

Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's optimism in Human Will: Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way

Pesimisme Schopenhauer Dan Optimisme Nietzsche Dalam Kehendak Manusia: Perspektif Islam Sebagai Jalan Tengah

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Abstract

This research seeks to re-examine the concept of will as a metaphysical problem in modern philosophy through a dialogue between Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Islamic views. The philosophical problem that is the main focus is how the human will can be understood not just as pessimism and optimism from psychological impulses, but as an ontological structure that affirms the relationship between suffering (pessimism), affirmation of life (optimism), and participation in the Divine will. In Schopenhauer's view, he saw life as a manifestation of blind metaphysical will, a blind and irrational impulse that plunged man into endless suffering. On the contrary, Nietzsche emphasized the will to power as a principle of optimism that gives birth to new values through the courage to face suffering so as to achieve it (amor fati). This study uses the dialogical interpretation method to trace the dialectic between Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism about blind metaphysical will and Nietzsche's ontological affirmation through will to power, with the concepts of irādah, qudrah, and kasb in Islamic theology as a middle way. The results of this analysis show that Islam not only becomes an ethical position between pessimism and optimism in the human will, but presents a metaphysical reconciliation, the human will functions as a form of conscious participation in the irādah of Ilāhiyyah, not a negation of it. This concept transforms suffering from a mere existential condition into a purification space that fosters spiritual awareness, and rearranges the meaning of the will as a unity between effort (ikhtiar) and surrender (tawakal). The philosophical contribution of this research lies in the offer of the concept of participatory irādah as a mediator between the negation of Schopenhauerian will and the affirmation of Nietzschean will, which presents an alternative metaphysical paradigm of human will in relation to the source of transcendence.

Keywords : Will, Irādah, Pessimism, Optimism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berupaya menelaah kembali konsep kehendak (*will*) sebagai problem metafisis dalam filsafat modern melalui dialog antara Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, dan pandangan Islam. Persoalan filosofis yang menjadi fokus utama ialah bagaimana kehendak manusia dapat dipahami bukan sekedar pesimisme dan optimisme dari dorongan psikologis, melainkan sebagai struktur ontologis yang menegaskan hubungan antara penderitaan (pesimisme), afirmasi kehidupan (optimisme), dan partisipasi terhadap kehendak Ilahi. Dalam pandangan Schopenhauer melihat kehidupan sebagai manifestasi dari *blind metaphysical will* suatu dorongan buta dan irasional yang menjerumuskan manusia dalam penderitaan tanpa akhir. Sebaliknya, Nietzsche menegaskan *will to power* sebagai prinsip optimisme yang melahirkan nilai baru melalui keberanian menghadapi penderitaan sehingga mencapai (*amor fati*). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode interpretasi dialogis untuk menelusuri dialektika antara pesimisme metafisis Schopenhauer tentang *blind metaphysical will* dan afirmasi ontologis Nietzsche melalui *will to power*, dengan konsep *irādah*, *qudrah*, dan *kasb* dalam teologi Islam sebagai jalan tengah. Hasil analisis penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Islam tidak hanya menjadi posisi etis di antara pesimisme dan optimisme dalam kehendak manusia, tetapi menghadirkan rekonsiliasi metafisis, kehendak manusia berfungsi sebagai bentuk partisipasi sadar dalam *irādah* Ilāhiyyah, bukan negasi terhadapnya. Konsep ini mengubah penderitaan dari sekedar kondisi eksistensial menjadi ruang penyucian yang menumbuhkan kesadaran spiritual, serta menata kembali makna kehendak sebagai kesatuan antara usaha (*ikhtiar*) dan penyerahan (*tawakal*). Kontribusi filosofis penelitian ini terletak pada tawaran konsep *irādah* partisipatif sebagai mediasi antara negasi kehendak Schopenhauerian dan afirmasi kehendak Nietzschean, yang menghadirkan paradigma metafisika alternatif tentang kehendak manusia dalam relasinya dengan sumber transendensi.

Kata Kunci Kehendak, *Irādah*, Pesimisme, Optimisme

A. Introduction

The future has always been an important concern for humans, even though it is fraught with uncertainty. In an increasingly competitive modern society, the pressure to achieve success in areas such as education, career, and personal life is even higher. This competition encourages individuals to continue to strive for success, but on the other hand, increasing social demands and standards often give birth to two opposite reactions: pessimism and optimism. These two attitudes are rooted in the human will, the inner impulse that makes a person strive to fulfill his life goals.

Psychologically, these two attitudes reflect the way humans interpret life experiences and manage inner stress. Individuals with a pessimistic mindset tend to view failure as a fixed destiny, thus losing the ability to survive difficult situations. Negative views of the social environment can reinforce this attitude, making it easy for a person to give up even at small obstacles.¹

On the contrary, optimism gives birth to the belief that behind difficulties there are opportunities, positive energy is able to arouse a person's spirit to face challenges. By thinking positively, one can see the opportunities behind every difficulty and make every experience a step towards success.² Optimism believes in a better future, has high hopes, the victory of good over evil, justice over the unjust.³

But the problem does not stop at the psychological dimension, because behind the impulse lies an ontological problem about the nature of the human will itself. Humans are creatures who have will, which is an inner tendency that focuses on something that is considered valuable. When one desire is fulfilled, another desire arises as a continuation of the will itself. Life, thus, is a never-ending series of wills. It is at this point that the fundamental question arises, whether this will is an expression of man's freedom, or a form of attachment to a power greater than himself.⁴

This question becomes the entrance to the realm of the will, which tries to understand the innermost essence of the human inner impulse. In this context, Arthur Schopenhauer became one of the philosophers who initiated metaphysical pessimism. According to Schopenhauer, reality is essentially driven by a metaphysical will that is blind, the absence of consciousness, evil, and enslaves the essence of reality. This will is the mastery of human life.⁵

¹ Dera Lukita Sari, Esti Widiani, and Sirli Mardiana Trishinta, 'Hubungan Pola Pikir Pesimisme Dengan Resiko Depresi Pada Remaja', *Jurnal Ilmiah Keperawatan*, 4.1 (2019), 93-95. <<https://publikasi.unitri.ac.id/index.php/fikes/article/view/1481>>.

