

# An Analysis of the Main Villain Character Bertrand Zobrist in Dan Brown's *Inferno*: A Psychological Approach

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**Citra Kartika Devi**

Mayors of English Department, Faculty of Letters Gunadarma University  
[cikadev@gmail.com](mailto:cikadev@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Every person in this world is different; there is no single person who is exactly the same as another. The reason for all the differences of every living human being in this world is because they all possess different personality. According to Sigmund Freud, there are three aspects that shape a person's personality; id, ego, and superego. The three aspects can also be applied in shaping a personality of a character in a novel. It is why the writer interested in analyzing the main character of Dan Brown's *Inferno* novel, Bertrand Zobrist. The aims of this research are; 1.) To find out the characteristics of the main villain character Bertrand Zobrist, 2.) To find out psychotic evidences suffered from by Bertrand Zobrist which led him to commit suicide and, 3.) To find out the evidences that shows id, ego and superego appeared in Bertrand Zobrist character. The writer uses descriptive qualitative methods in analyzing the data. The results of the analysis showed that; 1.) Bertrand Zobrist are; genius, psychotic, loneliness, obsessed and fanatic toward Dante, idealism and also a transhumanist. 2.) Some of the events have been experienced by Bertrand Zobrist course provides enormous mental pressure on him, it also seen on his psychical appearance changed in Zobrist. The peak of the mental stress was when Zobrist choose to commit suicide by jumping from Badia tower rather than arrested by the WHO. 3.) The Freud's id, ego, and superego found in the character of Bertrand Zobrist are as the following; a.) The id that works in Bertrand Zobirst are enormous which then motivate him to balance the earth by exterminating human population and also his sexual energy. b.) Bertrand's ego is when he still continues making the virus to reducing human population (the execution of id). c.) Bertrand's superego is when he realizes that he has to save the world from over population*

**Key words: Bertrand Zobrist, Inferno, characteristics, novel, psychotic, psychological approach.**

## INTRODUCTION

Literature helps readers to develop sensitivities to language, gender, race and culture. It provides a forum for exploration and an opportunity to emerge beyond one's self, see through another's eyes, and live as

someone else. Between the covers of this sampling of word-class literature is countless reading that processes the power to make a lifelong impact (Kennedy and Gioia, 2008).

There are many kinds of literature; they are written and unwritten literature. Three

major forms of literature those are; poetry, drama, and novel. The written literature is the easiest literature to understand and more likely to be found of and novel is one of written literature. Novel is fiction story that can reflect human life in many kinds of problems in novel which are portrayed by the character in the story. The story is communicated silently, at whatever the moment is and the reader desires. This idea is supported by Collins (1999) who states novel is an extended fictional work in prose dealing with character, action, thought, especially in the form of a story. By reading novel, people can get more pleasure, enjoyment and also can enrich our knowledge that can be useful for use to learn.

Talking about novel, there is Dan Brown, a famous American novelist. People knew Dan Brown who has unique characteristics that can be recognized easily rather than other American novelists. He is a great novelist from America whose novels are categorized into the best novels in the world. The great concept of a novel is distinguished in both craft and theme as the most accurate representation of the spirit of the age in the world at the time of its writing or in the time it is set. It is presumed to be written by Dan Brown who is knowledgeable about the state, culture, history, symbology, science, religion and common perspective in the human life.

The story of the writer has chosen Dan Brown's *Inferno* novel to be analyzed because this novel is more about a gateway argument on behalf of population control rather than about a simple thriller such as Dante, Florence, and bioterrorist. Dan Brown's fourth novel is clearly different from the previous ones. The antagonist character in the novel is quite interesting to analyze because of his character. He is a genius biologist who has a great ambition about saving earth. He takes extreme action to fulfil his ambition.

Psychological approach is an approach on the basis of assumption that the literary works always discuss about incident or events of human beings life (Semi, 1993). Psychological approach is used to analyze the character in novel. Usually it is related not only with behavior, but also personality of the character. Psychological approach is related to literatures; it is used in literary analysis to discuss about human being events or incidents.

