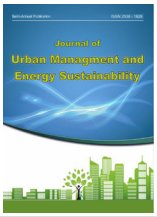
International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability (JUMES)

Homepage: http://www.ijumes.com



CASE STUDY RESEARCH PAPER

The role of light in architecture based on Sohrawardi's aesthetics and its relationship with Plato's theory of beauty

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received 2024-01-24
Revised 2024-03-29
Accepted 2025-04-10

Keywords:
Aesthetics, forms, Illuminations philosophy, Intuition, light

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the comparative analysis of light aesthetics within Suhrawardi's philosophy of illumination and Plato's theory of beauty. Both philosophers regard light as fundamental to understanding truth and beauty, highlighting its interconnectedness with love and knowledge. In his Theory of Forms, Plato views physical beauty as merely a reflection of the absolute beauty that exists in the realm of ideas, which can be grasped through reasoning and dialectical thought. Conversely, Suhrawardi perceives beauty as a direct manifestation of divine light and champions an intuitive, mystical approach to its recognition. This study also examines the insights of key interpreters such as Henry Corbin and Gholamhossein Dinani, illuminating both the congruences and divergences between these philosophical approaches. Furthermore, it analyzes their influence on Islamic art and contemporary artistic expressions. Suhrawardi's notion of light as a vital link between the sensory realm and divine truth has significantly enriched spiritual experiences within visual arts, serving as a conduit for deeper understanding and transformative encounters. Overall, the interplay of light in these philosophies reveals profound implications for artistic creation and appreciation in both historical and modern contexts.

DOI: 110.22034/IJUMES.2024.711844

Running Title: The role of light in Sohrawardi's aesthetics and its connection to Plato's theory of beauty

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
54	00	00

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INTRODUCTION

Beauty has always been one of the fundamental concepts in the history of philosophy, and thinkers throughout history have sought to understand its essence and nature. Among the great philosophers, both Plato and Sohrawardi have played a foundational role in the development of aesthetic theories. Plato viewed beauty as a bridge between the sensible world and the intelligible realm, presenting it as a reflection of absolute truth in the world of ideas. In contrast, Sohrawardi regarded beauty as the manifestation of the rays of truth and believed that this beauty flows through all levels of existence, guiding humanity toward transcendent truth. Aesthetics, as part of philosophy, involves the deep examination and analysis of the nature of beauty, its impact on the human mind, and its relationship with art and ethics. This branch of philosophy holds a special place not only among Western philosophers but also in Eastern philosophies. In this context, comparing and examining the two philosophical systems of Plato and Sohrawardi can contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of beauty and its role in spiritual elevation. Plato considered beauty as an eternal and absolute idea that could only be accessed through reason. He introduced tangible beauty as a shadow of true beauty in the world of ideas and believed that love for physical beauty leads a person toward understanding absolute beauty. Sohrawardi, in his philosophy of illumination, described beauty as a manifestation of the rays of truth and emphasized mystical intuition for grasping beauty. The aim of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the theories of Plato and Sohrawardi regarding beauty and to examine the role of light in Sohrawardi's aesthetics and compare it with Plato's theory of beauty. In this regard, the article will strive to clarify the differences and similarities between these two philosophical viewpoints and explore how love and light influence the understanding of beauty in each of these philosophical systems. This study could pave the way for presenting new horizons in the field of aesthetics and philosophical discussions.

Beauty has always been one of the fundamental concerns of philosophy, mysticism, and art. From the time of Plato to the philosophy of illumination by Sohrawardi, thinkers have sought to discover the essence of beauty and its place within ontological and epistemological systems. Plato viewed beauty as an absolute truth in the realm of ideas, understood through reason, whereas Sohrawardi regarded beauty as a manifestation of sacred rays, introducing it as an intuitive experience. In this context, the role of light in Sohrawardi's aesthetics and its comparison with Plato's theory of beauty presents a crucial question in Islamic and comparative philosophy that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of beauty and the ways to comprehend it.

In his philosophy of illumination, Sohrawardi considers light as the essence and foundation of existence, believing that beauty is nothing but the manifestation of these sacred rays at various levels of being. On the other hand, Plato defines beauty in relation to absolute truth in the realm of ideas, arguing that tangible beauty is merely a shadow of true beauty, guiding the soul toward perfection (Plato, 1975: 252). While these two perspectives may seem different in certain respects, they share fundamental commonalities, especially in their connection between beauty, knowledge, and spiritual elevation. Notable commentators on Sohrawardi, including Qutb al-Din Razi and Shams al-Din Shahruzi, have emphasized that beauty in the philosophy of illumination is not merely an outward quality but a reflection of different degrees of light in the various realms of existence (Rouzbahani et al., 2018: 187; Shahruzi, 2004: 214). Given this background, this article seeks to address several fundamental questions:

1. How is light introduced as the essence of beauty in Sohrawardi's philosophy, and what similarities and differences does this concept have with Plato's theory of beauty?

2. What relationship exists between light, love, and knowledge in the aesthetic systems of Sohrawardi and Plato?
3. Can the concepts of light and beauty be connected to contemporary art from the perspectives of these two philosophers?

