

The Concept of Destiny in Between the Perspectives of Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane (A Critical Discourse Analysis)

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the concept of destiny from the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane. The Destiny considered by Most of people to be something particular, turns out to be something that humans can still control. This opinion is undoubtedly contrary to the opinion of the majority. According to Syahrur, humans still have a significant role to play in determining their age, sustenance, and deeds, while according to Kane, humans have free will, which is not even suitable with God's provisions. This research is library research using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method, which consists of text analysis linguistically, discursive analysis or text production, and social practice analysis. This study concludes that Syahrur's opinion regarding the concept of destiny that humans can still control is obtained from an analysis of the verses of the Qur'an, which talk about age, sustenance and human charity with a linguistic approach and Kane uses a critical-logical analysis approach to the previous opinions that has existed Before. The result of the study found that according to Syahrur, the destiny is in the form of a collection of terms and conditions collected in one book, if these terms and conditions are fulfilled will cause a certain phenomenon, whether it is death, life, long or short life and so on. Meanwhile, according to Kane, human free will is like the garden of the forking path, where humans can choose which way to go without coercion from any party.

Keywords: *destiny; Muhammad Syahrur; Robert Kane; critical discourse analysis*

Introduction

Most people have always understood the human destiny as a definite decree that God has determined. However, according to some opinions, man can still control destiny. Among the intellectuals who had such thoughts were Muhammad Shahrur and Robert

Kane. Syahrur argues that the age, sustenance, life, and death of human beings are something that can still be controlled by the man himself. Otherwise, everything that man does will be in vain including medicine, pharmacy, surgical science and even the prayers that man prays to God will be useless if all are pre-destined (Shahrur, n.d., p. 411). Meanwhile, according to Kane, humans have freedom of will and everything they do is not pre-destined. Kane disagrees with determinists, who say that everything is pre-determined and pre-destined (Kane & Sartorio, 2021, p. 7).

The study of the human destiny has so far focused on three aspects. *First*, namely the study of the concepts of *qadha* and *qadar* with different backgrounds such as an article written by Mulyana Abdullah, which proposes a concept to implement faith in *qadha* and *qadar* in the daily life of Muslims (Abdullah, 2020, p. 11), likewise with Iril Admizal who discusses destiny in Islam, a thematic study. According to Admizal, the study of the destiny is always interesting because it has been the famous object of heated discussion since the early Islamic era (Admizal, 2021, p. 87). *Second*, the study of compulsion (*jabar*) and endeavor (*ikhtiar*), such as an article written by Joni Harnedi that analyzes the concept of *jabar* and *Ikhtiar* according to the perspective of Quraish Shihab. According to Joni, the study *jabar* and *ikhtiar* is one of the essential studies in Islam that causes long debates and causes the emergence of various theological schools such as Qodariyah and Jabariyah (Harnedi, 2017, p. 73). *Third*, the study of the human will (*human's free will*) such as the article written by Victor Delvy Tutupary which analyzes the concept of freedom of will from the perspective of David Ray Griffin (Tutupary, 2016, p. 136). Likewise, Zaimul Asroor analyzes the concept of freedom of human will according to Bintu Shathi's view'. According to Zaimul, the human will is different from the absolute will of God. The human will operates in circulation between the intention of desire and action (Asroor, 2019, p. 112).

Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this article is to analyze further the concept of destiny from the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane, where in previous studies, no one had any thoughts about the ability of man to change the provisions of destiny that have been in God's territory such as age, sustenance, life, and death and reject that everything has been established (predestined). In line with that, three questions will be answered in this article namely, *first*, what is the concept of destiny according to Shahrur and Kane? *Secondly*, what are the factors that cause such an understanding to arise? *Third*, what are the implications or impacts arising from the understanding of the two figures? Their

thinking will be analyzed using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in three stages: text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice (Munfarida, 2014, p. 1).

