

Original Research Article**An Analysis of the Influence of Greek Philosophy on Islamic
Philosophy in the Elucidation of the Concept of Beauty
(A Comparative Study of Selected Texts by Greek and Muslim Philosophers)**Mahdiyeh Afshar Bakeshloo¹, Hamidreza Ebrahimi^{2*}

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Abstract

The concept of beauty is one of the fundamental concepts in the history of philosophical thought. From the emergence of Greek philosophy to the tradition of Islamic philosophy, it has consistently been examined in relation to truth, goodness, perfection, perception, art, and the relationship between the human being and existence. Despite extensive studies on the philosophy of beauty and the views of Greek and Muslim philosophers, the manner in which aesthetic concepts were transmitted, transformed, and reinterpreted from Greek philosophy into Islamic philosophy has received comparatively little systematic investigation. Clarifying this process, however, can contribute to a more precise understanding of the theoretical foundations of beauty within the Islamic philosophical tradition. The central question of the present study is how the concept of beauty was transformed in its transmission from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy, and how Muslim philosophers reinterpreted the aesthetic elements of the Greek philosophical heritage within their own ontological, theological, and anthropological frameworks. This study aims to provide a comparative account of the transformation of the nature and origin of beauty in selected texts by Greek and Muslim philosophers and to elucidate the dimensions of continuity, difference, and reinterpretation of this concept within the two philosophical traditions. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method with a comparative approach. The data were collected through library research and the examination of primary texts and authoritative scholarly studies. The findings indicate that, in Greek philosophy, beauty is primarily understood in relation to the Forms, order, proportion, truth, and mimesis; whereas in Islamic philosophy, these same concepts are situated within a broader horizon and connected with existence, perfection, goodness, light, intellect, imagination, love, and human felicity. Accordingly, Islamic philosophy is not merely a repetition of Greek aesthetics; rather, while preserving its fundamental elements, it offers an ontological, illuminationist, mystical, and theological understanding of beauty. The study concludes that, in Islamic philosophy, beauty is not merely a quality of objects or works of art, but also a sign of the hierarchical levels of existence and a means of understanding truth, perfection, and the relationship between the human being and the Origin of existence.

Keywords: *Aesthetics, Philosophy of beauty, Islamic Philosophy, Existential perfection, Nature of beauty*

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Introduction

Beauty is one of the most fundamental philosophical concepts in the history of thought and has consistently been understood in relation to questions concerning truth, goodness, perfection, perception, and art. Although the term “aesthetics” in its modern sense emerged during a later period in Western philosophy, the question of beauty had occupied a central place in philosophical reflection from the very beginnings of Greek philosophy. In the classical tradition, beauty was generally regarded as objective; that is, as a quality inherent in the beautiful object itself or present in its proportion, order, and perfection, rather than merely as an individual feeling in the mind of the beholder (Sartwell, 2024). From this perspective, examining the concept of beauty in Greek philosophy and subsequently in Islamic philosophy can constitute an important avenue for understanding the historical and conceptual development of aesthetics.

Within the Greek philosophical tradition, beauty was not regarded merely as a sensory phenomenon or as something dependent upon individual taste; rather, it was understood in relation to concepts such as truth, goodness, order, proportion, perfection, and the nature of human perception. In this tradition, beauty is related, on the one hand, to the sensible world and artistic experience and, on the other, to realms beyond the sensible, such as truth and perfection. Greek thought therefore provided an intellectual framework within which beauty could be examined both as a quality of objects and works of art and as a means of apprehending higher levels of existence and knowledge (Sartwell, 2024; Pappas, 2025).

Furthermore, in Greek philosophy, art and artistic creation are analyzed in relation to concepts such as mimesis, imagination, pleasure, cognition, and their emotional effects on human beings. Within this framework, art is at times criticized for distancing itself from truth, while at other times it is recognized as a natural activity capable of producing knowledge and structuring human experience. Greek aesthetics

was thus concerned from its inception with two fundamental questions: first, what is the source from which beauty arises; and second, what is the relationship between the perception of beauty and truth, art, and human life (Destrée, 2021; Pappas, 2025)? These same questions later provided the basis for the reconsideration and reinterpretation of the concept of beauty within the Islamic philosophical tradition as the Greek philosophical heritage was transmitted to the Islamic world.

With the transmission of Greek philosophical works into the Islamic world, particularly during the translation movement from the second to the fourth centuries AH, numerous Greek philosophical concepts entered Muslim intellectual discourse. This process was not merely a linguistic transfer of Greek texts; rather, it created the conditions for the reinterpretation, critique, and reconstruction of philosophical concepts within a new Islamic intellectual context (Gutas, 1998). Muslim philosophers, including al-Farabi and Avicenna, drew upon the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic traditions to rethink questions concerning beauty, art, imagination, mimesis, and perfection within a new framework in which beauty became associated with such issues as existence, goodness, intellect, the soul, felicity, and the relationship between the human being and the Origin of existence (Black, 1998).

In Islamic philosophy, unlike in the modern Western tradition, independent works explicitly entitled “Aesthetics” were not generally produced; nevertheless, discussions of beauty are found within theological, epistemological, psychological, poetic, rhetorical, musical, and philosophical discussions of art (ibid.). Al-Farabi, for instance, particularly in his discussions of imagination, poetry, music, and the Virtuous City, examines art in relation to education, persuasion, felicity, and the communication of intelligible meanings to the broader public. From this perspective, art is not merely a means of producing sensory pleasure; rather, it can perform epistemic,

educational, and social functions. Avicenna likewise explains beauty in relation to perfection, goodness, perception, and intellectual pleasure. For him, beauty is not merely a sensible phenomenon but also a manifestation of existential perfection and the harmony among the levels of being (Abolghassemi, 2018).

From this perspective, the central problem of the present study concerns the transformation undergone by the concept of beauty in its passage from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy and the manner in which Muslim philosophers reinterpreted the Greek heritage within their own intellectual and theological horizons. Employing a descriptive-analytical method and a comparative approach, this study seeks to examine the nature and origin of beauty in selected texts by Greek and Muslim philosophers and to demonstrate the relationships among such concepts as the Form of Beauty, mimesis, proportion, imagination, perfection, and goodness within these two traditions. Accordingly, the central question of the article is whether Islamic philosophy merely continued Greek aesthetics or whether, while maintaining its historical connection with Greek thought, it opened a new horizon for understanding beauty in relation to existence, knowledge, and human felicity.

Given the breadth of the two philosophical traditions under investigation, the thinkers examined in this study have been selected purposively on the basis of four criteria: the relevance of their views to the principal themes of the research; their historical role in the transmission or reinterpretation of the Greek philosophical heritage; the availability of primary texts or reliable translations; and their representation of a distinct stage in the development of the concept of beauty. On this basis, the views of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Augustine are examined within the continuum of the Greek and Neoplatonic traditions, while those of al-Farabi, Avicenna, Ibn al-Haytham, Averroes, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra are considered within the Islamic philosophical tradition. This selection is intended to elucidate the process of transmission,

continuity, and reinterpretation of aesthetic concepts between the two traditions.

The originality of the present article lies in the fact that, rather than examining beauty separately in the works of Greek and Muslim philosophers, it traces the structural transformation of the concept of beauty along four interconnected axes: first, the transformation of the nature of beauty from Form, order, and proportion toward perfection, goodness, and the levels of being; second, the transformation of the source of beauty from the realm of Forms, cosmic order, and the natural structure of things toward the Origin of existence and existential perfection; third, the transformation of the perception of beauty from sense perception and intellect toward a broader network encompassing the senses, intellect, imagination, the soul, and intellectual pleasure; and fourth, the transformation of the concept of mimesis and the function of art from representation, pleasure, and cognition toward imagination, persuasion, cultivation of the soul, and human felicity.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that a comparative examination of beauty in Greek and Islamic philosophy not only contributes to a clearer understanding of the theoretical foundations of aesthetics but also demonstrates that the Islamic tradition did not adopt a passive or merely imitative approach in its encounter with the Greek philosophical heritage. Rather, Muslim philosophers incorporated many Greek concepts into new philosophical systems and connected them with their own ontological, theological, and anthropological foundations. Examining the transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy can therefore provide a clearer account of the contribution of Islamic philosophy to the history of aesthetic thought and establish a basis for a contemporary reconsideration of the philosophy of art within the Islamic tradition.

Literature Review

A review of the literature in scientific research makes it possible to identify previous achievements, recognize

existing research gaps, and determine the position of the present study. Accordingly, the most important international and domestic studies related to the concept of aesthetics are presented in [Table 1](#). A review of the existing literature indicates that numerous studies have addressed beauty, art, mimesis, imagination, and perfection within the Greek and Islamic traditions. However, a substantial portion of these studies either focuses on a particular philosopher or examines beauty within the specific domains of art, poetry, architecture, or Islamic philosophy of art.

