

# **A Comparative Study of the Western and Islamic Philosophical Vision on Divine Illumination from the Philosophical Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

**The relationship between light and philosophy is one of the oldest issues in the scope of epistemology. In philosophy, the presence of light has been manifested as the mystic- philosopher intuition and specific ontological model. The Islamic philosophers have emphasized the divine nature of light. The western philosophers have stressed on the centrality of rationalism besides metaphysical source of knowledge of the universe concurrent with the divine reason that manifested in the presence of light. The research method applied in the current study is based on the analysis of philosophical texts of western and eastern philosophers. The research statistical sample is chosen after analyzing the contents of the opinions of thirty five western and thirty two Islamic philosophers. The most common components with philosophical nature are three divine nature, active intellect and beauty. It was found that two components i.e. divine light manifestation and truth had the most philosophical nature in the western philosophers' opinions while three components of cognition, necessary being and revealed intellect were the most prevalent philosophical nature on the light by the Islamic philosophers.**

**Keywords: Light Philosophy; Divine Illumination; Islamic Philosophers; Western Philosophers; Philosophy.**

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## **Introduction**

Divine illumination is the oldest and the most effective naturalism choice in the realm of subjectivity and knowledge. The philosophical teachings are aim at proving the fact that the man needs a specific divine aid in his cognitive actions. These teachings are rooted in the ancient period and they have been manifested and converted according to the contexts. The divine illumination is particularly identified by Christianity in the middle ages especially via Augustine. The divine light or illumination has an outstanding place in the ancient Greek philosophy and it has preserved its role in the Neo-Platonic and Islamic philosophy, as well. In the divine light philosophy, the human mind relies on supernatural aids for completion of knowledge acquiring trend continuously. However, this aid should be supernatural and specific. It means that we should consider it something more than divine creation and continuous protection of human mind. In order to complete cognitive activities, the mind ought to rely on this virtue. The philosophy of light is one of the most important and effective constructs in the Iranian philosophy. Whether in the ancient period or the post-Islamic era, light and illumination were considered holy concepts on which philosophers' intellectual foundations are based. As such, all eastern philosophers

have considered this issue in their thoughts. From the illumination philosophy, the divine light is shined on all existence and any phenomenon or existing creature is benefitted by this light in accordance with its capacity. A complete recognition of the light and illumination theory and its nature is achieved by examining representations and its historical and evolutionary trend in different periods. In general, this issue can be divided into western and eastern philosophies. In this research, at first, the place of light in the philosophy of art is investigated and then a brief review on the opinions of western and eastern philosophers on the light is offered and the vision on this mysterious concept that has had a close relationship with the divinity is studied comparatively. Then commonalities and difference between these intellectual trends are examined according to the results.

## **Research Methodology**

This research is descriptive-analytical and analytical-comparative in nature. It is a survey and qualitative in terms of administration and it is also comparative based on the implementation of the research. The research is based on a field study and documentary where an attempt has been made to investigate written evidences.

## **The Philosophy of Light and Illumination in Christian West**

The most prominent theory of the philosophy of light explains a specific feature of human knowledge by a comparison between sensual vision and the role of light played in it. According to this theory, the man's knowledge on unchangeable objects and facts requires a kind of conceptual and intuitive light that illuminates the objects. Thus, it makes them visible in our mind. Plato believes that this light is originated from the goodness idea and Augustine refers to its divine source and others consider it innate being. The strange nature and behavior of the light has provided a paradigm not only for scientific theories but also for fundamental philosophical explanation of the realities. "For instance, the neo-Platonic existence world has likened the creation of the world to radiation of the rays from a light source. Thus the theory of light can include an epistemological aspect as a metaphysical phenomenon" (Mahvash, 2014).

### **Ancient Greece**

Plato quoted by Socrates suggests the experience of a divine or spiritual inspiration in the childhood as a

prohibiting proclaimer (Ahbel&Kamtekar, 2006:206). Socrates is explicitly describing a kind of cognitive guidance that has a "divine or spiritual" source. Plato's theory of recollection presupposes that the human mind somehow has built into it a grasp of forms. Aristotle, too, seems to invoke the divinity. He describes the active intellect in this way: "This intellect is separate, unaffected, and unmixed, being in essence activity.... It is not the case that it sometimes thinks and at other times not. In separation it is just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal" (Aristotle, 1987:197). In the ancient period and even in the contemporary era, some scholars believe that the intellect is a divine phenomenon not a humanly subjective faculty. "Aristotle explicitly believed in the divine light philosophy" (Pasnau, 1999). "Plotinus suggests the spiritual light as God's light and he has employed the apparent and inner light metaphors and resembled God to the sun"(Hamid, 1994:121). "He was not a Christian, however, the idea of God is being light is apparent in his writings. In his opinion, beauty is originated from the presence of immaterial light" (Mackenna, 1992).

**Table 1** Ancient Philosophers' Opinions on Light

<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Relevance to Philosophical Concept</b>
Parmenides	510-440 BC	Light is the reality of existence in the immortal being (pure being), it is eternal and constant and there is no nonexistence (Sadrolmotahelin, 2008:95).	- Pure being - Divine essence
Socrates	469-399 BC	Cognition with divine source or spiritual light (A.Layne, 2014).	-Guidance -Divine essence
Plato	447-347 BC	Light as the truth; sun (the source of light) as a goodness idea (Craig, 2000: 383).	- Truth - Goodness
Aristotle	358-322 BC	Resemblance of active intellect to light. The light is metaphysics connector between soul and body (Mahvash, 2014:223).	Active intellect
Plotinus	270-203 BC	Resemblance of God to the sun, the apparent light or the inner light (Mackenna, 1992)	- Beauty

### **The Middle Age**

The late 4<sup>th</sup> century begins with an emphasis on the philosophy of light in the West. “Augustine stresses on the role of the divine light in the human thought” (Augustine, 2006:146). In his opinion, God is the light that illuminates the world and converts nonexistence to existence and guides the man to truth (Mohammad Ilkhani, 2003: 63). In Augustine’s opinion, the illumination or divine light or rational light is required for perception of the truth (Talebzadeh, 2001:541). Thirteenth-century Franciscans, led by figures such as Grosseteste, Aquinas and Buenaventura gave the theory a detailed and systematic defense, focusing on the changeability and hence; uncertainty of the human mind and the sensory world (Ibid).