It discusses the problems of human beings and how they handle it and also discusses the effects that are brought by certain problems or events to human beings personality. Those effects can be either individually or socially. Through psychological approach the writer expects to know the personality of characters the wants to be analyzed. Bertrand Zobrist character as a villain in the novel of *Inferno* made the course of the conflict in the novel and gave this puzzle very dynamic role.

Inspired by Dante Alighieri's poem *Inferno*, Bertrand Zobrist character as a genius biologist in the young age was very interesting. As biologist, who really cares about the environment and the earth he was willing to reduce for human population on earth by releasing a virus. According to him, the humans cause damage to the earth and as the wild idea to release it into the target virus he was chasing by the World Health Organization. Zobrist epitomizes this earth as a nest of the sinners, all of the aspects and activities which human does in everyday life making the earth become an alarm it to the overpopulation. Consequently, the earth faces natural disequilibrium.

According to <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com> it is said that,

*“Psychosis refers to an abnormal condition of the mind, and is a generic psychiatric term for a mental state often*

*described as involving a loss of contact with reality. People with psychosis are described as psychotic. People experiencing psychosis may exhibit some personality changes and thought disorder.”*

From the explanation above, it becomes the major reason why the writer wants to explore about psychological factors that have influenced the Dan Brown's main antagonist character, Bertrand Zobrist. What character did in the novel, which is committed suicide because of suffering from psychotic, motivates the writer to do a research about it by using psychological approach. In this undergraduate thesis the writer would like to find out what are evidences of psychotic that developed in the main villain character, and also use Sigmund Freud theory, entitled “An Analysis of the Main Villain Character ‘Bertrand Zobrist’ in Dan Brown's *Inferno: A Psychological Approach*”.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this research the writer used descriptive qualitative. This research deals as a kind of research procedure that generates descriptive data in words and languages form (Moleong, 2009). The purpose of qualitative research is to understand something specifically, not always looking for the cause and effect of something and to deepen comprehension about something that studied (Moleong, 2009). The result of descriptive qualitative not shows with statistic procedures in analyzing the data, but the results present data in form of description. It is because of the data that collected was words and may pictures, not numeral data. Because of this, the report would consist of some evidences quotations to give the image of the report. In this qualitative research, the writer made accurate explanation to analyze and present what have been found about the main villain

character, it will describes about his personality, the psychotic that he suffered from and the writer use psychological approach and take the theory from Sigmund Freud to explain the character.

## RESULT OF THE RESEARCH

### 1. The Characteristics of Bertrand Zobrist

- a) Zobrist is a genius, In the novel there are evidences that support that he is a genius person in his field such as;  
*“Bertrand Zobrist. Famous biochemist. Made a fortune in biological patents at a young age.” (INFERNO P.130)*  
*“Zobrist was exceptionally talented and easily could have engineered something with unique capabilities.” (INFERNO P.274)*

From the other evidence the writer conclude genius was really Bertrand one of characteristics his achievements that he achieved and unique capabilities on biologist field, made him are the one of an influential successful man in their fields at young age.

- b) The evidences about Zobrist who is the person that obsessed with Dante are;  
*‘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.*  
*For I am your Salvation.*  
*I am the Shade.*

*I am the gateway to the Posthuman age.' (INFERNO P.110)*

Zobrist may have been a lunatic, his thought, but he certainly had a sophisticated grasp of Dante that can be seen from some statements in the novel such in the video that Zobrist made it before he committed to suicide.