• International studies

Black (1998), in her article “Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy,” demonstrates that, unlike the modern Western tradition, Islamic philosophy did not generally produce independent works explicitly devoted to aesthetics. Nevertheless, discussions concerning beauty can be found in the writings of Muslim philosophers, particularly al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, under such topics as God and the divine attributes, creation, poetry, rhetoric, mimesis, and imagination. One of the principal conclusions of her study is that Islamic aesthetics should be understood within the broader philosophical, theological, and epistemological systems of Muslim philosophers rather than merely in the modern sense of the philosophy of art. Erzen (2007), in the article “Islamic Aesthetics: An Alternative Way to Knowledge,” argues that beauty in the Islamic tradition is not merely an artistic or subjective matter of taste; rather, it can constitute a mode of understanding the world, the order of existence, and the relationship between the human being and truth. This study demonstrates that Islamic aesthetics, contrary to certain modern interpretations, is not confined to the outward appearance of objects but is closely connected with knowledge, meaning, and spiritual experience. Abolghassemi (2018), in the article “Avicenna on Beauty,” attempts to reconstruct the concept of beauty from various works of Avicenna. The author demonstrates that Avicenna did not formulate an independent and systematic theory

explicitly designated as aesthetics; nevertheless, his works reveal significant connections among beauty, perfection, goodness, perception, and intellectual pleasure. The principal finding of this article is that Avicenna’s conception of beauty is related to both the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions, while acquiring a new meaning within the framework of his philosophy of being. Halliwell (1990), in the article “Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated,” demonstrates that mimesis in Aristotle’s thought is not a simple or mechanical imitation of reality, but rather a complex concept related to the structure of the work of art, representation, cognition, and aesthetic pleasure. The significance of this study for the present article lies in its demonstration that an understanding of Greek mimesis would remain incomplete without considering its epistemic and artistic dimensions. Pappas (2025), in the article “Plato’s Aesthetics,” shows that beauty in Plato’s thought is closely associated with knowledge, desire, the cultivation of the soul, and the movement from the sensible to the intelligible. The study concludes that Plato should not be regarded merely as a critic of art; rather, he examines beauty in relation to truth and the philosophical education of the human being. Destrée (2021), in the article “Aristotle’s Aesthetics,” explains that although the term “aesthetics” is a modern one, Aristotle’s works contain numerous discussions that would today be classified under aesthetics, including poetry, tragedy, mimesis, pleasure, cognition, and the emotional effects of art. The findings of this study indicate that Aristotle understands art not merely as imitation, but as a natural and cognitively significant activity. Sartwell (2024), in the article “Beauty,” traces the history of the concept of beauty from the ancient tradition to modern philosophy and demonstrates that, in Greek and medieval philosophy, beauty was generally understood as an objective concept associated with order, proportion, goodness, and perfection. The significance of this article lies in its provision of the theoretical framework necessary for distinguishing between classical and modern conceptions of beauty.

• Domestic studies

Hashemnezhad (2016), in the article “A comparative discussion of Farabi’s definition of beauty with some other famous definitions,” compares al-Farabi’s definition of beauty with the views of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and several modern philosophers. The principal finding of the article is that, in al-Farabi’s view, beauty signifies the realization of the highest mode of existence and the ultimate perfection of each being. This study is significant for its focus on al-Farabi and its comparison of his thought with the Greek tradition; however, its primary emphasis is on al-Farabi’s definition of beauty rather than on the overall transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek to Islamic philosophy. Bahrami (2015), in the article “The relationship between beauty and metaphysics in Farabi,” demonstrates that beauty in al-Farabi’s thought cannot be separated from his metaphysics. In this study, beauty is associated with concepts such as metaphysics, perfection, goodness, and the ontological rank of beings. The article concludes that, for al-Farabi, beauty is an ontological concept and is not merely confined to feeling or sensory pleasure. Bahrami (2019), in the article “The perfection in the aesthetics of Avicenna and critique of common approaches for this,” examines the relationship between perfection and beauty in Avicenna’s thought. The principal finding of the article is that beauty in Avicenna should be divided into sensible and non-sensible beauty, and that the criterion of beauty at each level must be understood in accordance with the type of perfection proper to the respective being. This study is important for its detailed analysis of Avicenna; however, it does not provide a systematic comparison between his thought and the Greek tradition. Navvab (2016), in the article “According to Islamic tradition aesthetics is authentic or philosophy of art?” raises the question of whether the Islamic tradition should be discussed in terms of the philosophy of art or aesthetics. The principal finding of the study is that an independent, modern discussion of art is not particularly prominent in the Islamic tradition,

whereas the question of beauty, especially divine and non-sensible beauty, occupies an important position. This article is significant for determining the place of aesthetics within the Islamic tradition.

Hashemnezhad (2006), in the article “An introduction to the philosophy of art from the perspective of Islamic philosophers,” demonstrates that although Muslim philosophers did not write independent treatises on the philosophy of art in its modern sense, their works contain discussions concerning beauty, imagination, mimesis, poetry, music, and the source of artistic creation. The article concludes that Islamic philosophy possesses the potential for reconstructing a philosophical theory of art.

Zargani (2012), in the article “Evolution of the term “imitation” in philosophical-Islamic writings,” examines the transformation of the concept of mimesis in the works of Matta, al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Baghdadi, Averroes, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and al-Qartajanni. The principal finding of the study is that, within the Islamic philosophical tradition, mimesis developed beyond the simple meaning of imitation and became associated with imagination, poetry, imagery, and persuasion. This article is particularly relevant to the present study because it illustrates a clear instance of the transformation of a Greek concept within the Islamic intellectual context.

Rabiei & Ghaffari (2018), in the article “Avicenna’s views on “Mohakat” in painting,” demonstrate that mimesis in Avicenna’s thought is not confined to poetry and can also be examined in relation to painting and aesthetic pleasure. The article concludes that Avicenna, influenced by Aristotle, associates mimesis with perception, pleasure, and artistic representation.

Eidi (2019), in the article “Comparative study of aspects of beauty semantics and ontology from Avicenna and Mollasadra viewpoint,” demonstrates that, in Avicenna’s view, beauty is associated with order, proportion, balance, perfection, and a divine source, whereas in Mulla Sadra’s thought, beauty is related to existence and the gradation of being. An

important finding of this study is that beauty in Islamic philosophy is objective and ontological rather than merely a subjective feeling.

Aynechi & Khandaghi (2022), in the article “Comparison of the concept of perfection in the definition of beauty from the perspective of Avicenna and Aquinas,” demonstrate that the concept of perfection plays an important role in defining beauty in both the Islamic and Christian traditions. In this study, beauty in Avicenna is analyzed in relation to order, composition, balance, and the perfection of beings. The article is significant for its attention to the relationship between beauty and perfection; however, its primary focus is the comparison between Avicenna and Aquinas rather than the transformation of beauty from Greek to Islamic philosophy.

A review of previous studies indicates that valuable research has been conducted on beauty in Islamic philosophy, al-Farabi’s definition of beauty, the relationship between perfection and beauty in Avicenna, mimesis in Islamic philosophy, and the status of aesthetics within the Islamic tradition. However, most of these studies have either been limited to a particular philosopher, examined only a single concept such as mimesis, imagination, perfection, or art, or studied Islamic philosophy without closely analyzing its relationship to its Greek roots. Therefore, the principal research gap lies in the fact that few studies have systematically demonstrated how the concept of beauty was transmitted from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy, which elements of the Greek tradition were preserved, and which elements were reinterpreted within the ontological, theological, and anthropological horizons of Islamic philosophy.

Accordingly, the present study, by focusing on four dimensions the nature, origin, and perception of beauty, as well as the concept of mimesis and the function of beauty and art -seeks to demonstrate how concepts such as Form, order, proportion, and mimesis were reinterpreted in the transition from Greek to Islamic philosophy in relation to perfection,

goodness, existence, intellect, imagination, imaginative representation, and felicity.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

• The concept and nature of aesthetics and its distinction from the modern conception

Aesthetics, in its modern sense, is a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of beauty, aesthetic experience, judgments of taste, art, and the relationship between human perception and the beautiful. Nevertheless, a distinction must be drawn between “aesthetics” as a modern and independent discipline and “philosophical reflection on beauty.” Aesthetics may be regarded, on the one hand, as a relatively recent discipline and, on the other, as a field with deep and ancient roots. Its relative novelty lies in the fact that the emergence of aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy is generally associated with the year 1750, when Alexander Baumgarten published *Aesthetica*, in which he systematically and theoretically organized issues concerning aesthetics for the first time. Baumgarten had, however, used the term “aesthetics” earlier, in 1735, in another work entitled *Philosophical Reflections on Matters Pertaining to the Nature of Poetry*. Nevertheless, the institutionalization of aesthetics and the formation of its specialized discourse occurred even later than the emergence of the term itself; for instance, the first specialized journal devoted to aesthetics was published in Germany in 1904, and the first university chair of aesthetics in France was established at the Sorbonne in 1921 (Guyer, 2026).

