meursault: From an Existentialist angle* that, “The major principle of existentialism is the rejection of God, which is very evident in Camus’s *The Stanger*, where the main character Meursault refuses the fact that God exists.” (Ozyon, 2012, para. 2). When the chaplain tries to meet Meursault for third time, he still refuses and is fed up with his irrational notions for Meursault. When chaplain tries to convince him to believe in God, again Meursault refuses to believe. Ozyon (2012) says “It is clearly seen that there is a confrontation in which the chaplain tries to persuade Meursault to turn to God and repent, and Meursault stubbornly refuses to do so”

Thus, it is proved that Albert Camus has conveyed the idea of death of God in his novel where Meursault finds people chasing irrational and obnoxious things. He does not fund any



meaning in the religion of Christianity; the crucifix does not have any value for Meursault. Christians think that Jesus crucified himself for washing out the sins of Christians.

METHODOLOGY

The research is purely qualitative in nature because it does not use any statistical or mathematical data and graphs for analysis but instead, the researcher subjectively analyzes the collected data from the novel in the lenses of the views of Nietzsche. As the collected data is qualitative in nature, because it were selected lines or paragraphs from the novel, hence it is qualitative research. The data collected for research was critically textually analyzed by the researcher. The researcher has analyzed the data in order to portray whether Dan Brown has conveyed the ideas of Nietzsche or not. It was purely textual analysis without using any statistical formulae or graphs. The researcher has focused on the figures of speech, especially, similes and symbols used by Brown for the depiction of God is dead and its relevant notions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

God is Dead

The idea that has been reflected throughout the novel is 'God is dead' which means the sudden disappearance of divine ethics from the Europeans and replacing them with morals driven by human beings. The whole novel revolves around the clash of religion and rationality and science.

Dan Brown thought that the foundations of morality have now disappeared from Europeans, which has been reflected time and again in the novel. The novel put forward the idea that 'truth' can only be realized with the help of 'death' which appeals to two things. First, it carries the idea that human being (especially Christians) cannot know their God, but the only justification it provides is death that after death, the real truth will be revealed. Secondly, it also portrays that the death of God among the Europeans was the key cause which enabled them to discover and invent and know objective truths of the world. Brown demonstrates the idea that the more human being tries to discover by themselves, the more they discover and realizes that how ignorant they were in the past. "The truth can be glimpsed only through the eyes of death." (p. 69)

Will Durant thought that the declaration of death of God is one of the most important events in history which is, why he thinks, that there will be time when history will be parted in two; history before Nietzsche and history after Nietzsche. The same idea has been reflected in the novel with an exquisite craftiness. The date on which Zubrist has released the virus is very important for Zubrist. He has left an inscription on the rectangular plague beside the contagious bag. The inscription tells us about the historical importance of Nietzsche and his influence on the whole history "In this place, on this date, the world was changed forever." (p.27)

As it is earlier stated that religion is considered as the opium of the people by Dan Brown using the symbols of intoxicated Langdon, similarly, when Langdon is given some pills to activate sedatives in his body, he chew them which were to be swallowed and it felt bitter. Dan Brown portrays that the notion of death of God for the Christians will be a 'bitter pill to be taken' but he considers it something inevitable. Once they chew the pill of rationality and science, then their drowsiness of ignorance will fade.

"Langdon put the pills in his mouth and glanced around for some water. 'Chew them,' she (Sienna) said. 'They will hit your system faster and help counteract the sedative.' Langdon began chewing and instantly cringed. The pills were bitter, clearly meant to be swallowed whole." (p. 30)

The character of Sienna also shows such tendency and relies on intellect for the real- life hardships. She is born with outstanding abilities like 208 IQ. He has distinct brain structure from normal kids but the only thing she appeals in her life is wisdom. The novel show that



challenges and subtleties in life could be solved by using intellectuality. "Sienna had endured no shortage of challenges in her life, and although she had trained herself to rely on intellect to overcome hardships." (p. 39)

Dan Brown insists upon the idea of Nietzsche's 'God is dead' and says that now is the time that ignorance of Christian should not be considered as a forgettable sin. He claims that only wisdom and rationality secures the life of humankind. The power lies in the hands of wisdom and old gods and goddesses have lost their values for humankind now. In other words, Brown asks the Europeans to come out of the darkness of ignorance and receive their new possessor, Rationality. "But there comes a moment in history when ignorance is no longer a forgivable offence . . . a moment when only wisdom has the power to absolve." (p. 42)

