

THE MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS AS REFLECTED ON DAN BROWN'S INFERNO

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ABSTRACT

Moral philosophical is central to philosophy study as most issues have been discussed in the philosophy that related to morality. People who are not familiar with the other philosophical belief would think that the other party's belief is wrong while they hold the truth. This issue can be found in any social problem and has been reflected in one of literature work. A literature product is the closest portrait which reflects society's real situation and cultural background, including moral and ethnicity; one example of the products is Dan Brown's Inferno. In the novel, Brown portrays that there are two sides to the philosophical belief of the truth, which exist in a society. Two main characters reflect the two different beliefs of truths; Bertrand Zobrist versus Dr. Langdon and society. This article uses intentionality theory, which is proposed by Husserl to do moral philosophical analysis critically in order to examine how two sides of philosophical views are believed by two types of parties, society, and Zobrist. To support the analysis, the writer uses philosophy of mind as the primary theory to analyze the moral perspective. The result shows that Zobrist has his own belief that killing half of the human population by bombing them is the right thing to do to save the world. His belief has been built as he is conveyed by Inferno, one of Dante's great work. Meanwhile, Dr. Langdon and society think that Zobrist's belief is wrong; his action and plan to kill people is inhuman.

Keywords: *Inferno, moral-philosophical, philosophy of mind, intentionality theory.*

INTRODUCTION

Inferno is one of Dan Brown's literature works, which is released after other famous masterpieces of his including *The Lost Symbol*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *Angels and Demons*. The novel tells about two characters with a different philosophical belief, which are reflected as Robert Langdon, a Harvard Professor of symbology, and Bertrand Zobrist, a proponent of the population apocalypse equation. Those characters claim that their moral philosophical value is what is right to belief. They own philosophical belief to decide which one is the truth and which is false. This dualism is analyzed by using the philosophy of mind as the leading theory. To analyze the novel, the writer uses intentionality theory. It is used because

the discussion of this analysis tends to be about consciousness, mentality, and mind, furthermore the theory is explicitly describing the consciousness (Mazijk, 2017).

However, as people have grown various social groups in the world, each of them owns their philosophical viewpoint, along with their philosophical belief, on value, consciousness, causality, justice, or freedom. It shows that people have standing belief, desire, and state and those that drive their actions and moral value (Hansson & Unit, 2003). Because of that case, the way people see which one is the truth has become bias as they potentially have a different cultural background. This way, people would think that other people's philosophical belief is wrong as it is different from theirs while none of them are probably wrong and vice versa. The wrongness and righteous might be different from one society and other societies, or one individual to another. Every viewpoint has its reason to make it right and wrong because each society could place judgment on what is right or wrong (Chowdhury, 2016). This novel reminded people that the difference of viewpoint to see what is right and what is wrong does exist.

In the *Inferno*, Dan Brown portrays that there are two sides to the philosophical belief of the truth, which exist in a society. This paper aims to distinguish people or group of people who have their own philosophical belief of truth can reflect their morality. Thus, the focus of these analyses is the main characters' philosophical belief and how it affects their moral value shared by *Zobrist* and *Langdon*; and people who support him.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the moral-philosophical, which reflects on one of the literary works, entitled *Inferno*, which is written by Dan Brown. Literature is a medium which portrays and convey someone's ideas, feelings, or arguments about his/her society's norms and is called as the author (Bermudez, 2006). By sending out his or her thought in a book, a writer communicates with the readers to make them understand the message within it. *Inferno* is not an exception. Dan Brown states his idea of moral philosophical value in the society. He let the readers notice how the philosophical belief affects their morality and how people have different philosophical beliefs to see which is right and which is wrong.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This analysis uses the Philosophy in Mind as the primary theory because it relates to the right or wrong depending on someone's philosophical value. The Intentionality theory is also used as the framework of this article.

The Philosophy of Mind Theory

In the philosophical study, the philosophy in mind is an approach to do research which mainly relates to philosophical belief in seeing truth and false. This belief will affect the moral value and how someone acts.