Grosseteste believed that God is the primordial light and the creatures are radiant of the light that have been irradiated from the primordial light source and the truth of the objects relies on the divine wisdom that deserves to contemplation (Copleston, 2004). One of the incentives leading to consider the concept of light in the Middle Age was this belief that the God is light. Aquinas combined Christian beliefs with Aristotelian ones (Mosahab, 1966). In his pamphlet of “The Human Nature” that he responds to the Augustinian claims by recalling of the intellect as the Aristotelian agent, it is perceived that the truth is not perceived completely by senses and the light of intellect is required (Shapcote, 1947:323).

Buenaventura, an Italian philosopher, discusses on the relationships between the intellect and the faith. The intellect can discover some spiritual truths which form the foundation of the Christianity. However, divine light is necessary for perception of some truths (Vinck, 1960). Henry of Ghent emphasizes the revival of the early thirteenth century tradition providing the essence of God as the active intellect by reminding the intellect as the critical agent (Pasnau, 1995). John Duns Scots, as one of the middle age philosophers, infers that the pure knowledge cannot be assured out of light. In his opinion, human mind collaborates with the divine light in achieving this knowledge (Wolter, 1990). In Divine Comedy, Dante introduces God as the light that illuminates everything and

experiencing this light is prosperity (Lafferty, 1911:21). The light supernatural theory is represented in Divine Comedy and mostly, the creation is imagined as representation of the divine light according to the Muslim mystics' mysteries.

The Dante mirror metaphor is manifested as the light in the works of Ibn Arabi and the light is the symbol of God and darkness is the symbol of the substance (Jahangiri, 1996: 617-618). On the inner way which the mystics are benefited by their souls, Meister Eckhart defines: "My look on him is as his look on my", so he offers the lover eyes the light to observe that beauty" (Sattari, 1993:136). William of Ockham tents to observe the God only by the divine virtue that is represented in his perception of God (Fieser, 1995).

**Table 2** Middle Age Philosophers' Opinions on Light

<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Connection with Philosophical Concept</b>
Saint Augustine	354-430 AD	The nature of God is light. Light is a tool for reaching truth. The aim of creation of human is to join the light by essence. Illumination is essential for perception of truth and light of intellect (Mohammad Ilkhani, 2003: 63), (Leland, 1939, 46).	- Spiritual nature - Truth -Intellectual concepts
Pseudo-	5-6	For Christians, the spiritual light is manifestation of	- Divine light

Dionysius	centuries	God's light. Light is a phenomenon for representing beauty. The objects are realized by light (Luibheid, 1987:77).	- Spiritual nature - Beauty
Saint Anselm Canterbury	1033-1109 AD	Second Augustine. Tendency toward seeing God. Depends on the manifestation of the divine blessing. The divine grace is the main factor of gaining knowledge by divine grace (Davies& Evans, 1998:97).	- Spiritual nature - Truth - Divine grace
RobertusGrossatesta	1033-1109 AD	The pivotal role of the Illumination theory in the epistemology and existentialism. God is the primordial light and the creatures are the rays of the light irradiated from the primordial source (Copleston, 2004). The truth of the objects represented in the divine intellect and its discovery by illumination. Necessity of divine illumination for sensing of the facts (Talebzadeh, 2001).	- Spiritual nature - Truth - Active intellect
Saint Thomas Aquinas	1225-1274 AD	The idea of God being as light. Imperceptions of the truth completely by senses. The light of intellect is required for perception of the truth (Shapcote, 1947:323).	- Spiritual nature - Intellect
Bonaventura	1221-1271 AD	The divine light is essential for perception of some events. According to Saint James "any transcended gift is from God descending from the father of the lights" that diversity of lights is considered (Vinck, 1960).	-Revelation of the divine light -Multiplicity
Henry of the Ghent	1217-1293 AD	The importance of intellect relies on its being critical and emphasis on the revitalization of the tradition of the 13th century providing the essence of God as the active intellect (Pasnau, 1995).	-Manifestation of the divine light -Active intellect
John Duns Scotus	1266-1308 AD	The pure knowledge cannot be assured without light. There are four senses in the human intellect that consider the infallible facts in divine light. The not only the divine light is radiated on us but	-Divine light manifestation -Active intellect

		also on the subjects resulted from our perception (Wolter, 1990).	
Dante Alighieri	1265-1321 AD	God is the light that illuminates everything; however, the soul is not unified with this light and preserves its unity (Lafferty, 1911:21).	-Divine light manifestation -the issue of unity
Eckhart	1260-1320 AD	The inner way of the mystics is through the eye of the soul. The illumination of that beauty that lights the eyes of the lover to see that beauty (Sattari, 1993: 136).	-Connection with divine light manifestation
William of Ockham	1285-1349 AD	The man desire is only to see God that is done by expansion of the divine grace and perception of the facts that enable him for seeing and identification of God (Fiese, 1995).	-Divine light manifestation

**Renaissance Era**

In the renaissance era, the light was not considered as the mystery of the God revelation, but the light qualitative value was taken into account as an element that offered a sense of living (Van de Ven, 1971:14). Although, the philosophy of divine light has lost its eminent advocates and caused to disconnection from the world of sanctity in the fields of sciences and art, tendency toward cognitive phenomena supernatural interpretations had its own advocates (Pasnau, 1995). Marsilio Ficino is one of the neo-Platonic philosophers who securitized this issue in the book “Commentary in Plato's Symposium”. “The way to define an aesthetic entity relies on

contemplation and thinking not formal and structural examination of the objects. This thought paves the way to consideration of aesthetic entity resultant from God’s divine light which represents it as a perceivable construct”(Ramazan Mahi, 20150).

Leonardo de Vinci, a renaissance artist and philosopher writes on the quality of the light and darkness in an interpretation of the nature: on the discovery of the causes and incentives of the nature, the observer is astonished with the light more than other elements (Schultz, 2002: 14). The other manifestation of de Vinci visual thought is revelation by Jesus Christ and radiation of the divine light from Christ and the impact of the divine light on divine manifestation

of God. In response to his inner question on the divine light, he employed standing or kneeling figures that represent the spiritual light (Barolsky, 2002).

