

The Intersection of Transhumanism, Prognosis, and AI in Dan Brown's *Origin*

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Abstract

The intersection of Transhumanism, Prognosis, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a topic that has captured the imagination of science fiction writers for years. In Dan Brown's novel, Origin, he explores the idea that as AI evolves to the point of self-learning, the prospect of a post-human world becomes increasingly plausible. Artificial intelligence has become ubiquitous, not only in technology but also in the way people think about the world. Machines are learning, and evolving, and are soon expected to surpass human intelligence. However, this pursuit of creating the ultimate AI raises ethical and moral concerns. The idea of a machine achieving sentience and surpassing human intelligence is a nightmare scenario for some who fear the rise of artificial intelligence. In his quest to create the ultimate AI, the protagonist in "Origin" has plunged into dangerous territory, pushing the limits of what is acceptable. The defining technology of the modern era is artificial intelligence, a force that is transforming every aspect of society from finance to healthcare to transportation. As AI continues to advance, people are becoming increasingly concerned about the ethical implications of creating machines that can think and reason like humans. Transhumanism, which aims to enhance human capabilities through the use of technology, is closely linked with the development of AI. The coalescence of man and machine is becoming a real possibility, and the future belongs to those who can control it. In conclusion, the intersection of transhumanism, prognosis, and AI raises important ethical and moral questions about the future of humanity. As we continue to develop AI, it is essential to consider the potential consequences of creating machines that can think and reason like humans. The quest for the ultimate AI is a double-edged sword, and we must be careful not to plunge too far into dangerous territory.

Keywords: Transhumanism, Prognostication, Artificial Intelligence, Dan Brown, *Origin*

The notion of uncertainty is always the precursor to sweeping change and its recurring transformation is always preceded by upheaval and fear. This uncertainty enables the various speculations and futuristic claims on Transhumanism, the impending reign of AI, and its unfathomable power of Prognostication. The discourse preached by technology in relation to the recurring transhumanism and the human marvel of artificial intelligence is ambiguous in nature. It elucidates the ubiquitous reliability and irreversible bond of humankind with Technology and simultaneously discourses or warns man of the wreck, havoc, and impending danger belied within the convincing mask of technology and AI.

This paper attempts to analyse the novel *Origin* by Dan Brown and its significance of AI from a Transhumanistic and Prognostic perspective. It gives an overview of Transhumanism, the relentless power, and the growth of technology in a transhumanistic society. It also attempts to predict and

demonstrate the evolution of humankind concerning technological and physical evolution. Dan Brown is a bestselling American novelist who is renowned for his intricate plots, expert use of historical and religious themes, and masterful incorporation of cryptography, transhumanism, and symbolism. His literary glory is sourced from his novels such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons*, and *Origin*. His intersection of Transhumanism and Artificial Intelligence in the novel *Origin* from a prognostic standpoint opens the realms of research, analysis, and intrigue. *Origin* by Dan Brown follows Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of Symbology, as he travels to Spain to attend an event where a former student of his, Edmond Kirsch, is scheduled to make a ground-breaking announcement about the *origin* of human life. Kirsch is a billionaire futurist and computer scientist who claims to have discovered the answers to two of the most fundamental questions of human existence: Where do we come from? Where are we going? However, just as Kirsch is about to reveal his discovery to the world, chaos erupts, and Langdon finds himself on the run with the museum director, Ambra Vidal. Together, they race against time to decipher Kirsch's clues and uncover the truth about his discovery before it falls into the wrong hands. Along the way, Langdon and Vidal encounter a web of deceit, religious extremism, and dangerous enemies who will stop at nothing to keep Kirsch's discovery from seeing the light of day. The novel explores themes of science, religion, technology, and synthetic or artificial intelligence while keeping the reader on the edge of their seat with its fast-paced action and suspenseful plot. The maxims of transhumanism and its prognostic effect on mankind can be examined by the docent or the artificial intelligence named Winston. From the novel *Origin*, it is discernible that elements of Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism, and its recurring prognosis are interrelated and inter-connected respectively. In the novel, Dan Brown introduces Winston as a strong medium of artificial intelligence. AI can be defined as Artificial intelligence or synthetic intelligence referring to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks and data analysis that normally require human intelligence, such as perception, reasoning, learning,