² Siti Hatifah and Dzikri Nirwana, 'Pemahaman Hadis Tentang Optimisme', *Jurnal Studia Insania*, 2.2 (2014), 116-117 <<https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i2.1096>>.

³ Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Jakarta : PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 757.

⁴ Louis Leahy, *Manusia Sebuah Misteri* (Jakarta : Gramedia, 1993), hlm. 151.

⁵ Hani Nurfajrina and Radea Yuli A. Hambali, 'Konsep Jati Diri Manusia Perspektif Arthur Schopenhauer', *Gunung Djati Conference Series (GDCS)*, 24.3418 (2023), 6. <<https://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/1605>>.

So that suffering according to Schopenhauer comes from the will to live. The will for Schopenhauer was something blind, an impulse of the Ancient will. This will manifests itself in various forms from human animal instinct to human ratio, which then has the function of satisfying human physical desires. The pessimistic idea is not about the physical relationships or experiences of the individual human being, but comes from the metaphysical will of man, which is a blind will that is also manifest in conflict and suffering. For Schopenhauer, suffering is an ontological inevitability, not just an emotional condition, but the very essence of existence itself that persists endlessly. So humans are wolves to their neighbors. This is what is called a will that persecutes, competes with each other and is tormented by endless desires.⁶

On the other hand, Nietzsche in his optimistic view of the will to power concept has stages, the first stage offering to demand justice from those in power, breaking away from those in power, and the third being equal rights.⁷ In contrast to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche interpreted the will through the concept of Will to Power, which is the ontological structure of life that encourages humans to assert themselves and create new values. Nietzsche rejected the old life-denying morality and replaced it with a morality that affirmed the courage to live, accept suffering, and love destiny (*amor fati*). Thus, if Schopenhauer saw the will as a source of suffering that needed to be suppressed, Nietzsche saw it as a creative force that affirms existence.

In the middle of these two thoughts is between Schopenhauer (will to life) and Nietzsche (will to power). This is where Islam offers a different perspective. Islam recognizes the human will as part of the dynamics of life, but places it in relation to the divine will (*irādah*). In Islamic theology, especially in the Ash'ariyah view, Allah is identified with *irādah*, which is the divine will that is the basis of all forms. *Irādah* is interpreted as *masyi'ah* (universal will), while *masyi'ah* means *qasd* the desire to create something. This attribute is *al-wujūdiyyah al-azaliyyah*, which is eternal and inherent in the substance of Allah, and is the source of determining all possibilities (*mumkin*). From this comes the concept of *kasb*, which affirms the existence of a balance between freedom and attachment, between effort and submission that explains the dialectical relationship between the Divine will and the human will.⁸

In Islam, the human will is recognized as part of divine destiny, but it also emphasizes freedom of choice and moral responsibility for every action. Because Islam encourages every individual to be active in trying and working, because it is a command in the Qur'an to maintain dignity and self-honor. In addition, Islam also teaches the importance of praying to Allah in achieving all desires. Therefore, a life that is considered valuable, important, and expected by humans must have meaning, both in the context of short-term and long-term goals. Achieving life goals will give meaning and value to life.⁹ This concept emphasizes the existence of a balance

⁶ Moh Ariful Anam, 'Kesia-Siaan Eksistensi: Makna Kehidupan Menurut Pesimisme Klasik Abū Al-'Alā Al-Ma'arrī Extistential', *REFLEKSI: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 23.1 (2023), 15-16.

⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The will to power (Kekuasaan dan hasrat yang melampaui kemampuan diri manusia)*, Terj. Een Juliani dan Yustikarini. (Yogyakarta : Narasi, 2022), 74.

⁸ Muhammad Jamil, 'E S A : IRADAH ALLAH DALAM PEMAHAMAN AHLI SUNNAH', *Jurnal Syiar-Syiar*, 2.2 (2022), h. 83.

⁹ Ahmad Fauzan, 'Relasi Doa Dengan Usaha Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an', *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir*, 2.1 (2022), 56 <<https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v2i1.11523>>.

*Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's optimism in
Human Will: Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way*

between freedom and attachment, between effort and submission. However, the concept of will in Islam is often only understood normatively through the terms *ikhtiar* and *tawakal*, without being elaborated philosophically in the context of metaphysical debate as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche did.

Therefore, it is important to revisit the meaning of the human will in the philosophical perspective of Islam, not merely as a moral ethics, but as an ontological structure that affirms the relationship between man and God. This study will dialogue the concepts of Schopenhauer's Will and Nietzsche's Will to Power with the concept of will in Islam (*irādah*, *qudrah*, *kasb*) to find a form of balance between pessimism and life affirmation.

This research is qualitative descriptive using library research. The researcher examines in depth the philosophical works of both philosophers and Islamic texts, books, journals, scientific articles and other research to gain a comprehensive understanding, as well as in collecting these data to emphasize the researcher's understanding, so that the data obtained can reveal the meaning correctly.¹⁰

This research uses the method of interpretation and dialogical analysis, namely analyzing data critically to understand the philosophical meaning behind the ideas of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Through the interpretation approach, the researcher seeks to break through the data of problematic situation events, to capture hidden philosophy. Then, on the basis of that understanding, the author provides a critical evaluation and presents an alternative philosophy that is more comprehensive and relevant.¹¹

Then he dialogued the thought of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and matched it with the Islamic perspective as the middle way. Meanwhile, the method of dialogical analysis that dialogues between pessimistic and optimistic thoughts, how the arguments built by Schopenhauer and how the arguments built by Nietzsche from these arguments will be sought to be crossed. This method of dialogue was established by Socrates as a reviewer to find out how the involvement of the opponent of the discussion with the aim of designing a rational thought in exploring the meaning of something.¹² Through this analysis, it is hoped that a more complete understanding of the human will as an existential force rooted in spiritual consciousness is not just a psychological impulse.