**Table 3** Renaissancephilosophers’ Opinions on Light

<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Connection with Philosophical Issues</b>
Marsilio Ficino	1433-1499 AD	Beauty is originated from the rays of God’s divine light on human soul that shining is begun and represents it as perceivable construct(tebyan.net)	- Divine light manifestation - Beauty - Active intellect
Leonard de Vinci	1452-1519 AD	The specific style of the artist for visualization of the radiation of divine light from Jesus Christ and the effect on the divine light on divine manifestation of God.	- Divine light manifestation - Beauty - Active intellect
Michael Angelo	1475-1564 AD	Prevents penetration of the light from the highest point of the dome into the church (Schultz, 2002:113).	- Divine light manifestation - Beauty - Active intellect
Andrea Palladio	1508-1580 AD	The divinely definitions of the light were directed toward the mathematical aspects of the science of the light. Measuring the level of illumination proportionate with the heat produced by the light (Intellect, 2014:224).	- Active intellect

**Modern Era**

Most modern philosophers did not take into account issues belonging to the experimental science. Among nineteenth century philosophers, Goethe in the “Color Theory” writes: “The eye receives its existence from light. The eye was existed from the light and by the help of the light

and for the light to contact the inner light with the external light” (Corbin, 2000: 198). Arthur Schopenhauer likens the intellect to the light. “Any light can be distinguished. The intellect is a light, so it can be distinguished” (Schopenhauer, 2008:31). He considers light as a subjective affair (Zajonic, 1993:31). The architect



philosophers have proposed their viewpoints on the light. Frank Lloyd Wright considers the role of the light in relevance to aesthetic aspects; the importance of the darkness (shadow) relative to the light in the ancient architecture is as the brush for the traditional architect (Baker, 2002:9). By advent of orientalism in the realm of philosophy and art, the spiritual light is highlighted in the western countries and in the limited scope. Arthur Upham Pope, as an orientalist, writes: "Since the Zoroastrianism era, the beauty had had a disconnected relationship with the light. The light was the innate element of the spiritual light that fights with darkness and demon. In Iran, light has been expanded by the role that religion has granted to it" (Pope, 1991:13).

Tanizaki, a Japanese modernist writer in his book "In Praise of Shadows" acknowledges the difference between the light and the shadow and blames lack of shadow in the modern architecture. "In his opinion, the thoughtful and elegant attendance of the light and shadow in the space owes to the light controlled presence in the architecture" (Mahvash, 2014:208). Martin Heidegger in the book "The end of philosophy" writes: just because of light that every shining object can show itself. But lightness is based on something that is clearly evident. "Creatures, whether

materials, energy or soul become visible and recognized by light" (Husserl, 1999: 100).

Louis Kahn has investigated the light from spiritual dimension. Describing the architectural creation hierarchy, he visualizes matter-psyche rooted in the Platonic viewpoint (Burton, 1973). He believes that since the matter becomes visible by light, so the matter receives its existence from light (Corbin, 1973:264). "Louis Kahn defines the concept of silence that is equivalent to absence of light not lack of light as the desire for architectural being and being expressed that is achieved by light in the objectivity of the architecture" (Corbin, 2000). Faber Birren, one of the theorists of color in his book "Color and human response" writes about the close and mysterious relationship between the color and the architecture and categorized the Temple of the Chaldeans accordingly. Henry Corbin in his book "The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism" writes: "Black light is at the base of the revelation light of God that causes the man to see" (Corbin, 2009:151). Titus Burckhardt suggests the monotheism as an outstanding indicator of Islam and believes that "there is no symbol and revelation as light that is close to divine unity, so that the Muslim artists try to employ light excessively in their artworks" (Burckhardt, 1986: 87). Tadao Ando defines the only way of indication of

the pure truth as “Light informs the architecture about life and shapes it powerfully” (Ando, 2002:119). Light that is the origin of all existence reveals

interrelationships and indeed, the space is shown by the light as a curved sculpture” (Lobell, 1979: 36).

**Table 4** Modern philosophers’ Opinions on Light

<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Connection with Philosophical Issues</b>
Friedrich Hegel	1770-1831	Reference to the universal light. The man moves as a universal light.	- Universality
Johannes Goethe	1749-1832 AD	The eye has its existence from the light. The eye sees by because of the light and it was created for the light so that the inner light could contact with the external light (Corbin, 2000: 198).	- Active intellect
Arthur Schopenhauer	1788-1860 AD	Resemblance of the intellect to the light. He considers the light as subjective affair (Schopenhauer, 2008:14).	- Beauty - Active intellect
Frank Lloyd Wright	1867-1959 AD	The role of the light to the aesthetic aspects. The importance of the darkness (shadow) relative to the light (Baker, 2002:9).	- Beauty - Active intellect
Leo Corbusier	1887-1965 AD	The light is the most efficient architectural foundation and element. Architecture is the splendid playing of the masses interplayed in the light, dynamicity of the light (Copen, 2003: 371) (Lobell, 1979: 36).	- Beauty - Active intellect
Arthur Pope	1887-1965 AD	Relationship of the beauty with the light. The light is the innate element of the spiritual light that fights with darkness and demon (Pope, 1991).	- Beauty - Active intellect
Tanizaki	1886-1965 AD	The thoughtful and elegant attendance of the light and shadow in the space” (Intellect, 2014:208).	- Active intellect
Martin	1889-	Materials, energy or soul become visible and recognized	- Active

Heidegger	1976 AD	by light” (Husserl, 1999: 100)	intellect - Unity of existence
Louis Kahn	1901-1974 AD	He investigates the light from spiritual dimension. In describing the architectural creation hierarchy, he visualizes matter-psyche rooted in the Platonic viewpoint (Burton, 1973) (Zajonce, 1993). (Lobell, 1979:11).	- Privacy
Henry Corbin	1903-1978 AD	Black light is at the base of the revelation light of God that causes the man to see, he is the darkness and light and light represents architecture (Lobell, 1979:64).	- Divine light - Active intellect
Titus Burckhardt	1908-1984 AD	The opportunity to revel unity by the light. Closeness of the light to unit. The darkness cannot be seen except by the light. Light in the architecture resembles to a chemical reaction (Burckhardt, 1986: 87).	- Divine light - the active intellect
Pierre von Mais	Contemporary-1938	Architecture of silence, light and matter. Let us to be silent and compatible. Darkness is the accompanier of the light.	- Privacy - Active intellect
Tadao Ando	Contemporary-1941	Light is the way to reveal the pure light and the agent informing of the architecture from life. The existence relationship of the light and architecture in the nature. Light is dominated element in the architecture. Light attends without time and place (Ando, 2002).	- Truth - Active intellect
Gary Episcopal	Contemporary-1954	Light representing the raised architecture	- Active intellect