In Greek philosophy, medieval philosophy, and Islamic philosophy, beauty was not usually examined independently or separately from ontology, ethics, epistemology, and theology. For this reason, one cannot speak of the aesthetics of Plato, Aristotle, al-Farabi, or Avicenna in precisely the same sense in which one speaks of the aesthetics of Kant or Baumgarten. Nevertheless, if aesthetics is understood in its modern sense as an independent and distinct branch of philosophy, it cannot readily be said that philosophers

Table 1. Literature review. Source: Authors.

Researcher/Year	Title	Results and Findings
Halliwel (1990)	Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated	For Aristotle, mimesis is not a simple form of imitation; rather, it is associated with cognition, representation, pleasure, and the structure of the work of art.
Black (1998)	Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy	Muslim philosophers did not write independent works explicitly devoted to aesthetics; however, they examined beauty in relation to God, creation, poetry, rhetoric, mimesis, and imagination.
Erzen (2007)	Islamic Aesthetics: An Alternative Way to Knowledge	Islamic aesthetics is a mode of understanding meaning, order, truth, and spiritual experience, and it is not confined merely to outward artistic appearance.
Abolghassemi (2018)	Avicenna on Beauty	Avicenna does not present an independent theory of aesthetics; however, he explains beauty in relation to perfection, goodness, perception, and intellectual pleasure.
Destrée (2021)	Aristotle's Aesthetics	Aristotle does not use the term "aesthetics," but his works address issues concerning poetry, mimesis, pleasure, cognition, and the emotional effects of art.
Sartwell (2024)	Beauty	In the classical tradition, beauty was generally understood as an objective quality associated with order, proportion, goodness, and perfection.
Pappas (2025)	Plato's Aesthetics	For Plato, beauty is associated with knowledge, desire, the cultivation of the soul, and the movement from the sensible to the intelligible.
Hashemnezhad (2006)	An introduction to the philosophy of art from the perspective of Islamic philosophers	Discussions of art, beauty, mimesis, imagination, and music are dispersed throughout the works of Muslim philosophers and can provide a basis for reconstructing an Islamic philosophy of art.
Zarghani (2012)	Evolution of the term "imitation" in philosophical-Islamic writings	In the Islamic tradition, mimesis developed beyond simple imitation and became associated with imagination, poetry, imagery, and persuasion.
Bahrami (2015)	The relationship between beauty and metaphysics in Farabi	In al-Farabi's thought, beauty is associated with metaphysics, perfection, goodness, and the ontological levels of beings.
Navvab (2016)	According to Islamic tradition aesthetics is authentic or philosophy of art?	In the Islamic tradition, the philosophy of art in the modern sense is not particularly prominent; however, the question of beauty, especially divine and non-sensible beauty, is of fundamental importance.
Hashemnezhad (2016)	A comparative discussion of Farabi's definition of beauty with some other famous definitions	For al-Farabi, beauty signifies the realization of a higher mode of existence and the ultimate perfection of each being, and thus possesses an objective and ontological character.
Rabiei & Ghafari (2018)	Avicenna's views on "Mohakat" in painting	In Avicenna's thought, mimesis is not confined to poetry and can also be analyzed in relation to painting, perception, and aesthetic pleasure.
Eidi (2019)	Comparative study of aspects of beauty semantics and ontology from Avicenna and Mollasadra viewpoint	In Avicenna's thought, beauty is associated with order, proportion, balance, perfection, and a divine source, whereas in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, it is linked to existence and the gradation of being.
Bahrami (2019)	The perfection in the aesthetics of Avicenna and critique of common approaches for this	For Avicenna, beauty should be divided into sensible and non-sensible beauty, with each level corresponding to a particular type of perfection.

such as Aristotle, al-Farabi, Augustine, and Aquinas treated beauty as an autonomous subject. Their reflections on beauty were generally articulated within broader metaphysical, theological, and epistemological discussions and constituted part of their overall philosophical systems. Even so, reflection on beauty has a very ancient history, and even the earliest Greek philosophers of the fifth century BCE engaged with the subject in one form or another (Augustine, 1991). From this perspective, aesthetics in its broader sense that is, philosophical reflection on beauty -has a history as old as human thought itself. Accordingly, one may speak of a theory of beauty in philosophers such as Aristotle, Ibn al-Haytham, al-Farabi, and Avicenna, even though such theories had not yet been formulated within an independent discipline called aesthetics.

In the classical tradition, beauty was often associated with truth, goodness, order, proportion, perfection, and ontological rank, and for this reason it was generally discussed within philosophical and metaphysical systems rather than as an independent field of inquiry (Sartwell, 2024; Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018). Accordingly, by “aesthetics,” the present study does not mean the term in its narrow and modern sense; rather, it refers to the philosophical theory of beauty in its broader meaning, namely, an analysis of such questions as what beauty is, where it originates, how it is perceived, and how it relates to truth, goodness, perfection, art, and human felicity. This distinction is of fundamental importance to the present article, because Greek and Muslim philosophers generally did not write independent treatises explicitly entitled “Aesthetics,” yet their works contain profound discussions concerning the nature and origin of beauty.

• Beauty in the Greek Tradition

From its beginnings, beauty in the Greek tradition was associated with concepts such as order, proportion, harmony, goodness, truth, mimesis, and perfection. Tatarkiewicz (1970/2018) maintains that aesthetics is, to a considerable extent, the product of Greek thought and that subsequent developments in aesthetics cannot

be properly understood without considering their Greek roots. This aesthetic heritage, together with other philosophical works of Greek civilization, gradually spread to the Eastern lands during the Hellenistic period and contributed to the further development of the aesthetic thought of Eastern peoples. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of the later achievements of Eastern aesthetics, it appears necessary to examine the Greek origins of their views (*ibid.*).

- Pre- Plato

In the pre-Platonic period, there was not yet a complete and systematic theory of beauty; however, three major tendencies can be identified: first, the Pythagorean view, which regarded beauty as dependent on order, number, measure, and harmony; second, the Sophistic relativist view, which associated beauty with sensory pleasure and individual experience; and third, the functional view, which sought the beauty of objects in their suitability to their purpose and function (Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018).

- Plato

In the history of Greek philosophy, Plato is the first philosopher to address beauty and art within a comprehensive philosophical system in which aesthetic issues are closely intertwined with metaphysical, ethical, and epistemological questions. Accordingly, it is difficult to understand Plato’s view of beauty without taking into account the metaphysical and ethical foundations of his thought. Although Plato did not formulate aesthetics as an independent and systematic discipline, many of its central issues, including the relationship of beauty to truth, goodness, art, imitation, and the cultivation of the soul, are discussed throughout his works, sometimes briefly and at other times in considerable detail. In Plato’s thought, beauty is not merely a sensible phenomenon dependent on individual pleasure; rather, it is fundamentally connected with truth, goodness, and the intelligible realm. Within the framework of the Theory of Forms, he regards sensible beauty as a lower level of true beauty and maintains that beautiful objects are beautiful insofar as they participate

in the Form of Beauty. From this perspective, beauty for Plato is objective, trans-subjective, and independent of individual human responses (*ibid.*).

In general, two principal approaches to the question of beauty can be identified in Plato's works. The first derives from his metaphysical foundations and belongs primarily to the middle period of his thought; this approach is formulated through the theory of the "Form of Beauty." The second, which has Pythagorean roots, becomes more evident in Plato's later works and emphasizes such concepts as proportion, measure, and harmony. In dialogues such as *Ion*, *Republic*, and *Symposium*, Plato presents his metaphysical conception of beauty. According to this view, true beauty is located not in the sensible and changing world but in the realm of Forms. Beautiful objects in the sensible world do not possess beauty by virtue of their own essence; rather, their beauty derives from their participation in the Form of Beauty. Consequently, the beauty of sensible beings is unstable and subject to change: it may appear in one thing and not in another, or disappear over time. Yet behind all these particular and temporal manifestations lies the absolute, immutable, and eternal Form of Beauty (*ibid.*).

Sensible beauty can guide the human being from the sensible world toward intelligible and absolute beauty; thus, the perception of beauty is also related to the ascent of knowledge and the cultivation of the soul (Pappas, 2025). Nevertheless, in his discussions of art and mimesis, Plato approaches imitative art with suspicion, because he sometimes regards the work of art as an imitation of the sensible world and, consequently, as even further removed from truth. In his later dialogues, including *Sophist*, *Laws*, and *Philebus*, written during the final years of his intellectual life, Plato moves toward another conception of beauty rooted in Pythagorean thought: namely, an understanding of beauty in terms of proportion, measure, and harmony. In the *Philebus*, measure and symmetry are regarded as fundamental elements of beauty and perfection. Since beauty is connected with

measure, or at least depends upon it, it occupies an elevated position within the hierarchy of goods. At the conclusion of this dialogue, it is likewise suggested that beautiful objects are formed according to a precise and detailed order and that their proper proportions can be identified through mathematical measurement. Moreover, in dialogues such as *Meno* and *Timaeus*, Plato refers to squares and triangles that, in his view, exemplify perfect and genuinely beautiful forms and bodies. Accordingly, beauty in Plato's thought is not merely subjective or dependent on individual feeling; rather, it is an objective quality inherent in the object itself, accessible through the recognition and reconstruction of its real and harmonious proportions (Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018).

