



A MARXIST STUDY OF DAN BROWN'S *INFERNO*

Mustafa Amjed Jasim Al-Hameedawi,

Sajjad Issa Ajlan Al-Moussawiⁱ

Department of English,

College of Languages,

University of Kufa,

Iraq

Abstract:

The research paper analyses Dan Brown's novel *Inferno* and its portrayal of Marxism. In this context, the plot of the novel, along with the events, characters and organizations are examined. The study also emphasizes how the novel depicts the shadowy power structures that govern societies, such as the Catholic Church or the enigmatic Illuminati organization, which is portrayed through different types of faces or organizations while remaining the same. They also operate in the background, attempting to manipulate events and people in order to preserve their own selfish power and wealth. The research paper also focuses on how Sienna Brooks' character highlights the flaws in the capitalist system, where only the wealthy class has access to technology, further dividing society. The concept of hidden power is also discussed, and it is demonstrated how the novel reflects Marxist theory about the power of the ruling class. Eventually, the research paper delves deeply into Marxism's theoretical and ideological aspects, as well as how they relate to issues of class struggle, moral standards, belief systems, and economic states in modern society. Ending the research with a conclusion that discusses how the novel raises important points about the potential consequences of failing to address the issue of overpopulation, such as the possibility of a global catastrophe caused by resource depletion and disease spread.

Keywords: Marxism, capitalism, overpopulation, class conflict, *Inferno*

1. Introduction

"To say that nothing is true, is to realize that the foundations of society are fragile and that we must be shepherds of our own civilization. To say that everything is permitted is to understand that we are the architects of our actions and that we must live their consequences, whether glorious or tragic." (Sabbah H.)

ⁱ Correspondence: email mustafaa.alhameedawi@uokufa.edu.iq, elijahvolkov2@gmail.com

Ever wondered why our world is in a constant state of destruction, global wars, economic collapse, world hunger, and the misconception of overpopulation solutions? A debatable answer to a question like that could be wrapped and summarized in one word. Impossible it may seem at first; yet, great and legendary philosophers like Aristotle and Plato managed to wrap their entire philosophies and condensed their notions in one short simple sentence. One single sentence can explain the entire philosophy that has been worked on for years and years. And still, it seems impossible, as it requires enormous knowledge in language and history in order for someone who could be an intellectual to simply summarize all of that in one sentence, or in my case, one word. Nevertheless, *Inferno*, is the one-word answer to that question. But, insufficient it is without content at first, meaningless perhaps. And thus, this research paper comes in place in order to explain, analyse and construct the philosophical basis for that word from a different perspective, so it could weave a solid grip of its meaning and its own concept in relation to the final answer as a reliable term.

What is inferno, where did it come from, and what does it mean? Inferno in a sense is known as Hell, or at least that is what the word means. Where it came from is Italy; from Italian, *inferno*, and from Latin, *infernus*, *inferna* ("which basically means the lower regions"). The further you dwell within the philosophical meaning of that word—in relation to the topic at hand of this research paper—the more you will cohesively correlate the points in which why it answers that question. And in order to clarify and draw an image for how it answers that question, this research paper will tackle every angle and critical view of the topic.

Capitalism has been a social and ideological disease in our world for many years. And Brown's *Inferno* tries to demonstrate this fact to us, a fact that perhaps most critics would overlook. "Those who maintain their neutrality during moral crises are saved for the deepest pits of hell" (Dante. Canto 3: 34:42). This quotation demonstrates to us in a very clear way how that disease had ravaged our world for so long that societies had unwittingly adopted inferno into their way of life. As a result, they created Hell as a reserve for themselves, creating sheep-like communities that were uncaring and uninterested in the truth. Whether they were told to turn left or right, they would do so mindlessly and without realizing the virus they were spreading.

Marxism originated from the works of the 19th-century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The theory seeks the purpose of explaining the social phenomena within any given society by analysing the material conditions in order to fulfil the needs of human material needs regardless of time. This research will be focusing on the use of that framework's theoretical approach as the basis, along with an ideological and a psychological aspect in which they will support the argument of this paper in terms of addressing the issues and solutions for that matter.

This research paper will tackle the issues in which class struggle has been causing throughout the past and recent decades where it had affected societies and their moral standards, belief systems, and their economic state in modern times through the lenses and analysis, which is drawn off from Dan Brown's *Inferno*. The novel itself carries a

critical fact and story in which it could be interpreted, analysed and studied in such perspective to formalise an argument for a governmental solution to capitalism.

This research paper is divided into five sections, section one is an introduction in which the discussion of the research's main goal of Dan Brown's *Inferno* will be explained. Section two will be focused on the biography of the author, Dan Brown. Section three will be approaching the theoretical framework: Marxism, and explain it. Section four will tackle the approach of the Marxist theory over Brown's *Inferno*. And finally, section five will be a conclusion of the research.