**The Philosophy of Light/ Illumination in East**

The sun and fire had important place in primitive and ancient civilizations. Light was considered as a mystical symbol and sign of presence of God in addition to its

functional aspect. “All civilizations praised the sun since they believed that the light and color appear in presence of the sun” (Birren, 1978:2). In the philosophy of the east, particularly in Iran, as the realm of myths, religions, literature and ancient

rituals, light has had a specific place concerning to the spiritual relation with the light concepts. Light is the material and spiritual symbol of divinity. The spiritual light played an outstanding role in ancient Iran. "In ancient Iran, fire was the symbol of divinity. The sun was the eye of Ahura Mazda that looks on the earth from the sky. The material light is the symbol of real light and for this reason, the ancient Iranians worshiped Ahura Mazda toward the light to get closer the origin of the light (Khoshnazar&Rajabi, 2009: 34). After the advent of Islam, not only the light was the manifestation of the divinity in the world but also according to the Miracle 35 of the Quranic verse Noor (The light) it was considered by the mystics. The spiritual light recalling in Iran can be categorized into followings:

#### ***Ancient Iran- Philosophy of Khosrowani***

Probably Iranians had had a God with the attribute of light and they worshiped the sun that was called Mitra. The goddess Mitra was worshiped until Zoroastrianism. The Zoroastrian religion included the original mystical principles and its songs were accompanied by spiritual perceptions as the sign of intuition. They believed that the fire was intermediate between the God and the creatures and it had a hierarchy (Razi, 2014). "In the ancient Iranian Sufism, the desire to achieving the light

irradiant from the north is the symbol of the mystic quest for self-identification and recognition" (Corbin, 2000:9). This reflection is seen in Manichaeism. "The heaven of lightness is the main heaven in the Manichaean mythology that is the place of Zarvan (Ismaeilpour, 2002:294). " The Mandaism mysticism is based on the fight between the light and darkness and release of the light from the darkness. Avoiding darkness is meant joining the light, beauty and goodness" (Ibid: 22).

#### ***Islamic Iran-Philosophy of Illumination***

"In Islamic philosophy and mysticism, it was believed that the light is the issue of ontology and the existence grades as the fundamental subject" (Mahvash, 2014: 129). "From Suhrawardi and other advocates of the illumination viewpoint, the world consists of light and darkness and indeed, the lack of light and what is related to the objects material aspect is darkness that prevents penetration of the light in them(Nasr, 1966:91). "The theory of light and darkness is an ontological and anthropological viewpoint that is considered as one of the commonalities between the Zoroastrian mysticism and the Islamic mysticism. "From the advocates of illumination perspective, the absolute light primordial essence, God, illuminates continuously and it is revealed by this way and creates everything and offers them life.

Everything in the world, beauty and perfection is originated from God and redemption is meant joining this illumination” (Nasr, 1966:91). “According to this fact, the common ways for classification in the history are not confirmed by the periodical division of the Islamic philosophical history, so for studying the history of philosophy, Islam is divided into three periods” (Corbin, 1992).

### **The First Period: From Early Islam to Ibn Roshd (1198)**

Dhul-Nun al-Misri considers the light of knowledge as one of the signs of a mystic (Algoshiri, 1995:500). Alkandi believes in creation of a matter as condensed light (Mahvash, 2014). AbulhassanAmeri, one of the great philosophers of neo-Platonic school suggests color independent from light and the light is prerequisite of existence of the color not a medium to recognize it. Mansour Hallaj in the book “Kitāb al-Tawāsīn” (a series of eleven short works) refers to the light for explaining his ideas and considers the light of unity and unity in the divine essence and Allah (Hallaj, 2005: 158). He expresses “I am the truth” by proposing the unity of light with God or self-annihilation in the absolute light and employs it in praising the unity of God. On the other hand, in his opinion, existence is originated from God (Vardi&Danaiyan, 2011: 178). In Tawāsīn-

Seraj, he considers the light as the primary creation and this light is a perfected man who is the intermediate between the second creature and the creation hierarchy (Ibid: 179).

In Farabi’s opinion, actualization of the potential intellect is meant that the active intellect radiates light (Farabi, 1938:15-16). According to Farabi, the intelligible forms are achieved by abstraction of the tangible forms and the role of the active intellect is illumination for revealing tangibles and converting intangibles into intelligible. Ibn Heisam introduces light as an independent and effective factor for determining beauty. The light and color complement each other and they represent a beautiful form and other factors should be combined in the mind during visual perception (Najiboglu, 2000:259). He considers the light something different from color and in his opinion, the color is perceived due to the light radiated on it (Ameri, 1996: 331). MostamaliBokhari, the fifth century scholar introduces the light as the guidance of knowledge (Bokhari, 1984: 89). Avicenna considers two innate idea and metaphoric concept in interpretation of the miracle of light and relying on the opinion of Aristotle, he believes that the light in its innate idea is meant perfection. The upper and complementary limit is the almighty God. The metaphorical concept has two meanings; one is meant goodness and the

other is causative that causes to goodness. The goodness of God is the human intellect that is considered converted into acquired intelligence from talent and perceptibility through the active intellect (Avicenna, 2004: 352-354). He introduces the sun as the sign of the universal intellect that is the origin of all forms (Nasr, 2016:414). From AkhavanSafa perspective, intellect is the primordial light and the origin of the inspiration. "The universe consists of form and material. Others believe that it consists of the light and darkness (Nasr, 1980:95).

Mohammad Ghazali wrote the primary texts on the light and its specific place in the Islamic philosophy and logic. In "Meshkatol-Anvar" describes the creatures compared with the light of the sun: "He is the real light and there is no light beyond him and he is the light of all lights. The light is something that causes to appearance of everything and upper than him is something that has been appeared for his revelation" (Ghazali, 1984:39). Ghazali divides the creatures into three groups: those who are unobtrusive to the pure darkness, those who are unobtrusive to the light combined by the darkness and the third group who unobtrusive to the pure light (Ghazali, 1984). He suggests two

kinds of light including the sensory light and the light of intellect. He relates the sensory light to the sight and the light of intellect to the human vision and the eye of his heart (ibid). EinolgozatHamadani in the book "Arrangements" writes: there is a far distance from the light to other light; the darkness is from the light (Hamadani, 1962:213). One of God names is light and his existence offers creatures existence (Ibid: 257).

