

The Analysis of Things and Signs Concepts by St. Augustine Found in *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* Novel (Semiotic Study)

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ABSTRACT

In the light to St. Augustine's implementation, this small-scale study sought to discover 'things' and 'signs,' both of which refer to symbols contained in the novel *Khotbah di Atas Bukit*. The descriptive qualitative method was used as the research design in order to achieve the research's goal. This study's data included words, sentences, and paragraphs from the novel's dialogues that represented 'things' and 'signs,' as previously stated. *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* Novel itself served as the data source. The area that has been analyzed by other researches was found in Islamic values and prophetic dimensions in the novel while the symbols (things and signs) as one types of figurative languages has become the aspect that has not been yet explored. The findings revealed that things to be used were discovered between the main character himself, namely Barman, who was more concerned with worldly materials, and Barman's anxiety in facing this life. Meanwhile, things to enjoy were described by Barman's opposite character, Humam. Humam's consistent association of the worlds with God's existence influenced Barman's perspective on life and attitude.

Keywords: St. Augustine's concept, Symbols, *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* Novel

INTRODUCTION

When describing situations, conditions, or other things to other people, humans, as social beings, must use words that are relevant to the context in order for the meaning to be understood fluently. Every word spoken by people has meaning, even if it is not always delivered clearly and it may be assumed that it has no meaning. Furthermore, the written words have meaning since both spoken and written words have meaning, the meaning may refer to something else. This kind of aspects could be

represented and delivered through literature.

Literature, like other disciplines, has played significant role in human life. It has its own body of knowledge that can be studied in depth.

It also provides language as a medium for conveying meaning, idea, concept, and so on through the criteria of what is considered as literature. In terms of literature, under the influence of the technology industry, Indonesian literature is rapidly developing. Each author has contributed to the creation of Indonesian literature. A novel by Kuntowijoyo entitled *Khutbah di Atas*

Bukit which published in 2003 is one of Indonesian literary works. *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* novel was chosen since it contains philosophical thoughts in which readers would be confronted with a long description of the nature of life, death, happiness, and the mysteries of human destiny through the use of figurative language such as symbols.

The novel stories about an old man named Barman who has retired and taken care by his children. Barman is also accompanied by a woman named Popi, who serves all the need of the old man's life. Then, Barman met elderly man named Human who is in his age. Their views and attitudes towards life are completely opposite. Barman always thinks about materials stuff and feels worries toward it. While Human is more calm, religious, and he follows Sufi's values. At the end of the novel, Barman harms himself with his white horse with a crushed body and a face full of blood. Popi, the young woman, returns to her previous work as an prostitute. Additionally, A novel's story is also thought to have many moral lessons and acts of ethical kindness, as well as a message and advice. Due to the content of the story is major in character education, the novel, as a genre of literary works, employs good diction in relating the content of the story. (Widyahening and Eko Wardhani, 2016)

As it has been stated previously, this research is intended to analyze things and signs which regarded as symbols found in *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* novel since understanding and knowing To be able to imagine what happens in the story and feel the

emotions of the story, the meaning of symbols as one of the figurative language found in a novel is required (Harya, 2017). In terms of symbols, the author of the novel employed symbols as to provide clues to understand feeling, experiences, and/or meaning of the characters by referring to unrecognizable things that are shared throughout the story. When communicating meaning to readers or society by describing situations, conditions, or other things, one should use words that are relevant to the context so that the meaning is understood fluently. Every word spoken by people has meaning, even if it is not always delivered clearly and may be assumed to be meaningless. In addition, the written words have meaning. Because spoken and written words have meaning, the meaning could be referring to something else. The literal meaning of "white," for example, is the color of fresh snow or milk, but it can also refer to something else, such as purity. As a result, both types of words with meanings that refer to other things can be considered as symbols. It coincides with Augustine in (Nurrachman, 2014) stated that written text is misunderstood for two reasons. They are obscured by either unknown or ambiguous signs. Signs can be literal or figurative in nature. They are referred to as literal when they are used to define the things for which they were instituted. When a literal sign is used to represent something else, a figurative sign is produced.