- c) Anxiety is an unpleasant state, which acts as a signal that things are not right and something must be done (Hall & Lindzey). Zobrist is an anxious person. The anxiety about future and his safety in the story made him living in the fear, as a biologist and transhumanist he worried about the earth in alarming overpopulation that growth is even more dramatic, like stack of paper, had very meager beginnings. Bertrand anxiety toward world overpopulation is;

*"I brought you here to work with you. I have no doubt you understand that overpopulation is a health issue. But what I fear you don't understand is that it will affect the very soul 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." (INFERNO P.81)*

In this case, the loneliness that Bertrand Zobrist suffered cause by his hiding. Bertrand be helped by the Consortium, a private organization which covert services along the shadowy fringes of society capable to give protection and made him invisible

as long as he continuing makes his masterpiece. Although, Bertrand felt insecure from the WHO which pursued him but since in hiding, Bertrand definitely must get away from his daily life, people around him and also his lover. It is made him lonely, excluded and isolated from society. The statements that prove about Bertrand loneliness are;

*"Believe me, I know what it's like to feel all alone ... the worst kind of loneliness in the world is the isolation that comes from being misunderstood. It can make people lose their grasp on reality." (INFERNO P.323)*

There is misunderstood between Zobrist and WHO about how their point of view how to handle human overpopulation made Bertrand as a bioterrorist that should arrest by WHO, made him decided to exiled himself.

- d) Zobrist belief to save the lives is better choice than maintain the human race which become more and more each day and be the causes of earth destruction, on the other dialogue that support his idealism and ideology states:

*"Zobrist is a proponent of the Population Apocalypse Equation that said 'Sometimes the only course of action is the lesser of two evils.'" (INFERNO P.107)*

Essentially, Population Apocalypse Equation is 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. Bertrand has publicly predicted that the human race will not survive another

century, unless we have some kind of mass extinction event.

- e) Zobrist zealot toward Dante already explained clearly in the novel, his fanaticism also became the biggest thing that made him obsessed to make the virus which has the same title with Dante's literary works entitled *Inferno* and also he left the puzzles codes with modified Botticelli's vision of Dante's *Inferno* such in the dialogues below his understanding about Dante was plain to see from the map that he renew and in the poem which he made;

*Dante's poem: "A place is there below ... which not by sight is known, but by the sound of a rivulet, which descends along the hollow of a rock ... and by that hidden way, my guide and I did enter, to return to the fair world." (INFERNO P.276)*

Dante's scene had clearly been the inspiration for Zobrist's poem and map of hell, although in this case, it seemed Zobrist had flipped everything upside down with the real poem. The other evidence those are support of Bertrand fanatic toward Dante are;

*"Zobrist was a Dante fanatic, and he therefore chose Florence as the city in which he wanted to hide." (INFERNO P.259).*

- f) According to *Inferno*, transhumanism is an international cultural and intellectual movement with an eventual goal of fundamentally transforming the human condition by developing and making widely available technologies to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.

In the story Zobrist's newfound passion for Transhumanist philosophy very strongly support transhumanism movement. Zobrist had boundless hope for humankind. He was a Transhumanist who believed that human living on the threshold of a glittering 'posthuman' age-an era of true transformation. Some evidences below can describe that Bertrand are transhumanist;

*"I believe Transhumanism is mankind's only hope for long-term survival," Zobrist preaches, pulling aside his shirt and showing them all the "H+" tattoo inscribed on his shoulder. "As you can see, I'm fully committed." (INFERNO P.211)*

## 2. The Psychotic Evidences Suffered by Bertrand Zobrist which Led Him to Commit Suicide

In the novel which the writer already read it is clear that Bertrand Zobrist suffered from psychotic. From some quotations below and several previous quotations which have been already written by the writer can be conclude, that some of the events have been experienced by Bertrand Zobrist course provides enormous mental pressure on him, it also seen on his psychical appearance changed in Zobrist. The peak of the mental stress was when Zobrist choose to committed suicide by jumping from Badia tower rather than arrested by the World Health Organization.