This research, through a comparative study of the views of Plato and Sohrawardi, aims to demonstrate how both philosophers, despite their differences in ontological foundations, consider beauty a factor for spiritual elevation and the attainment of truth. Moreover, studying these concepts in light of the opinions of classical and contemporary commentators, such as Henri Corbin, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Gholamhossein Ebrahimi Dinani, can help clarify the connection between the philosophy of illumination and modern aesthetics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Litrature Review

The concept of beauty in Plato's philosophy

In Plato's philosophy, beauty is a concept that transcends mere sensory and physical appearance, presented as an absolute truth in the realm of ideas. In his prominent works, such as "Symposium" and "Phaedrus," Plato introduces beauty as one of the most significant divine ideas that guides the human soul toward perfection and elevation (Janaway, 2013: 52). According to Plato, true beauty is not accessible in the material and sensible world; rather, it is merely a shadow of ideal and eternal beauty in the realm of ideas. He believes that beauty in the sensible world can serve as a medium to move toward absolute beauty, but it should not be the endpoint (White, 1989). The process of knowing beauty in Plato's philosophy is made possible through dialectic and reason. This means that the true lover begins by observing physical beauties and then gradually moves from material beauty to spiritual beauty and ultimately to the essence (idea) of beauty itself (Nehamas, 2007). The dialectical movement from physical love to spiritual love is a form of spiritual ascent in which the human soul, through contemplation and understanding, attains happiness and absolute good. Particularly in "Symposium," Diotima, as Socrates' teacher, explains how love of beauty is a pathway to the attainment of absolute knowledge, and the love of true beauty guides the soul toward the encounter with the ideas and eventually the idea of the Good (Kahn, 1987). From Plato's perspective, beauty has a profound connection with truth and the good, not only producing an aesthetic pleasure but also serving as a tool for moral education and enlightenment. For example, in "The Republic," he criticizes art that is merely imitative of reality because such art cannot lead the soul toward the ideas and truth (Frede & Lee, 2003). In contrast, art that can help the human soul understand ideal beauty is considered valuable. Plato asserts that a true philosopher is one who understands true beauty and, with this knowledge, guides their soul toward divine order and perfection (Armstrong, 2004). Ultimately, beauty in the Platonic system is a means for beautifying the soul and strengthening the connection between humanity and the divine realm. This beauty is accessible through reason and dialectical contemplation, directing the soul away from dependence on bodily and sensory pleasures toward divine love and true knowledge (Chrysakopoulou, 2012). Therefore, according to Plato's view, only through contemplation of true beauty does human life hold value, and this contemplation not only brings joy and pleasure but also leads to the pinnacle of spiritual elevation (Seniw, 2004).

Beauty and Aesthetics in the Wisdom of Ishraq Suhrawardi

In the philosophy of illumination, according to Sohrawardi, beauty is a fundamental concept that is directly linked to the essence of existence, which is light. In his works, particularly in the book "Hikmat al-Ishraq," he introduces light as the principle and foundation of all beings, considering beauty as nothing but the manifestation of these rays of truth at various levels of existence (Widigdo, 2020). In this approach,

the closer a being is to light, the more beautiful and perfect it is; conversely, distance from light is associated with ugliness and deficiency (Garkani et al., 2021). From Sohrawardi's perspective, the rays of truth, whose source is "the Light of Lights," are the primary source of all lights and manifestations, and beauty is, in essence, the manifestation of this light in different existential realms (Kohandel, 2016). Sohrawardi views beauty not just as a sensory and outward quality, but as a reflection of different degrees of light in the universe. This beauty appears as pure lights in higher realms and in material and sensible forms in lower realms (Shindo, 2017). He emphasizes that the understanding of beauty is only possible through witnessing and illumination, as the light of truth shines directly and unmediated upon the heart of the seeker, allowing them to perceive true beauty (Mohammadi and Keramatifard, 2021).

Furthermore, Qutb al-Din Shirazi places significant emphasis on the role of witnessing and illumination in understanding beauty, believing that the light of witnessing is the key to knowing the truth. He writes in "Daratu al-Taj": "The intellect cannot grasp the truth of beauty on its own; only through the light of illumination can this understanding be attained" (Qutb al-Din Shirazi, 1995). In this context, Sohrawardi uses the term "present knowledge" (Ilm Huzuri) in contrast to "acquired knowledge" (Ilm Husuli), asserting that only through this present knowledge can one reach beauty and the rays of truth (Shihabudheen & Cholakkathodi, 2024). In other words, Sohrawardi makes a profound distinction between "present knowledge" and "acquired knowledge" in his philosophy of illumination. Present knowledge refers to the kind of knowledge that a person experiences directly and unmediated by concepts and mental perceptions. This knowledge, unlike acquired knowledge obtained through senses and logical tools, is a type of inner and immediate witnessing of the truth, meaning that the sacred rays—the source of all beauties and truths—are only comprehensible when a person attains the state of present knowledge. Understanding sublime beauties and accessing the truth of divine light requires a type of direct and intuitive connection with this light, which is only possible when the seeker transcends the sensory world and approaches the truth through self-purification and mystical witnessing.

In other words, present knowledge in Sohrawardi's philosophy refers to a state in which the seeker not only understands divine beauty at the level of mental concepts but fully and directly experiences this beauty. This present experience of truth is the deepest form of knowledge that can lead a person to divine light and absolute perfection. Therefore, Sohrawardi introduces present knowledge as a tool through which one can achieve final understanding of beauty and truth.

On the other hand, Shahrazuri, as one of the first commentators on Sohrawardi and one of the most important exponents of the philosophy of illumination, elaborates on this perspective in his work "Nuzhat al-Arwah wa Rawdat al-Afrah." He considers light to be the essential substance of existence, which manifests through illumination at various levels of the world, and beauty is, in fact, the manifestation of these sacred rays that are perceived at different degrees (Shahrazuri, 2004, p. 212). In his commentary on the philosophy of illumination, Shahrazuri also interprets light as the absolute truth of which other beings are merely its manifestations. He states: "The primordial light is the essence of all levels of existence, and all beings are shadows of this single truth". Qutb al-Din Shirazi, another commentator on Sohrawardi, emphasizes in his commentary on the philosophy of illumination that Sohrawardi, by distinguishing between intrinsic light and extrinsic light, shows that true beauty manifests only when the sacred rays appear in the human soul and can be understood through witnessing and illumination. In another work, "Daratu al-Taj," he points out that Sohrawardi's light is not