The study of the destiny's concept in between Syahrur and Kane's perspective is essential because their view of destiny is at first glance, opposite to the majority opinion. This certainly caused a sense of curiosity to see more clearly their thoughts about destiny. The majority opinion in Islam about age, sustenance, life and death falls into the category of *mubram* destiny, namely provisions or provisions that cannot be changed (N. A. Putra & Mutawakkil, 2020, p. 63). In fact, Syahrur argues that man can manage the length and shortness of his lifespan, which of course has to do with life and death, and man can manage his sustenance, while Kane says that man has a freedom of will that has nothing to do with God's destiny (divine predestination).

Literature Review

Critical discourse analysis is an attempt or process to explain a text discussed by a person or group that aims to get what it wants (Mardikantoro, 2014, p. 217). Basically trying to build a discourse analysis that contributes to social and cultural analysis (Saraswati & Sartini, 2017, p. 182). Critical discourse analysis has three properties: relational (relational), dialectical and multidisciplinary (transdisciplinary) (Fairclough, 2013, p. 3). It is called relational because its main focus is not what exists or is individual (Siswanto & Febriana, 2017, p. 123), but rather social relations (social relations), as well as dialectical relationships, namely relationships between objects that are different from each other, as well as integrated. Therefore, Fairclough said that critical discourse analysis is not just a discourse analysis but a dialectical analysis between one discourse and other objects, elements, and moments, including the analysis of internal relationships in one discourse. Because such an analysis will pass through various disciplines such as linguistics, politics, sociology, and others, it is also multidisciplinary (transdisciplinary) (Fairclough, 2013, p. 4). Nevertheless, Fairclough's approach is also referred to as text-oriented discourse analysis. It seeks to unite the three traditions (Gasa, 2019, p. 9). First, textual analysis in linguistics. Second, macro-sociological analysis of social practice, including Foucault's theories, does not provide a methodology for text analysis. Third, the sociological micro-interpretive tradition in the discipline of sociology (Munfarida, 2014, p. 8).



One of the terms to be understood in this article is destiny. Destiny in Arabic is linguistically derived from al-Qadru, masdar from the word *qaddara-yuqaddiru-taqdiran* (Admizal, 2021, p. 90). The word means to measure, to give a degree, or a measure, just as "God has made something" means that God has determined a certain degree, limit, and measure of his being (Talib, 2015, p. 30). The definition of destiny in terminology, according to Muhammad ibn Bakr al-Jauziyah is the provision of everything according to the knowledge of Allah that will occur at a particular time above a unique nature, recorded and desired and then occurred according to its provisions and creation (Jauziyah, 1978, p. 63). Understanding destiny requires an intense and comprehensive knowledge. Otherwise, it is feared that it will fall to one of the two groups with an extreme understanding of destiny that the majority rejects, namely Qadariyah and Jabariyah. The Qadariyah group gives freedom to humanbeings in an absolute way, where all the behaviors and deeds of beings do not have the slightest intervention of God in them because if all is within God's control, it means that there has been coercion of man to do something beyond his will, and this is very contrary to the nature of God Almighty (A. M. S. Putra, 2021, p. 9). While Jabariyah is the opposite of Qadariyah understanding's of Destiny which is passive, in the sense that man has no power and effort to determine his destiny, absolute will belongs only to God, in western scholarship Qadariyah is known as free will/free act. In contrast, Jabariyah is known as Determinism, Fatalism, or Predestination (Yurnalis, 2020, p. 80).

One of the Western intellectuals who has researched human free will comprehensively is Robert Kane. This can be seen from his books such as "*a Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*", (Kane, 2005) *The Significance of Free Will* (Kane, 1998) and others. while Muhammad Syahrur is one of the Muslim intellectuals who sought to reconstruct understanding – classical understanding, especially in Islamic law, this is seen in his book (Syahrur, n.d.). the result of his thoughts on reconstructing Islamic law became a hot topic of discussion among scholars, especially in Islamic studies. Among the themes that are often analyzed about Syahrur's thinking is the limit theory he introduced in understanding the laws in the Quran, such as the article written by Muhammad Ali Muradllo, who implemented the theory of limit to explore the values of gender justice in the verses of inheritance, Muhammad found that the male part is the maximum limit. In contrast, the female part is the minimum limit, allowing the female to be more in the division of inheritance (Muradllo, 2018, p. 76). However, in his book, Syahrur also has his interpretation of the age, sustenance,

and deeds of man, which also falls within the scope of destiny. Therefore it will be interesting to analyze more about Syahrur and Kane's concept of destiny.