- Aristotle

Aristotle follows a different path. Unlike Plato, he does not regard mimesis as something merely negative; rather, he considers it a natural tendency in human beings and a basis for learning, pleasure, and cognition. In his discussion of beauty, Aristotle emphasizes order, magnitude, symmetry, and perceptibility. In his view, a beautiful object must possess an internal order and a determinate magnitude so that it can be perceived as a unified whole. Thus, beauty remains an objective quality of the object, although its perception requires a correspondence between the structure of the object and the perceptual capacities of the human being (Destrée, 2021; Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018).

In Chapter 7 of the "Poetics", Aristotle regards the beauty of a composite object as dependent on the orderly arrangement of its parts and its possession of a determinate magnitude; hence, order and magnitude constitute fundamental elements in his definition of the beautiful. Aristotle (1984) states: "A beautiful thing, whether a living creature or anything composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts but must also possess a determinate magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order".

Aristotle is among the earliest philosophers to assign art an independent place within his philosophical

system and within his classification of the branches of knowledge. Unlike Plato, whose dialogues focus more extensively on the question of beauty than on art itself, Aristotle devotes greater attention to art, particularly in relation to imitation, the structure of the artwork, and its function. Nevertheless, his views on beauty are not presented in a coherent and independent form; rather, they are dispersed throughout his various works and are sometimes expressed only very briefly. Consequently, Aristotle's theory of beauty must be reconstructed and formulated on the basis of his scattered remarks and discussions (Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018).

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1991/2021) defines beauty as follows: "The beautiful is that which is desirable in itself and at the same time worthy of praise, or that which is both good and, because it is good, pleasurable; and if this is what beauty is, then virtue must necessarily be beautiful, for it is both good and worthy of praise." From this definition, it can be inferred that, in Aristotle's thought, as in Plato's and that of many ancient Greek thinkers, beauty is not confined merely to sensible or outward beauty; rather, it has a broader meaning that also encompasses non-sensible forms of beauty, including moral beauty and virtue. Moreover, for Aristotle, beauty possesses intrinsic value: it is desirable and worthy of praise in itself, not merely because of any utility or benefit it may provide to human beings. Beauty, in this conception, is also connected with goodness and, insofar as it is good, may itself become a source of pleasure. Thus, in Aristotle's thought, beauty is a concept that establishes a relationship among goodness, pleasure, virtue, and intrinsic value (Aristotle, 2021).

- Augustine

Influenced by the aesthetic tradition of ancient Greece, Augustine regarded beauty as objective and independent of the human mind. In his view, human beings do not create beauty; rather, they discover and perceive it in things. Accordingly, the pleasure that arises in the encounter with the beautiful is the result of the object's beauty, not its cause. Beauty therefore

has a basis in the object itself prior to individual human response and judgment.

In Augustine's (1991) thought, beauty is associated with order, proportion, harmony, and unity. An object is considered beautiful when its parts stand in an appropriate relation to one another and, through this proportion, form a coherent and harmonious whole. Thus, for Augustine, beauty is realized not in an isolated part, but in the relationship and coherence among the parts and in the unity that emerges from this relationship.

- Plotinus

Continuing the Greek tradition, Plotinus played an important role in shifting the conception of beauty from the level of formal proportion to a more metaphysical level. He did not reduce beauty merely to the symmetry and harmony of parts; rather, he regarded it as a sign of the participation of things in the intelligible realm and in a higher Principle. In Plotinus's view, sensible beauty acquires meaning insofar as it reflects intelligible beauty. This Neoplatonic perspective later exerted an important influence on Islamic philosophy, particularly in the association of beauty with existence, goodness, intellect, and the Origin of being (Tatarkiewicz, 1970/2018; Black, 1998).

Plotinus's views are particularly significant in discussions of aesthetics because many Muslim philosophers were influenced, directly or indirectly, by his philosophical system. Accordingly, it may be argued that part of the Islamic philosophical conception of beauty, especially in its metaphysical dimension, is closely connected with Plotinian thought. After presenting the prevalent views of his predecessors and contemporaries concerning beauty, Plotinus subjects them to criticism and rejects definitions of beauty based solely on symmetry, harmony, and proportion. In his view, the source of beauty should not be sought merely in the external order and proportion of things; rather, beauty is rooted in a higher and more transcendent level of reality. Plotinus maintains that even simple things can be beautiful, yet their beauty derives not from

composition or internal order, but from the presence of a higher principle within them. Accordingly, after rejecting the theory of proportion, he offers an alternative interpretation of beauty, regarding it as the result of the participation of things and beings in the realm of Forms, the intelligible realm, and the higher levels of existence. From this perspective, the beauty of the soul is likewise understood in terms of the degree of its resemblance and proximity to God, since God is pure and absolute Beauty.

Within this framework, beauty emanates from the divine Principle to the lower levels of existence. The higher Soul receives it directly; the human soul participates in it through the higher Soul; and the beauty present in sensible objects is itself a manifestation of the intelligible realm and the realm of Forms. Thus, in Plotinus's (1991) system, sensible beauty is not merely the result of the proportion of parts, but rather the consequence of the presence of Form and of the sensible object's participation in a higher, intelligible, and transcendent level of being.

Therefore, two principal trajectories may be identified within the Greek tradition: the first seeks beauty in order, proportion, measure, and harmony; the second associates beauty with the intelligible realm, truth, goodness, and the higher levels of existence. These two trajectories were subsequently reinterpreted within Islamic philosophy and acquired new meanings in light of the theological and ontological foundations of Muslim philosophers.

• Beauty in the Islamic Tradition

In Islamic philosophy, contrary to modern Western aesthetics, beauty has generally not been presented as an independent field of knowledge. Muslim philosophers have rarely authored standalone treatises titled "Aesthetics"; instead, discussions regarding beauty are embedded within their works under the headings of theology, metaphysics, psychology, epistemology, poetry, rhetoric, music, imagination, and mimesis. This suggests that Islamic philosophers, most notably Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, examined

aesthetic issues within the context of discussions on God, divine attributes, creation, poetry, rhetoric, and the faculty of imagination (Black, 1998). The influx of Greek philosophy into the Islamic world, particularly through the Translation Movement in Baghdad, provided a crucial framework for the transmission of concepts such as intellect, good, perfection, mimesis, order, and proportion (Gutas, 1998). However, this transmission was not merely a linguistic translation, but rather a conceptual re-reading within the intellectual and theological context of Islam. During the Hellenistic period, philosophy expanded through schools such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism, rather than continuing solely through Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysical systems. Philosophical inquiries diverged from the primary concerns of Plato and Aristotle, as metaphysical issues gave way to ethical and practical interests. Consequently, the metaphysical preoccupations of Plato and Aristotle were not pursued in Greece, but were instead gradually revisited and further developed in the Islamic world by philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna. Concurrent with the transmission of Greek philosophy and its metaphysical perspectives to the Islamic world, theoretical debates in the realms of art and beauty -as integral components of these metaphysical inquiries gradually garnered the attention of Eastern philosophers (D'Ancona, 2022).

- Al-Farabi

Islamic aesthetics, like many branches of Islamic philosophy, owes much of its early formation to the thought of Abu Nasr al-Farabi. Although al-Farabi's (1968) remarks on beauty are limited and scattered and are primarily presented within the context of his metaphysical discussions, the coherence of his philosophical system makes it possible to reconstruct a kind of aesthetic perspective from his works. In works such as *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* and *The Political Regime*, while discussing the greatness, majesty, glory, and perfection of the essence of God, al-Farabi also implicitly addresses the question of

beauty and explains it in relation to his metaphysical foundations.

In al-Farabi's philosophy, beauty is associated with existence, perfection, goodness, and felicity. Al-Farabi regards beauty as the realization of a higher mode of existence and the perfection appropriate to each being. From this perspective, a being is beautiful insofar as it approaches the perfection proper to it. Thus, for al-Farabi, beauty is not merely something sensible or pleasurable; rather, it is ontological in character. Al-Farabi defines beauty as follows: "Beauty is a higher rank of existence and the possession of all the expected and appropriate perfections." In al-Farabi's thought, the beauty of each being is related to its ontological rank and the perfection appropriate to it; therefore, the more a being possesses the perfections corresponding to its level of existence, the more perfect and beautiful it is from an ontological perspective.

From al-Farabi's perspective, the beauty, adornment, splendor, and goodness of every being consist in its attaining a higher and more perfect level of existence and in the realization of its "second perfection." Accordingly, beauty admits of degrees and varying intensities and cannot be regarded as a uniform concept existing at the same level in all beings. In this view, beauty is intrinsic to God, whereas in human beings and other creatures it is accidental and dependent on their ontological rank. The perception of beauty likewise occurs, according to its level, through sense perception, imagination, or intellect; consequently, the pleasure arising from the perception of beauty also possesses different degrees. At the highest level of this hierarchy stands the intrinsic beauty of God, accompanied by a kind of unity between lover and beloved. Below this lies the accidental beauty of created beings, in which the pleasure and perception of beauty occur while the distinction between lover and beloved is preserved (Ahmadi & Vatandoost, 2016).