This belief will affect the moral value and how someone acts. Some philosophers thought that it is essential to imply the philosophy of mind, which include the implication of mental idea which could not be described in the same term as happen in the physical phenomena.

The Intentionality Theory

Intentionality is a particular aspect that discusses mental acts and their processes. Mental act itself own two aspects, including intention and consciousness, which state to *what is about* and *what is directed at* (Kriegel, 2003).

This theory had been brought by two internationalists named Brentano and Husserl. Brentano had published his book *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* in 1874, which talked about the nature of intentionality theory. He explicated the psychical and physical phenomena by proposed different distinctions. The psychical phenomena itself was called as intentional existence of an object. However, he claimed that the object does not have to be a real object, something which can be touched. Furthermore, according to Brentano, Intentionality is about the relation between intentional action and immanent objects (Jacquette, 2016).

Later, this theory was reintroduced to the philosophy field by Husserl as he shared *ideas* in 1913 and *Logical Investigations* in 1901 – 1902. From his research, Husserl made his theory from Brentano's concept of intentionality in his *Logical Investigations*. Unlike Brentano, who observes the psychical and physical phenomenon, Husserl stated that consciousness composed of some intentional phenomenon or action. Hence, he also creates the distinctions between the two. He divided it into two distinctions; what is it about (*Noema*) and the meaning of an

action (*meinen*). Noema is not included into part of an action, but it is an idea, or something abstract, which contains entity of meaning (McIntyre, 1982).

Besides Brentano and Husserl, intentionality theory also had been discussed by Bentham in his *work*. According to Bentham, the intention will cover two kinds of objects; its activities and its consequences, both regards to an intention (Bentham, 2000).

As the distinction in intentionality theory has some variations based on the philosopher who proposed it, this paper will only focus on two distinctions proposed by Husserl, which include Noema and Meinen.

This analysis used a literature-based study, which is the branch of research design of qualitative design. It allows the researcher to analyze the moral-philosophical value, which is shown in *Inferno*, as a literature object of the study, then describe it as the finding of this analysis.

The Moral Values

Moral value must relate to someone's personality and behavior. Moral can be seen as the customs which guide the action that someone has made with sense. Value can be desirable for other people who have the same moral value; however, it can be undesirable for people who have different moral values. The moral value which has been set in people's minds is the criteria of any assessment of all response or action that someone makes. The moral value which is own by someone will be shown and acknowledge by how they react to any circumstances. There are some implementations and types of moral values itself, including someone's bravery degree, humbleness, politeness, honesty, sympathy and empathy, responsibility, sincerity, trustworthiness, and more.

Philosophical Belief

Philosophical belief is the basis that is chosen by someone to see what is right and what is wrong. It will have an impact on someone's moral value. The philosophical belief can be right or can be wrong; it depends on which side of philosophical belief is chosen because both sides have different reasons for their right and wrong decision.

As the society has grown into different cultures, the philosophical belief from one person or group of people might be different from other parties. It is usually formed and determined by the standard measure of one society as the morals

and ethics from one society are different from others. Their standard to decide the wrongness and righteous are accepted by the community. However, as people can have access to technology, especially gadgets and internet, people are easier to access to learn, meet people, and influenced by other societies that have a different cultural background. An individual can also have his/her own philosophical belief even if it might be different within the society he/she lives in and will be confronted (Bell, 2011).

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Collection

As it is a literature study, the writer used *Inferno* as the object to obtain the data of the analyses. In collecting the data, the researcher took the following steps to collect the data:

- 1) Reading and learning *Inferno* as the object of the study
- 2) Identify the data related to the study
- 3) Classifying the obtained data
- 4) Selecting the relevant ones
- 5) Describing the relevant data in the finding and discussion section of this analyzes

Analyzing Data Technique

The technique to analyze the data was to find and arrange the obtained data in a systematic way. It was done by organizing the data into categories, then describing it before concluding. Having collected the data, the writer analyses the moral-philosophical value by using philosophy of mind approach and under the intentionality theory. These are steps of data analysis technique for this research:

