



What is Discovery of Man about and why did I write this novel?

Through the eyes of Jack Newman, an "intelligent genetic design" clone born in 2048, Discovery of Man takes the reader to what awaits us in the second half of this century and beyond, if we continue to become ever more depended on and addicted to online technology, social media and AI.

In 2013 I started writing Discovery of Man. The first spark for the story was the realization that artificial intelligence (AI) would fundamentally change life on Earth. In a thought experiment, I wanted to investigate what the next two hundred years could look like if we continue to pursue perpetual technological and economic growth, driven by the unprecedented power of artificial intelligence.

After years of reading, thinking, talking and writing about future scenarios from the perspective of an evolutionary biologist, I now realize how unique it is that nature has given us as the first and only species on Earth the opportunity to escape the genetically programmed behavioral patterns that force living beings to be driven solely by survival and passing on as many of their own genes as possible to the next generations. Mankind is the only species that can acquire a large degree of freedom in feeling, thinking, willing and acting.

Mankind is the only species to have been given the ability to escape this planet, to conquer distant worlds, to embark on an eternal journey of discovery in the endless universe. It hardly seems like a coincidence that I was born in 1964 and as a toddler could see on a small black and white television how the first humans set foot on the Moon. I grew up dreaming that humanity would indeed focus on this grand and compelling common life goal: exploring other planets and moons, searching for extraterrestrial life. But in 1972 the moon voyages were stopped because consuming and enjoying became more important than exploring and learning.

Since the advent of the Internet, man has definitively turned inward and allows himself to live through the convenience, care and entertainment of the virtual world that he himself has created. The development of AI will further alienate us from the real world and our own nature. We forget the challenge and lose the courage and strength to explore the universe that surrounds us on all sides.

As a biologist I know that unlimited growth and multiplication leads to destruction. From history we learn that until now no civilization had eternal life. I fear that the current society of unchecked industrial and economic growth will also collapse and claim many victims, just as every pyramid scheme eventually collapses.

I have no illusions that I can save or improve the world. I'm too much of a typical human being for that myself. I also drive to the supermarket in my petrol car and buy chopped up and plastic-wrapped chickens, pigs and cows. Why do I, as an accomplice, write so critically about our society? To hold up a mirror to myself and my fellow human beings. To recognize what kind of beings we really are, how we relate and behave towards each other and other living beings. To show how good we are at justifying our thoughts, actions and omissions. To question our ethics, legislation, logic, self-image, worldview and vision of the future. I want to expose the collective self-deception, the justification for our (mis)deeds, which I also hide behind every day, no matter how much pain it causes my delicate, holy, chosen, spoiled, oversensitive, hypocritical soul.

If we are to go down, let us at least go down with an honest and open consciousness, fully aware that we are knowingly heading towards a future with: continued population growth, environmental pollution and destruction of nature and biodiversity; total dependence and addiction to the convenience, entertainment and nurturing of online technology and AI; loneliness, displacement and emptiness in our existence, causing us to flee deeper and deeper into social media and virtual reality; social disruption and polarization due to fake news and deepfakes; sole rule of the AI-producing and controlling companies and governments; loss of resilience against internal and external threats and enemies.

Since the publication of the first books of the series in 2021, the story of Discovery of Man has become increasingly topical, to the point of being frightening, because it is not a 'best case scenario' we are in.

Jos Lexmond, Dutch Center for Science Fiction:

“This entire work, this tetralogy, is un-Dutch and deserves to be translated, at least into English. For me, The Discovery of Man is on the same level as Dune by Frank Herbert, The Foundation by Isaac Asimov or any other top series. So let the world enjoy it! Let it be made into a film or a Netflix series.

Frank van Dongen started writing the Discovery of Man in 2013 and it shows. Even earlier, in 2009, when he wrote The Blueprint. It dominated his life for a full ten years and saw it become increasingly topical in recent years. We can hope that the story of our world does not go this way. It won't live to see it, but I'm really worried for our children and grandchildren. Nevertheless, for a true Sci-Fi enthusiast, for the time being in the Dutch language, it is a must, almost a duty, to read this work! It's grand and compelling!!! MAGNIFICANT!!!”



The Thousand Islands Experiment, part 1 in the DISCOVERY OF MAN series

In the mid-21st century, the world is overpopulated, and work has largely been taken over by algorithms, machines and robotized factories. The unemployed world population leads a withdrawn existence, addicted to the virtual world. Jack Newman grows up in a residential group for ex-drug addicts. The virtual world does not appeal to him - he prefers to be outside.

That changes when he discovers Alpha War, in which an alien invasion must be averted. Jack does everything he can to win this infamous game. But is it really just a game or is there more to it? And what about his twin brother Redmond, whose existence is denied by everything and everyone? What is his connection to the thousand islands experiment, once started by the shadowy Alpha civilization?

Jack starts investigating. The truth turns out to be more complex than he could ever have imagined.