RozbehanBagli, the sixth century mystic considers three dimensional relationship among light, love and beauty and introduces a cause and effect relationship among them and in most phrase adds the light into beauty. The light of the beauty of God has illuminated on the appointed creature and he is the reflector of the divine beauty" (Bagli, 1958:3). According to mystics, particularly Rozbehan, the creation is meant revelation of the beauty and the light of God in the human existence (Vardi&Danaiyan, 2011:184). "There is darkness where ignorance exists and there is light where knowledge exists and where there is knowledge and practice, there is light in light" (Meibodi, 1992:297).

**Table 5** Early Islamic Philosophers’ Opinions on Light

<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Connection with Philosophical Issues</b>
Dhul-Nun al-Misri	174-239 SH	The light is the knowledge of the mystic	- Knowledge
Yosef Al-Kandi	185-261 SH	Everything in this world has irradiation and the matter is condensed light.	- Active intellect
Abulhassan Ameri	291-370 SH	Light is prerequisite of color not the medium for perception and color and light are from the same origin.	- Active intellect
Abu Nasr Farabi	3th SH	The active intellect equal to light. Illumination for illuminating the tangibles and converting them to intelligible.	- Active intellect
Mansur Hallaj	237-301 SH	The light of unity in the divine essence (Hallaj, 2005: 158). Unifying of the light with God (Vardi&Danaiyan, 2011:178). The light is the primary creature (Ibid: 179).	- Revealed intellect - Light of the lights
Abunaser Mohammad Farabi	248-338 SH	Actualization of the potential intellect, the active intellect illuminates the light. Illumination converts the form of the tangible object in the mind of the man to abstract form (Farabi, 1938).	- Active intellect - Divine essence
Ibn Heisam	343-417 SH	Light is the active agent on beauty. Beauty is the complex interaction between the light and color. The perception of the color by the light and irradiation of the in direct lines.	- Beauty
Ismaeil Mostamlil Bokhari	421-? SH	The light is the guidance of knowledge. “The reason for all creation is light in mystics’ opinions” (Bokhari, 1984:89).	- Knowledge
Avicenna	359-416 SH	He considers two innate idea and metaphoric concept in interpretation of light. The upper and complementary limit is the almighty God. The	- Active intellect - Divine essence - Divine intellect

		goodness of the God is the human intellect (Avicenna, 2004: 352-354) and (Faridi&Soleimani, 2015:73). Sun as the sign of the universal intellect (Nasr, 1980:414).	- Necessary being
AkhavanAsafa&Kholan Alvafa	4th SH	The intellect is the primordial light and the origin of the inspiration is light. The world consists of the form and matter or light or darkness (Nasr, 1980:95).	- Nature of creation - Divine intellect - Revealed intellect
Imam Mohammad Ghazali	436-490 SH	The light is something that causes to appearance of everything. He suggests two kinds of light including the sensory light and the light of intellect. He relates the sensory light to the sight and the light of intellect to the human vision (Ghazali, 1984:39).	- Active intellect - Divine essence - Divine intellect
EinolgozatHamadani	477-510 SH	There is a far distance from the light to other light; the darkness is from the light (Hamadani, 1962:213). One of the God names is light and his existence offers creatures existence (Ibid: 257).	- Divine essence
RozbehanBagliShirazi	506-588 SH	Three dimensional relationships among light, love and beauty. The light of the beauty of God has illuminated on the appointed creature and he is the reflector of the divine beauty” (Bagli, 1958:3).	- Divine essence - Beauty
Abulfazl Rashid Farabi	514-? SH	There is darkness where ignorance exists and there is light where knowledge exists and where there is knowledge and practice, there is light in light” (Meibodi, 1992:297).	- Knowledge - Active intellect

**The Second Period: Three Centuries before Safavid Renaissance in Iran**

The outstanding feature of this period that can be called the Sufi theology was backbone of Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabia and

NajmKobra schools as the Sufism was connected with twelve Shia Imams on one hand and with Ismaili on the other hand (Corbin, 1973). The most influential figure in the scope of philosophy was Suhrawardi.



He writes: “The knowledge and perception is related to the light and the darkness perceives neither itself nor others. Life includes the apparent object and being alive is meant active perception, so life and knowledge are light (Sajjadi, 2000: 20). In the illumination philosophy, Suhrawardi suggests perception of the worldly pleasures as perception of the light included in them. Hence, the pleasure experienced by observing an aesthetic act is due to its spiritual light (Dinani, 2004: 610). Suhrawardi divides the objects into light and illumination (Shirazi, 2004: 288). He believes in an innate relationship between light and intellect (Bolxhari, 201:353).

In the works of Attar, words of king and sun have been used repeatedly as symbols and represent the concepts such as God and friends of God (Khosravi, 2009:87). Blurring of the shadow in the sun is symbol of mystical annihilation of the mystic in the divine light (Attar, 1989:236). Ibn Arabia observes the inner and appearance of the divine identity as white illumination on the red background and then he gains knowledge (Jahangiri, 1996:97). In his opinion, Sufism resembles the existence to light for expressing the truth on existence of God and the creatures’ hierarchy. He considers illumination consisting of light and God, it means God is light (Ibid). Khawaja NassirreddinTusi refers to abstractness of the light and its unity. Since

our soul was abstract light it was not confined in time (Tusi, 1995:158). The light has been reflected in the poems of Molana so that the advent of the Molavieh group is considered as reappearance of the philosophy of light in Islamic Iran and the intellectual construct of this group is light and sun (Shamisa, 1990:39). He expresses his intuitive experiences and refers to the light of his essence and attendance among the close ones in the world of light (Divan-Kabir, 17800/17804). Molana interprets this feature of the light that is apparent in the truth of his essence and the agent and cause of appearance of others to be coquette (ibid, 12163/3). For this reason, the object is perceived by presence of light (Masnavi, 1121/1). On identification of the spiritual facts he expresses that the perception of these facts depends on the illumination of the lights from the invisible world (Divan-Kabir, 34746/7). Molana calls the abstract light as the light without shadow and the accidental light is the acquired light (AbdullahiAhar, 2008:112). He uses the “universal intellect” to refer the dominant light of Suhrawardi(Divan-Kabir, 35091). Sa’adi considers the existence of absolute light and the world is its radiant, the light that illuminates the human wisdom. In his opinion, there is light everywhere and the human journey begins and ends with light and God is illuminator of souls, skies and the earth (Zibayeinejad,

2006:136). HoshangFati in his book “Hafez of Illumination and Sheikh of Illumination” expresses the ideas of hafez and Suhrawardi. Hafez has intuitive vision on the existence. “Of the examples of the light in the divine of Hafez, it can be referred to

knowledge, love, manifestation of the beloved, tavern, cup, drunkenness, Winehouse, and old man of the tavern in addition to emphasis on the light and sun (Fati, 2010).