- 1) Collecting relevant references to analyze the novel and moral philosophical value
- 2) Obtaining the conversation and narration, which are done by two main characters who have two opposite philosophical beliefs; Dr. Langdon and Zobrist.
- 3) Extracting the moral values and philosophical belief implied by the obtained conversation and narration.
- 4) Concluding the data analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Moral Philosophical Belief Portrays in *Inferno*

This article aims to analyze the moral-philosophical belief portrays in the novel *Inferno*. The writer would like to explain the moral-philosophical belief in the novel by using intentionality theory and under philosophy of mind approach. Husserl proposed intentionality theory. He stated that consciousness contains either intentional actions or experiences as they are related. This theory uses two distinctions, *Noema* and *Meinen*. Something which is what *is it about*, which is called the *Noema* or horizons of possibilities (Ellemers et al., 2019). The other distinction is a mental item, which is reflected by the meaning of an action that is called *Meinen*. In short, *Noema* relates to the significance of a word produced by the characters in the novel, and *meinen* relates to the sense of propositional meaning. Thus, the intentionality theory includes two distinctions which could be found in the novel, namely *Noema* and *Meine*

1. *Noema*

The *Noema* is the kind of distinction which portray as the word or sentence, which is stated by someone. From *Inferno*, the writer has found this distinction from either Langdon or Zobrist or supported by other characters. At the beginning of the story, there is a controversial plot that haunts Dr. Elizabeth Sinskey as WHO staff as Zobrist appears in the novel, mentioning that he has done the right thing to release a virus. He aims to kill a large number of people by using plague or virus to solve the overpopulation problem.

“And yet still there are those who hunt me like a dog, fueled by the self-righteous belief that I am a madman. There is the silver-haired beauty who dares call me monster! Like the blind clerics who lobbied for the death of Copernicus, she scorns me as a demon, terrified that I have glimpsed the truth.” (P. 43)

That is the philosophical belief that pushes him to do the right thing even though it is seen as a devilish action to other people. He adapts his philosophical belief from Dante Alighieri's literature work, whom he adores so much.

*“Shaking, Elizabeth unfolded the paper and read the handwritten note. It was a famous quote derived from the work of Dante Alighieri
The darkest places in hell*

*are reserved for those
who maintain their neutrality
in times of moral crisis” (p. 137)*

Those quotes are used to show that Zobrist's philosophical belief is the right one. He thinks that Elizabeth, along with her WHO staff, is the devil ones in that case because Elizabeth notices that overpopulation is happening in the world. However, she does not do anything to solve it. Thus, Zobrist sees that he is the savior of the world as he kills few to save the many. It is shown in the novel where Zobrist appears as a black or shadow image.

*“Inferno.
Soon you will know what I have left behind.
And yet, even here, I sense the footfalls of the ignorant souls who
pursue me ... willing to stop at nothing to thwart my actions.
Forgive them, you might say, for they know not what they do. But
there comes a moment in history when ignorance is no longer a
forgivable offense
With purity of conscience, I have bequeathed to you all the gift of
hope, of salvation of tomorrow...” (P. 43)*

Zobrist claims himself as salvation in that novel, and it is shown how he addresses himself in this case. That he addresses himself as the hero, he has a fundamental philosophical belief that killing a massive amount of people will save the rest of the world. Now, people might have a different viewpoint as his, but when he died, he believes the world will thank him. His statement, "*Soon you will know what I have left behind,*" is the clue that Zobrist involves his conscious mental state. He was intentional about his idea, and it raised the desire to make sure his plan went well.

*“And yet still there are those who hunt me like a dog fueled by the
self-righteous belief that I am a madman. There is the silver-haired
beauty who dares call me monster! Like the blind clerics who
lobbied for the death of Copernicus, she scorns me as a demon,
terrified that I have glimpsed the Truth” (P. 43)*

It was the continuation of the previous Zobrist's line above. The line shows that Zobrist stands for his philosophical belief. It is different from how Elizabeth saw Zobrist as the devil one because Elizabeth is the character who works for the WHO, an organization that helps people all over the world keep their health and awareness of various viruses and illnesses. Zobrist against WHO because it

is an institutional entity and has the power to defeat his plan potentially. As WHO is a big institution and organization, it can be called as *deontic powers* which handle duties and rights and has desire reason for a particular action (Guarnieri, 2019).