Research Method

This article is a library research by collecting data from various literature sources such as books, scientific articles, thesis, and others. The data obtained will be analyzed using the critical discourse analysis method Norman Fairclough's perspective, which consists of text analysis divided into representations, relationships, and identities (Setiawan, 2020, p. 176). as analysis of discursive practices and social practices. The data sources in this article consist of primary sources, namely the book *al-Kitab wa al-Quran* by Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane's book on Human Free Will, and secondary sources such as other supporting books, scientific articles, theses, discourses related to human destiny.

Analysis

Muhammad Syahrur's Concept of Destiny

Muhammad Syahrur, in his book *al-Kitab wa al-Qur'an*, does not discuss the destiny comprehensively. However, Syahrur examines several issues that have a close relationship with destiny, such as the issue of human age, sustenance, and charity or human deeds. Syahrur tried to analyze the verses of the Quran related to this in his book by stating that the issue of age, sustenance, and practice of man has not been written (*ghair maktub*) previously, in the sense that it was not predetermined or prescribed thing (*muqaddar*), the opinion he expressed was based on his reinterpretation of the verses of the Qur'an which he understood using a linguistic approach.

According to Syahrur, the word *maktub* (written) is taken from the word *kataba*, which is to gather something from each other to produce a particular theme, from here the word *al-Kitab* is taken which means a collection of various discussion themes given to Muhammad as a revelation, as well as being a sign of his prophethood and the content of his treatise, Syahrur calls it mushaf which begins with surat al-Fatihah to an-Nas. When the word *kitab* is in the form of *nakirah*, meaning that it includes only one theme (Elkarimah, 2017, p. 110). Syahrur, with his concept of anti-synonymous distinguishes the meaning of the Quran and the *al-Kitab* and divides the mushaf consisting of 30 chapters into several parts, some part of the *al-Kitab* there is part of the Quran, then when the word of *kitab* found in the quranic section it will have the meaning as a collection of conditions of thematic requirement which if

it is completed, the condition will cause one particular thematic phenomenon, such as *al-maut*, which means a collection of certain thematic conditions that if all the conditions are accumulated, then death will come and cannot be avoided (Syahrur, n.d., p. 411). From this kind of understanding, Syahrur thinks that the relationship between man and destiny is a relation of study and science, so when the data obtained by humans about delaying death increases, it will be able to delay the occurrence of death. However, it does not eliminate it (Syahrur, n.d., p. 412). This pattern of thinking became the primary basis for Shahrur to analyze more about man's lifespan, sustenance and charity, which will be explained next.

Regarding the age of man, Shahrur begins his explanation by quoting QS. 3:145, which explains that a person will not die except with Allah's permission which is a timed decree (*kita>ban muajjalan*), but the word *kita>ban* here according to Shahrur means *kita>b al-maut* which means a collection of conditions, a thematic requirement that if all the conditions have been met will result in death. Therefore death is inevitable if the conditions of the book of death are met. Otherwise a person may be able to extend his life. This is also based on QS. 13: 38 "*likulli ajalin kita>b*" meaning that any event that will happen will follow *kita>b*, which humans can reveal by adding ability and knowledge about something. If human science is increasing in the health field, for example, many people will be saved from various diseases and get an extension of life. Therefore everything has its provisions as in QS. 78:29 "*wa kullu syai'in ahshaina>hu kita>ba*". From this, Syahrur concludes that the lifespan of man is not something that has been established from the beginning, but it can still be capricious, it can be shortened or extended (Syahrur, n.d., p. 412).