only a philosophical truth but also an existential and intuitive reality. Light, as the essence of being, has various degrees of manifestation, and these degrees determine the path to knowing the absolute truth for the seeker. Henri Corbin, one of the greatest contemporary Western commentators on Sohrawardi, notes in his book "History of Islamic Philosophy" that beauty in the philosophy of illumination always finds meaning in the light of the relationship between humans and the truth of light, introducing mystical witnessing as the most important tool for comprehending this beauty (Corbin, 1977, p. 90). In his book "From Heidegger to Sohrawardi," he also refers to the role of light as a tool for understanding and grasping truth, arguing that light in the philosophy of Sohrawardi has both an ontological and epistemological aspect (Rouzbahani & Fahimi-Far, 2018). According to Corbin, Sohrawardi, by combining mysticism and philosophy, presents beauty not only as an aesthetic matter but also as a window to the absolute truth (Kaviani, 2000). Dinani also emphasizes in his book "The Ray of Thought and Witnessing in Sohrawardi's Philosophy" that Sohrawardi sees beauty not just as a sensory matter but as a bridge to connect to true light and transcendent truth. Dinani believes that Sohrawardi considers the understanding of beauty possible only through illumination and the elevation of the soul because pure reason cannot grasp the higher levels of light (Doherty, 2013). These viewpoints indicate that in Sohrawardi's philosophy, light and beauty are interconnected, and their path to understanding can only be achieved through illumination, which is an experience beyond sensory perception. Many others who have examined and analyzed Sohrawardi's philosophy have focused on the intuitive and mystical aspects of beauty in this philosophy and emphasize that this beauty can only be understood by those who have reached the state of illumination (Akbari, 2021). Kaviani believes that in Sohrawardi's system, light and beauty have an inseparable bond with love and knowledge, and true beauty can only be attained through love for the rays of truth (Kapstein, 2004). Ultimately, beauty in Sohrawardi's view is a manifestation of the rays of truth that guides the soul of the seeker toward truth and perfection. This beauty is manifested not only in nature and the sensible world but also in higher levels of existence and even in the world of ideas (the imaginative realm). By employing this theory, Sohrawardi provides a unique pathway to connect aesthetics with mysticism and philosophy, which can be distinctly observed in Islamic philosophy (Verstraete, 1987). In conclusion, the analyses of these commentators reveal that beauty and light are intricately intertwined in Sohrawardi's philosophy, and only through the light of witnessing can this exalted truth of beauty be understood.

The relationship between light and beauty in the philosophical systems of Plato and Suhrawardi

In the philosophy of Plato and the wisdom of illumination, there exists a deep and complex relationship between light, love, and knowledge, with both philosophers introducing these concepts as fundamental principles in the path of the soul's ascent and the attainment of truth. Plato emphasizes the role of love for beauty in the process of knowledge in works such as "The Symposium" and "Phaedrus." In "The Symposium," he explains that love for physical beauty is merely the starting point of a spiritual journey toward understanding absolute beauty. "He who truly begins to love is guided from love for the beautiful body to love for the beauty of the soul, and ultimately to love for absolute beauty" (Plato, 1988). This path, which Plato refers to as the ladder of love, directs the soul from the sensible world toward the realm of ideas and truth. In "Phaedrus," he describes love as a "divine force" that frees the soul from the constraints of the material world and guides it toward the realm of ideas and the absolute good. According to Plato, true knowledge is realized when the soul connects with love for true beauty, and this beauty is nothing other than the "Idea of the Good," which

is the highest rank of being and the source of all truths. According to Nehamas (2007: 167), Plato views love as a tool for knowledge that helps the seeker reach the world of ideals and ultimately the absolute good. Alexander Nehamas explains in "Plato and the Art of Living" that love for physical beauty in Plato's philosophy is merely a means to attain eternal truth. On the other hand, Charles Kahn (1987) emphasizes in "Plato and the Foundations of Knowledge" that Plato considers knowledge as a process of love that guides humanity toward union with the Idea of the Good. Kahn argues that love for beauty is a metaphysical force in Plato's philosophy that helps the soul move beyond the most superficial sensory perceptions to achieve an intuitive experience of absolute truth. Love for physical beauty is only the beginning of the path through which absolute beauty and ideas can be reached. In contrast, Sohrawardi, in the philosophy of illumination, introduces light as the essence of being and the principle of all beings. He believes that love for the rays of truth leads to true understanding and knowledge. Sohrawardi states in "Hikmat al-Ishraq" that divine light flows continuously in the realms of existence, and each being, to the extent of its proximity to this light, partakes in varying degrees of beauty and perfection (Vajda, 1987). In this regard, love for light and the effort to unify with it guide the soul toward present knowledge (Ilm Huzuri) and illumination. Unlike Plato, who primarily considers knowledge attainable through reasoning and dialectic, Sohrawardi emphasizes witnessing and illumination as the way to achieve knowledge (Mahmoud, 2006). Henri Corbin believes that Sohrawardi, by employing the concept of light, creates a connection among love, knowledge, and beauty that has profoundly influenced both philosophy and Islamic mysticism. He asserts that light in the philosophy of illumination has both an ontological and epistemological aspect, and love for light is a pathway to attaining divine knowledge and comprehending true beauty (Rouzbahani & Fahimi-Far, 2018). According to Corbin, in Sohrawardi's system, love for divine light and the effort to connect to it is equivalent to platonic love for absolute beauty, with the distinction that in the wisdom of illumination, this process occurs through witnessing and illumination rather than pure reasoning (Kaviani, 2000). In comparing these two perspectives, it can be said that although Plato and Sohrawardi refer to different paths for attaining knowledge, both philosophers regard love as a driving force that guides the soul toward truth and perfection. Plato sees love for sensory beauty as an initial stage on the way to the ideas, while Sohrawardi introduces love for divine light as a means to achieve present and intuitive knowledge (Sidi and Dirbaz, 2015). Ultimately, both philosophers believe that true knowledge is achieved when a person transcends the boundaries of the sensible world and connects with divine truth, whether in the form of Platonic ideas or divine light in the philosophy of illumination (Shihabudheen & Cholakkathodi, 2024).