and problem-solving. The Novel says that Human Brain and AI are similar since scientific experts place AI as the product of Human Intelligence and thus it is not its creation that is important but its function. The novel says, "The Human Brain is a binary system - synapses either fire or they don't - they are on or off. Like a computer switch. The brain has over a hundred trillion switches, which means that building a brain is not so much a question of technology as it is a question of scale" (Brown 47).

Secondly, the novel expounds on how AI is designed in accordance with the notion of Bicameralism but it is the unique structure of its bicameral mind that makes it different.

Bicameralism is nothing but the division of the brain into two halves; the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere. It is the medium and mode of function between the hemispheres that differs AI from Human Intelligence. The novel on Human Intelligence says, "One of the things that made human beings so creative was that the two halves of their brains functioned so differently. The left brain was analytical and verbal, while the right brain was intuitive and "preferred" pictures to words" (Brown 372). The difference is while the two halves of the Human brain function ambiguously, AI and its mental cognition function as a single unit, where the two spheres are referred to as two machines in AI. The novel says, "When forced to work as a single unit, these two machines adopt differing approaches to problem-solving – Thereby experiencing the same kinds of conflict and compromise that occur between the lobes of the human brain, greatly accelerating AI learning, creativity, and in a sense humanity" (Brown 373). The novel also strongly expounds that the major contrast between humans and AI is the level of resilience and persistence. Humans lack and fall short of persistence in comparison with AI. The novel portrays Winston saying, "Yes, computers are infinitely persistent. I can fail billions of times with no trace of frustration. I embark upon my billionth attempt at solving a problem with the same energy as my first. Humans cannot do that" (Brown 370).

The level and proximity of an AI mirroring human intelligence can be tested using a test called the Turing test. The Turing test is quintessential for drawing a line between Human and Artificial Intelligence. The novel says, "The Turing test,

Langdon recalled, was a challenge proposed by code-breaker Alan Turing to assess a machine's ability to behave in a manner indistinguishable from that of a human" (Brown 48). He also remarks, "Essentially, a human judge listened to a conversation between a machine and a human, and if the judge was unable to identify which participant was human, then the Turing test was considered to have passed. Turing's benchmark challenge had famously been passed in 2014 at the Royal Society in London. Since then, AI technology had progressed at a blinding rate" (Brown 48). Thus it is seen how the novel gives a direct and simple elucidation of the tenets of AI. It is evident that AI would occupy a higher echelon in Transhumanism and it should also be remembered that AI is not the only prominent technological marvel in transhumanism, there are other breakthroughs such as cognitive computer chips, cholesterol-eating nanobots, etc. Transhumanism is a movement and philosophy that seeks to use science and technology to improve and enhance human abilities and characteristics, ultimately transcending the limitations of the human condition. It advocates for using advancements in fields like biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and robotics to extend human lifespans, augment physical and cognitive abilities, and create new forms of human consciousness and existence. In essence, transhumanism aims to use technology to push the boundaries of what it means to be human.

The three pivotal maxims of transhumanism include embracing technologies, Transhumanism as a global perspective, and the post-human vision or the prognosis of evolution due to transhumanism. In an evolving transhumanistic society, everything is techno-centric and the individuals in the society exist as Techniums, "It was called: *Technium*" (Brown 409). Due to the Cambrian explosion of technology in a transhumanistic society, there is a continuous evolution of technology. The novel says, "Today we are witnessing the Cambrian Explosion of the Technium. New species of technology are being born daily, evolving at a blinding rate and each new technology becomes a tool to create other new technologies" (Brown 409). Secondly, transhumanism aims at uniting technology and man from a futuristic, global, and universal perspective.