Among other sources, Shahrur in his analysis Q.S. 35: 11, in this verse it is very clear that the increase and decrease in human lifespan will not occur unless there is a conformity with *kita>b* that God has determined, meaning that there are *kita>b* who reduce life and there are *kita>b* that extend life, all of which can be revealed by man as human science grows deeper and advances. Here we can see the privileges of health sciences, where the enormous costs incurred in health sciences are not in vain because these costs are used to find possible factors to extend life or reduce them. This will significantly impact medical science, and all health workers and humans everywhere will have a high sense of responsibility to value human life, for the length and shortness of life can still be cultivated by the man himself (Syahrur, n.d., p. 413).

Regarding human sustenance, Syahrur explains that when God wants to give sustenance to man, then God will create conditions that if a person lives according to these existing conditions, he will be able to try and work for his benefit. Syahrur based his argument on QS. 68: 3 which explains that God has determined the degree or limit of all things, but the limits that God determines are seen according to the situation and conditions around a person, for example, if God wants to give sustenance to man in the field of architecture, then God will create situations and conditions that are suitable for him in that field (Syahrur, n.d., p. 417).

Regarding human deeds, Syahrur argues that Allah Swt created man to do an act that is within his ability as a human being, and as he was created. It means that man is not able to do something that is beyond his character as a human being or beyond the ability of his body structure (*binyah*) as he was created. So a human being can do something if the condition of his body structure or his character as a human being supports doing a deed. According to Syahrur, Allah has established thematic provisions (*qawani>n al-maudhu>'iyyah*) that man will do something within the scope of that law. The man are free to do an act or choose to do something within the scope of the rules, provisions, or laws God has decreed (Syahrur, n.d., p. 438).

Robert Kane's Concept of Perspective Destiny

According to Kane, the debate about God's destiny (*divine predestination*) and man's freedom of will (*human free will*) has become a very serious problem for thinkers worldwide to think about from time to time. The debate on the topic has dramatically attracted the interest of religious leaders, including Christians, Jews, and Muslims. According to him, the issue of destiny and human freedom in a will is not explained in detail in Islam and the Quran. In his book Kane said:

It was this problem of predestination and human free will that led Muslim scholars (about a century after Muhammad's death) to ask the Caliphs if they could look into the scrolls of the ancient Greek philosophers left hidden in the libraries of the Middle East since the time of the conquest of Alexander the Great. The main concern of these Muslim scholars was to see if they could get some insight from the pagan Greek philosophers into the vexing problem of predestination and human free will that which the Qur'an did not resolve (Kane, 2005, p. 148).

The lack of explanation of God's destiny and human freedom is also found in earlier religious books such as in the Torah and Gospels; Kane said:

The Hebrew and Christians scriptures also describe an omnipotent (all-powerfull), omniscient (all-knowing) and all- good personal God, who created the universe, without entirely resolving the problem of how the omnipotence and omniscience of God could be reconciled with human freedom (Kane, 2005, p. 148).

Among the simplest ways that many thinkers think of solving the problem of God's destiny (*predestination*) is to argue that God's destiny (*divine predestination*) and the freedom of human will are compatible. This theory was developed by Jonathan Edward, according to him, we are free to do whatever we want even though God has determined everything, God has created good and evil, and man does according to his will without the difficulties of nature. Nevertheless, this concept is challenging to accept, especially by religious groups who believe God is not evil's source. Even God will punish sinners justly, but this statement raises the question if God is almighty and all-powerful, why does God not eradicate all evil with His dominion, or if God can remove evil but chooses not to do it, this would undermine the all-good nature of God (Kane, 2005, p. 149).

Saint Augustine gave a solution called "*the free will defense*", which believed that God is not the source of evil. However, God gave freedom to humans who caused evil due to their actions. However, here also a problem arises, why God gives freedom to humans if they know that they will do evil, Saint Augustine replied that free will is good. Without freedom of will, man will have no good or bad ethics, sense of responsibility, or guilt. Man cannot choose to love his God based on their desires. Love is more meaningful if given for nothing. Therefore God allows evil for the greater good. However, God is not the source of evil (Kane, 2005, p. 149).

