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Journal of Comparative Theology

E-ISSN: 2322-3421

Document Type: Research Paper

Vol. 16, Issue 2, No.34, Autumn & Winter 2025-2026 pp. 53-58

Receive: 20/12/2025

Accepted: 03/06/2026

The Divine Vision in the Mystical Thoughts of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart

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Abstract

The principle and possibility of the “vision of God” represent one of the most significant debates in theology and comparative mysticism. Owing to the soteriological implications of this issue, Muslim and Christian thinkers, like other major religious scholars, have examined it as a fundamental concern within their reflections. Employing an analytical–comparative approach, the present study seeks to examine the mystical perspectives of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart on the Divine Vision, to identify a shared ground between Islamic and Christian mysticism and discern an aspect of the objective reality. Research findings indicate Rūzbihān perceives the Divine Vision as a personified, determined event replete with visual metaphors, emerging from the heart of love, unveiling, and intermingling. Divine manifestation in forms such as the spiritual master, the red rose, beautiful Turks, or the lion reflects the deep connection between vision and the erotic-divine incarnation within the realm of the imagination. Conversely, Eckhart understands it as the experience of union with God—an immediate, abstract, and imageless encounter transcending all forms and representations, and facilitating the “birth of God in the soul” through silence and annihilation. In both perspectives, vision is an inward intuition different in form, language, and ontological foundation. The present study further demonstrates that both mystics emphasize inner experience and the purification of the self, regarding vision as a mode of divine presence within the wayfarer. While Rūzbihān portrays the Vision as a dynamic, amorous, and pluralistic process manifested through sensible and aesthetic forms, Eckhart characterizes it as an apophatic, abstract experience free from any form or determination.

Keywords: Revelation, Mystical Unveiling, Divine Vision, Rūzbihān Baqlī, Meister Eckhart.

1- Introduction

Divine Vision is considered a key concept in both Christianity and Islam, which is reflected in the Scriptures of both religions. For example: "The heart did not lie about what it saw" (*Najm/11*); "You will not see Me" (*A'araf/143*); "No vision can grasp Him, but He grasps all vision" (*An'am/103*). "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (*John 14:9*); "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (*Biblica, 2011, John 1: 18*); "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (*Biblica, 2011, Exodus 33:20*). From ancient times until the

present, various interpretations of scriptural passages and traditions related to Divine Vision have existed among Christian and Muslim thinkers, and numerous views regarding the Vision of God have been presented by theologians, philosophers, and exegetes. In the traditions of Islamic and Christian mysticism, which are considered the esoteric interpretations of these religions, special attention has also been paid to this subject. Rūzbihān Baqlī (1128–1209 CE) is one of the Muslim mystics whose works feature prominently the theme of Divine Vision. For instance, in his book *Kashf al-Asrār*, relying on the imaginative faculty, Rūzbihān employs a

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Golizadeh, S. , Khademi, S. and Dehghanzadeh, S. (2025). The Divine Vision in the Mystical Thoughts of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart. *Comparative Theology*, 16(2), 53-58.



flexible language to describe inner experiences and express them through luminous and perceptible similes (Ernst, 1998b, p. 131). Meister Eckhart (1260–1327 CE) is also an influential and renowned mystic of the Christian mystical tradition who paid attention to Divine Vision. In his works, including Sermons and Treatises, Eckhart speaks of Vision as a transcendent experience in which the human soul unites with the Divine Essence and perceives God, not through sensible forms, but in the depths of being and through mystical union. Given that the concept of Divine Vision holds a special place in the mystical paths of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart, and they have presented different articulations of Divine Vision in their works, it is therefore important that the issue of Divine Vision in the views of these two mystics be analyzed and the similarities and differences in their views be elucidated. Therefore, the main research question of the present study is: What are the similarities and differences between the views of Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī and Meister Eckhart regarding the concept of Divine Vision?

2- Theoretical Foundations and Research Literature

Mystical experience is one of the most significant and widely used terms employed to describe mystical states since the nineteenth century CE in the Western world. Experience is the phenomenon extending from a mild—transient or enduring—sense of the divine presence or sacred essence to very powerful unveilings and intuitions, voices, or experiences of union with a greater and more transcendent reality (Hick, 2003, p. 188). Mystical moments are states of consciousness and awareness that possess distinctive characteristics and leave profound effects on those who undergo them (James, 1988, p. 82).