1.1 Dan Brown's Biography

The American author and writer, Daniel Gerhard Brown (Born 1964), who is also known as Dan Brown, had a strange yet fascinating career when he began writing after moving from the music-focused industry; which was his first attempt to succeed before it failed and drove him into writing his successful novels. Dan Brown is the author of numerous number-one bestselling novels, including *The DaVinci Code* (2003), *Inferno* (2013), and *Origin* (2017). His novels, which all have become one of the bestselling novels of all time in the world, for both intellectual debaters and readers as well as scholars all over the world (Britannica, 2022).

Brown, the son of a mathematics teacher and a church organist, grew up on a prep-school campus, where he became fascinated by the paradoxical interplay of science, socialism, and religion. These themes eventually became the foundation for the writing of his books. Brown's intriguing interest in puzzle concepts and code-breaking obsession led him to begin his writings with a few, if not many, novels based on that enticing yet mysterious aspect. The ambiguity of his interest in these symbolic-themes stems from his early life, specifically the influence he had from within his household, where codes and ciphers were the universal tie or link of his parents' work; mathematics, music, and languages were among them. As a result, we see many of those characteristics implied in some, if not the majority, of the characters in his novels. Some would question Dan Brown's religious view and political affiliations, but really there isn't any. Perhaps in a sense, Dan Brown might be a Marxist due to how he portrays societies and world-leading communities in his novels, and the way he builds his characters' belief systems. However, in some interviews, Brown spoke about his past life and his private life in terms of belief:

I was raised Episcopalian, and I was very religious as a kid. Then, in eighth or ninth grade, I studied astronomy, cosmology, and the origins of the universe. I remember saying to a minister, 'I don't get it, I read a book that said there was an explosion known as the Big Bang, but here it says God created heaven and Earth and the animals in seven days. Which is right?' Unfortunately, the response I got was, 'Nice boys don't ask that question.' A light went off, and I said, 'The Bible doesn't make sense to me.' And I just gravitated away from religion. Says Dan Brown (Kaplan, J.)

And thus, we can witness some facts about the author and his belief when it comes to religion, and whether it influences his writing or not. Brown also said:

"There are enormous parts of the human experience and science that make no logical sense, no rational sense, and certainly imply that something else is going on. I would not be surprised to find that he's a white male with a long beard who had a son named Jesus. The religions of the world have come up with some pretty interesting tales about where we came from and why we're here. I don't think any of them are true, but I'm open." (Smith, D.)

Despite all of those interviews and statements that he talked about, there is no doubt of religion's affect in the minds of some societies managed to project the artwork-science within the mind of Brown. Which therefore, it influenced his thoughts in terms of writing; causing him to weave those thoughts in a creative manner within his characters and plots.

But there is still the question of: if Brown doesn't believe in religion, God, or even hell. Then, why does he write about Hell? As in Dante's *Hell*, *Inferno*. Now, this is probably the most interesting part for he actually is not interested in the literal meaning of hell, but rather its concept in a sense in which we as humans are most likely living in our daily lives. It could be that humanity is going through moral-crisis, identity-crisis and social-crisis. They all are portrayed as a living-hell. Although Brown's interest in Dante wasn't a coincidence. While researching for his novel, named after and inspired by the classic 14th-century poem *Inferno* by Dante, best-selling author Dan Brown lost his way into the mazes of Florence's streets and waddled into Dante's church in Italy, only for him to find his way asking for some inspiration that could help him writing the book.

Rumours has it that Dante Alighieri's lover, Beatrice, is buried at the small church in Santa Margherita, and it's the tradition for people to leave letters at her tomb seeking help with love, or perhaps other things as well. And so did Brown followed along, writing a note to leave by her tomb asking for assistance in completing his new book. And what might seem a little bit surprising is that the note was a quote from Homer, the ancient Greek poet.

"It's a petition, in the same way, that Homer was saying, 'Listen, I've got to write 'The Odyssey'." Brown said. "Sing in me, muse, and help me tell this story.' I wrote a very similar note and put it in there, and a year and a half later, I had a novel. So, who knows? Maybe it's magic." (Stump, S.)

At the end of the day, Brown is the man who can take you by hand and cruise you across the globe with his style of writing and storytelling skills, he is the man who can fascinate you with his intense and deep knowledge about the subjects of each of his novels. You start reading his work due to his outstanding popularity and then he just captivates your mind with his plot and style of narration, which you could rarely find in other works by other authors during his time. One simple way to put it, Dan Brown, he's just the best in his field. And anyone who is obsessed with novel reading, can become his fan in no time.

1.3 Theoretical Framework: Marxism

The social, political, and economic doctrine as well as the well-known theoretical philosophy known as Marxism was inspired by the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx. He examines how capitalism had historically affected labour, productivity, and economic growth in his books. He contends that in order to replace capitalism with a communist economy, a worker revolution is necessary. The struggle between the capitalists and the proletariat is what determines economic relations in a capitalist system and ultimately results in a communist revolution, according to Marxism, which some people are unaware of.