Technology and this universal transhumanistic perspective aim in improving the environment: "A future where the environmental technologies provided billions of people with drinking water, nutritious food access to clean energy" (Brown 411). It also strives to eradicate diseases: "A Future where diseases like Edmond's cancer were eradicated, thanks to the genomic medicine" (Brown 411). Ultimately it strives for sheer betterment through technology: "A future in which breakthrough technologies began creating such an abundance of humankind's critical resources that warring over them would no longer be necessary" (Brown 412). Finally, transhumanism aims to create a Post-Human vision, Prognosis, or a theoretical technological evolution in which technological hybridity and obligate endosymbiosis are seen and present.

Prognostication or prognosis can be defined as the act of prophesying future events. The speculation of the advantages and the following repercussions of an ultimate AI can all be determined by Prognostication. There is a probable prognosis of hybridity, where there is a fusion of technology and biology, the novel says, "We are becoming a hybrid species – a fusion of biology and technology. The same tools that live outside our bodies – smartphones, hearing aids, reading glasses, most pharmaceuticals – in fifty years will be incorporated into our bodies to such an extent that we will no longer be able to consider ourselves *Homo sapiens*" (Brown 411). There is also a probable prognosis of Obligate Endosymbiosis concerning evolution. Usually, evolution is ambiguous in nature, where a species splits into two new species. But in certain cases, there occurs a singularity or Obligate Endosymbiosis in which there is fusion instead of biological fission. The latter is similar to syncretism – the process in which two religions blend to form an entirely new faith. The novel on Obligate Endosymbiosis says, "Here is a rare evolutionary process known as obligate endosymbiosis. Normally, evolution is a *bifurcating* process – a species splits into two new species –but sometimes, in rare instances, if two species cannot survive without each other, the process occurs in reverse... and instead of one species bifurcating, two species fuse into one" (Brown 410).

In encapsulation, the intersection of Transhumanism, Prognosis, and AI can open many avenues for human health and well-being. For instance, AI-Supported systems can be incorporated into hospitals to analyse medical data and suggest effective medical operations, this intersection can also enable the development of Brain-computer Interfaces (BCIs). The latter enables the augmentation of cognition and helps to achieve enhanced intelligence that surpasses human capabilities. It is predominant however to ascertain that the relentless evolution of man, the various movements and conceptualizations, and the theoretical prognosis pale in concern with the deep oblivion of the undefined and the uncertain. The tenets of AI are fascinating but also indicate the impending peril of its computational entropy, psychological stagnancy of humankind, and the termination or the infertility of Human effort, resilience, inspiration, and intrigue. The renowned scientist Stephen Hawking remarks, "Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history. Unfortunately, it might also be the last, unless we learn how to avoid the risks." (Hawking). The renowned futurist and billionaire, Elon Musk seconds to the latter negativity along with Hawking by saying, "I am really quite close, I am very close, to the cutting edge in AI and it scares the hell out of me. It's capable of vastly more than almost anyone knows and the rate of improvement is exponential." (AFP). Thus arises a human obligation to control and address the threat of the impending darkness that threatens to engulf mankind. It should be inherent that faith in the human capacity for creativity and love when combined, possesses the power to illuminate any darkness. It should be inherent and evergreen as Transhumanist Natasha Vita-More remarks, "Transhumanism is about using science and technology to empower human beings to transcend our limitations." This latter universal perspective should usher in the transhumanistic

enlightenment of elegance and the disposal of exemplary empowerment in relation to the evolution of technology. As, the novel *Origin* in its finale remarks, "May our philosophies keep pace with our technologies. May our compassion keep pace with our powers, and may love, not fear, be the engine of change" (Brown 413). Hence, if the engine of change and its pistons pump out love rather than fear, vanquishing the malevolency of technology is tenable and possible.

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