The relationship between light, love, and knowledge. In contemporary art, the concepts of light and beauty from the philosophy of Plato and the wisdom of illumination by Sohrawardi have been creatively and deeply employed, with contemporary artists drawing inspiration from these teachings to create outstanding artworks that encompass philosophical and spiritual reflections. Plato regarded beauty as an absolute truth in the realm of ideas, attainable through reasoning and dialectic. In "The Symposium" and "Phaedrus," he expresses that tangible beauties are merely shadows of absolute beauty, and true art is art that can guide the soul toward truth (Kahn, 1987). In contemporary art, artists like James Turrell create experiences using light and space that invite the audience to reflect on the nature of light and realities beyond the material world (Koelliker, 2009). Turrell's works utilize light as the primary medium of art, providing an experiential and transcendent experience for the audience, which can be linked to Plato's teachings on absolute beauty. In contrast,

Sohrawardi introduces light as the essence of being in the wisdom of illumination and views beauty as the manifestation of these rays of truth at various levels of existence. He believed that the recognition of beauty is possible only through witnessing and illumination, with sacred rays directly shining upon the heart of the seeker (Widigdo, 2020). This perspective has profoundly influenced Islamic art, particularly in Iranian architecture and calligraphy. For example, the architectural play of light and shadow, along with light reflections through tile work and artistic architecture in historical mosques in Iran, such as the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan, creates a mystical and illuminating experience for the audience (Jamshidi & Babolhavaeji, 2016). This experience not only evokes an aesthetic sense but also brings about a kind of spiritual connection with the sacred rays.

Comparative studies indicate that the commonalities and differences between these two viewpoints in contemporary art are clearly observable. Artists inspired by Plato tend to seek to create works that guide the audience toward truth through reasoning and logical structure. In contrast, artists drawing from Sohrawardi's wisdom of illumination emphasize the intuitive and illuminating aspects of beauty. In this regard, an article analyzes the application of the concepts of light and beauty in the works of contemporary Muslim artists, demonstrating how these artists reflect a mystical experience in their works through the use of symbols of light and its manifestations (Maftouni, 2018). Overall, Platonic and illuminative teachings in contemporary art serve as a tool for bridging sensory experience and spiritual knowledge. Light, as a common element in both intellectual systems, plays a pivotal role not only in aesthetics but also in creating experiential and intuitive knowledge. These concepts have manifested in contemporary artworks, especially in conceptual and environmental art, where artists invite their audiences to engage in experiences beyond the material world and reach spiritual realms (Keshteli et al., 2021).

Application of the concepts of light and beauty in contemporary art

In Sohrawardi's philosophy, light is presented as the principle and essence of existence and the primary source of all beings, introduced as the foundation of the universe in the book "Hikmat al-Ishraq." "Light is the principle and truth of all beings, and each being, to the extent that it is closer to light, occupies a higher rank of existence. All levels of existence are nothing but variations in the intensity and weakness of light" (Sohrawardi, 1975: 237). All levels of existence are defined through the intensity and weakness of light (Dervišević & Teparić, 2024). The divine light, called "light of lights," is the main source of all lights and manifestations, and beauty is nothing other than the reflection of this light at different levels of existence (Othman, 2018). His philosophy of light has had a profound impact not only on epistemological and mystical dimensions but also in artistic fields, especially in contemporary visual arts that draw on concepts of light and beauty. The relationship between beauty, light, and perfection in the philosophy of illumination is such that the closer a being is to light, the more beautiful and perfect it is. This philosopher believes that light has both sensory and spiritual aspects, and true beauty is understood when a person reaches the state of illumination and witnessing (Dervišević and Teparić, 2024). In this view, art serves as a means for the manifestation of light and beauty, allowing artists to invite the audience to experience illumination and connect with the luminous truth through their artistic works. This perspective is evident in Islamic art, particularly in the architecture of mosques and calligraphy, where light and shadows harmoniously contribute to creating a spiritual and mystical space (Baslouh, 2020).

The importance of light in contemporary visual arts is also clearly evident. As previously mentioned, artists like James Turrell use light as the primary medium of art to create a minimalist and illuminative space that offers an

experiential perception for the audience. These works, inspired by Sohrawardi's philosophy of light, engage with light and space to create visual experiences that transcend the material world (Zakeri, 2025). Minimalist artists, emphasizing simplicity and purity of form, also strive to introduce light as the main source of truth and beauty. These works, through the use of bright colors and smooth surfaces, invite the audience to reflect on the essence of light and its connection to truth (Mahvash, 2004). The influence of philosophical concepts of light on minimalist art and installations is undeniable. In installation art, artists create environments using light as a spatial element that leads the viewer to a sensory and spiritual experience. For example, in the works of artists like Dan Flavin and Anthony McCall, light is used not only as a source of illumination but as a material for shaping space and creating visual and conceptual experiences (Bradley, 2008). These artists, employing simplicity and minimalism in their works, create an atmosphere for contemplation and witnessing that resonates with Sohrawardi's teachings on light and beauty.

Overall, it can be said that Sohrawardi's philosophy of light, emphasizing light as the essence of existence and beauty, inspires contemporary artists to use light as a tool for conveying spiritual and illuminative concepts. This approach, especially in minimalist and installation art, creates a space for aesthetic and mystical experience that invites the audience to reflect on the essence of light and reality beyond the material world (Nitsche & Louchakova-Schwartz, 2023).