Marxism is a political and social theory that also embraces the theory of class conflict and Marxian economics. *The Communist Manifesto*, written by both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was the first publication to explicitly state Marxism. It lays out the entire idea of class conflict and revolution. Marx's criticism of capitalism, which he outlined in his 1867 book *Das Kapital* is at the centre of Marxism philosophy and its economic analysis. Marxism typically argues that capitalism is essentially defective and doomed to failure as an economic and social reproduction system, which clearly throughout time and up to our current time is serving nothing but social destruction in a daily basis.

Readers may ponder and wonder what is Capitalism and why is it dangerous for the growth of a healthy modern society? According to the definition, capitalism is a system of production where business owners, or capitalists (elites), own all means of productions of a certain region—or the world— (such as the factories, the tools and machineries, the raw materials, the final products they make, and the profits earned from their sales in general, or even the currencies themselves as a whole). Now workers (labours) are employed for compensations; however, they do not own any property or receive any of the profits of their fruition. And thus, you have a large part of working society taken advantage of—just like slaves—, and this is why the system is purely enslaving the population unconsciously, hence destroying its healthy growth.

Marxism as a theory wouldn't have survived long enough without its disciples, and for that, in order to further more comprehend the theory as a whole; one should learn about the very famous Marxists' who have put as much effort into the theory as Marx himself. There are a few mentioned important approaches by some very popular Marxists that could help in portraying the issues of society, the implication of this theory in particular and its variants:

The concept of false consciousness, which contends that the majority of people are either not aware of or are wilfully neglecting their capacity for self-emancipation from oppression and inequality, is among the fundamental tenets of Marxism. It also, more comprehensively, refers to the theory that proletariat members unconsciously misjudge their genuine social position and routinely fail to understand their primary concerns within the social dynamics of labour under capitalism. The most prevalent manifestations of this concept can be seen in Marxist upheavals and literary criticism. False consciousness is the term used to describe people's inability to acknowledge injustice, tyranny, and the act of enslavement in a capitalist society as a result of the ideologies that

normalize these issues, and therefore they justify the existence of many social classes in that society being so dominant.

Despite its close association with his philosophy, Karl Marx never used the phrase "*false consciousness*." In his book *History and Class Consciousness*, from 1923, the Hungarian philosopher and literary critic György Lukács introduced and coined the concept of false consciousness as a theoretical construct. The concept was developed further in the 20th century by Marxist academics like French-born French sociologist Henri Lefebvre and American philosopher Herbert Marcuse, both of German descent. Since the late twentieth century, studies of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race and the alleged gender-based oppression have used the idea without explicitly adopting Marxist theory as its foundation. There are many other concepts to take into account including those of Hegel, Althusser, Gramsci and Marx.

Secondly; we have the concept of hegemony which refers to a group's dominance over another that is frequently justified by accepted standards and viewpoints. Hegemony is a term that is frequently used in recent times to refer to a particular collection of ideas that has a disproportionate amount of influence and a propensity to become intuitive and sensible, obstructing the spread or even the expression of other ideas.

It had only been used sporadically in political analysis prior to Italian politician and Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's discussion of hegemony grew out of his on-going attempts to understand how well the capitalist state persisted in the most advanced Western countries. Gramsci worked to explain how specific institutional features and resource relations of production happened to come to rule. He identified capitalism as the mode of rule that predominated. It is possible to achieve a class's superiority and the successive fertility of the associated mode of production across monopoly force or physical force. Gramsci's main discovery, however, was that within advanced capitalist societies, a class rule was largely upheld by mutual consent—through moral and intellectual leadership. Thus, Gramsci's assessment of hegemony includes a study of the means by which these capitalist ideas are spread and taken for granted as normal and reasonable. A hegemonic class is able to win the approval of other external norms, and maintaining this approval is an on-going task. A group must comprehend its own best interest in regard to the method of production, in addition to the motivating factors, expectations, and concerns of other groups, in order to obtain this consent. Gramsci observed how the organizations of civil society relentlessly shaped the collective consciousness under capitalism. He also demonstrated how hegemony required the expression and dissemination of popular ideas beyond specific class interests through his notion of the national-popular.

Finally; Althusser's theory, this theory builds on Marx's idea, arguing that the capitalist system has created a reality which is similar to the "matrix" (from the movie: *The Matrix*), and that it is some sort of systematic-power that operates through ideological state apparatuses such as the family, education, and religion. This power works to maintain the status quo and ensure that the capitalist system continues to function. Althusser then argues that this power is internalized by individuals, creating a concept

of "*ideological interpellation*", and it is the process by which individuals are identified as members of a certain group or class. He believes that this process is what enables the ruling class to maintain its power and control over society in general: that further reinforces the dominant ideology. In this way, Althusser's theory and its concepts provide an explanation for how capitalism is able to reproduce itself without relying on force or coercion like a self-developing virus; or like an invisible parasite almost in full control of its host (society).