The academic problem that is to be answered in this study is how the concept of the human will can be understood philosophically through the dialogue between Schopenhauer's pessimism, Nietzsche's optimism, and the metaphysics of the will in Islam? This study seeks to show that in Islamic *irādah* there is a metaphysical horizon that mediates two wills in Western thought: denial and affirmation. This question is not only relevant to contemporary philosophical thought, but also important in

¹⁰ Muzairi Dkk, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat*, (Yogyakarta : FA Press, 2014), 50-51.

¹¹ Anton Bakker dan Achmad Charris Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat*, (Yogyakarta : Kanisius, 2009), hlm. 110

¹² Felisita Marcelliana Atmojo and Yeni Danawak, 'Tinjauan Filsafat Metode Dialog Socrates Dan Implementasinya Pada Pembelajaran Matematika', *PRISMA*, Prosiding Seminar Nasional Matematika, 4. Volume 5 (2019), 45 <<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/prisma/>>.

answering the problem of modern humans caught between despair and meaningless ambition. Islam, with its balance between iradah and effort, offers a middle way for humans to understand their will both ontologically and spiritually.

B. Discussion

Will is a fundamental aspect in human life that refers to a potential, faculty, or power in humans that is involved in decision-making, determining the direction of actions, decisions, and the way humans face reality. In everyday life, the will appears in the form of choice and the drive to achieve something that is considered valuable. However, in the context of philosophy, the will is not simply understood as "will" or "desire" in a psychological sense, but as the ontological structure underlying the will. It is this understanding that distinguishes between the phenomenal will, which is the empirical manifestation of human will, and the noumenal will as spoken of by Arthur Schopenhauer as the innermost essence of reality.¹³

In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer explains that the world is only a representation (*Vorstellung*), whereas the true essence of the Will is a blind, irrational, and insatiable metaphysical force. Humans live in a cycle of suffering because they are enslaved by the Will who continues to push endless desires. Suffering does not arise from psychological despair, but from an ontological inevitability, namely that existence itself is the source of a never-ending impulse. Thus, Schopenhauer's pessimism is not an emotional attitude towards life, but an ontology of suffering. Life is the embodiment of a will that knows no satisfaction. In this context, pessimism means an awareness of the absurdity of existence, not simply a negative view of the future.¹⁴

In contrast to Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche rejected the view that life is suffering that must be suppressed. Through the concept of Will to Power, this concept has stages, the first stage offers to demand justice from those in power, break away from those in power, and the third is the existence of equal rights.¹⁵ From this stage, Nietzsche emphasizes life itself. The will to power is not just a fighting spirit or motivation to succeed, but a creative power inherent in the whole of reality. All living things seek to affirm their existence through the process of transformation and value creation. Therefore, Nietzsche's optimism is not a form of psychological positivity, but an ontological affirmation of life of a total acceptance of suffering, change, and limitations as part of the power of life itself.

Pessimism and optimism are two attitudes that arise from how humans understand and respond to life's challenges. Before examining the ontological dimension of the will that gives birth to the tendencies of pessimism and optimism, it is necessary to first explain the general understanding of these two attitudes as known in the consciousness of modern society. Basically, pessimism and optimism are two existential orientations that arise from the way humans interpret and respond

¹³ Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), h. 427

¹⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated from the German by E.F.J. Paynes, volumes II. Dover Publications, inc. New York, 166.

¹⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The will to power (Kekuasaan dan hasrat yang melampaui kemampuan diri manusia)*, Terj. Een Juliani dan Yustikarini. (Yogyakarta : Narasi, 2022), 74.

*Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's optimism in
Human Will: Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way*

to the reality of life. Pessimism departs from looking at everything from the worst and the most hopeless aspects. A view that sees everything with a view of sadness, pity, gloom, despair, absurdity, pain, death and the conviction that all these feelings are fundamental and are the inevitable elements of life therefore emphasize the negative side of human existence.¹⁶ On the contrary, optimism is based on a view of the good and there is a belief that life has the potential to develop for the better, and that suffering can be overcome through effort and hope for positive possibilities in the future.¹⁷ These two attitudes, although often understood psychologically, actually reflect the way humans understand themselves and the world.

Within this framework, the differences between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche cannot be simplified as pessimism and optimism of the will, but as two metaphysical views of the nature of the will in life. Schopenhauer rejected the will because he considered it a source of suffering, while Nietzsche affirmed the will because it was there that new meanings and values were created.

Meanwhile, Islam offers a different perspective with these two views. In Islam, the will (*irādah*) is not just an individual impulse, but part of the participatory metaphysics between man and God. The will of man is within the scope of the Divine will, but it does not mean that man loses his freedom. Concepts such as *qudrah* (strength), *kasb* (acquisition), and *endeavor* (effort) illustrate that human actions are the result of the two-dimensional involvement of human will and the will of Allah. Thus, *irādah* in Islam is not just a theological consolation to accept destiny, but also a metaphysical structure that affirms the existence of man as a being who participates in God's will. In the *Ash'ariyah* view, human will is *kasbī* human beings obtain their deeds in the corridor of God's will. Meanwhile, in *Mu'tazilah*, human will is autonomous, affirming man's absolute freedom in determining his actions. As for the Sufism tradition, the true will belongs only to Allah, man reaches perfection when his will is merged in the Divine will (*fana' fi irādah Allāh*). From this it appears that Islam views the will not as a desire born of shortcoming, but as a participatory action of the form itself, in which man affirms his existence in relation to God.¹⁸

With this metaphysical framework, Islam is not merely a middle ground between pessimism and optimism, but offers the deepest essence of the will. If Schopenhauer viewed the will as suffering that must be rejected, and Nietzsche affirmed the will through creative power, then Islam places the will as the existential mandate of a space in which the human will, with its efforts and *tawakal*, participates in *iradah*. Thus, the will in the Islamic perspective does not stop at practical moralities such as hard work or patience, but has a deep ontological and theological basis. The will is a manifestation of the existential relationship between man and God, man wills because God wills. From this it can be understood that Islam does

¹⁶ Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 837.