The grand theory guiding to discuss the symbols of the novel is the theory by St. Augustine writing of the

interpretation of Scripture which leading him to the attention of Semioticians and literary theorists. It is highly known that semiotics is the study of signs and symbols. The theory by St. Augustine was discussed and taken from Nurrachman's book entitled *Classical Critical Theory* published in 2014. Referring to Augustine in Nurrachman (2014), signs are the same with things. The using of thing is to signify something while the words are also things in which signification is the whole use of each word as things. However, if all signs are things, not all things are signs. In addition, the discussion of signs from Augustine leads to the discussion of the reasons why things written (such as words) are not understood. The meaning of it is obscured by either unknown or ambiguous signs. Since signs for instance the words, are either literal or figurative. (Augustine in Nurrachman's book, 2014).

Augustine in Nurrachman (2014) stated that signs are things objects which are used to objects something. A sign is a thing which makes one to assume of something other than the impression itself. Signs, according to Augustine, are the means by which things are acquired. It would appear that his term for the relation of signs to things is 'signify'. So we have, (1) things learned by signs, and (2) signs signifying things. St. Augustine stated that Signs are things which are used to indicate anything, and words are things whose sole purpose is to imply something. However, even if all signs are things, not all things are signs. Things are learned by signs. Things

can also be indicators of other things. Words, for example, are a sign whose primary intention is to define. For no one uses words unless they are utilized to imply something. What it is called as "signs" can be inferred from this; they are objects used to represent something. As a result, every sign is also a thing.

Additionally, a sign is significant since it notes to something else, and that something is essentially the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for Augustine. As a result, the sign is valuable not as a pleasant experience in and of itself, but instead in its action of symbolic representation toward God. Signs, on the other hand, cannot embody God since God is ineffable. When Augustine speaks of enjoyment, it is not enjoyment of the aesthetic surface of the sign, but of its ultimate signified. It means that the surface hides, but then yields, a depth of intellectual beauty. Besides that, some things are meant to be enjoyed while others are meant to be used. This world must be used, not enjoyed, in order for God's invisible things to be clearly seen and acknowledged by the things produced (Augustine in Nurrachman, 2014). Regarding the significance of things and signs considering and relating to symbols as one of figurative languages, this research is aimed to discover it in the form of descriptions.

Several studies have been also conducted related to the analysis of *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* Novel. The first study was conducted by Zaynul Faiz in (2020) whose research entitled *Estetika Islam: Analisis Novel Khotbah Di Atas Bukit* Karya Kuntowijoyo. The

research was aimed to find out the aesthetics of Islam's values in the novel through the conversations and expressions of the characters in the novel. The second one was done by Muhammad Ayyinna Yusron El Farouq, and Umi Machmudah in 2020) entitled *Prophetical Dimension in Khotbah Di Atas Bukit Novel by Kuntowijoyo*. The finding revealed that the novel addressed the concepts of aqidah (belief), khauf (worry), tawakal (disclosure), and raja' (expectation). At the centre of the novel's making, the dimensions of transformation, freedom, and spirituality portray the ethical prophetic aspect of prophet of islam. Regarding the previous studies above, the similarity between the two studies was Islamic values, and Prophetical dimension found in the similar novel as the data source. Meanwhile, the novelty of this current research was to analyze symbols which represented by the term 'things' and 'signs' concept proposed by St. Augustine.

METHOD

The data in this study are narratives, prologues, monologues, and dialogues that reflect things and signs in *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* novel. Data were collected from the primary data source, namely *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* novel written by Kuntowijoyo. The steps of collecting data are classifying data, analyzing data, and then reporting the result of the analysis. The technique of collecting data uses a documentation study. The data analysis technique of this study consists of three activities

that co-occur, namely (1) data condensation, (2) data display, (3) drawing and verifying conclusion. The process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials is referred to as data condensation. Data condensation refers to the process of deciding, concentrating, rationalizing, separating, and/or modifying data that appear in the full collection of documents (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, paperwork, and other empirical materials. Data condensation is a type of analysis in which data is improved, arranged, centered, and structured in order to bring and confirm "final" findings. The next step is to display the data. A display is a well-organized, concentrated collection of information that allows for interpretation of the results and actions to be taken. The third step is drawing and verifying conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 2014).