Althusser's two main concepts, in relation to his theory: ISA and RPS, they are integral in a way to his theory. ISA stands for "*ideological state apparatus*," which refers to the institutions of a society that serve to reproduce the dominant ideology. These institutions include the family, education, religion, media, and law. RPS stands for repressive state apparatus, which refers to the institutions of a society that serve to maintain social control through force or coercion. These include the police, military, and judiciary systems. Not to mention, Althusser argued that these two types of apparatuses work together in order to ensure the reproduction of dominant ideologies and maintain social control.

1.3.1 Theoretical Framework: Marxism and its Relevant Examples

Undoubtedly, one of the most important science fiction movies of the twenty-first century, *The Matrix* was released in 1999. The movie, which was produced by the Wachowski brothers and was one of the most well-known of its era, was written and directed by them. It is a prime candidate for a range of critical analyses due to its popularity and philosophical themes. Many first-time viewers are not aware of the film's incorporation of Marxist philosophy and worldview, despite the fact that *The Matrix* contains numerous significant philosophical references and thematic viewpoints. *The Matrix* has thus been identified as the ideal contemporary illustrative example of Marxism by various political research findings and inferences. Having said that, this example and a few others that will be discussed later are quite important to further understand a clear point of view of the current world, as well as the purpose of this paper; both are meant to be comprehensively illustrate the sociological and political issue at hand, which hopefully would help in spreading awareness about the current state of the world.

The Matrix obviously operates within a Marxist framework. The story opens with a society battling an adversarial, alien regime. The machines that run the Matrix keep humans as prisoners while drawing energy from them. This, in a sense, is a direct parallel to Marx's concept of alienation, in which humans are socially manipulated and brainwashed into becoming mere pawns of production in a capitalist society. Throughout the film, characters are given the option to either become slaves to the Matrix or reject the Matrix and fight for their freedom. This reflects Marx's concept of class conflict, in which those outside of the oppressive economic paradigm must act decisively to resist and deconstruct this inhumane system in order to free the world.

The frequent references to labour and work exhibits the Marxist ideas; such as the labour theory of value, which holds that labour, rather than money, creates wealth. The

AI, in the film, extracts vitality from humans. In some ways, this exemplifies that these people are cultivated by machines and utilized as a form of power and a source of sustenance for the upper class. And that this type power-play is reminiscent of Marxism in that it uses the underclass as a commodity to empower and enrich those in the upper classes.

Finally, *The Matrix* shows Marxist ideas about communism. In the film's climax, Neo uses his newly acquired ability to stop the fighting and bring peace. This resolution depicts a utopia in which everyone is cared for and accepted, which is reminiscent of Marx's ideas about a post-capitalist utopia.

Everyone has witnessed first-hand how the media can be subverted and employed to control the populace. Why wouldn't an oligarch use 0.1% of his wealth to exert media control and sway public opinion in his favour? It is no longer a conspiracy theory; instead, it has now been replaced by a widely accepted and distressing actuality, which has been corroborated on multiple occasions and is further exemplified by the experience of Andrew Tate Emory. Andrew Tate III, a prominent individual in the fight against the prevailing oppressive structure worldwide, is a British-American social media personality and entrepreneur who was unjustly and abruptly banned from all social media platforms. In light of the circumstances, it is difficult to conceive of any other explanation than that events are being orchestrated remotely by a malevolent force.

So, what do the ruling elites desire? The aspirations of the ruling class are directed towards the preservation of capitalism and their dominion over the population. The materialistic doctrines and adherence to political correctness serve as means to sustain capitalism, and both are overtly backed and approved by the establishment. In the words of Slavoj Žižek, an Eastern European philosopher, "*Political correctness is the most dangerous form of totalitarianism.*"

In his work, *Brave New World Revisited*, Aldous Huxley, an English writer and philosopher, postulated the concept of the Leviathan surveillance police state, which is depicted by the Matrix. Huxley highlighted the inadequacy of civil libertarians and rationalists in anticipating strategies to combat tyranny. He reasoned that their failure was due to their lack of recognition of humanity's insatiable craving for diversions. "*failed to account for man's almost infinite appetite for distractions.*" (Chapter 4. PP. 35-36). Huxley further predicted that individuals would be subjected to control by means of providing pleasure, as opposed to inflicting pain (Huxley, A.)

In addition, Huxley proclaimed that in due course, our affections would be the cause of our demise. He further envisioned that there would be no need for a ruler or tyrant to deprive us of our independence, wisdom, or past, as individuals would willingly embrace their subjugation and venerate the innovations that impair their cognitive abilities. Huxley's utmost apprehension was that veracity would be overwhelmed by a multitude of trivialities. As he once said: "*people would come to love their oppression and adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.*" The author's statements suggest that humanity's attraction to superficiality and surrendering to external influences could ultimately lead to its downfall (Hurvitz, J.).