Bahrani (2019) demonstrates that al-Farabi's aesthetics cannot be separated from his metaphysics, because beauty in his thought is related to God, the

First Intellect, goodness, perfection, and the ontological hierarchy of beings. Moreover, in al-Farabi's political and artistic thought, art and imagination play an important role in communicating intelligible meanings to the general public, educating citizens, and directing them toward felicity.

- Avicenna

Avicenna's aesthetics may largely be regarded as a continuation and development of al-Farabi's views on beauty. Since Avicenna is considered the most prominent representative of the Peripatetic tradition, examining his thought is essential for understanding the Peripatetic conception of beauty. In works such as "al-Shifa", al-Najat", and "Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad", Avicenna (1984, 1997) addresses the question of beauty in the course of his discussions of love, pleasure, and the intellectual apprehension of the Divine Essence. In his view, the beauty and excellence of every being consist in its being as it ought to be; that is, in attaining its proper perfection and ultimate actuality. Thus, in Avicenna's thought, beauty is associated with existential perfection and is objective rather than dependent on individual perception or taste.

Accordingly, beauty is not limited to sensible things but also encompasses intelligible and immaterial realities, especially the Divine Essence. Since intelligible beings possess a more perfect mode of existence, their beauty is likewise superior to sensible beauty, while God, by virtue of possessing all perfections, occupies the highest degree of beauty. In his analysis of sensible beauty, Avicenna considers elements such as order, composition, balance, and proportion to be important; nevertheless, he does not restrict beauty to these material features. Moreover, in his view, the perception of beauty is not exclusive to human beings; separate intellects and God also apprehend beauty. The more perfect the ontological and cognitive rank of the perceiver, the greater its capacity to apprehend higher forms of beauty and the pleasure arising from them. Consequently, in Avicenna's (1984) thought, beauty is fundamentally connected with perfection, love, and pleasure.

In Avicenna's philosophy, beauty is likewise associated with perfection, goodness, order, perception, and pleasure. He explains sensible beauty in terms of order, composition, and balance, while refusing to confine beauty to sensible realities. Avicenna identifies three elements as fundamental components of beauty and value: order, composition, and balance. In his view, the realization of these three elements ultimately gives rise to proportion and harmony. Beauty can therefore be understood in relation to a certain kind of proportion, orderliness, and harmony. Nevertheless, defining beauty in terms of proportion and harmony has always been open to debate, since such a definition appears more readily applicable to sensible and material forms of beauty and cannot easily account for intelligible, spiritual, and immaterial beauty. Simple beings, for example, including the Divine Essence, do not consist of composite parts whose beauty could be explained in terms of proportion and harmony among those parts. Accordingly, within philosophical thought, the relationship between sensible and intelligible beauty, as well as the possibility of extending the criterion of proportion to immaterial levels of existence, becomes an important issue in the analysis of beauty (Ahmadi & Vatandoost, 2016).

Abolghassemi (2018) demonstrates that Avicenna did not formulate an independent and systematic theory explicitly entitled "aesthetics"; nevertheless, his works make it possible to identify significant connections between beauty and perfection, perception, intellectual pleasure, and the levels of being. Bahrami (2019), likewise emphasizing the relationship between perfection and beauty, argues that beauty in Avicenna's thought should be analyzed at two levels, sensible and non-sensible, and that the criterion of beauty for each being depends on the type of perfection proper to it (Bahrami, 2019).

Within this framework, Islamic philosophy does not abandon the Greek heritage, but neither does it merely reproduce it. Concepts such as order, proportion, goodness, mimesis, and perfection enter Islamic

philosophy from the Greek tradition, yet within Islamic thought they become associated with concepts such as existence, the Origin of being, intellect, the soul, imagination, intellectual pleasure, and human felicity. Thus, in Islamic philosophy, beauty is more than merely a formal quality of objects or a subject pertaining to art; rather, it is a manifestation of existential perfection and of the relationship of beings to goodness and to the Origin of existence.

- Ibn al-Haytham

Abu Ali Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham al-Basri, commonly known as Ibn al-Haytham, was one of the most prominent scholars of the fourth and fifth centuries AH in the fields of optics and the study of vision. His most important work, "Book of Optics [Kitab al-Manazir]", consists of seven books devoted to issues concerning light, vision, and visual perception. The significance of this work is not limited to its physical and optical dimensions; in the course of analyzing the process of vision, Ibn al-Haytham also addresses the perception of visual beauty. According to Abdelhamid I. Sabra, the discussions presented in Kitab "al-Manazir" constitute some of the most important and extensive examinations of visual beauty within the Arabic-Islamic tradition (Pourzabih et al., 2020).

The significance of Ibn al-Haytham's approach lies in the fact that, rather than examining beauty exclusively within a metaphysical framework, he considers it from the perspective of sensory perception and visual experience. Whereas some earlier approaches explained beauty primarily in terms of concepts such as perfection, order, proportion, and balance, Ibn al-Haytham (1983) emphasizes the role of the objective properties of things, light, and the mechanisms of human perception in the apprehension of beauty. From this perspective, the perception of beauty is not the result of a passive reception of sensible forms; rather, it emerges through a process in which the characteristics of the object and the manner in which it is perceived interact with one another. Accordingly, Ibn al-Haytham's analysis of beauty focuses primarily

on visual beauty and explains the experience of the beautiful in terms of the relationship among the visible properties of objects, lighting conditions, and the process of perception. His approach may therefore be understood as one that, while acknowledging the objective characteristics of the object, also takes into account the role of the perceiver in the formation of aesthetic experience.

- Averroes

Averroes constitutes one of the most important links between the Aristotelian tradition and Islamic philosophy; therefore, examining his thought is essential for a study that seeks to explain the transmission and reinterpretation of Greek concepts within Islamic philosophy. In his Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics, he reinterprets poetry and mimesis within the framework of logic, imaginative representation (*takhyil*), and the effect of poetic discourse on the audience. The significance of his view lies in demonstrating that the Aristotelian concept of mimesis did not remain, within the Islamic tradition, merely a matter of imitation of reality; rather, it came to be interpreted in relation to imaginative representation, the structuring of discourse, and its effect on the audience's perception and judgment. In his "Epitome of the Book of Poetry [Talkhīṣ kitāb al-shi'r]", Averroes (1986) regards poetic discourse as grounded in imaginative representation and mimesis and demonstrates that poetry, through the representation of praiseworthy or blameworthy actions and qualities, affects the soul of the audience and can encourage it toward virtue or turn it away from vice. Likewise, in his "Epitome of the Rhetoric [Talkhīṣ al-khaṭābah]", he (1967) attends to the role of persuasion, audience reception, and the modes through which discourse exerts its effects. Thus, in his thought, poetry and rhetoric are not merely instruments of expression but are closely connected with perception, imagination, and the practical guidance of human beings. In this way, Averroes reinterprets the Aristotelian legacy of

mimesis in relation to imaginative representation and the ethical and persuasive functions of discourse.

- Shaykh al-Ishraq (Suhrawardi)

Examining the question of beauty in the thought of Shaykh al-Ishraq is important because Suhrawardi, as the founder of Illuminationist philosophy, exerted a profound influence on subsequent philosophical and intellectual currents in the Islamic world. To express many of his philosophical and mystical ideas, he employs the language of allegory, symbolism, and narrative, and he also discusses some of his views on beauty, love, and perfection in the treatise "Fi Haqiqat al-'Ishq". Although his works do not provide an independent and explicit definition of beauty, it is possible to reconstruct the ontological status and origin of beauty from his discussions. From Suhrawardi's perspective, intellect occupies the first level of creation, and one of its functions is the apprehension of God, an apprehension associated with the manifestation of beauty. Hence, at the beginning of the hierarchy of existence, beauty and love acquire a fundamental relationship with one another, and beings are understood as moving toward and seeking perfection and beauty. Within this framework, beauty and perfection are understood in relation to the degrees of light and each being's relationship to the luminous Origin of existence, while love expresses the inclination of beings toward higher perfection and beauty. Suhrawardi also regards pleasure as one of the effects of the manifestation of beauty; consequently, the capacity of beauty to produce pleasure acquires an important place in explaining the experience and perception of beauty (Yasrebi, 2006).

- Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Sadra)

In his account of beauty, Mulla Sadra follows the tradition of earlier Islamic philosophers, particularly al-Farabi and Avicenna, and associates beauty with the perfection of a being. In his view, a being is beautiful when it possesses the perfections appropriate to its own rank and essential reality. Alongside this principle, elements such as balance, proportion, symmetry, and

pleasantness also play a role in explaining beauty; however, these elements cannot be understood independently of his ontological foundations. In Mulla Sadra's (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1989) philosophical system, beauty is fundamentally related to existence and existential perfection. Accordingly, the more perfect and intense the ontological rank of a being, the greater its share of goodness, perfection, and beauty. On this basis, beauty is not merely a formal attribute or a quality dependent on the outward appearance of things; rather, it is directly related to the ontological rank of beings and the degree to which perfection is actualized in them.

