

**REFUTATION OF THE AGGLOMERATION OF FUNCTION IN COELHO'S *THE ALCHEMIST*: MARCEL'S IDEA ON RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISM**

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[hariyono@unitomo.ac.id](mailto:hariyono@unitomo.ac.id)**Abstract**

This research focuses on aspect of refutation of agglomeration of function in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* based on Marcel's idea on religious existentialism. The researchers manage qualitative research using a novel, *The Alchemist* as the source of data. The research findings show that *The Alchemist* is the novel that is steeped in existentialism ideology which emphasizes the idea of a person's necessity to create an authentic and unique life. The ~~novel's author uses the~~ main character in his novel is Santiago, as a medium for depicting how a person lives and creates his authentic life. ~~This~~ It is proven by Santiago's decisions starting from becoming a shepherd and find treasure in the pyramid. Apart from containing atheist existentialist ideology, this novel also contains the religious view of existentialism which ~~according~~ relates to Marcel, a religious existentialist, one of the indicators of religious existentialism is the refutation of the agglomeration of functions. Santiago refuses to be an ordinary shepherd by adding some more value to himself and his life by having the ability to read many books, believing in the interpretation of his dreams, and deciding to make those dreams come true then he becomes an adventurer.

Keywords: *Existentialism; Marcel; Refutation of the Agglomeration of Function; Religious Existentialism.*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Many existentialists thinkers are well-known atheists like Nietzsche, Sartre, and Jasper. In fact Gabriel Marcel is a religious existentialist who has great role in shaping the idea of existentialistic from theistic view (Ogundele, 2018, Perry, 1989). This term is originated from the notion that life is viewed from an optimistic perspective rather than from a pessimistic one, as an atheist such as Sartre once stated. Related to this problem, the researchers use Marcel's point of view of this hopeful theology to a literary work which was written by Paulo Coelho entitled *The Alchemist* in 1988.

The researcher studies this problem from some previous studies that they have been conducted by combining philosophical or psychological ideas with Coelho's *the Alchemist*, e.g.

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Christina (2009) who studied an optimistic view of Santiago character, while Cahya, (2022) studied philosophy of existentialism was the key point of studying Santiago in the novel, and it was also done by Nuri (2018) who studied the existentialism in his thesis for S1 degree. However, the researcher applies that the all focus only on common existentialistic views tend to be atheistic. While on the contrary, Santiago, the main character in the novel is deeply a religious or a man who is enriched by spiritual thoughts. The researcher studies that Santiago has strong tendency. Therefore, they apply the ideas of Marcel to read and view the novel.

As an existentialist, Marcel like other existentialist has the common ideas of existentialism, namely living the reality in life is more important than living in unreal life by trying to understand the meaning of life. The truth is not always be found on rational things, someone who has dream or plan has to materialize his dream or plan, everyone is unique and one way to create the unique and authentic life is by daring to take a different path from other, everybody is responsible for himself for the universe does not care about his life and the fact that death is always waiting for him, and everybody is expected to create an authentic life and develop the potential in life. But, the researchers also study that a religious existentialist like Marcel formulated that religious existentialist saw the world with that three (3) points which are found ~~finding~~ higher reality in life and the presence of God, refutation of the agglomeration of function, and relating God's existence to the relation with others. In this study ~~project~~, therefore the researchers have the objective of study that is on how the refutation of the agglomeration of function is portrayed in Coelho's *the Alchemist*

## B.RESEARCH METHODS

In order to address the research question and characterize and interpret the quotations—which take the shape of sentences, phrases, or declarations—that demonstrate the debunking of the agglomeration of function in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* as portrayed through Santiago, the researchers apply the descriptive qualitative research methodology. According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive research entails examining the data to find recurrent themes, patterns, or ideas, after which those categories are described and interpreted.

Hermeneutics is a suitable research technique to select since it is the theory and practice of interpretation, and the purpose of this research is to describe and interpret the evidence that

has been gathered (Paterson and Higgs, 2005). The hermeneutics approach constantly provides opportunity for investigation, reconstruction, or improvement from alternative pertinent interpretations rather than focusing on just one interpretation. This approach is thought to be a good place to start when conducting critical and reflective research (Gadamer in Chang, 2022).

Hermeneutics contends that there is no right or wrong way to interpret a book or an actual occurrence. As long as everything stays inside the general context, everyone is free to interpret it in accordance with their regular routines and presumptions (Oevermann in Chang, 2022). Thus, this method gives researchers more freedom to investigate as well as express their ideas. Therefore, the words, phrases, and assertions that express Santiago's experience of religious existentialism in refutation of the agglomeration of function will be analyzed and interpreted in this research.