Therefore, we can see that *The Matrix* refers to the entire system designed to keep humanity in blissful ignorance and slavery. And it could be remarked that during one of his interviews in a podcast Andrew Tate's explanation of the Matrix can also be referred to as the "*Liberal World Order*", or in other words as commonly known "*The New World Order*". *The Matrix* has a predetermined agenda, and it is ruled by ruling elites who, according to Andrew Tate, are even above the governments of all nations.

The concept of the Matrix, which stands in for capitalism's forces and the ruling elites, uses a variety of methods to control and subjugate the populace, including social engineering, programming, indoctrination, and mass brainwashing through the media and educational systems. According to Andrew Tate, the Matrix wants to weaken men's fortitude because they are the only ones who can challenge its power. It is crucial to remember that a system devoid of ethics, religion, and values will eventually come to an end. Unfortunately, it seems that the current system is moving in that direction.

Capitalism didn't stop at the extents of economy only, but rather extended further more into the sociological aspects of the society, interfering and modifying even their lifestyle and choices. From that, the concept of "NPC" (Non Player Character) has sprung in its other contextual meaning and gained popularity as a term used to describe individuals who have been unwittingly subjugated by the current system and have passively accepted it. Similar to a scene from *The Matrix* film, where an artificial world contained an extensive population of artificially created individuals (bots), these "NPCs" are products of a system that has indoctrinated them through various means such as education, mass media, entertainment, political correctness, and other channels. These individuals are living in a state of ignorant bliss, disconnected from reality, and are plugged into the matrix created by Capitalism. They exhibit a range of behaviors such as excessive use of social media, frequent Netflix usage, addiction to pornography, unsatisfactory personal relationships, dependence on antidepressants, drugs, and other forms of escapism, all of which are a result of the programming they have received from the system.

1.4 Brown's Inferno: A Marxist Approach

Before dwelling on the main point of this paper's part, we need to understand a few points about the characters in order to grasp a better comprehensive analysis of the novel's content and its relation to the framework's perspective. First of all, Robert Langdon is a completely fictitious central character in Dan Brown's works of fiction, which makes him unquestionably considered to be among the most popular fictional main characters of any and all times. Langdon has captivated readers all over the world, owing to his intellectual prowess, industriousness, and moral development throughout the series. Dan Brown has created a memorable and distinctive character in Robert Langdon, whom readers have come to adore and admire throughout the series of his endeavours in Brown's novels.

Being a Harvard University professor of religious and iconographical symbologies, his job regularly puts him in the middle of world-changing conspiracies. His knowledge of art history, religious traditions, and architectural style has enabled him

to recognize and resolve intricate puzzles and codes in Brown's novels. His willingness to explore enigmatic scandals distinguishes him as an extraordinary protagonist, and his dedication to the reality of things, regardless of the risk of his own well-being, it distinguishes him as well as a fascinating character.

Langdon's character has grown by leaps and bounds throughout the series, beginning as a shy academic with a love of puzzles and languages (quite the resemblance of the author's hobbies being implied within his character). He has grown more fearless and courageous as a result of his life experience in Dan Brown's novels, always prepared to take off across the world in order to safeguard those he loves and uncover malicious plots against humanity. This, in a sense, gives us the vibe of a role in which any individual would take in today's reality. Especially when it comes to exposing such a corrupted system, destabilised societies, etc..

Another character would be the villain, Bertrand Zobrist, who is portrayed to be the antagonist, is a rich and powerful scientist who appears to believe in overpopulation and advocates for extreme measures such as mass purification to manage the population of humans and further helps in putting a cruel end to it that goes against many beliefs, moral and social standards. This was showcased in his conversation with Dr. Sinskey. His voice turned eerily cajoling:

" I brought you here to work with me. 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 of 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 very soul of man." (Brown, 2013, CH.22, P.176-177)

This worldview is a direct condemnation of capitalism, emphasizing the inequalities caused by the wealthy class. By using the character of Sienna Brooks, who is the true hidden antagonist, Brown does, however, delve further into the Marxist theory. Sienna is a supporter of the trans-humanist movement, which aims to merge technology and biology in order to create a modern post-human species. This ideology depicts a future in which class distinctions and wealth disparity are repealed and everyone is treated equally. Sienna's character also highlights weaknesses in the capitalist system, where only the wealthy class has access to these technologies, which further leads to dividing society. Thus, it shows to us the sense of anti-capitalism (Lecarme, L.).