¹⁷ Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, 756-757.

¹⁸ Muhammad Jamil, 'E S A : IRADAH ALLAH DALAM PEMAHAMAN AHLI SUNNAH', *Jurnal Syiar-Syiar*, 2.2 (2022), h. 83.

not only provide comfort to suffering, but presents a metaphysical understanding of the meaning of human existence in the midst of the will to life and will to power.

1. Schopenhauer's pessimism about Will and Suffering

Arthur Schopenhauer is known as one of the most influential pessimistic philosophers in the modern Western philosophical tradition. At the center of his thought lies in the idea of the will as the metaphysical reality underlying all existence. In his monumental work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation), Schopenhauer put forward the thesis that the world we experience is not the world as it is (*das Ding an sich*), but rather a representation (*Vorstellung*) of our consciousness. Behind all these phenomenal representations, there is one ontological principle that is beyond the reach of empirical experience, namely the will as the deepest essence of reality.

In Arthur Schopenhauer's view, vanity is an inherent essence of human existence and the world. He sees that in infinite space and time, while humans as individuals live in limitations. This makes human existence always trapped in the tension between limitations and infinity. The only real existence is the present but time continues to move so that every moment passes soon. As a result, all human efforts and achievements lose their true meaning because nothing lasts forever. For Schopenhauer, the world is a manifestation of the will to life, a metaphysical impulse that is the basis of all existence. This will is eternal and makes man continue to desire endlessly.¹⁹

In this framework, human life is seen as an expression of the will to life of the metaphysical drive to continue to maintain and multiply the self. However, since the Will knows no bounds, each fulfillment of desires only gives birth to new desires, creating an endless cycle between desire and disappointment. Happiness, for Schopenhauer, is only a momentary pause between two sufferings. Thus, human existence is characterized by permanent dissatisfaction even when all needs are met, man remains subject to an existential emptiness that ultimately gives rise to boredom and mental suffering.

Schopenhauer explained the relationship between representation (*Vorstellung*) and the will of will through the Kantian framework. He accepted Kant's idea that the phenomenal world is the result of the subject's cognitive structure, but he rejected Kant's view that *das Ding an sich* could not be known at all. According to Schopenhauer, *das Ding an sich* can be known directly through man's inner experience of himself, i.e. as a will. In other words, the world as a representation is an appearance, while the world as a will is an invisible metaphysical reality. The suffering that man experiences because of the endless impulse of the will is a manifestation of the ontological difference between the two.²⁰

In Arthur Schopenhauer's view, it represents an ontological aspect of his philosophy that places the will as the deepest essence of reality. For Schopenhauer,

¹⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Tentang Pesimisme Arthur Schopenhauer*, Terj, Khoiril Maqin (Yogyakarta : Antinomi, 2023), 25

²⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, h. 577.

*Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's optimism in
Human Will: Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way*

everything in the world is simply a manifestation of the universal will at work behind the whole phenomena of life. It is this will that he calls *das Ding an sich* or the true essence that is not visible, but is the basis of all existence. Human beings as individuals are a limited embodiment of these wills, so that by nature they are always dominated by desires that never reach an end. Each satisfaction achieved only gives birth to new desires, making life an endless series of desires and sufferings. Therefore, human suffering does not originate from external factors alone, but is an ontological consequence of nature. Thus, the essence of existence according to Schopenhauer is a will that continues to process without an end goal, where reality becomes an arena for the will to live that never reaches total fulfillment. Thus, according to him, the suffering of pessimism is not a psychological consequence of the individual's failure to achieve his desires, but is an ontological condition inherent in existence itself.

How man never feels satisfied! Every time satisfaction is achieved, new desires arise which indicate that human desires have no end. This is because basically the will is the ruler of the whole world, everything belongs to him, and therefore there is nothing that can give satisfaction, which encompasses the whole that is infinite. Of all this, it should arouse our sympathy to think how small the so-called will, the ruler of this world, whose will is truly fulfilled when it manifests itself in the form of an individual, is usually sufficient only by uniting the body at the same time. The omnipotence of this will is the reason why humans suffer so much.²¹ Thus for Schopenhauer, the will is not the psychological faculty of man, but rather the universal noumenal substance of a blind, aimless, and unconscious metaphysical force, which expresses itself in all forms of life. All phenomena in the world, including man, are only objective manifestations of the Will. Because this Will is endless and never attains satisfaction, the entire existence is filled with tension, desire, and suffering.

Psychologically, pessimism can be interpreted as the tendency to see the negative side of things. However, in the metaphysical realm that affirms that everything is pessimistic, pessimism is a view that says that everything is basically evil or something negative. Or the view that says that the evil and suffering that plague the world are more numerous and fundamental than good.²²

Schopenhauer argued that despite their intelligence they imagined that he was looking at possibilities thoroughly. The worst things remain invisible to him, because the will conceals this with his hands in other words, the will is so overwhelming to the intellect that it is unable to see the worst case even though this case is the most likely because it actually happens. But in the decidedly melancholy characters or those who become wiser through similar experiences, the process is reversed. Because fear

²¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Tentang Pesimisme Arthur Schopenhauer*, Terj, Khoiril Maqin (Yogyakarta : Antinomi, 2023), 30.

²² Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, 837-838

and anxiety in them play a role that was previously played by hope. The appearance of danger for the first time puts them in an unfounded anxiety.²³

When great fear often makes us lose our senses in such a way that we become frightened or do the most absurd things. For example, when a fire occurs, we immediately run into the fire. Anger makes us no longer know what we are doing, let alone what we are saying. Urgency, for this reason called blindness, makes us incapable of carefully considering the arguments of others or even choosing and organizing our own. Excitement makes us incomprehensible, thoughtless and stupid, the desire to act in much the same way. Fear prevents us from seeing and utilizing resources that are still available and often within our reach.²⁴ So Arthur Schopenhauer defined it as a metaphysical will that is described as blind, the absence of consciousness, evil, and the enslavement of the essence of real reality. This will is the mastery of human life.²⁵

The most perfect manifestation of this will to life is the human organism with its ingenious and intricate machinery. Must fall into filthy dust and then surrender and all efforts made lead to destruction. Nature, which has always been so true and sincere in its words, declares this whole struggle of the will to be essentially barren and unprofitable.²⁶

So, pessimism according to Schopenhauer is that we should not rejoice because we are alive, but instead we should lament the fact. Better nothing than there is (better nothing than life). Life is something that shouldn't exist. If an individual chooses, he will reject life, because he has understood that the world is futile. All circumstances in life end up as frustrated, unhappy, illusory, or painful. Life is filled with suffering, despair, dissatisfaction, uncertainty, disappointment, helplessness, hopelessness, and death. This world is the worst possibility, nothing worse can be created or imagined. This world is an expression of blind and irrational will. Everything has a will to live and the consequence is suffering. Individuals can overcome the world and its suffering with philosophical contemplation, transcendence through aesthetic experience, and compassion (rompassion).²⁷

Thus, Schopenhauer's pessimism lies in his metaphysical idea of the will as the basis of reality, life understood as a struggle without an end goal, in which suffering is an inevitable consequence of existence itself. Therefore, redemption for Schopenhauer can only be found through the negation of the will (Verneinung des Willens), that is, through the path of asceticism and aesthetic contemplation that suspends the impulse of desire.²⁸

In this context, too, a conceptual bridge can be built to Nietzsche, who, despite rejecting Schopenhauer's pessimism, still makes the will a basic ontological principle.

²³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated from the german by E.F.J. Paynes, volumes II. Dover Publications, inc. New York, 257.

²⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 255.

²⁵ Hani Nurfajrina and Radea Yuli A. Hambali, 'Konsep Jati Diri Manusia Perspektif Arthur Schopenhauer', *Gunung Djati Conference Series (GDCS)*, 24.3418 (2023), 6. <<https://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/1605>>.

²⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Tentang Pesimisme Arthur Schopenhauer*, 32.

²⁷ Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, 839

²⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated from the german by E.F.J. Paynes, volumes II. Dover Publications, inc. New York, 726

If Schopenhauer views redemption as a denial of the will, Nietzsche proposes the "affirmation of life" (*Bejahung des Lebens*) through the concept of will to power, a form of affirmation of existence in which suffering is not to be avoided, but to be overcome and transformed into a creative force. Thus, the comparison of the two opens up a wider space of understanding of the metaphysical meaning of the will, both as a source of suffering (Schopenhauer) and as an affirmative force of life (Nietzsche).

2. Nietzsche's Optimism about the Will to Power

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) was one of the most radical philosophers in dismantling the Western tradition of metaphysics. Through the concept of *der Wille zur Macht* (the will to rule), Nietzsche affirms that life is essentially a dynamic of being (*Werden*) that is constantly an immanent movement in which existence asserts and overcomes itself. In this framework, will to power in the form of optimism of creative power which is the basis of all existence.

Nietzsche's thought developed in a struggle with himself and with the world. The essence of his philosophical thought is called the philosophy of the will. Nietzsche was a German philosopher who had his own position in the 19th century, he could not be included in one school at that time. His father was a pastor, so he received a religious education, but he eventually abandoned the faith. His works are mostly in the form of poems and short texts.²⁹

The life of Friedrich Nietzsche has some similarities with Arthur Schopenhauer. Nietzsche lost his father before his fifth birthday, this event greatly changed his life even more. Nevertheless, Nietzsche was a brilliant and extraordinarily accomplished student. He studied Greek, Hebrew, and became a very brilliant philologist. Nietzsche's life went through ups and downs. He enlisted in the military, but there had an accident falling from a horse. Despite his misfortune, Nietzsche later regained his zest when he met composers and musicians Richard Wagner and Erwin Rohde. Subsequently, Nietzsche taught at the University of Basel for 10 years before finally quitting due to his deteriorating health. However, the illness did not prevent him from continuing to write and produce great works.³⁰

Nietzsche developed this idea in his confrontation with Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism. If for Schopenhauer the will to live is a blind force that plunges man into suffering and must therefore be negated through asceticism, then Nietzsche reverses that position: suffering is not something to be avoided, but a constitutive element of life itself. He wrote in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "I say to you: one must still have chaos in him to give birth to a dancing star" (*Man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können*). Suffering and

²⁹ Siti Nurlaili Muhadiyatiningsih, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat*, (Jawa Tengah: Efudepress, 2022), 92

³⁰ Ira Puspitorini, *Kutipan 100 Tokoh Filsafat Paling Terkemuka*, 15-16.

chaos here are not interpreted as moral evil, but rather as conditions that allow for the birth of creativity and existential transformation.³¹

Thus, will to power is an affirmative metaphysics of life that replaces Schopenhauer's negation metaphysics. Life, for Nietzsche, has no external purpose, but rather is valuable because he himself continues to overcome and assert himself. According to Nietzsche, life is like a battlefield to fight between creatures to maintain their existence. Based on this principle, Nietzsche said that a good person is a person who is able to maintain his existence, succeed, power and win.³² The will to power works at all levels of reality from biological growth to the creation of cultural values as a principle of self-organization (Selbstorganisation) and the creation of new values (Umwertung aller Werte). Through this power, life is not just self-preservation, but self-overcoming. Nietzsche asserts in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§13): "The living being above all wants to vent his power such a life is the desire to be powerful".³³