From those expressions above, readers will realize what Zobrist said is the representation of his moral value and philosophical belief. According to him, what he thought and belief are not false even though his intention and belief are different from the society around him. Hence, his idea associates with his intention (Dewalque, 2013).

In this situation, true or false can be seen in different ways. It depends on the philosophical belief of someone, and his/her moral value can be reflected in how they state their opinion, although they know that their opinions might be entirely against other people.

2. Meinen

On the contrary of Noema, Meinen is reflected and can be seen in a meaning of action which is done by someone. The writer has found this distinction from some narrations or phrases in the novel.

"Essentially, it's a mathematical recognition that the earth's population is rising, people are living longer, and our natural resources are waning. The equation predicts that the current trend can have no outcome other than the apocalyptic collapse of society. Zobrist has publicly predicted that the human race will not survive another century ... unless we have some kind of mass extinction event." Sienna sighed heavily and locked eyes with Langdon. "In fact, Zobrist was once quoted as saying that the best thing that ever happened to Europe was the black death" (p. 148)

Sienna Miller is the second main character, which helps Langdon to figure out the problem. It shows that Sienna has figured out what is the intention of Zobrist's action to kill a mass amount of people to make the apocalyptic collapse of society. It turns out that Zobrist thinks that the earth has held the human race for too long, and it is not good. His philosophical belief has driven and affected his judgment of which is right and which is wrong.

Furthermore, from that statement, it can be said that Zobrist consciously has assumed that he raises his beliefs and actions to eliminate mass amount of

people. He confronts his idea as he is aware of having visual experience about the condition of the earth, the increasing of the human population, or prediction on the human race's survival (Baressi, 2007). Hence, he thinks his idea is a good death because he will save the future generation and earth.

Furthermore, Zobrist's action has driven the story more than his narration or conversation, which are shown in the novel. If it is not because of Zobrist's virus to eliminate the mass number of people, Dr. Elizabeth Sinskey, WHO staff, would not ask help from Langdon and Sienna would not be involved in the story. Before Zobrist commits suicide by jumping off from the Badia tower, he has met the provost to ask them to deliver the safe – deposit box to Vayentha. It was his 'present' to the world.

“INFERNO

Midway upon the journey of our life

I found myself within a forest dark,

for the straightforward pathway had been lost.

On the opposing page, his client had signed the book with a handwritten message:

My dear friend, thank you for helping me find the path.

The world thanks you, too”

(p. 69)

It shows Zobrist action that he will not do it by himself and wants the provost to send it to Vayentha, to Elizabeth to be exact. As he has stated in the video that once the video is released, he would be dead already. He wants to be seen as the one who truly wants to save the world and leaving the goods for people by saving the earth from the overpopulation problem. Zobrist has a firm intention of his action. His action will end and against social conformism which means killing people is considered as sin and inhuman whatever the intention is; this is in line with Rowlands (Rowlands, 2015) that society constructs rules. People need to obey it even though they do not understand the rule yet; it makes people tend to judge each other as they are obeying or against the current norm and rules.

It is shown in the following sentences:

“I am the shade.

If you are watching this, then it means my soul is finally at rest.

Driven underground, I must speak to the world from deep within the earth, exiled to

this gloomy cavern where the blood red waters collect in the lagoon that reflects no stars.” (p. 43)

He killed himself after he did what he thought he needed to do to save the world. His soul would see how he saved the world and finally rest in peace. He also mentioned the blood red waters as the representation or picture of how the viruses attack people and take their lives at the end of the story, which will be failed by Elizabeth, Langdon, and Miller.

Based on that statement, it can be seen that Zobrist, as an agent, does action and arises the desire to create and produce the outcome (Pellizzoni et al., 2010). It shows intense action to attack the society and other main characters in the novel, including Sienna Miller, Langdon, and others, whoever that has different philosophical belief.