With that being put in the setting, we can start explaining the correlation between Dan Brown's novel and its signalling patterns of puzzling indications of Marxism throughout the story. Now, the concept of hidden power is one way Marxism appears in Robert Langdon's story. Brown's *Inferno* delves into the shadowy systems of power that dictate societies, such as the Catholic Church or the enigmatic Illuminati. These structures operate in the background, attempting to manipulate events and people in the interest of

preserving their own selfish power and wealth. However, in the novel, Langdon, as a symbologist, is frequently called in to unearth these psychokinetic powers and unveil them to the general population:

Dr. Sinskey, Elizabeth said:

"Whoever you are, you know damned well the WHO takes overpopulation very seriously. Recently we spent millions of dollars sending doctors into Africa to deliver free condoms and educate people about birth control." (Brown, 2013, CH.22, P.117)

Replied Zobrist:

"And an even bigger army of Catholic missionaries marched in on your heels and told the Africans that if they used the condoms, they'd all go to hell." (Brown, 2013, CH.22, P.177)

This conversation demonstrates how higher authorities, like the Church and organizations like WHO, who are all essentially working for the Illuminati or as their underlings, have almost complete control over what people should and shouldn't do. manipulating people's lifestyle, choices, and even the rate of overproduction by humanity. Similar problems have been anticipated and dubbed the "*Golden Billion*". The phrase was created in the 1970s to describe an idealized population with access to the resources of the entire world and a high standard of living. This group, which is typically composed of residents of developed countries, has generated a great deal of controversy in relation to problems like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. The "*Golden Billion*" idea is significant in this situation because it highlights the unequal distribution of resources throughout the world. It is worrying that a small number of people have access to such a significant portion of the world's resources, and it raises ethical questions about resource distribution. Because it implies that those who are most privileged are also the most vulnerable to the effects of overpopulation, this is especially important in the context of overpopulation. The antagonist and the evil organizations in the book believe that overpopulation poses a serious threat to the future of the world, which motivates their efforts to eradicate the "*Golden Billion*". This point of view has been hotly contested, with many experts contending that the problem of population growth is complex and not amenable to being solved by quick fixes. The book does, however, make some crucial points regarding the negative effects of ignoring this problem. For instance, it draws attention to the threat of a global catastrophe brought on by resource depletion and the spread of disease, both of which are true in both cases.

However, the idea of concealed authority by the Church, Illuminati or the organisations that work for "*humanity's*" sake, it is strikingly similar of Marxist theory about the ruling class's power. Marxists believe that the ruling class maintains force through a variety of means, which include media control and political system control. Brown is capable of discovering these hidden powers and delivering them to light by using Langdon as a sort of detective, who is challenging the norms.

The idea of the "elites", or those who rule society and have unbelievable access to all the resources that the general populace does not, is another theme Brown emphasizes. And characters like Zobrist who thinks that the only way to prevent the extinction of humanity is to control the population through extreme measures. A technological revolution, according to Sienna, who stands in for the revolutionaries, can bring about a society without class divisions.

There's also the idea of rebellion against authority, which is another Marxist theme occurring by Langdon in *Inferno*. Langdon is frequently compelled to investigate authority figures throughout his adventures, regardless of whether they're religious leaders or government officials, quite the likes of the "Consortium" organisation that was trying relentlessly to take down Langdon. Thus, through a Marxist lens, this opposition against that type of authority can be considered a prime instance of class conflict. The ruling elite, including religious leaders as well as government authorities again like the previously mentioned organisation, they resemble the capitalist class's interests. Langdon, however, was capable of subverting the ruling class's power by intimidating their authority, potentially creating an opportunity for a revolutionary movement against them and the system itself.

It is important to note another aspect that Robert Langdon's adventures throughout *Inferno*, and in many other Dan Brown's novels, it frequently takes a spotlight in far-off places rich in history and culture. The greater emphasis on historical contexts can be interpreted as a repudiation of the aspect of homogenisation impacts over globalization, which in return Marxists argue that it suppresses distinctive cultural identities. Nevertheless, Brown is capable of acknowledging diversity and contesting the uniformity of culture that seems to be inherent in capitalist globalization by simply putting Langdon in such culturally rich settings, which we have witnessed throughout the novel.

Furthermore, the novel has successfully depicted the concept of how institutional power perpetuates false consciousness. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, supports Zobrist's plan because it believes it is necessary for the greater good. The organization's support for population control, on the other hand, is rooted in a neoliberal framework that prioritizes profits and economic growth over all else. By perpetuating oppressive systems, institutions create and perpetuate false consciousness on a daily basis in modern days. The WHO's power in *Inferno* is an example of institutional hegemony. The organization wields considerable power and influence over global health policies, and its decisions have far-reaching implications. This type of hegemony is problematic because it can result in decisions that benefit the powerful but harm the less powerful (Lecarme, L.).

By implying concepts of some Marxist points, we can simply analyse and see how *Inferno* delves into the power of governments to control their citizens, in addition to institutional hegemony. The novel takes place in Florence, Italy, and is heavily focused on the city's history and culture. The Italian government is important in the story because they try to find and stop Zobrist's plan. The government attempts to control and protect the people of Florence through its actions. Not to mention, the government's power in

Inferno is an example of also political hegemony. They have the authority to direct their citizens' actions and, in times of crisis, they can take extreme measures to protect those citizens. However, political hegemony, like institutional hegemony, can be problematic because it can lead to the erosion of individual rights and freedom, and as such we see it implied frequently.