**Table 6** Second Islamic Period Philosophers’ Opinions on Light

Philosophers	Period	Opinions on Light	Connection with Philosophical Issues
Shabeddin Suhrawardi	532-570 SH	The knowledge and perception is related to the light. Life includes the apparent object and being alive is meant active perception, so life and knowledge are light (Sajjadi, 2000: 20). In illumination philosophy, Suhrawardi suggests perception of the worldly pleasures as perception of the light included in them. Hence the pleasure experienced by observing an aesthetic act is due to its spiritual light (Dinani, 2004: 610). Suhrawardi divides the objects into light and illumination (Shirazi, 2004: 288).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active intellect</li> <li>- Beauty</li> <li>- Knowledge</li> <li>- Light of the lights</li> </ul>
Attar Neishabori	537-619 SH	The words of king and sun have been used as symbols of concepts such as God (Khosravi, 2009). Blurring of the shadow in the sun, mystical annihilation of the mystic in the divine light (Attar, 1989).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Divine essence</li> </ul>
Mohieddin Ibn Arabi	561-635 SH	The light is the symbol of God and darkness is the symbol of the substance (Jahangiri, 1996: 617-618).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Necessary being</li> </ul>
Khawaja NasirTusi	579-653 SH	Reference to abstractness of the light and unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiplicity and unity</li> </ul>
MolanaJalaleddinMohammad	604-672 SH	The advent of the Molavieh group, reappearance of the philosophy of light and the intellectual construct of this group is light and sun (Shamisa, 1990). Expressing intuitive experiences and referring to the light of his essence and attendance among the close ones in the world of light. The perception of facts depends on the illumination of the lights from the invisible world. The abstract light as the light without shadow and the accidental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Divine essence</li> <li>- Knowledge</li> <li>- Light of the lights</li> <li>- Revealed intellect</li> <li>-Connection with truth</li> </ul>

		light is the acquired light. The “universal intellect” for referring to the dominant light of Suhrawardi (Divan-Kabir).	
Saadi Shirazi	705-768 SH	The existence as the absolute light and the world is its radiant, there is light everywhere and the human journey begins and ends toward light and God is illuminator of the souls and the skies and earth (Zibayeinejad, 2006:136).	- Divine essence - Active intellect
Hafez Shirazi	722-792 SH	Alignment with to knowledge, love, manifestation of the beloved, tavern, cup, drunkenness, Winehouse, and old man of the tavern in addition to emphasis on the light and sun (Fati, 2010).	- Divine essence - Knowledge

**The Third Period: Revival of Safavid**

In this period, a significant change happened in Iran (Corbin, 1992). Mohammad BagerAstarabadi’s conclusion is based on the direct relationship among the light, existence and beauty, and if the existence of the light is significant, the beauty will be complete. And God is the manifestation of beauty and perfection and all creatures are the radiant of his existence and shadow of his essence (Afrasyabpour, 2001:45). Sheikh Bahaei was an outstanding figure in designing the philosophy and the illumination and established the Isfahan architectural renaissance (Javani, 2011:155). Mullah Sadra writes: “The issue of existence and its hierarchy is as light, as the followers of the light illumination philosophy distinguish objective truth as the hierarchy and also believe in it and as the light has two denotations, one has subjective

denotation and that is an objective truth and the other is realization and presence and there is common concept and abstract one and the other is objective truth (Sajjadim 2000: 513). The first being is the light of God that our reason cannot perceive it and it is God (Ibid: 504-505).

Mullah Sadra’s philosophy suggests that there are divine light and incidental light that everything and everywhere exist (Ibid: 20). He believes that the truth light is expanded and it has existence and illuminates other creatures and it is the truth that has no specie and commonality since it is not hidden in its innate so it is the most clarified one, neither is reason nor evidence of something( Shirazi, 1983:142). It is pure light and that is existed by light that illuminates everything (Ibid: 146).

MohagehSabzavari in the book “Asrare-Hekam” classifies the objects into three categories: existence, essence,

nonexistence and in other words this classification includes light, illumination and darkness (Sabzevari, 2004:63). Motahari writes that God is the absolute light, absolute appearance and unity divine essence of the absolute light, the light that it does not have darkness and it is constant without setting. It has illuminated everywhere without veil (Motahari, 2010: 125). The light is knowledge (ibid: 265). God is the light of the lights and the existence is meant light and darkness is meant nonexistence (ibid: 229). In the Qur'an, the light does not have only sensory denotation but it is an illumination for everything. We call it the sensory light since it is visible and illuminating and we call the reason the light. The holy Quran refers to the faith as light and the mystics call the faith the light (Ibid: 26). Imam Khomeini emphasizes the triplet of unity, light and beauty in explaining a prayer (Imam Khomeini, 2009:28). Manifestation and light are the truth of the existence and everything that has a manifestation and presence is light (Ibid: 101).

Allameh Tabatabaei describes the quality of the clear-sighted affairs and one of them is the light and it means that the light is illuminating something other than itself and the light illuminates the objects and darkness is lack of light where realization of the light is true (Tabatabaei, 2008:452). Hussein Tehrani on the light

writes "The essence of God is light and the God is the origin of the existence and the creatures have been existed by it so his nature is light (Tehrani, 2004:50). "The intellect is considered as light so the essence of God is light "(Ibid: 30). "Illuminative cognition is radiance of truth in the human mind without need for sensation and thoughts and it is a kind of illumination of the mind (Jafari, 1981:189). "The absolute light primordial essence, God illuminates continuously and it grants life and any beauty and perfection is his blessing (Nasr, 1966:91). "The light does not mean a substance but it is a symbol of the divine intellect and also a spiritual essence that penetrates into the matter and converts it to a pure form that is appropriate for human life (Nasr, 2001). He considers the presence of the light in the Islamic architecture as the reminder of illumination (Mahvash, 2014:265). Light is the symbol of divine existence and divine intellect (Nasr, 2001). Dinani writes when I perceive something it means that it is illuminated for me and become light. Knowledge has the light essence and it is illumination and finally, God is light since everything is perceived in the light of God. So God is the light so it is beauty (Marefar, 10). Suhrawardi refers to appearance and thus, it is the intellect of the light (Dinani, 2016:30). The knowledge is light since

there is no unapparent knowledge (Ibid: 2014).