This illuminative philosopher believes that divine light is the "light of lights," and all other beings are merely reflections of this essential light. The closer a being is to this light, the more beauty and perfection it possesses (Munroe, 2012). Especially in Sohrawardi's philosophical system, light acts as a bridge between the sensible and intelligible worlds, through which one can achieve intuitive and direct knowledge (Koelliker, 2009). One prominent aspect of Sohrawardi's philosophy of light is the emphasis on creativity and the role of imagination in the process of creating beauty and art. Sohrawardi argues that imagination is a force that can establish a connection between the sensible and intelligible realms, and this connection is realized through light and its manifestations. According to him, the World of Ideas (the imaginal world) is a space between these two worlds where imagined forms and spiritual concepts are manifested through divine light (Maftouni, 2021). In fact, an artist, by utilizing the power of imagination and intuition, can bring forth elusive and spiritual beauties in a tangible and perceivable form through light and its manifestations. This view is particularly manifested in Islamic art and Iranian architecture, where artists create a mystical and spiritual experience for the audience through the interplay of light and shadow (Kaviani, 2000). Henri Corbin, a prominent commentator on Sohrawardi, refers to the role of imagination and creativity in the philosophy of illumination in his book "From Heidegger to Sohrawardi," suggesting that Sohrawardi offers a new path for connecting art, beauty, and knowledge through his emphasis on light and imagination (Mahmoud, 2006). He emphasizes that in Sohrawardi's system, artistic creativity is a form of witnessing and illumination through which the artist attains the state of observing divine light, with their artworks reflecting these luminous manifestations (Koelliker, 2009). Overall, in Sohrawardi's philosophy, light is not only a metaphysical and ontological concept but also a tool for creativity and the creation of beauty. This creativity is manifested in Islamic art and literature through the use of symbols and light imagery, creating an imaginative and mystical space, and employing the power of imagination to reveal spiritual and divine concepts (Maftouni, 2021). Ultimately, the artist in Sohrawardi's illuminative system resembles a mystic who discovers hidden beauties in the world through light and imagination and manifests them in their artistic works.

DISSCOUSION AND FINDINGS

Comparative analysis of Suhrawardi and Plato's aesthetics

Subscriptions

In a comparative analysis of the aesthetics of Sohrawardi and Plato (who regard beauty as an intermediary for understanding absolute truth, with light and ideas as intermediaries between the material world and truth), significant similarities and differences can be identified in these two philosophers' approaches to the concepts of light, love, and absolute beauty. Both philosophers view beauty as a means to grasp absolute truth. Plato, in works like "The Symposium" and "Phaedrus," believes that love for physical beauty can lead one toward absolute beauty and a truth beyond the material world. "He who properly begins his love rises from love of a beautiful body to love of all beautiful souls, and then to the love of absolute beauty itself" (Plato, 1975: 475). In "Phaedrus," Plato describes love as a divine force that guides the soul from earthly love toward absolute beauty and truth. "Love is a heavenly inspiration that lifts the human soul up from the sensible world and guides it toward the contemplation of truth and absolute beauty." He argues that beauty in the sensible world is merely a shadow of absolute beauty in the realm of ideas, and love for beauty can guide the soul toward perfection and knowledge (Kahn, 1987). On the other hand, Sohrawardi, with a mystical approach, regards light as the essence of existence and beauty as the manifestation of divine light. He asserts that love for divine light not only guides the soul toward truth but also enables one to achieve direct, immediate knowledge through witnessing and illumination (Mahmoud, 2006). In terms of similarities, both philosophers introduce light and ideas as intermediaries between the material world and absolute truth. Plato, through the concept of the "World of Ideas," sought to clarify that the sensible world is merely a reflection of a higher truth, accessible through reasoning and dialectical philosophy (Nehamas, 2007). Conversely, Sohrawardi, via the concept of "light of lights," states that all beauties and perfections at different levels of existence are various manifestations of divine light, and the closer a being is to this light, the more beautiful and perfect it becomes (Widigdo, 2020). In both perspectives, light and beauty not only possess aesthetic aspects but also serve as tools for attaining knowledge and absolute truth. The roles of love and reason in understanding beauty are other common points between these two philosophers. Plato considers love to be a divine force through which the human soul can transcend the limits of the sensible world and reach the realm of ideas. Love for beauty, in his view, is a means for liberating the soul from the chains of the body and achieving absolute truth (Kaviani, 2000). Sohrawardi also views love for divine light as a principal condition for mystical ascent and believes that through love and witnessing, one can attain immediate knowledge. "Love for divine light is the source of all knowledge, and whoever connects with true love for light will experience immediate knowledge" (Sohrawardi, 1993: 137). In his dialogues, he says: "Only those who are truly in love with light and pass through the veils of the sensible can see the truth of the divine light with the eye of the heart and achieve immediate knowledge" (Sohrawardi, 1993: 189). He believes that love for light brings about illumination and clarity of heart and guides the seeker toward the truth (Pechilis , 2023). One of the most significant differences between Plato and Sohrawardi lies in the ways of attaining knowledge. Plato emphasizes reasoning and dialectics, asserting that truth can only be obtained through philosophy and logical reasoning, whereas Sohrawardi considers witnessing and illumination as the primary means to attain knowledge, believing that divine truth is only revealed through light and its manifestations on the heart of the seeker (Mahmoud, 2006). Henri Corbin also points out this difference in his works, arguing that Sohrawardi provides a deeper and more spiritual approach to beauty and knowledge through the concepts

of light and illumination, which has influenced not only philosophy but also Islamic mysticism (Rouzbahani & Fahimi-Far, 2018). Ultimately, both philosophers emphasize absolute beauty and present it as a means to achieve truth and spiritual elevation. This approach is also evident in Islamic art and architecture, where artists create a spiritual and illuminative atmosphere using light and shadow that leads the audience toward a mystical and experiential encounter (Jamshidi & Babolhavaeji, 2016). This comparative analysis shows that although the approaches of Plato and Sohrawardi differ in details, "beauty in Plato's philosophy is a reflection of a truth beyond the material world that exists in the realm of ideas" (Plato, 1975: 462). Sohrawardi also considers beauty as a ray of the light of lights that manifests in all levels of existence (Sohrawardi, 1993: 261). However, both share the ultimate goal of guiding the soul toward absolute truth and enhancing cognitive and spiritual aspects.