In data condensation, the researcher classified the words, sentences, and paragraphs in the novel's dialogues and monologues as not presenting the symbols. The chosen data were selected purposively. Then, the data were displayed by presenting the selected quotation and analysis in the form of descriptions or explanations. The last step was concluding the finding of the analysis. The flow of this research analysis made extensive utilization

interpretation and a deep understanding of all research data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, several quotations from the novel related to the focus of this research were chosen to represent the findings of the analysis. As Augustine in Nurrachman (2014) stated that sign is a thing that signifies to another object, this could be represented by the quotation such as “*Popi membenahi kamar tidur, menatap sekali lagi bantal Barman yang basah.*”, the words of “*bantal basah*” is a signs in form of thing (*bantal basah*) that signifies Barman just has cried. Furthermore, for Augustine, there are things to be enjoyed and things to be used. Things to be enjoyed are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Augustine in Nurrachman’s book, 2014). It could be said that *things to be enjoyed* refer to one’s belief, or religion. Things to be enjoyed in this novel could be seen through this quotation. “*Tak ada yang aneh dalam hidup. Atau semuanya aneh. Semuanya bisa dimengerti atau semuanya tak bisa dimengerti. Itulah soalnya. Dan aku telah memutuskan untuk tidak berpikir lagi. Tak ada yang perlu kuceritakan, pap. Apakah papi merasa perlu mencari jejak burung-burung sawah yang berlalu? Tidak. Itu sia-sia. Hiduplah, hidup.*””*Ya itulah kepercayaanmu, pap. Eh agamaku mungkin*”. The quotation is from Popi’s dialogue when Barman asked her to tell something “weird” in her life. Then she explained it to Barman but he does not have the same opinion with Popi. Barman stated that the way Popi thought of her life is not *civilized*

way. Popi faced her life based on the rules or the ways of her belief.

The novel also contained objects as signs or symbols. Firstly, the yellow bird in its novel is an object stands for another thing. The yellow bird signifies the freedom of Barman. Barman himself wants to be free from metropolitan people living in big cities surrounded by material things. An illustration of this could be understood by the quotation from the novel “*Ya ingin berdamai dengan kabut, rumput, pohonan, gunduk, semak, dan dingin bukit. Berdamai dengan alam untuk setiap kali mengucapkan selamat.*”. The quotation indirectly states that fog, grass, tress, hills and so on are things owned by nature and also are not related with city life. Barman wants to be in peace and freedom by exploring the nature by himself and leaving Popi for a while.

Additionally, the other thing referring to another thing is Humam, who became a companion for Barman on his lonely journey. For Barman, Humam represents life's guidance. As previously stated, Barman is an elderly man who spends the rest of his life with Popi, on a hill, and is only concerned with himself and Popi. Barman rarely communicates with his son, Bobi. Since meeting Humam, Barman has been easily influenced by Human's advice on how to deal with this life especially God’s existence. Then, the next quotation was stated by Humam to Barman, “*Tinggalkan segala milikmu. Dan engkau tidak lagi merdeka. Engkau mengira itu kekuasaan, tidak. Itu membuatmu takluk. Membelenggunu!*”. Humam was described as the ideal man in

Barman's life. He gives positive thoughts for the old man to face life, even though Barman perceives Humam intervening in his life by talking religious discussions and always relating the discussions to life. It is described in the following novel quotation, *“Ia (Barman) bersandar pada kayu kandang. Sekop di tangannya. Ketakutan kalau-kalau laki-laki yang datang itu (Humam) akan menyusahkannya lambat-lambat timbul dalam benaknya. Pergilah, Humam. Tidak, jangan pergi. Aku memerlukanmu, sungguh.”*.