Throughout the analysis, there appeared the concept of how the ability of technology to shape our lives and control our actions is portrayed through the novel. Zobrist, for example, believes in the novel that technology can be used to control the population and reshape the world to fit his vision. He invents a virus that can be spread via social media, demonstrating how technology can be used to manipulate people. But if we were to understand the concept behind that idea, or philosophy, we need to comprehend one thing: technology and social media are now ubiquitous in today's society, pervading almost every aspect of our lives. We are bombarded with notifications, messages, and updates on our smartphones and laptops from the moment we wake up. Technology has infiltrated our social interactions, professional lives, and even intimate relationships. Unfortunately, this technological takeover of our lives has become a viral phenomenon that has spread to the most remote corners of the globe. And from a slightly different perspective, one could interpret the virus as a technological virus in a sense rather than a biological one perhaps. However, when we say that technology as well as social media have spread like a virus, we are referring to the fact that we're unable to envision our lives without them. We yearn for the dopamine whacks that come with receiving notifications, likes, and comments on our posts as we grow more attached. We are dependent on social media and technological advances to work properly in a modern environment (Lecarme, L.).

The speed with which information spreads on social media and technology is another factor in their transformation into informational viruses. Similar to biological viruses, technology and social media spread quickly and effectively once they take hold. This is a result of the connections they encourage among users. A message can quickly go viral and spread to millions of people worldwide. The way we consume news and media has changed as a result of this ability to disseminate information. Additionally, it has evolved into a deadly weapon that has contributed to suppressing public awareness of what goes on behind closed doors. (Lecarme, L.)

And with that being *Inferno*'s technological power, it can be an example of technological hegemony. Which apparently tells us how technological advancements have the potential to shape our lives and influence our thoughts and behaviours. This type of hegemony is particularly pernicious because people frequently fail to recognize the extent to which technology exerts control. *Inferno* provokes commentary on the issue of hegemony in our society. Dan Brown highlights the dangers of allowing powerful entities to wield too much control over our lives by exploring various forms of hegemonies; including institutional, political, technological and social hegemony. The novel encourages readers to question authority and recognize their own power, something which Marxism itself motivates the people to do against dictating systems.

Finally, if we were to approach the novel from a pure Marxist economic as well as social point of view, we can clearly see how the novel possessed quite a few key themes portraying those factors and issues in the modern day. In the opening lines of the book, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is quoted, setting the tone for the narrative: "*Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward had been lost*" (Brown, D. 2013).

One of the novel's central themes is the idea that humanity is on the verge of a disaster due to an expanding population and limited resources. The novel emphasizes the potentially devastating impact on the global economy as resources become increasingly scarce and competition for them intensifies (Sanz Alonso, I.).

Brown also explores the idea of "*bioterrorism*" and how it might influence the world's financial markets. In the story, Robert Langdon, the main character, must act quickly to stop the spread of a deadly virus that would cause a sharp decline in the global population (Kibin). In conclusion, Dan Brown's *Inferno* emphasizes the link between economic crises and Marxism. Brown deftly employs the characters', organisations and government's personal experiences as well as the challenges of the capitalist system to demonstrate Marxism's ideal that the only way to cure the economic crisis is to overthrow capitalism.

2. Conclusions

Coming to a conclusion, Marxist ideas are incorporated into a complex portrayal of society in Dan Brown's novel *Inferno*. Class conflict, economic inequality, and labour exploitation are all major concerns in Marxist theory, and these issues are all explored in depth in the novel. The issue of class conflict is one of the most prominent Marxist themes in *Inferno*. We see a clear divide between the wealthy and the working class throughout the novel, with the former exerting control over the latter. Bertrand Zobrist, the novel's antagonist and wealthy businessman, personifies this conflict. To address the issue of overpopulation, Zobrist believes that the world's population should be reduced, and he sees the working class as expendable. His plan entails unleashing a lethal virus that will only target those who cannot afford to protect themselves. Zobrist's actions demonstrate how the wealthy exploit the working class for their own gain and regard them as disposable.

Another aspect of *Inferno* that is Marxist follows by as it tells us how economic inequality is portrayed. The novel illustrates how a small number of powerful people and companies hold the majority of the country's economic power. The director of the World Health Organization, Doctor Elizabeth Sinskey, embodies this in her personality. Sinskey is depicted as a strongwoman with significant influence over the world economy. Her actions show how economic power is concentrated in the hands of a small elite (whom recognised as the Illuminati outside the novel) throughout the entire book, while the majority of people struggle to make ends meet.