Differences

In a comparative analysis of the aesthetics of Plato (who sees beauty as a reflection of the realm of Ideas) and Sohrawardi (who understands beauty as a ray of divine light), notable differences can be observed in their approaches to the concept of beauty and its place within their philosophical systems. In his philosophical framework, Plato introduces beauty as a reflection of a transcendent truth in the realm of Ideas. He believes that the sensible world is merely a shadow of absolute truth in the realm of Ideas, and worldly beauties are actually ephemeral reflections of true and eternal beauty found in the realm of Ideas. In prominent works such as "The Symposium" and "Phaedrus," Plato poetically and philosophically explains how sensory beauty can serve as a bridge for the soul, guiding it from the sensible world toward absolute beauty and ultimately to the "Idea of the Good." He asserts that love for physical beauty can be the first step in the spiritual ascent toward a truth that transcends the sensible (Kahn, 1987). From an epistemological perspective, Plato considers sensory perception as the starting point for attaining certain knowledge. He emphasizes that for someone in search of the highest levels of love and knowledge, the first step is to become enamored with a beautiful face; then, by employing reason and dialectics, they can move toward the understanding of absolute beauty and ultimately the Idea of the Good. Even in instances where Plato considers knowledge as "recollection," sensory perception still plays an important role in the reminiscence of eternal and absolute truths. However, from an ontological viewpoint, Plato sees the sensible world as strictly dependent on the realm of Ideas. In other words, if all sensible objects were to be destroyed, their ideas would remain stable and eternal in the realm of Ideas. Plato believes that Ideas, as the principles and causes of the sensible world, are immutable and constant, and changes in the sensible world do not affect them. Instead, sensible objects attain relative stability and permanence by emulating rational archetypes and benefiting from the light of truth; it is as if the closer they come to truth, the greater their dignity and status, rather than diminished (Murata et al., 2018). In the well-known allegory of the "Cave," Plato illustrates that a philosopher who has been freed from the cave (the world of ignorance and illusion) attains the highest levels of knowledge and reality. He never concludes that there is no cave or prisoners but realizes that each of the rational and sensible realms holds its own place. Such a philosopher believes it is his duty to return to the sensible world after discovering the truth and to guide the inhabitants of the cave toward the light and truth of the realm of Ideas. As a result, Plato, through his theory of Ideas, sought to establish a rational and solid foundation for the sensible world. He never intended to diminish the dignity and importance of the sensible realm but always emphasized preserving its place and status. His main goal was to show that the sensible world is incomplete in itself and can only achieve perfection and relative stability in connection with the

realm of Ideas and by utilizing the light of truth (Murata et al., 2018). In this approach, beauty is not only an aesthetic quality but also a bridge to truth and knowledge, achieved through reason and dialectical philosophy (Nehamas, 2007).

In contrast, Sohrawardi views beauty as a ray of divine light. In Sohrawardi's mystical system, light is presented as the essence of existence and the principle of all beings, with beauty being the manifestation of this light in various levels of existence (Zhang, 2019). According to Sohrawardi, the closer a being is to divine light, the more beauty and perfection it possesses. He perceives beauty not only in the material world but also in higher realms of existence, believing that the recognition of beauty is possible through witnessing and illumination (Mahmoud, 2006). This perspective, unlike Plato's, emphasizes immediate and unmediated knowledge, with the path to absolute beauty being accessible through love and divine light (Widigdo, 2020). Henri Corbin, a prominent interpreter of Sohrawardi, believes that the main difference between Plato and Sohrawardi lies in their ways of attaining knowledge and understanding beauty. Corbin argues that Plato, emphasizing reasoning and dialectics, views understanding as a mental and argumentative process, whereas Sohrawardi, with a mystical and illuminative approach, sees knowledge as a light that shines upon the heart of the seeker, achieved through illumination and witnessing (Mahmoud, 2006). On the other hand, Seyyed Hossein Nasr also references the differences between these two viewpoints in his works, stating that in Sohrawardi's philosophy, divine light is not only an intermediary for understanding beauty but also manifests absolute beauty itself (Nasr, 1974). Another important difference is that, in Plato's philosophy, sensible beauty only acts as a means to attain absolute beauty in the realm of Ideas, while in Sohrawardi's wisdom of illumination, every manifestation of divine light in the world can itself be a manifestation of true beauty. In other words, while Plato sees beauty as a reflection of truth, Sohrawardi regards beauty as the truth itself, which becomes apparent in every ray of divine light (Jamshidi & Babolhavaeji, 2016). This approach of Sohrawardi is especially reflected in Islamic art, particularly in Iranian architecture and calligraphy, where artists create a spiritual and illuminative atmosphere using light and shadow that guides the audience toward a mystical and experiential encounter (Rouzbahani & Fahimi-Far, 2018). "While Plato considers beauty as a reflection of ideal forms (Plato, 1975: 337), Sohrawardi presents divine light as absolute truth, of which beauty is merely a ray (Sohrawardi, 1975). This methodological difference shows that Plato leans toward rationalism, whereas Sohrawardi tends toward mystical and experiential insight."