When pleasure arises where there is a feeling of power. Happiness is in the triumph of consciousness over power and victory. Progress is in the strengthening of type, the ability for great willpower.³⁴ For this reason, Nietzsche invites: "Let us imagine the emergence of a generation with a brave gaze, with a heroic inclination towards the great. Let us imagine the bold move, the proud courage with which they turned their backs on all the doctrines of the weak so that they lived with unanimous determination in all that they did."³⁵

In this framework, a strong human being is not an individual who is free from suffering, but one who affirms life in its entirety, including its tragic side. The peak of this optimism was called by Nietzsche as *amor fati* love for destiny. He wrote in *The Gay Science* "Amor fati: let it be my love from now on! I don't want to fight against anything, I don't want to accuse anyone, not even the past." With *amor fati*, man does not reject suffering, but rather affirms the entire series of life experiences as part of his existence. This is where the transfiguration of pessimism into affirmation lies: suffering is not the end of existence, but the path to a higher power.

"I want to learn more and more to see the beauty of what is required in various things; then I will be one of those who make something beautiful. *Amor fati* (Love of destiny): let it be my love from now on! I don't want to fight against what is ugly. I don't want to accuse; I don't even want to accuse those who accuse me. Turning away would be my only denial. And overall and overall: one day I just want to be the one who says Yes! (GS §276: 223)."³⁶

³¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*. Terj. Also sprach Zarathustra alfred kröner derlag leipzig dan trus spoke Zarathustra. H.B. Jassin dkk. (Yogyakarta : IRCiSoD, 2019), 58

³² I Komang Ramadi Putra, 'TRAGEDI PEMBUNUHAN TUHAN DALAM MENCIPTAKAN MANUSIA UNGGUL (Konstruk Pemikiran Fredrich Nietzsche)', *JURNAL PENALARAN RISET (Journal of Reasoning Research)*, 1.01 (2022), 32–39.

³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil, Moral Disagreements: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Penguin Adult, 2013) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203134436-8>>.

³⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Will to Power (Kekuasaan dan hasrat yang melampaui kemampuan diri manusia)*, 310.

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Lahirnya Tragedi*, terj. Saut Pasaribu, (Yogyakarta :Narasi, 2017), 18.

³⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, 'The Gay Science', in *The Nietzschean Mind*, 2018, pp. 41–54 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315146317>>.

*Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's optimism in
Human Will: Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way*

One way to read this passage is to interpret amor fati as a form of love that is erotic in a philosophical sense, i.e. love of something insofar as the value of its beauty can be understood and accepted, hence Nietzsche emphasizes the need to "learn more and more." This view can also be interpreted as a response to the Platonic paradox of love that amor fati is a form of love for something that essentially rejects or transcends the will of man.³⁷

The concept of Übermensch (superior man) in Thus Spoke Zarathustra became a symbolic figure of the will to power in its highest form. The übermensch is a human being capable of creating new values, rejecting dependence on old morality, and bearing the burden of existence with full courage. It is not a moral ideal, but a creative mode of existence that continues to overcome its limits. In this process, the will to power manifests itself as the principle of meaning-creation in a nihilistic world. Through the act of creating value, man asserts his life not by rejecting suffering, but by dancing on it.³⁸

Therefore, Nietzsche proposes a way of affirming life of the courage to say "yes" to all existence, including suffering, absurdity, and destruction. Life, in Nietzsche's view, is not a problem that demands a solution, but a celebration that demands affirmation. This is where the will to power serves as the metaphysical dynamic of life itself becoming, overcoming, and creating endlessly.

Through that understanding it can be concluded for Nietzsche that this will is not just an impulse to survive or the pursuit of happiness, but an impulse to actualize oneself, to become better and stronger. Nietzsche views that optimism comes from the courage to accept life's challenges, and that through that process human beings can reach their maximum potential. In the context of modern life, it encourages humans to continue to fight, strengthen themselves and reach their maximum potential which emphasizes courage in facing challenges, so that humans can develop to become stronger through their will.

3. Dialectical synthesis between Pessimism and Optimism

Pessimism and optimism are often seen as two opposing attitudes in looking at life. Pessimism tends to view the world through a negative lens, full of suffering and uncertainty, while optimism views life as something full of hope and the possibility of progress. However, within the philosophical horizon, the two are not just psychologically contradictory, but contain ontologies that can enrich our understanding of their existence. In this discourse, the dialectical is carried out to see two seemingly opposite ideas in contact with each other, thus finding an ontological mediation point where two different worldviews reveal the essence of reality to each other in more depth.

³⁷ Béatrice Han-Pile, 'Nietzsche and Amor Fati', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 19.2 (2011), 224-61 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2009.00380.x>>.

³⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*. Terj. Also sprach Zarathustra alfred kröner derlag leipzig dan thus spoke Zarathustra. H.B. Jassin dkk. (Yogyakarta : IRCiSoD, 2019), 51

Arthur Schopenhauer viewed reality as the embodiment of a single metaphysical principle, namely the blind will that has no rational purpose but is the basis of all existence.³⁹ This will never ceases to desire, so that human life is trapped in an endless cycle of suffering. Each achievement only gives rise to new desires, and therefore happiness is only a brief pause between sufferings. In line with this, Schopenhauer wrote that "If suffering were the direct and immediate purpose of life, our existence would have completely failed in its original form. It is absurd to see such extraordinary pain spilling over into this world, beginning with a necessity and inevitability that is inseparable from life itself, as working without any purpose at all and getting results that are not ordinary, seems, no doubt, to be an extraordinary exception, because misfortune in general is the rule of the game."⁴⁰ This statement confirms his view that human existence is driven by irrational and suffering will. The way out of suffering, according to him, is not to satisfy the will, but to deny it through asceticism, art, and metaphysical contemplation. Thus, Will in Schopenhauer's view is the noumenal basis of the whole phenomenon, a reality in itself (das Ding an sich) that is beyond the reach of ratio.⁴¹

On the contrary, Friedrich Nietzsche rejected the denial of life and introduced the concept of will to power as an affirmative principle of existence. Life, for him, is not just surviving, but overcoming oneself (Selbstüberwindung). In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche wrote: "Where I find life, there is also the will: not the will to live, but I teach you the will to rule."⁴² Suffering is not a metaphysical error, but rather a creative energy that affirms life. Destruction and sacrifice, in Nietzsche's view, are the conditions for the creation of new values. Therefore, where Schopenhauer saw salvation in negation, Nietzsche saw the transformation of suffering conquered not by denying it, but by affirming it as part of the process of becoming.