The only statement that may be regarded as a definition of beauty in Mulla Sadra's thought is the expression, "al-jamil huwa alladhi yustahsan," meaning that the beautiful is that which is regarded as good and pleasing. Reflection on this statement makes it clear that Mulla Sadra's definition of beauty continues the general conception found in al-Farabi and Avicenna. Al-Farabi understands beauty as the realization of the ultimate perfection and the higher ontological rank of each being, while Avicenna likewise associates beauty with a thing's attaining what it ought to be. Mulla Sadra, like other theosophical philosophers, also regards God as "Absolute Beauty" and the source of all beauty in the universe; however, his account of this issue is broader and more profound.

In Mulla Sadra's view, the world does not merely possess divine beauty; rather, the whole of existence is a manifestation of the Beauty of God. In other words, while philosophers such as Plotinus, al-Farabi, and Avicenna regarded God as the principle and source of the beauties of the world, Mulla Sadra goes a step further and considers the entire universe to be a manifestation of divine beauty. From this perspective, beauty is not merely a quality scattered among individual beings, but an ontological manifestation of Absolute Reality that becomes manifest throughout all levels of existence (Hashemnejad & Nemati, 2012).

Table 2 presents a general comparison of the definition

of beauty from the perspectives of Greek and Muslim philosophers.

• Theoretical framework of the study

Based on the foregoing discussions, the present article employs a four-dimensional framework to analyze the transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy. This framework enables the study to move beyond merely reporting the views of individual philosophers and to demonstrate the conceptual transformation of beauty across the two traditions (Fig. 1).

The first dimension concerns the "nature of beauty." This dimension examines how beauty is defined within each tradition: Is beauty sensible or intelligible? Is it an objective quality of things, or does it depend on subjective human experience? In the Greek tradition, beauty is often associated with order, proportion, the Forms, and truth; in Islamic philosophy, these same concepts are reinterpreted within the horizons of perfection, goodness, and existence.

The second dimension concerns the "source of beauty." In Greek philosophy, the source of beauty is sought variously in the realm of Forms, cosmic order, or the proportion and natural structure of things. In Islamic philosophy, the source of beauty becomes more closely associated with the Origin of existence, Absolute Goodness, existential perfection, and the levels of being. In this respect, beauty in Islamic philosophy acquires a more explicitly theological and ontological character.

The third dimension concerns the "perception of beauty." In the Greek tradition, the perception of beauty begins with the senses but may lead to intellect, knowledge, and truth. In Islamic philosophy, in addition to sense perception and intellect, the perception of beauty is associated with the faculty of imagination, the soul, intellectual pleasure, and the various levels of human perception. This is particularly significant in the discussions of al-Farabi and Avicenna concerning poetry, rhetoric, imagination, and mimesis.

The fourth dimension concerns the "transformation

Table 2. General comparison of the definition of beauty from the perspectives of Greek and Muslim philosophers. Source: Authors.

Philosopher	Nature and Concept of Aesthetics (Subjective or Objective)		Source of Beauty	Effects of Beauty
Islamic Philosophers	Al-Farabi	Predominantly Objective	Perfection, proportion, and harmony in beings; beauty is the result of order and ontological perfection.	It gives rise to intellectual and moral pleasure and contributes to the perfection of the soul.
	Averroes	Objective–Aristotelian	Beauty and art are understood in relation to order, mimesis, and imaginative representation (takhyil).	Poetry and mimesis influence the audience’s perception and judgment through imaginative representation and depiction.
	Ibn al-Haytham	A Combination of Objective and Perceptual Elements	Beauty arises from the combination of proportion, order, color, and form in visual perception.	It produces visual pleasure and a perception of harmony in the mind of the observer.
	Suhrawardi	Spiritual and Illuminationist	Beauty is a manifestation of light and the luminous levels of existence.	Beauty leads to illumination, spiritual awakening, and an orientation toward the realm of light.
	Mulla Sadra	Objective–Ontological	Beauty results from the intensity and perfection of existence; the more perfect a being’s existence, the more beautiful it is.	Beauty draws the soul toward existential perfection and divine truth.
Western Philosophers	Plato	Predominantly Objective and Transcendent	The “Form of Beauty” in the realm of Forms; in his later works, beauty is also associated with proportion, measure, and mathematical order.	Sensible beauty guides the human being toward absolute beauty and truth; it leads to the elevation of the soul and philosophical love.
	Aristotle	Objective	Order, symmetry, proportion, and determinate magnitude in objects.	It generates perceptual pleasure and admiration; in art, it leads to catharsis (emotional purification).
	Augustine	Objective, with a Divine Origin	Order, proportion, and harmony as reflections of God.	Beauty guides the human being toward the knowledge of God and the divine order of the universe.
	Plotinus	Objective–Spiritual	Beauty arises from the presence of Form and spiritual unity and, ultimately, from emanation from the One.	Beauty leads the soul to ascend toward the divine and toward unity.

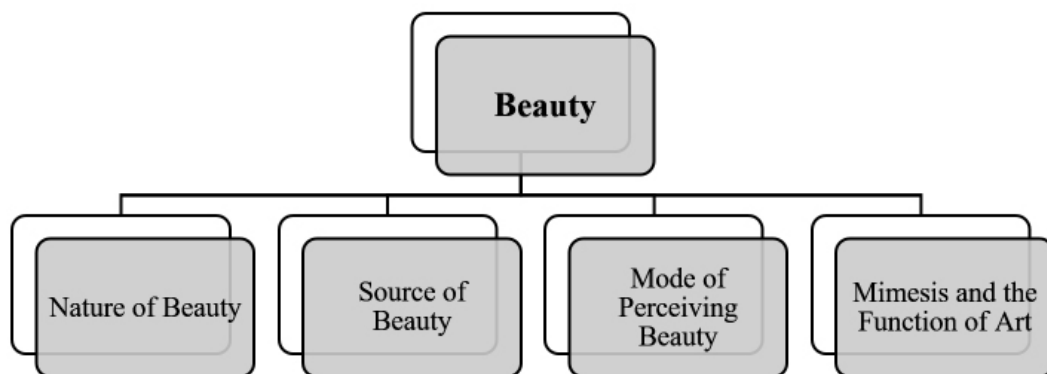


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for the analysis of beauty in the present study. Source: Authors.

of the concept of mimesis and the function of art.” In Greek philosophy, art is analyzed primarily in relation to mimesis, representation, pleasure, cognition, and its emotional effects on human beings. In Islamic philosophy, however, art and beauty, in addition to these functions, also become associated with education, persuasion, the communication of intelligible meanings, the cultivation of the soul, and human felicity.

Accordingly, the theoretical hypothesis of the article is that Islamic philosophy is not merely a continuation of Greek aesthetics. Rather, while preserving certain fundamental elements of the Greek tradition such as order, proportion, goodness, mimesis, and perfection, it reinterprets them within a new horizon shaped by ontology, theology, intellect, imagination, and human felicity. Therefore, the transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy should be understood neither as a complete rupture nor as a simple repetition, but as a process of transmission, preservation, transformation, and semantic reinterpretation of concepts.

Research Method

This study is a fundamental-theoretical research conducted using a descriptive-analytical method with a comparative approach. The data were gathered through library research, involving a review of selected texts by Greek and Muslim philosophers, as well as authoritative domestic and international studies. The selection of philosophers and texts was purposive, based on four criteria: first, the presence of a direct or reconstructible discussion regarding one of the core axes: the nature, origin, perception, and the evolution of the concepts of mimesis and art; second, the thinker’s historical role in the transmission or reinterpretation of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic heritage; third, the availability of original texts or reliable translations; and fourth, the representation of a distinct stage or approach in the philosophical evolution of the concept of beauty. Accordingly, in the Greek and Neoplatonic tradition, the views of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Augustine

are examined, while in the Islamic philosophical tradition, the views of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham), Averroes, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra are analyzed. This selection does not claim to encompass all thinkers of both traditions but serves as a purposeful sample to trace the transmission and reinterpretation of aesthetic concepts across the four research axes.

In this study, the concept of beauty is analyzed based on four primary axes: the nature of beauty, the origin of beauty, the mode of perceiving beauty, and the evolution of mimesis and the function of art. Subsequently, the perspectives of Greek and Muslim philosophers are compared within these axes to elucidate the aspects of continuity, divergence, and conceptual transformation of beauty from Greek to Islamic philosophy. Thus, the research aims to demonstrate that while drawing upon the Greek aesthetic heritage, Islamic philosophy has reinterpreted concepts such as beauty, perfection, goodness, mimesis, and imagination within its own ontological, theological, and anthropological horizons.