The role of light in Suhrawardi's aesthetics

In the philosophy of Sohrawardi, light is introduced as the fundamental element of beauty and the essence of existence, with all beings considered as various manifestations of this divine light. In Sohrawardi's mystical system, light is not merely a physical or material phenomenon but absolute truth and the source of all beauty and perfection. In "Hikmat al-Ishraq," Sohrawardi describes light as "the light of lights" and states that all being originates from this light; the closer a being is to this light, the more beauty and perfection it possesses (Kohandel, 2016). He believes that true beauty manifests not in appearance but in the manifestation of divine light across different levels of existence. This manifestation of light, in addition to creating beauty, has a profound impact on the spiritual elevation and spiritual understanding of humanity (Murata et al., 2018). One of the prominent aspects of Sohrawardi's aesthetics is the impact of light on the elevation of the spirit and spiritual knowledge. He asserts that divine light can enlighten the human heart and guide it toward immediate and intuitive knowledge. In this process, light acts as an intermediary that connects the sensible world with the intelligible realm. In fact, a seeker can attain the

understanding of absolute truth and divine light by observing the light and its beauties in nature and the material world (Todorova, 2020). Sohrawardi employs the term "knowledge of presence," which contrasts with "knowledge by acquisition," arguing that this knowledge of presence is only achievable through light and illumination (Verstraete, 1987). Henri Corbin, one of the most significant Western interpreters of Sohrawardi, highlights the key role of light in spiritual elevation in his works. He states that in the philosophy of illumination, light is not only a pathway to understanding beauty but also a tool for attaining divine truth (Gommans & Huseini, 2024). According to Corbin, in Sohrawardi's system, light, as a manifestation of absolute truth, has the capacity to create an inner and spiritual transformation in humans, and a seeker, by focusing on light and witnessing it, can reach a level of knowledge and illumination where truth is revealed to him directly (Necipoğ lu, 2015). Overall, in Sohrawardi's mystical system, light is presented as the essence of beauty and a means for spiritual elevation. Light exists in both physical and spiritual dimensions and, by shining on the heart of the seeker, it frees him from the bonds of the material world and guides him toward divine truth and perfection. This approach is also reflected in Islamic art, where artists use light and play with shadows to create a spiritual and illuminative atmosphere that brings an experiential and spiritual encounter to the audience (Kapstein, 2004).

The connection between light in the wisdom of illumination and Plato's theory of beauty

The relationship between light in Sohrawardi's philosophy of illumination and Plato's theory of beauty can be examined from various angles, revealing points of connection and significant differences between the two philosophical systems. Both philosophers consider light as a key element in the understanding of beauty and absolute truth. In his theory of Forms, Plato introduces beauty as a reflection of the realm of Ideas, believing that beauty in the sensible world is merely a shadow of absolute beauty in the realm of Forms. He emphasizes that light acts as a metaphor for the Idea of the Good and, like the sun illuminating the material world, the Idea of the Good illuminates the spiritual realm and makes the knowledge of Ideas possible (Nehamas, 2007). In this view, light symbolizes rational clarity and the power of reason that guides humans toward the understanding of truth (Kahn, 1987). In contrast, Sohrawardi adopts a mystical approach, introducing light not only as the fundamental element of beauty but also as the essence of existence. He believes that all beings are reflections of "the light of lights," and the closer a being is to this divine light, the more beautiful and perfect it is (Widigdo, 2020). In Sohrawardi's system of illumination, light has not only a metaphysical aspect but also serves as a tool for attaining intuitive and immediate knowledge. Unlike Plato, who emphasizes reason and logic, Sohrawardi stresses witnessing and illumination as the pathways to understanding beauty and absolute truth (Mahmoud, 2006). He asserts that a seeker can achieve immediate knowledge by concentrating on divine light and experiencing illumination, which is a type of direct knowledge attained through insight (Jamshidi & Babolhavaeji, 2016).

An interesting point in comparing these two views is that although both Plato and Sohrawardi introduce light as a means of reaching truth, the paths to attaining this knowledge in their philosophies differ. Plato believes that one can attain knowledge of absolute beauty through reason and dialectics, whereas Sohrawardi proposes a mystical and experiential path that is made possible through illumination and inner light (Kohandel, 2016). This methodological difference creates a profound contrast in the epistemology of the two philosophers, where Plato emphasizes acquired and logical knowledge, and Sohrawardi focuses on immediate and intuitive knowledge (SDS Maqtul & al-Ishraq, 2015). On the other hand, Plato's metaphysical view of the Forms differs from Sohrawardi's experiential

perspective on light. While Plato considers the sensible world to be merely an imperfect reflection of the world of Forms and regards sensory beauty as merely a stage toward absolute beauty (Koelliker, 2009), Sohrawardi believes that every manifestation of light in the world can be a manifestation of divine light and absolute beauty. He holds that beauty can be experienced not only in the realm of Ideas but also in the material world and nature, provided the observer reaches this beauty through witnessing (Rouzbahani & Fahimi-Far, 2018).

In general, while Plato and Sohrawardi share a commonality in using the concept of light as an intermediary for understanding beauty and absolute truth, their methodological and epistemological differences lead them to propose different pathways for attaining knowledge and beauty. These differences have influenced not only philosophy but also art and aesthetics, manifesting in Islamic art, particularly in Iranian architecture and calligraphy, where artists create a spiritual and illuminative atmosphere using light and shadow that guides the audience toward an experiential and intuitive encounter (Ibrahim, 2024).

Applied Analysis of Light Concepts in Contemporary Art: A Comparison of the Philosophy of Illumination and the Theory of Forms with Modern Art

Light as a Metaphysical Element in Contemporary Art

In today's world, where art constantly draws from philosophical and epistemological traditions, the concepts of light in Sohrawardi's philosophy of illumination and Plato's theory of beauty have found a central place in the formation of modern artistic movements. Light is no longer merely a visual element or a tool for displaying forms; it has itself become the subject and essence of the artwork. In this context, numerous thinkers, such as Henri Corbin (Vajda, 1974), believe that Sohrawardi's philosophy of illumination is not just a theoretical system but a model for an ontological understanding of light that influences aesthetics and art. Light, according to Sohrawardi, is the essence of existence and a truth that manifests itself through various ranks in the world (Sohrawardi, 1975: 223). In Plato's philosophy, light also serves as a symbol of the Idea of the Good, providing a pathway to the perception of absolute truth (Plato, 1988: 359). Despite methodological differences, these two philosophical approaches share the common principle that beauty and light have a profound connection, and their experience transcends sensory perception.