From the dialectic between Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's affirmative optimism, an ontological mediation can be drawn that reveals the essence of life as a dynamic process between suffering and the affirmation of existence. Schopenhauer saw the world as a manifestation of Will, a blind will without direction and rational purpose, so that human life was nothing but an endless struggle in the cycle of suffering. In this framework, suffering is the essence of existence, while happiness is only a momentary pause from the tension of desire. The solution he offers is the denial of the will through asceticism and contemplation as the path to liberation from suffering. This signifies metaphysical pessimism, in which existence is understood as something to be overcome by rejecting worldly impulses. Instead, Nietzsche rejected the idea of denial and asserted that life must be accepted in its entirety, including its suffering. Through the concept of will to power, he shows that suffering is not a metaphysical error, but a creative force that allows man to transcend himself (Selbstüberwindung). In this case, the affirmation of suffering is actually the highest form of authentic will to live, because through suffering human beings affirm their freedom and ability to create new values.

³⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 237

⁴⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Tentang Pesimisme Arthur Schopenhauer*, 1

⁴¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1

⁴² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*. Terj. Also sprach Zarathustra alfred kröner derlag leipzig dan thus spoke Zarathustra. 209.

Thus, the dialectical point between these two views gives birth to a synthesis that man does not completely reject the will as Schopenhauer saw, but also does not get caught up in the euphoria of the will in power as Nietzsche did. He learns to affirm suffering without flattering it, making it a reflective space for the reinforcement of existence. In this case, suffering is not just a moral test or psychological burden, but a mode of human participation in the dynamics of life itself.

Thus, a dialectical synthesis between pessimism and optimism was achieved. Schopenhauer's pessimism provides an awareness of the limits and harms of man, while Nietzsche's optimism affirms the potential for creation born of the wound itself. From the tension of the two was born a new ontological insight that human existence is a process of becoming that does not stop between hope and despair, but continues to move towards a deeper affirmation of an amor fati, a love for the entire destiny of life, including its dark side.

In the context of modern human beings living in the midst of competition and pressure, this awareness presents a new ethic for living with courage: not to resist suffering, but to cultivate it into a source of strength, wisdom and the creation of meaning. Thus, modern man can get out of the trap of the shackle of the will and make suffering the path to the integrity of existence.

4. Islamic Perspective as a Middle Way

Islam as a religion that is based on revelation not only provides ethical guidelines, but also offers an ontological framework for understanding the essence of the will. In the Islamic metaphysical view, the will is contained in the irādah Ilāhiyyah the will of God which is the basis of all forms. This is where the position of Islam can be read as an ontological middle ground between the two extremes of Western philosophy: the denial of will in Schopenhauer's pessimism and the radical affirmation of will in Nietzsche's optimism.

In Schopenhauer's framework, the will is an unconscious blind force, which gives rise to suffering due to the endless impulse of desire. Nietzsche, on the other hand, affirms the will as the power of creation and domination, as the affirmative force that gives meaning to life. Islam does not reject both, but mediates by affirming that human will is not completely autonomous nor is it completely rejected; it is a participatory emanation of the Absolute Will (irādah Allāh).

This concept can be traced in the Qur'an, for example in Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]:11 "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." This verse shows the existence of a dialectical relationship between the Divine will and the human will: God is the ultimate cause of all things, yet man becomes a participatory agent in the process. This is the principle of endeavor,

tawakal which is not just moral, but an ontological expression that human beings exist together (ma'iyyah) with God's will.⁴³

In the context of Islamic theology, the relationship between the human will and the Divine will is further explained through the concept of kasb. The term kasb comes from the word kasaba which means to get or earn. This idea dates back to the early days of the development of Islamic thought, when theologians sought to explain how man could act within the framework of God's will. Over time, kasb became one of the key concepts in kalam discourse that discussed destiny, freedom of will, and human moral responsibility. Etymologically, kasb means "effort to obtain sustenance," but in the Qur'an the meaning has developed to include all forms of good and bad deeds done by humans. Therefore, kasb is understood as a human existential effort, namely an action that shows the active involvement of humans as actors, as well as as a party responsible for all their actions.⁴⁴

In the view of al-Ghazali's Sufism, striving and striving are existential imperatives of human beings in living the life of the world. According to him, Allah has made the world a field of business (maidan al-kasb) where humans seek sustenance and do righteous deeds, while the hereafter is the realm of retribution for all deeds, both in the form of reward and torment. Therefore, the life of this world is not the final goal, but a transcendental means to achieve the perfection of life in the hereafter. The world, for al-Ghazali, is like a field where the seeds of charity are planted that will be harvested in eternal life. In line with that, al-Ghazali explained that human irādah (will) is rooted in the power of effort bestowed by God, but is carried out consciously by man. Thus, every human action is the result of a correspondence between man's relative freedom and God's absolute will, confirming the balance between human moral responsibility and divine decree in the metaphysical structure of deeds.⁴⁵ This is a form of ontological mediation that is not found in either Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, human beings do not reject the will (like Schopenhauer), but neither do they make him a source of absolute autonomy (like Nietzsche).