The source of data is *The Alchemist*, the English version of *O Alquimista* Novel written by Paulo Coelho, published by Harper Collins with ISBN 978-0-06-231500-7 in 2014. The techniques of data collection used by the researchers are adopting a forestructure of understanding, deciding the representative data, and collecting and classifying data (Gillo, 2021). Meanwhile, the techniques of data analysis used by the researchers are organizing and preparing the data collected, reading the data holistically, examining the data in detail as well as identifying themes and sub-themes or variation, then developing the data, and the last is writing the discussion by interpreting the data (Gillo, 2021).

## **C.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The researchers find that there are four (4) evidences that Santiago refutes the agglomeration of function within the framework of Marcel's idea of religious existentialism:

### **A.Having the Ability of Reading Books**

In addition to herding sheep for a living, Santiago is a shepherd child who enjoys reading books. He reads his book while he waits his turn to sell his wool to the merchant. Then he hears a girl's voice, expressing how impressed she is to discover that there is a shepherd who can read. Santiago's refutation of the agglomeration of function is proven through the expression of this girl. The following quotation gives validity to the statement:

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So the boy sat on the steps of the shop and took a book from his bag.  
 "I didn't know shepherd knew how to read," said a girl's voice him. (Coelho, 2014:13)

Based on the mentioned quotation, the researchers assume that Santiago wants to be more than a mere shepherd caring to his sheep without making any advances in knowledge. This is obvious from the girl's emotion of admiration upon discovering that Santiago, a shepherd boy, is reading. The girl's saying, "I didn't know shepherd knew how to read," which suggests that shepherds, generally, cannot read. All they do is herding their sheep into pastures and selling the wool, which are what shepherds typically do. Hence, Santiago does not want to be like other shepherds and he learns how to read so that he can read book to make himself more knowledgeable. As this study is in existentialism point of view, the thesis writer also studies that Santiago experiences the point number one and four of existentialism.

According to Perry, the first point of existentialism is that experiencing life as it is more important than merely trying to figure out its purpose. The researchers discover that by living with actual sheep and engaging in shepherd-related activities like herding sheep and selling wool, Santiago lives his reality. But in addition to being a shepherd, Santiago also encounters point number four—that is, the idea that each person is unique and authentic. Santiago's existence becomes authentic because he possesses a skill that not many shepherds do: reading. Therefore, Santiago refuses the idea of the agglomeration of function and lives his reality as a shepherd who is also literate.

## **B.Trying to Know the Interpretation of His Dream and Deciding to Realize It**

Santiago gets two same dreams about a treasure buried around the pyramids. He then makes the decision to ask the Gypsy woman what the interpretation of his dream is. After giving it some thought, Santiago chooses to take a chance after the Gypsy woman describes what he must do to go to the pyramids in order to find the treasure. Santiago's decision proves his refutation of the agglomeration of function. The following quotation gives validity to the statement:

Another trick, the boy thought. But he decided to take a chance.  
(Coelho, 2014:18)

The researcher examines how Santiago declines to be a typical shepherd based on the mentioned quotation. His choice to take a gamble and go out on a quest to find the treasure he sees in his dream represents evidence of this. From the phrase "but he decided to take a chance," it can be understood that Santiago wants to be a remarkable shepherd by following a different path in life than the other shepherds. He makes the decision to accept and carry out the Gypsy woman's advice to follow his dream and visit the pyramids in order find his treasure. The choice he makes further proves that, in accordance with existentialist theory, Santiago tries to live up to his full potential while living an authentic life.

Santiago experiences existentialism's points four and six. The fourth point is that each person is authentic and unique. By daring to take another path and surrendering his sheep in order to reach the pyramids, Santiago authenticates his life. Santiago embodies the sixth point of existentialism—that is, that people are free to choose how to fulfill their potential and become more authentic versions of themselves—by taking the risk of visiting the pyramids. Santiago decides to visit the pyramids, which proves his commitment to truthfulness. By learning all he can from his travels, Santiago can reach his full potential in life. However, in addition to living an authentic life and maximizing his potential, Santiago uses his choice to refuse the idea of the agglomeration of function. It indicates that Santiago desires to become more valuable than just an average shepherd by using his travels and whatever lessons he may learn from it as a tool.