Research Findings

• Transformation of the nature of beauty

An examination of the selected texts shows that, in the Greek tradition, beauty is understood primarily in relation to order, proportion, the Forms, truth, and mimesis. In dialogues such as the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, and the *Philebus*, Plato does not regard beauty as merely sensible or dependent on individual pleasure; rather, he associates it with truth, goodness, and the intelligible realm. In his view, beautiful things are beautiful insofar as they participate in the Form of Beauty, and sensible beauty can guide the soul from the sensible level toward absolute and intelligible beauty (Pappas, 2025). Accordingly, for Plato, the nature of beauty is objective, intelligible, and metaphysical.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle (1984) does not refer beauty to the realm of Forms; rather, he seeks it in the structure of the object itself and in the relation of its parts to the whole. In the *Poetics* and the *Metaphysics*,

beauty is associated with order, magnitude, symmetry, and determinacy. A beautiful object must possess a magnitude that allows it to be perceived as a unified whole. Thus, for Aristotle, beauty remains objective, but instead of being grounded in a transcendent Form, it is realized in the internal order, form, and proportion of the parts of beings.

Plotinus (1991) develops this trajectory at a more distinctly Neoplatonic level. In the *Enneads*, he does not reduce beauty merely to symmetry and proportion, since simple things can also be beautiful. For Plotinus, sensible beauty is a sign of the participation of things in Form, Intellect, and the higher realm. True beauty therefore finds its meaning in the intelligible realm and, ultimately, in relation to the Good and the One.

Augustine (1991), likewise influenced by the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions, associates beauty with unity, number, order, proportion, and a divine origin. In his works, particularly the *Confessions* and *On Music*, the beauty of created things is a sign of divine order and of the higher beauty of God.

In Islamic philosophy, this Greek and Neoplatonic heritage is preserved but reinterpreted within a new ontological and theological horizon. Al-Farabi (1968) associates beauty with the existential perfection of each being. In his view, the beauty of each thing consists in its attaining a higher mode of existence and the perfection appropriate to it. Beauty, therefore, is not merely an outward or sensible attribute but is related to the ontological rank and perfection of the being.

Avicenna (1997) likewise analyzes beauty in relation to order, composition, balance, goodness, and perfection. In his view, sensible beauty can be explained through proportion and balance, whereas truer beauty ultimately refers to the existential perfection and goodness of the being.

In Suhrawardi, beauty becomes associated with light and manifestation. In Illuminationist philosophy, light is the fundamental reality, and the levels of existence are understood according to degrees of intensity and diminution of light. Beauty can therefore be analyzed

in relation to manifestation, illumination, and the luminous intensity of existence. Here, beauty is no longer merely a matter of formal proportion, but a manifestation of the disclosure and luminosity of being (Yasrebi, 2006).

In Mulla Sadra (*Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, 1989), too, beauty is directly related to the primacy of existence, the gradation of being, and existential perfection. Since existence is a graded reality possessing different levels of intensity, beauty likewise admits of degrees, and the more perfect the ontological rank of a being, the higher its beauty will be.

• Transformation of the source of beauty

In Greek philosophy, the source of beauty is explained on several levels. For Plato (1997), the ultimate source of beauty lies in the realm of Forms. Sensible things are beautiful insofar as they participate in the Form of Beauty. Thus, the source of beauty does not lie in the sensible world itself, but in a reality that transcends sensible things.

For Aristotle (1984), the source of beauty lies in form, order, proportion, magnitude, and the natural *telos* of things. Aristotle does not refer beauty to a separate realm; rather, he understands it as grounded in the natural and purposive structure of beings.

Plotinus (1991) locates the source of beauty in the intelligible realm and, ultimately, in the Good or the One. Sensible beauty emerges when matter participates in intelligible Form. Accordingly, the source of beauty does not reside in matter itself, but in the presence of Form and in the relation of the object to the higher realm.

Augustine (1991) likewise regards God as the source of beauty and interprets the order, number, proportion, and harmony of beings as signs of divine wisdom and creation. Thus, in Augustine's thought, beauty begins in the sensible world, but its ultimate source lies in God and in the divine order of the universe.

In Islamic philosophy, the source of beauty becomes increasingly associated with the Origin of being, Absolute Goodness, existential perfection, and divine

emanation. Al-Farabi (1968) regards God as the First Being and the most perfect reality; therefore, the highest degree of beauty belongs to the First Principle, while the beauty of all other beings is understood in proportion to their participation in existence and perfection.

Avicenna likewise understands the source of beauty in terms of existential perfection and goodness. In his philosophical system, every being possesses goodness and beauty in accordance with its degree of actuality and perfection, while the Necessary Existent, as pure perfection, is the ultimate source of all goodness and beauty (Abolghassemi, 2018).

Ibn al-Haytham (1983), although best known for his work in optics and visual perception, is important for understanding the source of the perception of beauty. In “Book of Optics [Kitab al-Manazir]”, he demonstrates that visual perception results from the entry of light into the eye and the mental processing of features such as light, color, magnitude, shape, distance, position, continuity, and proportion. From this perspective, Ibn al-Haytham analyzes the source of the experience of visual beauty as residing neither solely in the object nor solely in the mind, but in the relationship among visible properties, light, and the human perceptual faculties.

In Suhrawardi’s Illuminationist philosophy, the source of beauty must be sought in light and its hierarchical levels. Since light is both manifest in itself and that which makes other things manifest, each level of existence possesses manifestation, perfection, and beauty in proportion to the intensity of its luminosity. Accordingly, in Suhrawardi’s thought, beauty is associated with illumination, manifestation, and the relationship of beings to the Dominating Lights and the Light of Lights (Yasrebi, 2006).

In Mulla Sadra’s (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1989) Transcendent Theosophy, the source of beauty is likewise traced back to existence. Since existence is coextensive with goodness and perfection, the more intense and perfect a being’s ontological rank, the greater its beauty. Thus, in Islamic philosophy, the

source of beauty moves beyond the realm of Forms or natural proportion and becomes rooted in the Origin of being, existential emanation, and Absolute Perfection.

• Transformation of the perception of beauty

In the Greek tradition, the perception of beauty begins with the senses but can ultimately lead to intellect and truth. In the Symposium, Plato (1997) presents the perception of beauty as a kind of ascending journey: the human being begins with the beauty of bodies, then proceeds to the beauty of the soul, laws, and forms of knowledge, and ultimately reaches absolute Beauty. Thus, in Plato’s thought, sensible beauty plays a mediating role and can guide the soul toward intelligible truth.

For Aristotle (1984), the perception of beauty is associated with sense perception, pleasure, and cognition. Human beings take pleasure in mimesis because, through recognition and an understanding of the relationship between the work of art and reality, they learn something. Moreover, a beautiful object must possess a magnitude and order that make it perceptible to human beings. Thus, for Aristotle, the perception of beauty is not merely a sensory response but is connected with understanding, cognition, and epistemic pleasure.

Augustine (1947), associates the perception of beauty with the inner order of the soul and its capacity to apprehend number, proportion, and harmony. In his view, human beings perceive beauty through an encounter with sensible order, yet this sensible order directs them toward a higher divine order. Accordingly, the perception of beauty in Augustine has sensory, intellectual, and theological dimensions.

In Islamic philosophy, the perception of beauty becomes associated with sense perception, intellect, imagination, the soul, and intellectual pleasure. In the field of visual perception, Ibn al-Haytham (1983) demonstrates that seeing is not merely the passive reception of an image; rather, the mind plays an active role in combining and distinguishing visible properties. Accordingly, visual beauty results from the

interaction of light, form, color, proportion, memory, discrimination, and perceptual judgment.

Al-Farabi (1968) emphasizes the role of the faculty of imagination in the perception and communication of meanings. In his view, not all human beings are capable of directly apprehending intelligible truths; therefore, poetry, rhetoric, and allegory can render intellectual meanings comprehensible to the general public by presenting them in imaginative and sensible forms. Here, the perception of beauty and art becomes associated with imagination, education, and social guidance.

Avicenna likewise analyzes the perception of beauty within the framework of his theory of the soul and the hierarchy of perception. Sensible beauty is apprehended through the senses and imagination, whereas higher beauty is associated with intellect and intellectual pleasure. For Avicenna, pleasure results from the apprehension of a perfection appropriate to the relevant cognitive faculty; therefore, aesthetic pleasure can transcend the sensory level and become the intellect's pleasure in apprehending goodness and perfection (Abolghassemi, 2018).

In Suhrawardi's thought, the perception of beauty is associated with illumination and luminous presence. Knowledge in Illuminationist philosophy is not merely conceptual and discursive; rather, it involves a form of presence, intuition, and disclosure. Accordingly, at a deeper level, beauty is perceived through the intuition of light and the presence of meaning (Yasrebi, 2006).

In Mulla Sadra's (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1989) philosophy, too, the perception of beauty is related to the soul's movement toward existential perfection; the more perfected the soul becomes, the higher the levels of beauty and truth that it is capable of apprehending.