Meanwhile, Ibn 'Arabi, who is famous for the concept of wahdat al-wujūd wahdat al-wujūd, was born the understanding of the perfect human being (insan kamil). In his monumental work al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah, Ibn 'Arabī asserts that all the knowledge and knowledge he acquired was not the result of his own thoughts or will, but rather a direct overflow of the Divine presence. He stated that the process of writing the book was not done on the basis of free choice or rational reflection, but it was God who dictated the content of the work through the intermediary of the angel of revelation. Thus, the will in Ibn 'Arabī's view is a form of human participation in the Divine will, in which man as a being is not just a doer, but a

⁴³ Fatar Faqih Muhammad, 'Rethinking Qadha Dan Qadar Allah: Ikhtiar Hidup Dalam Keteraturan Menghadapi Era Digital', Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Masyarakat, 19.2 (2024), 136. <<https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v19i2.6800>>.

⁴⁴ Desi Intan Sari, Abdul Malik Ghozali, and Masruchin Masruchin, 'Konsep Al-Kasb Dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Tafsir Mafāṭiḥ Al-Ġayb Karya Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī)', MISYKAT Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran Hadist Syari Ah Dan Tarbiyah, 8.1 (2023), h. 73 71 <<https://doi.org/10.33511/misykat.v8n1.71-81>>.

⁴⁵ Abu Hamid Muhammad, Al-Ghazali, Ihya' Ulumu al-Din, Juz 2, (Surabaya: Al-Hidayah, t.t), 62

mirror of God's will and love who wants to manifest Himself through creation.⁴⁶ The human will, in this context, is not a blind impulse, but a reflection of the Divine consciousness in the perfect human being who is able to harmonize his personal will with the will of God. In this synthesis, suffering is not erased as in Schopenhauer's negation, nor is it worshipped as in Nietzsche's affirmation, suffering is interpreted as a mode of tazkiyah, an existential purification that leads man to his spiritual perfection.

Then Muhammad Iqbal's work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is an attempt to reconstruct the Islamic religious way of thinking to be in harmony with the spirit of modernity, without losing the spiritual and metaphysical essence of Islam.⁴⁷ Muhammad Iqbal in his ideas about the concept of *khudī* which means self or ego is a marker of Muhammad Iqbal's intellectual maturity in his philosophical and metaphysical thought phase. This idea is considered to be the core of his entire philosophical system. Iqbal's philosophy on *khudī* was built on the basis of his deep reflection on the nature of human existence and his relationship with God.⁴⁸ For Iqbal, man is not destined to passively surrender to the world (as in Schopenhauer's asceticism), but also not to be as absolutely powerful as the Nietzschean ideal. On the contrary, man as a caliph, as a caliph in the world, is active, free, but remains within the scope of the Divine will.

Thus, the "middle way" in the Islamic perspective is not just ethical moderation, but participatory reconciliation between negation and affirmation of the will. Islam teaches that man's will acquires meaning only in its vertical relationship with God's will, an existential relationship that makes man free in obedience and strong in humility. In this order, endeavor is not a form of rebellion against fate, but an active acknowledgment of participation in the Divine plan, whereas *tawakal* is not passive surrender, but a metaphysical awareness that the results of all efforts return to the source of all forms.

Therefore, Islam presents a dialectical synthesis of pessimism as suffering and optimism as affirmation. When suffering is recognized as part of God's will to cultivate spiritual awareness, affirmation is manifested in ethical and creation actions that are worthy of worship. In this horizon, man finds a balance between freedom and attachment, between "I will" and "Thou willest," which ultimately forms what is called the perfect human *insān kāmil* whose will is in harmony with the Absolute Will.

⁴⁶ Zainun Kamaluddin Fakih, 'IBN 'ARABĪ DAN PAHAM WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD', *Refleksi : Jurnal Kajian Agama Dan Filsafat*, II.2 (2000), 117–30.

⁴⁷ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 2005.

⁴⁸ Basrir Hamdani, 'MUHAMMAD IQBAL'S HUMANISM; A RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS-SUFISTIC AND SECULAR HUMANISM', *KORDINAT*, XXIII.1 (2024), 112–24.

C. Conclusion

Through this discussion of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and the Islamic view, this discussion reveals that the core of the question of the will lies in the existential tension between suffering, power, and surrender. For Schopenhauer, the will is a metaphysical force that blinds and causes endless suffering, life is a reflection of the uncontrollable impulse that negates peace. Nietzsche rejected this negation by reversing the direction, the will is precisely the affirmative principle of the creative impulse to affirm existence and transcend limitations. Islam, meanwhile, does not stand on the pole of absolute negation or affirmation, but places the human will (*irādah al-insān*) in a participatory relationship with *irādah ilāhiyyah*. Through the principles of endeavor and *tawakal*, Islam builds a metaphysical synthesis in which the human will acquires meaning not in domination or rejection, but in directing to a divine purpose.

Thus, this comparison reveals dimensions in the metaphysical discourse of will. Schopenhauer uncovers the basis of human suffering in a directionless impulse, Nietzsche restores the will as a value-creating force, while Islam offers an ontological horizon that mediates the two, the will as a conscious participation in God's will that restores the meaning of existence in the midst of the paradox of modern life. In this framework, man is not merely a subject who suffers or conquers, but a being willing to participate makes suffering a space of purification, power a responsibility, and surrender as the highest form of freedom.

The philosophical contribution of this paper lies in the submission of participatory *irādah* as a mediative category between Schopenhauerian negation and Nietzschean affirmation. This concept allows for a reinterpretation of modernity trapped in the logic of autonomous will, that true freedom is not freedom from transcendence, but freedom in relation to it. Islam thus exists not only as a religious morality, but as an alternative metaphysical paradigm that reframes the relationship between man, the will, and the source of existence.

For the next direction of research, the study can be expanded by involving the thoughts of classical Islamic philosophers such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Mulla Sadra in order to delve deeper into the dynamics of *irādah* in relation to the ontology of form (*wujūdiyyah*) and the epistemology of human action. This approach will enrich the study of the metaphysics of will across traditions and open up the possibility of a new synthesis between Western philosophy and Islam in reading the existential conditions of modern man.

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