### **C. Wanting to be an Adventurer**

The researchers investigate Santiago's dissatisfaction with his life being only an agglomeration of function. As he moves forward on his trip, he hopes to discover more of life than what is already known. In order to raise money for his travels, Santiago sells his sheep. Santiago meets a boy who speaks Spanish similarly to him as soon as he arrives in North Africa. The boy warns Santiago about the possibility of thieves there who may rob all of his money and disrupt his travels. However, it comes out that the boy is the one stealing, taking all of Santiago's money with him. For a little while, Santiago feels hopeless in this moment. Then he recalls that his journey is meant to make him a more experienced shepherd than others and become an adventurer. Reminding himself of his true purpose, Santiago pushes aside his feelings of sorrow

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and misery. Santiago believes that this drive to overcome hardship is evidence of the refutation of the agglomeration of function. The following quotation supports the above claim:

“I’m an adventurer, looking for treasure,” he said to himself.  
(Coelho, 2014:37)

The researcher examines Santiago's refusal to accept failure as a result of losing his money by citing the quotation mentioned earlier. It is reflected in his statement, "I'm an adventurer," in which Santiago tells himself that he has always wanted to be anything other than a shepherd. In order to take the chance to visit the pyramids and sell his sheep, he wishes to gain more expertise and knowledge. Because of this, Santiago pushes aside his sadness and despair state following his loss of money and tells himself that he wants to be more than just an average shepherd—he wants to be an explorer who goes farther than other shepherds.

The researchers investigate how Santiago's choice reflects some of his existentialism experiences. Santiago first encounters point number three, which calls for the practice and realization of thinking. In order to make his trip to the pyramids a reality, Santiago sells his sheep. In addition, Santiago embodies the fourth point—that each person is authentic and unique—by daring to follow another path than other shepherds, selling his sheep in order to go on a journey. The researchers also discover that Santiago experiences the fifth and last point, which is that humans are responsible for their own lives as death is always nearby and the universe does not give any thought about what people choose to do. After losing his money, Santiago takes responsibility for his actions by refusing to give up and by reminding himself of his life's ultimate goal—becoming an adventurer and discovering his treasure.

#### **D.Continuing his Journey to Find the Treasure**

Santiago keeps going and eventually arrives to the oasis. There, Santiago meets the alchemist who advises him to continue on his mission and assures him that he will be his companion. He also meets Fatima, the oasis girl who becomes his love of life. After meeting Fatima and becoming a counselor, Santiago initially believes that he does not need to travel in search of the treasure because his life is now ideal. However, the alchemist reminds him of his Personal Legend, which states that if he does not pursue it, he will later regret it. When Santiago's career as a counselor comes to an end, he will look back and regret it. Santiago

chooses to accompany the alchemist in his search for the treasure after learning that. Santiago's choice demonstrates how he refutes the agglomeration of functions. The following quotation supports the above statement:

“I’m going with you,” the boy said. (Coelho, 2014:86)

The researcher concludes from the mentioned quotation that Santiago is not interested in retiring as a counselor without adding greater significance to his life. It is obvious from his choice to seek his Personal Legend and carry on with his journey after the alchemist's advice. Santiago is not satisfied with being a retired counselor without having special experience in his life. In relation to this occurrence, the researchers investigate how Santiago rejects the idea of the agglomeration of functions. Santiago has the desire to go on a journey to discover his Personal Legend. Refusing to accept his status as a retired counselor shows that he has made the decision not to become a counselor permanently, which means that he wants to act as a complete human being rather than as an object who acts according to societal norms and not his own desires. According to research from an existentialist perspective, Santiago also experiences a process of becoming his authentic self and realizing his potential to improve his previous situation.

The researcher finds that by choosing to go on journey with the alchemist, Santiago transforms his life into the authentic one. He want to stand out from those who merely exist in the oasis without taking any particular action to fulfill their potential. Santiago has lived an authentic life and fulfilled his potential if he makes it to the pyramid and finds his treasure.

## **D.CONCLUSION**

After analyzing all ideas above, the researchers conclude that Santiago is one who experiences religious existentialism by his refutation on agglomeration of function. It can be seen in four situations, first, having the ability of reading books unlike other ordinary shepherds who are known to not be able to read books. Second, trying to know the interpretation of his dream and deciding to realize it so that he can develop his potential in life. Third, wanting to continue his journey and become an adventurer despite losing his money. And the last, continuing his journey to find the treasure instead of staying in the oasis and becoming a counselor.

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