One of the most important terms related to mystical experience observable in the works of Muslim mystics is "unveiling and intuition". Unveiling (kashf) is the disclosure of hidden meanings to the servant such that they are beheld as if with the eye (Sarrāj al-Tūsī, 2015, p. 355; Qaysarī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 80). According to Khwāja ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī, when all veils between the servant and the Divine Essence are removed, the state of witnessing (mushāhadah) arises. He posits three degrees for witnessing: a) witnessing of gnosis (ma‘rifah), accompanied by flashes of the light of existence and manifestations of the Known Face; b) witnessing of direct beholding (mu‘āyanah), accompanied by stable and permanent theophanies; c) witnessing of union (jam‘), which occurs in the state of complete annihilation (fanā) and with the intuition of the Truth by the Truth (Anṣārī, 1997, p. 125). As when Abraham (PBHU) was taken to the Kingdom (Malakūt), he did not look at acts or see creation, but beheld God, and his longing increased (Hujwīrī, 1996, p. 487–488). In mystical texts, this witnessing of the Truth is referred to as the vision of God, which occurs through the heart of the seeker. Thus, when the heart’s mirror is cleansed of human attributes and the tarnish of nature, it becomes receptive to the lights of the unseen, and the seeker, according to the purity of the heart and the manifestation of the lights, witnesses those lights (Rāzī, 1986, p. 149).

To date, several articles have addressed the mystical ideas of Rūzbihān and Eckhart. Carl Ernst, in the article “The Rhetoric of Mystical Experience in Rūzbihān Baqlī’s *Kashf al-Asrār*” (1996), has examined the rhetoric of mystical experience in Rūzbihān’s *Kashf al-Asrār*. Bernard McGinn, in “Meister Eckhart and the Image of God: The Role of Detachment in Mystical Vision”, has elucidated the image of

God in Meister Eckhart’s mystical views. Markus Enders, in the chapter “Meister Eckhart’s Understanding of God” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, has analyzed Eckhart’s conception of God and its metaphysical foundations for transcendent encounter. Jeremiah Hackett and Jennifer Hart Weed, in the chapter “From Aquinas to Eckhart on Creation, Creature, and Analogy” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart* (2013), have demonstrated how Eckhart’s use of creation and analogy supports a non-material relation to the divine aligned with mystical vision. Tamaddun and Naṣr-e Iṣfahānī, in the article “Unveiling and Contemplative Vision in Rūzbihān Baqlī’s Mystical School” (2018), have investigated unveiling and intuition in Rūzbihān’s mystical thought and briefly outlined the stages of vision according to Rūzbihān. Mohammadian and Khayrābādī, in the article “Studying the Structure of Narrative in the Deconstructive Visions of Rūzbihān Baqlī” (2017), have examined the narrative structure and elements of Rūzbihān’s visions in *Kashf al-Asrār*.

Given the aforementioned research background, articles centered on mystical experience and unveiling and intuition have been conducted separately on the thought of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart, but no independent study has yet addressed the concept of Divine Vision in the mystical views of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart. The present article, while analyzing and elucidating the concept of Divine Vision in the views of these two mystics, also comparatively discusses the similarities and differences between them in this regard.

3- 'Vision of God' in Mystical Thought of Rūzbihān Baqlī

Rūzbihān Baqlī, one of the renowned and influential mystics within the tradition of Islamic mysticism, has expressed important discussions concerning the Vision of God, examined in what follows.

3-1-The Place of Interpretation in Relation to Divine Vision

In Rūzbihān’s intellectual framework, the Vision of God signifies the mystic’s perception of Divine Reality by a fascinated heart; a perception realized through the purification of the self, divine attraction, and inner cleansing. In his prominent works, both in Arabic and Persian, Rūzbihān recounts his visionary experiences using elevated and symbolic language. Articulating these experiences, he portrays humanity’s inner need for the Vision of God in a way that, on the one hand, manifests as a tangible and experiential observation, while on the other, emphasizes the absolute transcendence and otherness of the Divine Essence. Thus, Rūzbihān establishes a poetic and epistemological link between the ‘desire for encounter’ and the ‘inability to perceive the Essence’ (Renard, 2009, p. 131). In *Kashf al-Asrār*, relying on his imaginative faculty, Rūzbihān employs a flexible language to describe inner experiences and express them through luminous and perceptible similes (Ernst, 1998a, 131). This analogical language, prominent in his mystical works, provides a means for articulating Divine Vision and transforms the perception of God from an abstract state into a visual and imaginable one. For Rūzbihān, this perception is not abstract or philosophical knowledge; rather, it is a vision in the guise of ‘form’ (sūrah), specifically human form (Ernst, 1998a, p. 93). According to Corbin, Rūzbihān conveys his unveilings to us with the unique resonance of his own breath, despite the difficulties of his language and style—difficulties that are often formidable (Corbin, 2015, vol. 3, p. 46).