As Augustine stated about things to be enjoyed and things to be used as thing signifies something, and signs signifying things. It could be seen through this quotation from the novel *“pasti gelas anggur akan disuruhnya direguk, kemudian tubuhnya hangat serasa terbakar dan perempuan itu akan berubah jadi makhluk yang indah di matanya, menggairahkan.”*. The words written by Kuntowijoyo are the things as significations. The things signify that Barman as the main character of its novel has high sexual desire to women especially Popi his beloved assistant. The words *“gelas anggur”* signify that Barman has high class habitual in which most of them would love to drink wine regularly and always related to women. The next signification symbolized by words is *“Dalam saat-saat kelakar ia selalu menyebut dirinya sebagai “tahu rasanya perempuan hanya dari potretnya”*. The quotation above signifies that Barman has “dated” with many women before since the word of *“rasanya”* refers to the other meaning which could be as “sexuality”. The

previous quotations discussed could be regarded as things to be used as Barman spent most of his time and money which was given by God in the form of materials and worldly stuff, for his personal satisfaction. It is consistent with Augustine's statement that to use, in contrast, is to implement whatever resources are available to achieve what one wants and needs, if it is an appropriate object of desire; an unauthorized use, on the other hand, should be referred to as a violence. The word of unlawful or unauthorized means that one should use the ‘object’ that has Given by God in a positive way not the opposite.

“Dunia adalah Barman tua dan Popi yang muda dan cantik” is a thing as a word symbolizing that Barman only concern of himself and Popi. He does not focus on his family, and the life after the death. This quotation also refers to the meaning of true life for the old Barman that he does not give attention to the other things but Popi. He only wants to spend his time in peace with Popi. In relation to Austine's concept in Nurrachman (2014) about things to be used, the dialogue also refers it as Barman is the type of man who is always concerned with his own personal satisfaction. Until his death, he had only infrequently remembered God and life after death.

In terms of things to be enjoyed, it could be seen from the conversation between Barman and Humam. Humam said that *“nikmatilah, kita sedang berjalan. Di bawahmu adalah rumput, air, tanah, batu-batu”*. Atau cobalah berlomba dengan bayang-bayangmu. Burung, udara, pancing, sungai.

Awan, gunduk tanah, pepohonan. Sahabat kita yang baru dan mengagumkan akrabnya! Berjalan ialah hidup kita!” Humam’s character is the opposite of Barman’s. based on the conversation between the two, Humam’s statement is the representation of things to be enjoyed since ‘nikmatilah perjalanan’ means that it is about enjoying nature as it would bring peace in life in which life, or nature has become one with God. It coincides with Augustine in Nurrachman (2014) stated that The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are thus the true objects of pleasure.

Furthermore, the other conversation between Barman and Humam such as “*aku memiliki kuda di rumah,*” Barman memecahkan kesunyian. “*Aku memilih tanpa kuda.*” “*Itu akan lebih enak?*” “*Mm, biarkan otot bergerak. Karena hakikat kita adalah gerak. Dan, waktu pun berlalu.*” “*Kuda dapat menambah kesenangan.*” “*Kita adalah kuda itu, Bung “terkurung dalam dunia. Tanpa pelepasan harapan. Atau harapan yang selalu hanyalah harapan. Dunia ini adalah kandang kita. Penjara!*” also showed that the word “kuda” signified as human, person. Humam considered that Barman and himself are like a ‘horse’ that were bonded in this world.

“*Lupakan semuanya, bahkan dirimu. Yang ada ialah pohon-pohon, rumput-rumput. Engkau makhluk yang paling berbahagia. Waktu ialah untuk dinikmati. Ruang ialah tempat kita bergerak. Gerak ialah hidup kita.*”, this quotation was stated by Human which also represent things to be enjoyed as leaving worldly things,

including oneself, makes achieving immortality from the Eternal easier. Humam’s statement implies that humans must return to God, as Augustine stated that The only thing to be enjoyed is God, who is one’s greatest true and important enjoyment (Nurrachman, 2014). In terms of things written (words) are not understood as signs might have the intervention of literal and figurative meaning for Augustine in Nurrachman (2014), there are some illustrations or examples in the form of quotations from the novel which is assumed could describe clearly toward the argumentation of Augustine such as “*Kelopak-kelopak bunga gugur dari kepalanya.*” signifying to another thing which is the hair or Barman who has been old and got hair loss. The author of the novel uses figurative language which is a metaphor to describe Barman’s condition. It could not be directly understood clearly by the readers since it uses figurative language. “*Hidup ini tak berharga untuk dilanjutkan! ... Bunuhlah dirimu!*” *seru Barman.*” this quotation is from Barman’s statement to his “people” before he decided to end his life by jumping from the mountain side. The words written or so-called as signs are not understood since it uses figurative language to represent its meaning.