Reflection of the philosophy of light in minimalist art and light arrangement

The influence of these philosophical concepts can be seen in minimalist art, especially in the works of James Turrell. Turrell, a pioneer in the use of light as an artistic medium, creates an experience in which the viewer encounters light as a living, metaphysical phenomenon (Hashemi, 2023). His works, including the series "Heavenly Rooms," create a space in which light, as the essence of existence, provides the viewer with an intuitive experience. This experience can be compared to Suhrawardi's teachings on optical intuition, where light is understood not through rational analysis, but through a kind of direct encounter with reality (Sohrawardi, 1993: 92). In installation art, light is also used as a contemplative element in aesthetic experience. Using reflected light in her famous installations, such as her "Infinite Rooms," Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama creates a space that detaches the viewer from time and space, immersing them in a boundless experience of light and space (Nasr, 1974). This type of encounter with light can be considered a type of illuminative experience in which the viewer not only observes the light, but also is placed within it and feels at one with it, a concept that can be directly adapted to Suhrawardi's theory of light.

Light in Contemporary Architecture: The Convergence of the Philosophy of Illumination and the Theory of Forms

The influences of these two philosophical traditions are also observable in modern and Islamic architecture. The use of light as a tool

for spiritual communication in contemporary art can lead to the creation of works that evoke a sense of divine presence and mystical experience for the audience through the interplay of light and shadow. These works can be employed in public or religious spaces, such as mosques and places of worship, and by emphasizing light as a symbol of absolute truth, they create an environment that guides the audience toward contemplation and spiritual experience (Chishti, 2004: 892). In Islamic architecture, light has always been a fundamental element in creating a sense of spirituality and aesthetic experience. A prominent example of this can be seen in the design of the clerestories of mosques, such as the dome of Sheikh Lotfallah Mosque in Isfahan, where light filters through the latticed windows to create a space that not only embodies physical manifestation but also conveys a sense of transcendence beyond the material world (Branco et al., 2017). This concept can also be compared to Plato's theory of Forms, where light acts as a bridge between the sensible realm and the intelligible realm. In contemporary architecture, architects such as Tadao Ando have extensively utilized light to create a sense of meaning and contemplation. His Church of Light is an example of the minimalist application of light, creating a calm and reflective space (Nasr, 1974). This use of light can be seen as an extension of philosophical teachings that portray light not just as a physical element but as a spiritual and metaphysical experience.

CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

The examination of the impact of light concepts in the philosophy of illumination and Platonic theory shows that contemporary art, especially in the realms of minimalism, installation, and architecture, has not only drawn inspiration from these philosophies but has also redefined them in a new framework. Light, which is considered in these philosophies as a bridge to absolute truth, continues to play a fundamental role in the works of modern artists. As Plato expresses in the Republic, "the light of the sun not only enables seeing objects but also reveals the truth itself". Similarly, Sohrawardi asserts, "light is the key to understanding truth, and whoever connects with light will attain knowledge of truth". Therefore, light in contemporary art can serve as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds. Specifically, in environmental and minimalist arts, light can evoke a sense of liberation from material constraints and guide the audience on an inner and intuitive journey. This type of art acts not only as a visual experience but also as a tool for conveying profound philosophical and spiritual concepts. Overall, Sohrawardi's philosophy of light inspires artists seeking to create works with a spiritual dimension that transcends merely sensory beauty. These works can invite audiences into a direct experience of the rays of truth and absolute truth, forging a deep connection between art, knowledge, and intuition. Both philosophers introduce light as an essential element in understanding beauty and absolute truth; Plato emphasizes light as a symbol of the "Idea of the Good," while Sohrawardi presents light as "the light of lights," the essence of existence and the source of all beauty. Although the paths to attaining knowledge differ in these two intellectual systems—Plato emphasizes reason and dialectics, and Sohrawardi focuses on intuition and illumination—both perspectives ultimately guide the human spirit towards elevation and perfection. The convergence of the theories of these two philosophers shows that light and beauty act as a bridge between the material world and metaphysical truth in both approaches. Plato uses light as a means to understand the realm of Forms, considering sensory beauty merely a reflection of absolute beauty. In contrast, Sohrawardi views every manifestation of light in the material world as a manifestation of divine light, believing that true beauty can be attained through an experiential and intuitive approach. This convergence in fundamental concepts of light and beauty can provide a suit-

able foundation for future research in further comparing aesthetics in these two philosophical systems. One important suggestion for future research is to explore the potential impacts of these theories on contemporary art. Particularly in installation art and minimalist designs, where light is used as a primary material, the teachings of Sohrawardi and Plato can be leveraged to create spiritual and intuitive experiences. This type of art can guide the audience, through a sensory experience, on an inner and spiritual journey, establishing a profound connection between art, knowledge, and beauty. Ultimately, a call to rethink aesthetics in today's art, relying on Eastern and Western philosophies, can lead to the creation of works that are impactful not only visually but also spiritually and intellectually. Contemporary art can utilize the concepts of light and beauty in the philosophies of Plato and Sohrawardi to become a medium for spiritual connection and the transmission of deep philosophical messages. This rethinking can assist contemporary artists in providing experiences that transcend material boundaries for their audiences, inviting them to reflect on absolute truth and divine beauty through the use of light as a metaphysical and aesthetic element.

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