*"Rumors had circulated that this particular client had suffered a psychotic break over the last few months, but this video seemed to*

confirm those rumors beyond any doubt" (INFERNO P.42)

Bertrand Zobrist characteristics of his psychotic also appear in his appearance who really look different from before the Provost met him, his psychic look like;

"The disheveled man who arrived on the yacht was barely recognizable as the steady, clean-cut person with whom the provost had done business the year before. He had a wild look in his once-sharp green eyes. He looked almost ... ill." (INFERNO P.61)

Some statements above give evidences about Bertrand Zobrist suffered psychotic, because he isolated himself from the human life to continue made a virus to save human population, Bertrand sacrifice himself to spend his time focusing on hidden to avoid all the people those has thought against him.

As the writer mention above in some evidences Bertrand Zobrist committed to suicide in the end of his goal after his opus (virus) already done, he felt so tired, under pressure from people who force want him to give up and stopped his plain about to reducing human race. Finally, he made a choice to jump from Badia tower to end his life.

### 3. The Evidences that Shows Id, Ego and Superego Appeared in Bertrand Zobrist Character

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the personality itself is made up three major system; the id, the ego, and the superego

which have a reaction cause for people who are always fighting against themselves. If unbalance reaction happened neurosis will appear which it gives distribution (Semi, 1993).

#### a) Id that appeared in Bertrand Zobrist

The id is enormous which then motivate him to balance the earth by exterminating human population and also id of his sexual energy. In the Zobrist character, the death instinct is more apparent in the novel than his sexual energy. With the powerful force in Zobrist inner self to exterminate humans and thus only leaves only superior humans who live on earth intended for the lives on earth be longer without humans who according to him are too many and will leads to the destruction of earth, the quotation that support is as the following:

"I brought you here to work with you. I have no doubt you understand that overpopulation is a health issue. But what I fear you don't understand is that it will affect the very soul 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. We are facing a battle for the very soul of man." (INFERNO P.81)

"I'm a biologist. I save lives ... not souls." (INFERNO P.81)

Early in the development of his theory Freud (1989) saw sexual energy as the only source of energy for the id. After the tragedy of World War I,

however, Freud felt it necessary to add another instinct to the id. So, he proposed *thanatos* or the death instinct. *Thanatos* accounts for the instinctual violent urges of humankind. Obviously, the rest of the personality would have somehow to deal with these two instincts. By adding *thanatos*, he could describe more mental phenomena.

The other forms from id that exists in Bertrand Zobrist character not only about death instinct but also in his sexual energy such as in this scene when Bertrand Zobrist make a love with his girlfriend, the evidence is;

*“Zobrist smiles and inches closer. “I’m not sure what you’ve been waiting for, but please let me be your first.”*

*In that moment all the awkward sexual fears and frustrations of my childhood disappear...evaporating into the snowy night.*

*For the first time ever, I feel a yearning unfettered by shame.*

*Ten minutes later, we are in Zobrist’s hotel room, naked in each other’s*

*arms. Zobrist takes his time, his patient hands coaxing sensations I’ve never felt before out of my inexperienced body.*

*This is my choice. He didn’t force me.*

*In the cocoon of Zobrist’s embrace, I feel as if everything is right in the world. Lying there, staring out the window at the snowy night, I know I will follow this man anywhere. “ (INFERNO P.211-212)*

As the writer already mention above the id, not only consist of death instinct, in Bertrand Zobrist there are the *eros*. *Eros* is the tendency toward survival, propagation, sex, and other creative, life-producing drives, in this story course tell us about Bertrand Zobrist relationship with Sienna Brooks which is include to the id of himself.

#### **b) The Ego that Appeared in Bertrand Zobrist**

The ego is the surface of the personality, the part you usually show the world. The egos goal is to satisfy the demands of the id in a safe a socially acceptable way. The ego is governed by the 'reality principle', or a practical approach to the world. It seeks to turn the id’s drive to behavior which brings benefits in the long term rather than grief (Freud, 1989).