Zobrist's opponents, on the other hand, are trying to figure out his action in order to fail his mission. It happens because they have different philosophical beliefs about what is right and what is wrong. Those two sides of them have accused that the opponent's philosophical belief and moral values are wrong.

Zobrist thought that killing a few will be a better solution to save the world. As he knows that his opinion will prevail against all people, he decided to act more. He prepared the virus to be spread to kill a massive amount of people, then killing himself. Meanwhile, Langdon and teams are working hard to make Zobrist's plan is impossible to have happened. Although, in his viewpoint, Zobrist belief that his action and what he thinks is right made him think he will be a savior and his opponent devil, there are other people that he is the wrong one. Sinskey, Langdon, and Miller also think that Zobrist is evil, and their struggle to fail Zobrist's plan is something useful to do. That is what happens between transhumanists and WHO staff and people who think killing people is evil action as they value lives, and that is how they are taught about humanity because the social judgments exist and have been set up from social interaction (Malle & Knobe, 1997).

Through one of Dan Brown novel's *Inferno*, this article discovered some phenomenon of intentional and how the characters' mentality supports their intention and further action. This phenomenon has been discussed in many

scientific discussions. Varga (2015) explained everything related to intentionality or someone's intention is understood as 'aboutness'; as in this case, the story leaves readers wondering about asking, "what is Zobrist's plan about? Moreover, ask anything relate to his action which against humanity rule.

Although it is a fiction novel, it does not mean it does not exist in reality. Indeed, the novel has blurred the lines between reality and fiction as its author incorporates the real organization and some events within the storyline. Although it is fiction, there is some hidden truth that inspires the story. The world seems that it is shocked by a couple of hazardous viruses that threaten humankind's existence every few years. Those include Ebola, Bird Flu, MARV, Zika, the list goes on. Those threatening lists remain a threat to humankind's safety, and they may have nothing relate to Brown's *Inferno*, but the novel does depict the real phenomenon. That is why any fantasy fiction, including a novel, is made as the artist was at some point relate to reality, so does *Inferno* (Roslan et al., 2016).

This article has strengthened the structure of intentionality, which consists of an idea that formed from a particular intentional stage. For instance, memory or perception either Zobrist or Langdon and WHO staff has their memory and perception on how to save the world, although they have different perspectives to see which one is right or wrong (Duppen, 2018). Thus, it can be concluded that the intention in intentionality theory has a significant influence on philosophical studies as it relates to people's actions and moral choices before doing, knowing, or believing something. Hence, their perspective toward right or wrong might be different because sometimes people are doing something consciously, but unconsciously, they act poorly without even realizing it (Cole, 2014).

CONCLUSION

From the results and discussion above, it can be said that what is right and what is wrong can be justified from one side because both sides will have their opinion to stick on their philosophical beliefs about what is wrong and what is right. Zobrist's action and decision to kill a massive number of humans has his reason as he is affected by Dante's *Inferno*. It is mentioned that there is a way to eliminate

people and send them to the core of the earth, which is the Inferno or hell. Zobrist thought that the earth is too old to hold the number of overpopulations, and he has to do something.

Meanwhile, his characters' opponent which are dr. Langdon, Sienna Miller, and the other characters who help him also have their reasonable philosophical beliefs. They thought that it is wrong to kill massive of innocent people. Killing is a terrible thing, no matter the reason is. Hence, they tried to fail Zobrist's idea to do massive human elimination by distributing the virus and send them to hell. Both sides of understanding which one is wrong and which one is right will make the readers to be more aware and understanding other people's opinions because they might have a different reason which might be the right one too.

From the findings and discussion in this article, the writer acknowledges that the matter of truth that everyone has might be different from other people; hence, they will not agree with us or other people's beliefs. It is fine to have a different belief as we cannot please all people. Zobrist's character has reminded the readers to not afraid to be different and judged. However, it does not mean that Zobrist's action is good for us. His way to stand to his philosophy belief and show the actual moral value are the thing to be admired. Everyone's viewpoint of wrongness and righteous might be different and matters.

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