**Table 7.** Third Islamic Period Philosophers’ Opinion on Light

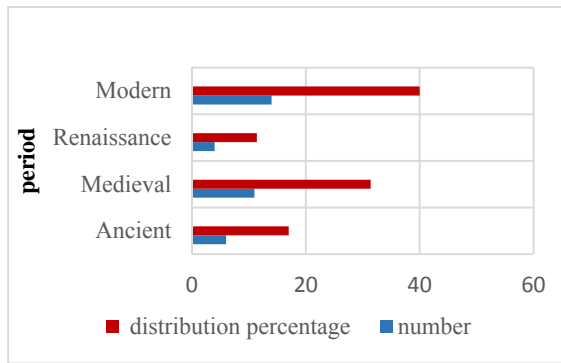
<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Opinions on Light</b>	<b>Connection with Philosophical Issues</b>
Sheikh Bahaei	925-1000 SH	Gradually got accustomed with the daylight Otherwise become dark as a bat	- Active intellect
Mullah Sadra	950-1050 SH	The light does not need for definition (Mullah Sadra, 2012). It resembles to existence (Sajjadi, 2000). The primordial light is the spiritual light. The true light is expanding, the reason and evidence (Shirazi, 1983), purity of the light (Ibid).	- Necessary existence - Active light - Divine essence
Mohammad BagerSabzevari	987-1058 SH	Classifies the objects into three categories: existence, essence, nonexistence and in other words this classification includes light, illumination and darkness (Sabzevari, 2004:63).	- Active intellect - Existence - essence
MortazaMotahari	1298-1358 SH	God is the absolute light, absolute appearance and unity divine essence of the absolute light. It has illuminated everywhere without veil (Motahari, 2010). The light is knowledge. God is the light of the lights and the existence is meant light and darkness is meant nonexistence (Ibid: 229).	- Divine essence - Knowledge - Cognition
Imam Khomeini	1281-1368SH	Emphasizes the triplet of unity, light and beauty in explaining a prayer (Imam Khomeini, 2009:28). Manifestation and light are the truth of the existence and everything that has a manifestation and presence is light (Ibid).	- Divine essence - Beauty
AllamehTabatabaei	1281-1360 SH	He describes the quality of the clear-sighted affairs and one of them is the light and it is illuminating something other than itself and illuminates the objects and darkness is lack of light where	- Truth - Privacy

		realization of the light is true (Tabatabaei, 2008).	
Seyyed Mohammad Hussein Tehrani	1305- 1374 SH	The essence of God is light and God is the origin of the existence and the creatures have been existed by it so his nature is light. “The intellect is considered as light so the essence of God is light “(Tehrani, 2004).	- Active intellect - Divine essence
Allameh Mohammad TaghiJafari	1302- 1377 SH	Illuminative cognition is radiance of truth in the human mind without need for sensation and thoughts and it is a kind of illumination of the mind (Jafari, 1981).	- Active intellect - Divine essence
Seyyed Hussein Nasr	Contem porary- 1312 SH	He considers the presence of the light in the Islamic architecture as the reminder of illumination (Mahvash, 2014:265). Light is the symbol of divine existence, divine intellect and spiritual essence (Nasr, 2001).	- Existence - Active intellect - Divine essence
Golam Hussein Dinani	Contem porary- 1313 SH	When I perceive something it means that it is illuminated for me and become light. Knowledge has the light essence and it is illumination and finally, God is light since everything is perceived in the light of the God. So God is light so it is beauty (Marefar, 10). The knowledge is light since there is no unapparent knowledge (Dinani, 2016:30).	- Knowledge - Active intellect - Divine essence - Beauty

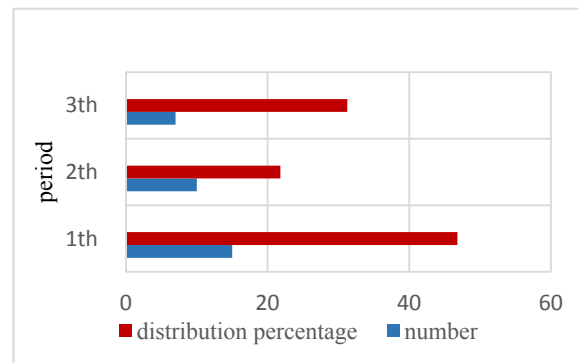
### Data Analysis

In this research, opinions of 35 western philosophers and 32 Islamic philosophers on the illumination and the spiritual light were investigated separately and tried to classify their intellectual foundations from the philosophical concept. Fig.1 depicts the distribution of opinions of western philosophers and Fig.2 shows Islamic philosophers' opinions on the light. Fig .3

and 4 reveal the opinion of both the western and Islamic philosopher on the light. Fig. 5 shows the confirmation of the opinions based on the philosophical concept. Tables 8 and 9 summarize five Islamic and western philosophical concepts that have gained the highest percentage and Fig. 6 illustrates the conformity of the Western and Islamic philosopher's opinions with the most common philosophical concept



**Fig 1** Western Philosophers and their Distribution percentage



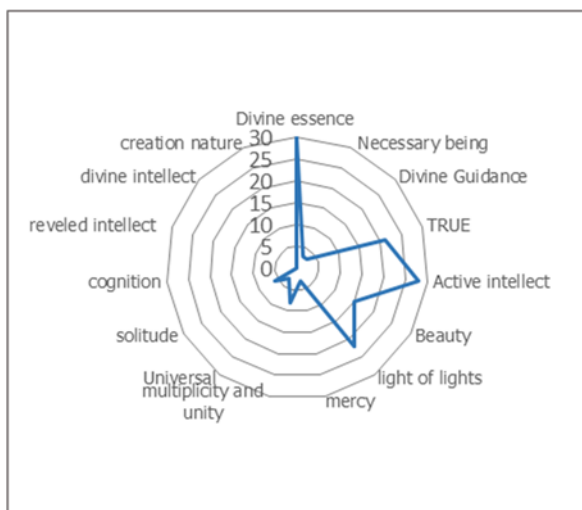
**Fig 2** Islamic Philosophers and their Distribution Percentage