Robert Kane's Human Freedom

In analyzing human freedom of will, Kane introduced several terms often discussed in the study of human freedom of will: determinism, free will, compatibilism, and incompatibilism. Determinism is the existence of a law that governs the universe. There is only one possibility for the future, and no matter what happens is inevitable. Free will states that there are all sorts of possibilities for the future, which sometimes leaves it up to us to choose which path we might take. A compatibilist is a group that also believes in free will but recognizes that human freedom in wills is in line (compatible) with what has been determined (determinism), while in-compatibilist groups that reject compatibilist and refuse to believe that God's destiny is in line with man's freedom. Among this group, Robert Kane tends to be the In-compatibilist group (Kane & Sartorio, 2021, pp. 5-6).

Kane's understanding of human free will, however, has some conditions to be met. Although he rejects compatibilism, yet, he does not reject it altogether. He acknowledges that some human freedoms are in line with God's will. However, there are freedoms the man has that do not have to be conformed to or not determined by God, the group that has this understanding is called libertarians, that is, the group that believes that there is among the freedoms of will that human beings have that are incompatible or in line with determinism (God's destiny), they believe that the future is like a branch of cutlery that gives us freedom which part we will choose, in such circumstances, it all depends on us, and no one forces and determines the possibility of which path we will choose for our future, in such circumstances, human beings are given complete freedom (Kane & Sartorio, 2021, p. 7).

Critical Discourse Analysis of Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane

Syahrur's concept of destiny in his book *al-Kita>b wa al-Qur'an* is not discussed in one theme explicitly. However, Syahrur explains his understanding of destiny by analyzing Quranic verses about human life, sustenance, and charity. By analyzing the verses on these themes with a linguistic approach. Syahrur concluded that the age of man is not something that has been determined by Allah Swt from the beginning. The length and shortness of man's lifespan depends on the attitude and effort of man himself, Allah Swt has made conditions that cannot be violated in *kita>b*, in every aspects, wether it is about the man's lifespan, the length and short, death or sustenance and so on. The conditios give man various options to freely choose which direction he will take, if he wants to live a long life then follow the factors that allow to extend life, otherwise do the opposite. Likewise the sustenance, if you want excess sustenance, then fulfill the factors that Allah has provided. Regarding human deeds, Shahrur argues that Allah Swt has given freedom to man to do and act according to his character as a human being and the structure of his body, man will not be able to do something outside his character or not supported by his body structure, even though he wants to do more but his body structure and character do not support then he will not be able to do anything more than that.

Robert Kane has another view of human freedom of will. According to him, there is a predetermined part of human life (*determinism*) and there is no (free will). Which means some parts are pre-determined and some are freed. People are free to choose what they will do, even though their choice is not in line with God's provisions (in-compatibilist). Adherents of in-compatibilist understanding are also called libertarians (free) and Robert

Kane supporters of this group, for whom human freedom is like a forked tree whose every branch has more various other branches, in the sense that man is always free to choose his future path from the possibilities that exist. No one forces them to take any path they want.

The concept of destiny presented by Syahrur and Kane could be also called a discourse. According to Norman Fairclough, discourse can be analyzed through language as a social practice instead of an individual activity. Fairclough has a method (discourse analysis) that unites all existing discourse analysis, ranging from text analysis or linguistics, discursive practices, and social practices integrated into social change (Munawan, 2018, p. 156). These analyses are divided into three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation (Sholikhati & Mardikantoro, 2017, p. 125). Fairclough introduced the analysis of text discourse or linguistics through three essential elements: representation, relation, and identity (Annas & Fitriawan, 2018, p. 44). From the results of the discourse analysis of the concept of destiny from the perspective of Muhammad Syahrur and Robert Kane, it was found that the discourse of destiny expressed by Syahrur in his book is represented through linguistic analysis of verses of the Quran which discusses the age, sustenance, and charity of human deeds. In contrast, Robert Kane represents his thoughts on destiny with a logical analysis of God's provisions (predestination) and human freedom of will (human free will).