• Transformation of the concept of mimesis and the function of art

In Greek philosophy, mimesis is primarily discussed in relation to art's relationship with reality and truth. In the Republic, Plato (1997) criticizes imitative art because of its distance from truth, since the work of art

is an imitation of the sensible world, while the sensible world itself is merely a shadow of the intelligible realm. Thus, if art remains at the level of outward imitation, it may lead human beings away from truth.

In the Poetics, Aristotle (1984) offers a more positive account of mimesis. In his view, mimesis is a natural human tendency, and human beings learn through it. Tragedy, through the representation of human action and the arousal of emotions, provides both a cognitive and an educational experience. Thus, for Aristotle, art is not merely an external imitation but a meaningful recreation of reality and an ordering of human experience. In Islamic philosophy, the concept of mimesis extends beyond its Greek meaning and becomes associated with imagination, poetry, persuasion, education, and felicity. Al-Farabi (1968) understands poetry in relation to the faculty of imagination. Poetry and imaginative forms can render intelligible truths accessible to the general public and play a role in their civic and moral education. Accordingly, for al-Farabi, mimesis is not merely an imitation of reality but also a means of communicating meaning, persuading audiences, and directing the soul toward felicity.

Avicenna (1997) likewise regards poetry as imaginative discourse: discourse that affects the soul through imagery and the activation of imagination. From this perspective, mimesis in Islamic philosophy concerns not only the representation of reality but also the influence exerted on imagination, emotion, and human action. Consequently, art can play a role in shaping perception, stimulating desire, and guiding the soul.

Ibn al-Haytham (1983) contributes to this discussion from another perspective. He demonstrates that the perception of visual forms is not the result of a simple reception of images but involves discrimination, combination, memory, and judgment. This analysis is important for understanding the visual arts because it shows that visual beauty and artistic effect depend on the interaction among the object, light, and the mind.

In Suhrawardi's philosophy, art and beauty are associated with symbolism, light, imagination, and

the disclosure of inner reality. Suhrawardi employs symbolic language, allegory, and light to express philosophical truths. Here, art is not merely a representation of the world but a means of revealing inner realities, cultivating the soul, and awakening love (Yasrebi, 2006).

Averroes (1986), in his Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics, likewise reinterprets mimesis in relation to imaginative representation (*takhyil*) and the effects of poetic discourse. His significance within the Islamic tradition lies in the fact that he directly engages with Aristotle's theory of poetry while interpreting it within the logical and linguistic framework of Islamic philosophy.

In Mulla Sadra's (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1989) philosophy, art and beauty can also be understood in relation to the levels of existence and the perfection of the soul. If beauty is a manifestation of existence and perfection, artistic creation may likewise assume a higher or lower form depending on the existential and spiritual rank of the creator.

Analysis of the Results

Based on the preceding analysis, the evolution of the concept of beauty from Greek to Islamic philosophy cannot be viewed merely as the transmission of a static concept. In Greek philosophy, beauty is intrinsically linked to the Forms (Ideas), order, proportion, truth, and mimesis. Plato attributes beauty to the intelligible realm and the Form of Beauty; Aristotle locates it within the order, measure, and structure of the object; Plotinus perceives it as an emanation of the Intellect and the Good; and Augustine regards beauty as a sign of divine order, number, unity, and proportion.

While these elements are preserved in Islamic philosophy, they are reintegrated into a fundamentally new conceptual framework. Al-Farabi links beauty to ontological perfection and human felicity; Avicenna analyzes it in relation to goodness, perfection, perception, and intellectual delight; Ibn al-Haytham elucidates the perceptual and visual dimensions

of beauty through the theory of light and vision; Suhrawardi associates beauty with light, illumination (*ishraq*), and manifestation; and Mulla Sadra interprets beauty through the lens of the primacy of existence, the gradation of being (*tashkik al-wujud*), and ontological perfection.

Therefore, Islamic philosophy is not a mere repetition of Greek aesthetics. While Greek concepts such as order, proportion, Form, mimesis, and the Good persist within the Islamic tradition, they are reinterpreted through new foundational premises, including the source of existence, divine emanation (*fayd*), the degrees of being, the faculty of imagination, intellectual pleasure, light, love, and human felicity. Consequently, the evolution of beauty from Greece to Islam should be understood as a process of preservation, transmission, and re-signification a process in which beauty is elevated from the level of formal order and proportion to ontological, illuminative, mystical, and theological dimensions (Table 3).

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to explain the transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy across four dimensions: its nature, source, perception, and the concept of mimesis and the function of beauty and art, drawing on selected texts by philosophers from the two traditions. The analysis showed that although the term "aesthetics" in its modern sense emerged during a later period of Western philosophy, reflection on beauty, its source, and its relationship with truth, goodness, perception, art, and perfection has a very long history and continued from the beginnings of Greek philosophy into the Islamic philosophical tradition.

The findings indicate that, in Greek philosophy, beauty is understood primarily in relation to concepts such as the Forms, order, proportion, truth, goodness, and mimesis. In Plato's thought, sensible beauty provides a path for the soul's ascent toward intelligible and absolute Beauty. In Aristotle, beauty is realized in the

Table 3. Comparative framework for the transformation of the nature of beauty, the source of beauty, the perception of beauty, and mimesis and the function of art in Greek and Islamic philosophy. Source: Authors.

Dimension of Comparison	Greek Philosophy	Islamic Philosophy	Type of Transformation
Nature of Beauty	Beauty is understood in relation to order, proportion, the Forms, truth, and mimesis.	Beauty is associated with existence, perfection, goodness, light, and the levels of being.	From Formal and Intelligible Beauty to Ontological and Theological Beauty
Source of Beauty	The source of beauty is sought in the realm of Forms, cosmic order, proportion, and the natural structure of things.	The source of beauty is traced back to the Origin of being, Absolute Goodness, divine emanation, and existential perfection.	From a Formal and Cosmic Source to a Divine and Ontological Source
Perception of Beauty	The perception of beauty begins with the senses and can lead to intellect, truth, and knowledge.	The perception of beauty is associated with sense perception, intellect, imagination, the soul, intuition, love, and intellectual pleasure.	Expansion of the Perception of Beauty from Sense and Intellect to Imagination, Intuition, and Love
Mimesis and the Function of Art	Mimesis is discussed in relation to art's relationship with reality, truth, representation, pleasure, and cognition.	Mimesis is associated with imagination, poetry, persuasion, education, the guidance of the soul, and human felicity.	From the Representation of Reality to a Means of Education, Persuasion, and Felicity

order, magnitude, proportion, and internal structure of things, while mimesis is explained as a natural, cognitive, and pleasurable human activity. In Plotinus and Augustine, beauty likewise moves beyond the level of formal proportion and becomes associated with the intelligible realm, goodness, unity, divine order, and the transcendent source of being.

In Islamic philosophy, this Greek heritage is preserved but reinterpreted within a new framework and in relation to ontological, theological, Illuminationist, and mystical foundations. Al-Farabi associates beauty with existential perfection, goodness, and felicity and analyzes it in relation to the ontological rank of each being. Avicenna explains beauty in relation to order, balance, perfection, goodness, perception, and intellectual pleasure. Ibn al-Haytham clarifies the perceptual and visual dimensions of beauty through his analysis of light, vision, and the human perceptual faculties. Suhrawardi understands beauty in relation to light, illumination, and manifestation. Mulla Sadra, in turn, interprets beauty in light of the primacy of existence, the gradation of being, and ontological perfection.

Accordingly, the answer to the principal research

question is that Islamic philosophy is not merely a continuation or repetition of Greek aesthetics. Rather, while preserving important elements such as order, proportion, the Forms, goodness, perfection, and mimesis, it reinterprets them within a new horizon. As a result, beauty in Islamic philosophy is no longer merely a quality of objects but also a sign of the levels of existence and a path toward truth, perfection, and human felicity. In this transformation, beauty moves beyond formal order, sensible proportion, or artistic mimesis and becomes an ontological, theological, Illuminationist, and mystical concept. The source of beauty likewise shifts from the realm of Forms, cosmic order, and the natural structure of things toward the Origin of being, Absolute Goodness, divine emanation, the Light of Lights, and existential perfection.

The perception of beauty also undergoes a conceptual expansion in this process. In the Greek tradition, the perception of beauty begins with the senses and can lead to intellect, truth, and knowledge; in Islamic philosophy, however, it becomes associated with the faculty of imagination, the soul, intuition, love, intellectual pleasure, and human felicity. Similarly, art and mimesis in Islamic philosophy are not limited

to the representation of reality but become connected with imagination, poetry, persuasion, the cultivation of the soul, and the guidance of human beings toward perfection and felicity.

Consequently, the transformation of the concept of beauty from Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy should be understood as a process of transmission, preservation, critique, and reinterpretation. Islamic philosophy draws upon the Greek heritage but places it within a new framework in which beauty is not merely a property of objects or works of art but a manifestation of existence, goodness, perfection, light, love, and the human relationship with the Origin of being. Thus, the contribution of Islamic philosophy to the history of aesthetic thought lies not merely in preserving the Greek heritage, but in opening a new horizon for understanding beauty in relation to being, knowledge, the soul, and human felicity.

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