Ego of Bertrand Zobrist is the execution from the force of id which because he thinks he is right thus even though there are many who block him, he is still persistent to realize his vision, Bertrand still creates virus, help by the Consortium that is illegal organization. Bertrand’s ego makes him thinks that his vision is still the right thing to do, making him create a virus that he thinks will save the earth, even when there are many who try to prevent him, especially WHO. Thus makes it as evidence how ego works in Bertrand Zobrist this statement supporting the evidence above;

*“I have forged a masterpiece of salvation, and yet my efforts have been rewarded not with trumpets and laurels ... but with threats of death.*

*I do not fear death ... for death transforms visionaries into martyrs ... converts noble ideas into powerful movements.*  
*Jesus. Socrates. Martin Luther*

King.

*One day soon I will join them.*  
*The masterpiece I have created is the work of God Himself ... a gift from the One who imbued me with the intellect, tools, and courage required to forge such a creation.* (INFERNO P.207-208)

Ego linked as executor, which is a decision-making, in here is reflected by the attitude of Bertrand Zobrist. He is still making the virus with the help of Consortium organization that hidden Bertrand Zobrist in the Florence. The writer analyzes that ego possessed by Bertrand Zobrist leads to the gratification of id or his subconscious force, which exterminates the human population by creating a virus. Bertrand Zobrist's ego leads him run into the Consortium. He needs the Consortium to make him invisible for a while so he could pursue an endeavor far from prying eyes.

After doing several things that he had done, from persuade WHO to cooperate which only leads in refusal along with harsh insulting words he got, as a defences he still continue what he think is right with his own way. Bertrand Zobrist previously gave a warning to WHO, sounds like;

*"Fair warning. With or without your cooperation, I can very easily explore this idea on my own."* (INFERNO P.107)

With his wealth and his genius brain, he still hides and proceed his

final task, before he finally commit suicide.

After all the tragedy that happened in Bertrand Zobrist life until he decided to died with jumping from Badia tower. Realisation of his ego was a virus, waiting in the certain place. Floating in the underground, Bertrand Zobrist talked in the video which he asked Consortium to upload in the certain time about that virus, the virus form such in evidence below;

*"Here, tethered to the floor by a short filament, was an undulating sphere of thin plastic. Delicate and wobbling like an oversize soap bubble, the transparent shape floated like an underwater balloon ... inflated not with helium, but with some kind of gelatinous, yellow-brown liquid. The amorphous bag was distended and appeared to be about a foot in diameter, and within its transparent walls, the murky cloud of liquid seemed to swirl slowly, like the eye of a silently growing storm."* (INFERNO P.38)

It is clear that Bertrand Zobrist already located the virus in the certain place which is spreading time of the virus had planned.

### c) **The Superego that Appeared in Bertrand Zobrist**

According to Freud (1989), the Super-ego aims for perfection. It comprises that part of the personality, mainly unconscious, which includes the individual's ego ideals, spiritual goals, and the psychic agency (commonly called "conscience") that

criticizes and prohibits his or her drives, fantasies, feelings, and actions. The superego operates on the morality principle and motivates us to behave in a socially responsible and acceptable manner.

It is quite difficult to determine which superego possessed by Bertrand Zobrist because it is clearly stated in the novel that Bertrand Zobrist is a villain, but if we look at the goal of Bertrand Zobrist for creating the virus, also his background as biologist, his goal is only to save the world, and it is the goal that thus turns to superego, the goods side of him wants to save the world from doomsday caused by population density.

*"I brought you here to work with you. I have no doubt you understand that overpopulation is a health issue. But what I fear you don't understand is that it will affect the very soul of man. Under the stress of overpopulation, those who have never considered stealing will become thieves to feed their families. (INFERNO P.81)*

Before Bertrand decided to make a virus to reducing human population he offered Elisabeth Sinkey to work together with him, this evidence support the superego that Bertrand has, offered somebody else to save the world that is the influence person from WHO. The anxiety from evidence above which Bertrand has showed about his awareness to save the earth from alarming overpopulation (doomsday) and made him determine to do something. Although after he asked Elisabeth Sinkey he had a

rejection, and led him to make virus by himself.