There was Dark Age before renaissance took place which was a time when Christianity interfered in the affairs of states. When secularism spread in England especially in the era of Queen Elizabeth and Christian church's influence was thrown out, England started emerging in the Europe. Although, Renaissance was in real followed by the Black Death, but the writer has used Black Death symbolically for the death of influence of Christianity in the affairs of state, which broke out rebirth known as renaissance. "Ask yourself, what followed Black Death? The Renaissance. Rebirth. It has always been this way. Death is followed by birth." (p. 48)

Robert Langdon hallucinates many times where he sees blood and disfigured people. He also smells death everywhere which reflects the notion that 'God is dead and we have killed him'. In the same hallucinations, the woman asks Langdon to find the truth and realities of the world. She tells him that he should find meaning of life for himself. "The smell of death hung everywhere. *Seek*, the woman whispered. *And ye shall find.*" (p. 9)

Sienna thought that the intellectual loftiness of Zubrist is not the blessing of any God bestowed upon him, but it was itself the effect of very process of Darwin's evolution. Brown says that human beings have taken millions of years to develop to such a stage that now they can understand things by themselves.

"What you forget is that it was evolution that created Bertrand Zubrist. His superior intellect was the product of the very process Darwin described . . . as evolution over time. Bertrand's rare insight into genetics did not come as a flash of divine inspiration . . . it was the product of years of human intellectual progress." (p. 453)

Brown has willfully supported the idea of Evolution which tells us about the origin of humanity not in Adam and Eve of Christianity, but coming from other animals through the process of evolution. Dan Brown appeals to the idea of death of God when he tries to promulgate the notion that human have taken millions of years to evolve.

"humans have evolved incrementally over millennia, inventing new technologies along the way -rubbing sticks together for warmth, developing agriculture to feed ourselves, inventing vaccines to fight disease, and now, creating genetic tools to help engineer our own bodies so we can survive in the changing world." (p. 453)

Dr. Sienna Brooks was initially the fan of Zubrist and his mission and she applauded him and considered him to be right. Dan Brown preaches the idea with the help of Inferno novel, that truths must be accepted even if it is hard to accept. Truth must be followed even if it produces fear among some or wrath amongst other. "You sound like you're a fan Zobrist's.' 'I am the fan of the *truth*,' she replied forcefully, 'even if it's painfully hard to accept.'" (p. 215)

The production of virus in order to save humanity is the war against God itself because God gives everything to human beings including security, but Zubrist wants to use his intellect for saving the future of humanity. He developed the virus that made one of third population sterile. Sienna thought that the declaration of God's death is the solution of many questions at its root level. She says that the death of God changes the identity of Christians because they are then no more what they used to be. "He solved the problem at the root level.' 'It's genetic terrorism.' Langdon whispered. 'It's changing who we are, who we've always been, at the most fundamental level.'" (p. 439)

Brown has given a panorama that humanity lies on verge of historical fragility. It is the time the spirituality will collapse and rationality will take reigns of ethical thrones. He says that



the bomb of death of God is now gone off and the new God has taken the position of Christian God, which is mathematics, pure rationality and wisdom.

"I have enlightened you about the fact that we are on the brink of spiritual collapse.' . . . The time bomb is no longer ticking. It has already gone off, and without drastic measures, exponential mathematics will become your new God . . . and 'He' is a vengeful God." (p. 104)

In Epilogue of the novel, when goes to sleep, so before that, he looks at the sky he realized the world was changed. The people of Europeans had lost all their values once bestowed upon them by the God. "As he clicked off his overhead light, he turned his eyes one last time to the heavens. Outside, in the newly fallen darkness, the world had been transformed." (p. 463)

The Idea of Superman

The idea of 'superman' is given by Nietzsche in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche argues about the idea of 'superman' that superman would be a person far superior in intellect than common people. Superman will be a person who would have realized the truth that there is no truth in the world. He will revolt against the existing norms and values of society and religion hence coming into the age of 'childhood' as he would lack the standard of morality. Then, by driving intellect, he will produce his own ethics and morality.