Furthermore, the white horse symbolizes Barman’s desire such women. In this novel, the white horse described as beautiful horse just like women coming in Barman’s life. This is the following quotation described the beauty of the horse belongs to Barman, “*Kuda itu putih bulunya,*

seperti gumpalan susu, Nampak sangat bersih dalam cahaya pagi.”. The white horse is an object stands for another thing which is as woman. Therefore, it could be said that the white horse is also signified as Popi. The similarity between the white horse and Popi are both of the two is owned by Barman and they could not go anywhere freely since Barman treats them well even if they want to be free.

As Augustine in Nurrachman (2014) said that this world should be used, not enjoyed, in order for God's hidden things to be clearly seen and acknowledged by the things created, it could be seen from the quotation such as *“Barman berteriak kegirangan ketika seekor burung menabraknya dalam kabut itu, ia mengumpat: “Matamu,” dan tertawa. Barman merasa dekat dengan alam. Ia berpikir, bahwa kelahirannya yang kedua ialah kelahirannya dengan alam ... Seekor burung berbulu kuning melintas di dekatnya dan hinggap di sebuah pohon. Ia menuju ke pohon itu dan bersiul, sampai burung itu terbang.”* this quotation is the illustration of *things to be used* which birds as one of God's creatures could be used to know and understand that God exists in human's life. In this novel, the author (Kuntowijoyo) did not mention directly of Barman's belief or religion but Barman is consistently associated with a “prophet” who has the people following him.

Referring to Augustine's statement in Nurrachman (2014) who argued that every sign is a thing., for that which is not a thing is nothing at all. But not every thing is also a sign,

an illustration of this might be understood by understanding this quotation of the novel, *“Barman merasa lelah ketika pada sore hari ia tiba dirumah.”*. The word of “house” is a word but it does not always stand for another thing. This “house” means a place where one's living not another thing which hides “something” from the literal meaning. The other example of not every ‘thing’ is a sign comes from the following quotation of the novel, *“Sesungguhnya Barman sangat lapar. Ketika ia terbangun, yang pertama kali tertangkap oleh matanya ialah roti dan mentega itu.”* (chapter II) bread and the butter does not refer to another thing. The meaning of it is only a food deserved in the morning for breakfast.

CONCLUSION

Spoken and written words are not the only things that have meaning; there are a large number of other things that have meaning and contain symbols, such as humans. Humanity, as God's creature, is a 'thing' symbolized from various perspectives. They could represent God's existence, the physics of one, and so on. The symbols contained by everything exist in this world for various reasons, such as representing a thing hidden by the other things.

Since this study employed St. Augustine's theory of Semantics, symbols were considered for 'things' and 'signs' in this small-scale study. Augustine pioneered two categories of things: 'things to be enjoyed' and 'things to be used.' Things to be enjoyed refer to God's existence as the true enjoyment, whereas things to be

used refer to the world itself, which must be used in a positive way so that it is not violated by humans. Regarding the finding of this research, things to be used found in the novel were related to several aspects. It referred to Barman himself who prioritized himself and a beautiful woman named Popi. He did not concern with God's existence but worldly materials. In contradiction, Human is the representation of things to be enjoyed. In the novel, Humam was described as an elderly man with a spiritual attitude in facing his life. He has consistently been concerned with life after death, and he has been

preparing for it for as long as he has lived in this world. As a result, Barman saw Humam as the 'guidance' to lead him in the right direction. Barman had a desire to change like Humam because Humam had shown him how to be free from worldliness.

This study has several limitations because it only discusses and analyzes one type of figurative language, namely symbols. It is suggested for further research to discuss more deeply because *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* is a novel that contains persuasive and impactful aspects for readers, particularly Muslims, by utilizing other literary devices.

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