Superego linked with norms/good values which believed by Bertrand Zobrist or by the society. Superego can be seen from that side, if seen from Bertrand Zobrist's side, the superego which he possessed has similarity with id/ his subconscious force. That similarity forces Bertrand Zobrist to create a virus and his participation in transhumanism organization which support Population Apocalypses Quotation making his intention becomes bigger to create the virus. When id and superego clash, it creates a disturbance in a person's self (Bertrand Zobrist), light restless, depression and all that included in psychotic disturbance, as seen in the novel, Bertrand Zobrist finally decided to commit suicide because he suffer from psychotic. The evidence about superego that Bertrand had, supported by other character in the novel, she is Sienna Brooks which state;

*"Absolutely. Bertrand had boundless hope for humankind. He was a Transhumanist who believed we are living on the threshold of a glittering 'posthuman' age—an era of true transformation. He had the mind of a futurist, eyes that could see down the road in ways few others could even imagine. He understood the astonishing powers of technology and believed that in the span of several generations, our species would become a different animal entirely—genetically enhanced to be healthier, smarter, stronger,*

*even more compassionate.” She paused. “Except for one problem. He didn’t think we’d live long enough as a species to realize that possibility.” (INFERNO P.316-317)*

Bertrand Zobrist suffer disturbance when his id cannot be accomplish. The id he posses is so powerful. Because the superego he posses clash with the superego believed by the society, (the value he believed in with the value believed by society), therefore the difference creates conflict and resulting Bertrand Zobrist suffer psychotic and decided to kill himself.

Superego, if seen by the opposite of what Bertrand Zobrist believed, which is believed by the society, is clearly conflicting. Society believes that the virus is extremely dangerous, without any cure, attacking its victim randomly with selecting their gen and making that person infertile, all those reasons made WHO wanted to capture Bertrand Zobrist.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the research, after analyzing the villain character in Dan Brown's novel entitled *Inferno*, which are this research to find out about; about Bertrand Zobrist characteristics, psychotic evidences suffered by Bertrand Zobrist, and how do id, ego, and superego work in Bertrand Zobrist character, from all of those problem formulation that exist in the chapter I, the writer concludes:

1. Bertrand Zobrist has many characteristics and his characteristics are; genius, psychotic, loneliness, obsessed and fanatic toward Dante, idealism and also a transhumanist. All characteristics have been supported by

evidence that the writer already explained in chapter four.

2. From several previous quotations in the before which have been already written by the writer it can be conclude, that some of the events have been experienced by Bertrand Zobrist course provides enormous mental pressure on him, it also seen on his psychical appearance changed in Zobrist. The peak of the mental stress was when Zobrist choose to committed suicide by jumping from Badia tower rather than arrested by the World Health Organization.
3. The Freud’s Id, Ego, and Superego found in the character of Bertrand Zobrist are as the following;
  - a.) Id that appeared in Bertrand Zobrist are enormous which then motivate him to balance the earth by exterminating human population and also id of his sexual energy.
  - b.) Ego of Bertrand Zobrist is the execution from the force of ID which because he think he is right thus even though there are many who block him, he is still persistent to realize his vision, Bertrand still creates virus, help by the Consortium that is illegal organization. Bertrand’s ego makes him thinks that his vision is still the right thing to do, making him creates a virus that he think will save the earth, even when there are many who try to prevent him, especially WHO.
  - c.) Superego which is he possessed has similarity with id/his subconscious force. That similarity force Bertrand Zobrist to create a virus and his participation in Transhumanism organization which support Population Apocalypses Quotation



making his intention becomes bigger to create the virus that purpose to save the humankind from overpopulation.

The writer hopes this research can be understandable and useful to the readers, other writers and absolutely for knowledge seekers. Hopefully, this research will inspire the readers, other writers and all knowledge seekers to conduct advanced research or conduct the research with the same methodology that is uses psychological approach in literature work.

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