Dan Brown says that humanity needs a person who possesses power and zeal for changing the old-fashioned thoughts into the glimmering notions of modernity and technology which can make people live a better life. He feels the necessity of a superman who can take drastic measures against the conservative notions of Christianity. If humanity is not properly driven by the supermen, they will be more dangerous than a plague. Their existence will in itself become an evil. "Mankind, if unchecked, functions like a plague, a cancer." (p. 144)

Dan Brown suggests that it is the time that Christian people should take action and overthrow the crazy notions of Christianity that goes against rationality and reality because it prevents them from the sweets of life. There must be a person who can take bold action because if they do not take action, then the future will not forgive them. Dan Brown says that if religion (Christianity) worsens a social issue and rationality can solve it, then religion must be sacrificed. "*It is imperative that someone take bold action*, he had declared, his green eyes flashing. *If not us, who? If not now, when?*" (p. 162)

Dan Brown tells us from the mouth of superman of the novel Bertrand Zubrist, that he is the defender of the world from the notions of God which restrict Christians from the enlightenment. He tries to assure the people that what he has done (denouncing Christian God) is the hope that can secure the upcoming generations. Brown goes against the religious teachings because he thinks that religion does not go along with sciences and philosophy. He thinks that if people adhered to the teachings of religions, they will not go further in discoveries and inventions. Zubrist calls himself the 'Shade' which refers to the 'madman' of Nietzsche. Similarly, it also suggests that Dan Brown is conveying the philosophy of Nietzsche who is real being while Zubrist plays the role of his shade.

"And so boldly I have taken action. Some will recoil in horror, but all salvation comes at price. One day the world will grasp the beauty of my sacrifice. For I am your salvation. I am the Shade. I am the gateway to the Posthuman age." (p. 145) Dan brown quotes Dante Alighieri and promulgates the notion that those people are worth-punishing who keeps neutrality in such a time when history demands their actions. It refers to the people who do not take action because the action may seem contradictory to their dogmas. He thinks that this nature of human being will deteriorate the life of future generations. "The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in the times of moral crisis." (p. 163)

Dan Brown calls it a 'sin' if human beings do not try to secure themselves by the help of their rationality. He thinks that if human beings maintained those religious teachings which prevent them from moving ahead in discoveries and knowing things, then humanity will pay the



price of this ignorance. He claims that his idea will produce horror in those who are staunchly devoted but salvation always comes at a price.

“To do nothing is to welcome Dante’s hell . . . cramped and starving, weltering in Sin. And so boldly I have taken action. Some will recoil in horror, but all salvation comes at a price. One day the world will grasp the beauty of my sacrifice.” (p. 346)

Zubrist thought that the common people do not know how terrific is the future but he can glimpse the horrors of future caused by the inaction of these ignorant souls. He mourns over those who do not appreciate the ideas of superman because he is unique and peculiar. When Zubrist is chased by security forces, he thinks with himself “They do not understand what is coming . . . nor what I have done for them! *Ungrateful land!*” (p.5)

Zubrist calls the people that they should know that Zubrist was the person who gave them freedom from the fear of hell. He thinks of himself as the salvation of mankind because he closed the yawning gates of hell forever. Dan Brown shows that the declaration of death of God from Nietzsche has influenced the western society and it is still attracting people.

“Mankind should know the source of his own salvation . . . the name of he who sealed the yawning gates of hell forever! With each passing hour, the outcome grows more certain. Mathematics as relentless as the law of gravity –is nonnegotiable.” (p. 283)

Zubrist insists upon the idea that he should play his role in the present to secure the future. In the video he left to be uploaded, Zubrist talks about the glorious performance he has played by crippling down the idea that only God can save us and applauds the role of those who backed him up in the mission. He calls those people ‘real faithful’ as Zarathustra once claimed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “there is but one God! Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (as cited in Durant, 1961). Similarly, he calls those who believe in God as ‘ignorant beings’ for they know not the consequences of their ignorance.

“The beaked-nosed shadow continued speaking for several minutes, talking of plagues, of population’s need for purging, of his own glorious role in the future, of his battle against the ignorant souls who had been trying to stop him, and of the faithful few who realized that drastic action was the only way to save the planet.” (p.282)

Bertrand Zubrist was a person with extraordinary skills in the field of virology. His one step in wrong direction can lead humanity to an apocalyptic nightmare. He was in reality a ‘superman’. “Bertrand was a genetic engineer of exceptional skill and vision. He was years ahead of his peers.” (p. 451)

CONCLUSION

The death of God and the disappearance of divine morality is the central finding of this thesis, which Brown has widely discussed in *Inferno*. Brown has insisted that humanity must take the spur of history and should develop themselves to the positions of old ditties. This research found how Dan Brown feels the necessity of a superman in the world who can transform the whole world for its betterment through the generation of moral principles. It showed the fragility of history, when world needs a man with his own moral value, rejecting previous norms for the sake of human security, because super man should be far advance than his peers. The study explored that *Inferno* also conveys the idea that human beings functions like intoxicated animals in the dresses of religions as religions enable them forget about the horrors of life and embark them on the journey of hope. Moreover, it also showed how, according to Dan Brown, people seek shelter under the umbrella of religion from the horrific hails of worldly miseries.

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