**Table 8** Western Philosophers’ Opinions and Confirmation with Philosophical Concepts

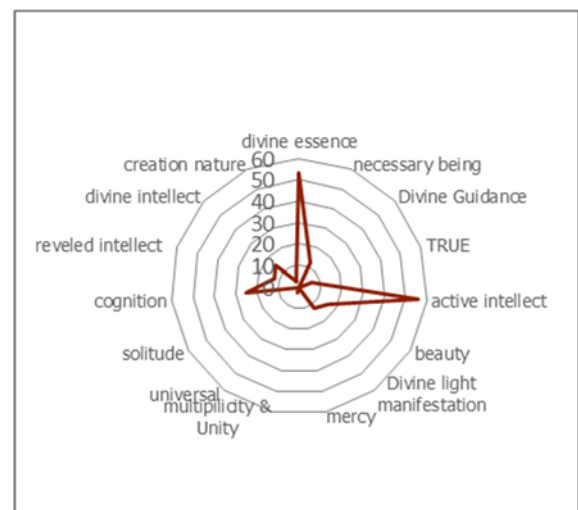
Philosophical Nature	Distribution %
Divine essence	30
Active intellect	28
Divine light manifestation	22
Truth	21
Beauty	15

**Table 9** Islamic Philosophers’ Opinions and Confirmation with Philosophical Concepts

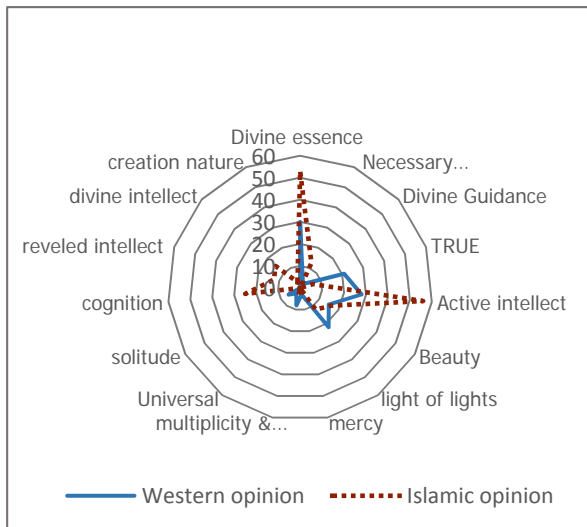
Philosophical Nature	Distribution %
Divine essence	53
Active intellect	56
Knowledge	25
Beauty	16
Necessary being revealed intellect	15



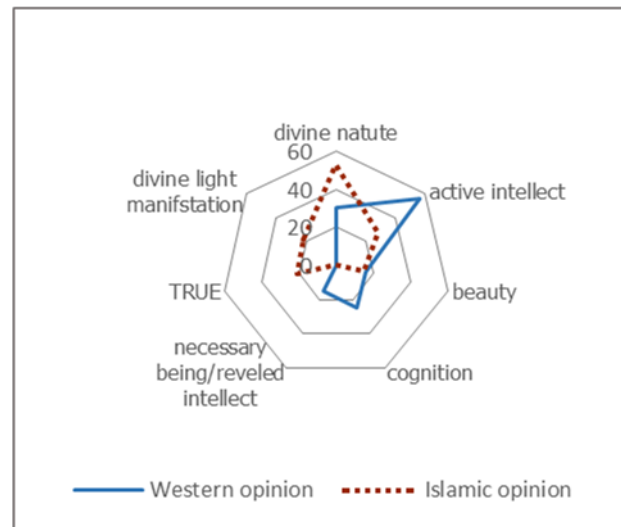
**Fig 3** Western Philosopher’s Opinion on Light



**Fig 4** Islamic Philosopher’s Opinion on Light



**Fig 5** Conformity of Western and Islamic Philosopher's Opinions with Philosophical Concepts



**Fig 6** Conformity of the Western and Islamic Philosopher's Opinions with the Most Common Philosophical Concepts

**Conclusion**

The conformation of the Islamic philosophers' opinions on the light shows that more than half of their issues were about the divine essence and the active intellect. One-fourth was about the philosophical concepts on their reference to knowledge. The presence of the beauty and the issue of necessary existence as well as revealed intellect depicts the most important Islamic philosophers' opinions conformed by the philosophical concepts. Ten most influential components in the Islamic philosophers' opinions with the highest (54) and lowest level (3) were the active intellect, divine essence, knowledge, beauty, divine intellect, necessary existence, revealed intellect, truth, multiplicity and unity and the essence of creation.

The conformation of western philosophers' opinions on the light shows that the divine essence and the active intellect constituted approximately one-third of the issues on the nature of the light. The issues of the light of the light divine manifestation and truth included one-fifth of the issues. Three categories of beauty, multiplicity and unity and privacy were important issues. Ten most influential components in the Islamic philosophers' opinions with the highest (30) and lowest level (3) were the divine essence, the active intellect, divine light manifestation, truth, beauty, multiplicity and unity and privacy, necessary existence, identity and blessing. The Islamic philosophers' opinions on the light had highest integration in terms of homogeneity and resemblance relative to the western philosophers. In contrary, the western



philosophers' opinions on the light had highest diversity. Unity in the Islamic philosophers' opinions was strong, while, multiplicity had a specific manifestation in the western philosophers' opinions.

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## بررسی تطبیقی آراء فلسفی غرب و اسلام

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نسبت نور با فلسفه جزو کهن‌ترین مباحث مطرح در وادی معرفت‌شناختی است. در حکمت حضور نور به شهود عارف-فیلسوف، مدل هستی‌شناسانه خاصی ارائه شده است. فلاسفه دوره اسلامی بر ماهیت الهی نور تاکید داشته‌اند. فلاسفه مسیحی محوریت عقل‌گرایی را همراه اتصال به منبع ماورائی شناخت هستی توامان با عقل الهی در تجلی حضور نور مورد توجه قرار داده‌اند. روش تحقیق پژوهش مبتنی بر شیوه تحلیل محتوای متون فلسفی فلاسفه اسلام و مسیحیت استوار بوده است. نمونه آماری پژوهش با تحلیل محتوای اندیشه‌های سی و پنج فیلسوف مسیحی و سی و دو فیلسوف اسلامی صورت گرفته است. بیشترین مولفه‌های مشترک با ماهیت حکمی، سه مولفه ماهیت الهی، عقل فعال و زیبایی بوده است. دو مولفه جلوه نور الهی و حقیقت در آرای فلاسفه غربی و نیز دو مولفه معرفت و واجب الوجود و عقل و حیاتی بیشترین ماهیت حکمی در باب نور در آرای فلاسفه اسلامی را به خود اختصاص داده است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: فلسفه نور، اشراق، فلاسفه اسلامی، فلاسفه غربی، حکمت.

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