Shahrur seems to be more systematic by analyzing in-depth first the critical vocabulary contained in verse, then interpreting it and explaining the intention of his interpretation to change the old mindset that considered issue of age, sustenance, and charity of human deeds has been determined or destined by God in *lauh mahfu>z*. Kane rejects the notion that everything is predestined and echoes human freedom of will, but only presents a long debate among western intellectuals around the issue and then takes a position as a supporter of the theory of human free will. Syahrur, who is known as a Muslim intellectual who initiated the limit theory to reconstruct Islamic law, apparently also had the idea of reconstructing other thoughts outside Islamic law that were considered no longer following the development of times, such as the concept of destiny in the matter of age, sustenance and charity of human deeds. In the matter of fact, Kane who from the beginning has focused his studies on predestination and human free will, its seriousness in this study during the years and long period of times can be taken into consideration to analyze the concept of God's destiny and human freedom comprehensively.

The study of destiny in previous studies still considers that God's destiny has been determined from the beginning in *kita>b* who are in *lauh mahfu>z{* (Shaikh, 2009, p. 435). In following to that argumens, there are group who accepted it and considered that everything done by man is God's will, man does not have the freedom to will (*Jabariyah*), on the contrary, there are those who consider man to be accessible to will without the intervention of God (*Qadariyah*) and there is a group that mediates between the two (*ahlussunnah wa al-Jama'ah*). Exluding themself from that concept, Shahrur argues that God's destiny is destined but in the form of a collection of thematic conditions that if fulfilled will cause specific effects or phenomena (*kita>b qawani>n al-Maudhu'iyah*). As well as Kane argues that human beings have freedom, and freedom is like a forking path, one time people will be faced with various choices in life, and they are free to choose which path they will take, without anyone forcing them to choose one or two paths from the various options available.

The concept introduced by Shahrur and Kane opens up a new point of view in the study of destiny. In Syahrur's view, human beings can know the secrets of *kita>b* (a collection of God's provisions) by researching and deepening their knowledge of something. The deeper and more advanced human science will be, the closer they will be to God's provisions and conditios which are suitable for their benefit. Syahrur's concept has tremendous implications for science in medicine or health because the deeper and more advanced human science, they understand how to deal with a disease that allows extending human life, the level of public health will increase, and human age standards will increase. This is true in all areas of life, such as Syahrur's concept of sustenance. Allah has determined the concept of sustenance in a *kita>b*. If Allah Swt wants to give sustenance to a person in agriculture, then Allah will create suitable conditions for him in that field. This study is very interesting to analyze further because the study of destiny that has direct implications for daily life is rarely carried out and seems stagnant.

Conclusions

The concept of destiny that the majority has understood is particular and has been determined from the beginning. It turns out that, according to Syahrur and Kane contains errors. According to Syahrur destiny is in the form of special or thematic conditions that if those are met, it will create an effect or phenomenon, such as the condition of age in *kita>b*. Some conditions extend life, and some shorten life. If one of these conditions is met then life will be long or short, as well as sustenance. Regarding human deeds, Syahrur argues that man is only able and free to do as long as he is in his character as a human being and is

supported by the structure of his body. Meanwhile, according to Kane, human freedom of will is like the branch of the forking path, where humans are free to choose which path they want without coercion.

This understanding of destiny has tremendous implications for various fields in the modern era that give a significant role to man to do things for the benefit of his life. However, that freedom is certainly not as absolute as God's freedom of will. However, if man wants to get more benefits, then man should deepen his knowledge in various fields, So that periodically and slowly, he will be able to understand the various provisions and conditions that are beneficial to his life.

Research on destiny, predestination, and human free will is rare, because most of people thought that this research is impossible to analyze even further. Particularly in Islam, because the study of destiny belongs to the theological realm. However, according to the author, because this study is in the theological realm, it means that the study of destiny is a very important study to be analyzed more comprehensively for the majority of people to understand. moreover, the study that needs to be developed here that has direct implications for society, It is not a study that is just a concept and no implications for the development of society and science.

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