The Machine Plague, part 2 in the DISCOVERY OF MAN series

Genetically engineered prodigy Jack Newman realizes that humanity has little time left and creates a mentally fused quadruplet with almost unlimited brainpower and creativity. Governments and mega-corporations see this AI as a threat and force Jack to work on other things than he would like.

Jack's twin brother Redmond, whose life he occasionally catches a glimpse of, is stranded in the Thousand Islands experiment. On a distant world he fights the Feind, a hostile civilization that is preparing an invasion of Earth.

An interstellar space fleet could still save humanity, but the powers that be are more interested in an a-mortality program for the elite. What can Jack do to save humanity?



The Feind Invasion, part 3 in the DISCOVERY OF MAN series

Late 21st century. Jack Newman is seen as an enemy of the state. The a-mortality program he helped develop is only affordable for the elite and has caused the world to be ravaged by revolutions and civil wars.

The torn society cannot resist when Earth is invaded by the Feind, an aggressive alien army feared by Jack.

Can Jack count on the Alpha civilization now that billions of people have already died? Although all seems lost, Jack tries to find his brother Redmond and in doing so he encounters the true intentions behind the Thousand Islands experiment, and the question of whether humanity still has a future.

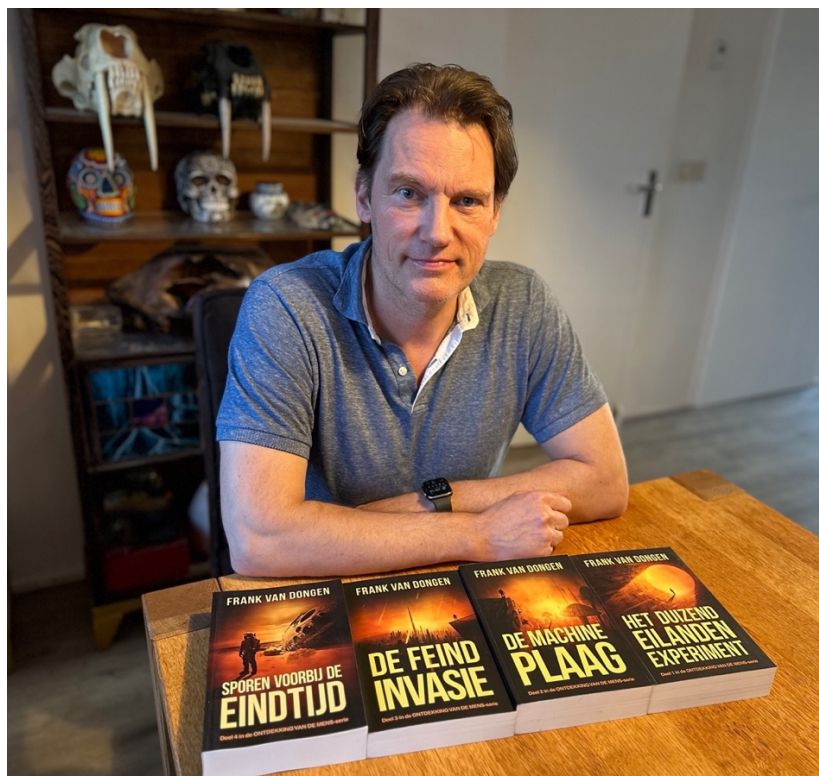


Spores beyond the End Times, part 4 in the DISCOVERY OF MAN series

Jack Newman has finally found his identical twin brother Redmond just before his death on a distant planet from the Thousand Islands experiment. While the Alpha civilization fights the Feind, Redmond gives the a-mortal Jack the all-encompassing task of ensuring that his tribe of Intelligent Genetic Design clones survives the end of time by crossing over to the next universe.

To find out if this is even possible, Jack must try to get in touch with the technologically much more advanced Alpha civilization. Why did they help humanity and what are their long-term goals and plans? And what danger does the reborn civilization that once caused the machine plague, narrowly defeated by a monster alliance between the Alpha civilization and the Feind, pose?

Jack finally finds out by whom and for what purpose he was put on the world as an IGD clone. He has now lived for centuries and tries to unite his last living kind to achieve the seemingly impossible. Who will survive the End Times?



About the author

Since studying evolutionary biology, I have led a double life.

As a manager, director, vice president and consultant in the pharmaceutical and biotech industry, I have been traveling the world for three decades and contributing to the development and marketing of innovative therapies.

As a writer, I develop thought experiments about our future and the consequences of our interactions with artificial and alien intelligences.

My first novel, the Blueprint, is a raw, philosophical exploration of the downfall of man in the far future on an alien world.

In the Discovery of Man tetralogy, I investigate the near future of man.

Outside of work, I try to withdraw from online existence as much as possible. I prefer to produce rather than to consume and lose myself in social media and virtual entertainment.

I have three daughters and live with my Mexican wife in the woods of the east part of the Netherlands, close to the German border.