With that being said, this is the point in which the term "inferno" outside the novel and within our real world conjures up its various images of meaning such as fire and

devastation as well as a hot, chaotic, and hazardous environment. This description seems particularly appropriate when applied to modern society from a Marxist perspective. Indeed, many would contend that given the extreme levels of economic inequality, labour exploitation, and environmental degradation, today's society actually feels like hell sociologically.

One of the most shocking aspects of modern society is the extent of economic inequality. While the majority of people struggle to make ends meet, a small group of wealthy individuals—you could call them the Illuminati, the Matrix, or something similar—hold the majority of the wealth and power. The situation is getting worse in the globe, where deprivation and economic exploitation are widespread. According to Marxist theory, this situation is unfair by nature and fuels class conflict. The privileged few maintain their positions through their power, leaving the great majority to suffer and deal with hardship.

Today's society is characterized by both economic inequality and the exploitation of labour. With few opportunities for career advancement or job security, many workers are compelled to work long hours for meagre pay. The developing world, where labour laws are frequently lax and workers are susceptible to exploitation, is where this issue is most acute. Marxist theory identifies this exploitation of labour as a fundamental aspect of capitalist society. Employers often take advantage of workers' health and well-being in order to maximize labour productivity, as this serves their financial interests.

Another point is environmental degradation, also a feature of modern society. Without consideration for the long-term effects, the pursuit of profit frequently results in the destruction of natural resources and the environment. Marxist theory claims that capitalism's emphasis on immediate gains and wealth accumulation is what has led to the current situation. The pursuit of profit often results in the exploitation of the environment and natural resources at the expense of human and environmental welfare. Finally, in conclusion, "Inferno" offers a trenchant, Marxist-influenced critique of society. The novel emphasizes how the main issues facing modern society are class conflict, economic inequality, and labour exploitation. The novel asks readers to reflect on the current state of society and consider alternatives that put the needs of the many over the interests of the few. It does this by portraying these issues, and it encourages for discovering solutions for both overpopulation and resources depletion which is escalating in a scary rate in today's world. And the term "inferno" seems especially appropriate when used to describe modern society from a Marxist perspective. This society's main characteristics—economic inequality, labour exploitation, and environmental degradation—all combine to produce a sociological environment that feels like hell. Marxist theory contends that in order to be resolved, fundamental systemic change is necessary because these problems are endemic to capitalist society. Modern society will continue to resemble an inferno, a place of chaos and destruction, without such change.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Mustafa Amjed Jasim Al-Hameedawi is a lecturer in Kufa University / College of Languages. He is interested in Postmodernism and contemporary fiction. However, he wrote and published papers in Modern English poetry and comparative literature.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0001-8920-8913>; ResearchGate https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mustafa-Al-Hameedawi?ev=hdr_xprf

Sajjad Issa Ajlan Al-Moussawi is dedicated scholar in field of American fiction. His papers and seminars are concerned with detective and fantasy novels.

References

- Alighieri, D. (2017). *Dante Alighieri - the divine comedy, translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis*. Portable Poetry.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2020, March 4). *False consciousness*. Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2022, September 5). "Dan Brown" Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- Brown, D. (2013). *Inferno: (Robert Langdon Book 4)*. London, England: Bantam Press.
- Hurvitz, J. (n.d.). Neil Postman - foreword to *amusing ourselves to death*. Retrieved from Tau.ac.il website: <https://www.tau.ac.il/education/muse/maslool/boidem/170foreword.html>
- Huxley, A. (2006). *Brave New World Revisited*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Kaplan, J. "Life after 'The Da Vinci Code'". (2022, September 13) Parade.
- Kibin (2023). *A view on bioterrorism as described in dan brown's "inferno"*. <http://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/a-view-on-bioterrorism-as-described-in-dan-browns-inferno-fphkQLWh>
- Lecarme, L. (2020, July 7). *Dan Brown's Inferno — is the prophecy here?* Retrieved March 8, 2023, from Spirit of Crypto website: <https://medium.com/spirit-of-crypto/dan-browns-inferno-is-the-prophecy-here-40a3ff685490>
- Nietzsche, F. W. (2018). *The Genealogy of Morals* (J. M. Kennedy, Trans.). Createspace Independent Publishing Platform
- Sanz Alonso, I. (2018). *Inferno Unleashed: Dan Brown's Uncomfortable Solution to Overpopulation // Inferno desatado: La solución incómoda de Dan Brown a la sobrepoblación*. *Ecozon@*, 9(1), 85–93. doi:10.37536/ecozone.2018.9.1.2316
- Smith, D. (2018, November 18.) 4am starts and spinach smoothies: Da Vinci Code's Dan Brown on how to write a bestseller. *The Guardian*.
- Stump, S. (2013, May 14). *Dan Brown on "Inferno": "I just spent 3 years in hell."* TODAY.
- UKEssays. (November 2018). *Characteristics of Marxism in The Matrix and The Hunger Games*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/film-studies/characteristics-of-marxism-in-the-matrix-and-the-hunger-games.php?vref=1>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Literary Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).