3-2- The Relation of Mystical Experiences to Divine Vision

For Rūzbihān Baqlī, the "Vision of God" is paramount, frequently expressed as "ra'aytu-hu" (I saw Him) in *Kashf al-Asrar*, signifying the most crucial aspect of mystical knowledge (Ernst, 1998a, p.93). This vision is understood through "intermingling" (iltibās), where the Divine clothes Itself in creaturely attributes (tashbīh) without compromising its pure Essence (tanzīh), a paradox resolved only by pure love in the experiential realm (Corbin, 2015, vol. 3, p. 128). This "realm of intermingling" ('ālam-e iltibās) serves as a divine channel for God's manifestation through similitude (tamaththul) to chosen servants (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 224). Rūzbihān's works consistently feature the metaphor of "unveiling" and "intermingling," where knowledge of God is achieved by shedding worldly veils to perceive the Divine Essence. However, divine theophany, while revealing, also paradoxically acts as a veil by manifesting through attributes. Yet, for Rūzbihān, concealment (iḥtijāb) is not merely an impediment but a symbol of creation emerging as divine theophany (Ernst, 1998a, p. 77–78).

3-3- Levels of Divine Vision

Rūzbihān delineates five hierarchical stages of Divine Vision, marking the mystic's inner progression from initial observation to ultimate annihilation (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 137–138). This journey begins with the "Vision of the Heart," where purification enables perception of the subtle world. Next, the "Vision of the Spirit" liberates the spirit, revealing divine mysteries and subtle attributes. The "Vision of the Intellect" then transcends discursive reasoning, apprehending divine attributes through contemplation. Subsequently, the "Vision of the Self" brings tranquility as the self-experience divine acts and "eternal compulsions." The culmination is the "Vision of the Secret and the Secret of Secret," where esoteric knowledge is unveiled, and attributes dissolve before the unveiled Divine Essence (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 137–138).

3-4- Divine Vision in the Light of Unveiling and Intuition

Rūzbihān Baqlī defines "unveiling" (kashf) as the disclosure of hidden realities, leading to a direct "Vision" of the Divine. This spiritual unveiling (mukāshafah) manifests the earthly and heavenly realms, allowing mystics to perceive pre-eternal majesty, divine beauty, and acquire knowledge through the intuition (shuhūd) of Divine Attributes. "Witnessing" (mushāhadah) further signifies the direct perception of Truth via the "eye of the spirit," culminating in the vision of Divine Beauty in the station of The Presence (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1995, p. 557). For Rūzbihān, this unveiling is an immediate vision of Divine Theophanies across the unseen realms (Malakūt, Jabarūt, Lāhūt) and the phenomenal world, guiding the mystic to comprehend divine signs. Reflecting the three levels of theophany (essential, attributive, verbal), spiritual unveiling is similarly categorized: Verbal Unveiling (e.g., Moses on Sinai), Attributive Unveiling (e.g., Adam's teaching)¹, and Essential Unveiling (e.g., the Prophet's Ascension (Mi'rāj))², which culminates in the vision of the Divine Essence (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, pp. 114–115, 214)³.

Rūzbihān grounds the certainty of spiritual unveiling in Sūrat al-Najm, Verse 11, affirming the heart's truth-seeing, a

characteristic of his intuitionistic mysticism linking unveiling to Divine theophany (Ernst, 1998a, p. 720). He posits that encountering the Divine stems from symbolic and intuitive perception, arising from inspiration (ilhām) and spiritual unveiling, rather than philosophical reason or imagination (Ernst, 1998a, p. 93). Rūzbihān describes diverse visions of God, including light (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 121), the image of Adam (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 143), beautiful Turks (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1393 AH, 196), a shepherd, spiritual elders, masters (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 115), a red rose (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 117), and a yellow lion (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 127), illustrating the varied forms of divine manifestation.

3-5- Divine Vision in the Stations of Sobriety (Ṣaḥw) and Intoxication (Sukr)

Rūzbihān distinguishes the pursuit of Divine Vision between states of "intoxication" (sukr) and "sobriety" (ṣaḥw). In verse 260 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, Prophet Abraham (PBHU) requests, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead", reflecting attentiveness to divine signs (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 128). This cautious request reflects vigilance and attentiveness to divine signs. To clarify vision in the state of sobriety, Rūzbihān references Quranic verses, such as verse 53 of Sūrat Fuṣṣilat: "Is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 192). Rūzbihān's spiritual experiences align him with the tradition of Sufi mystics known for their ecstatic states, sharing similarities with figures like al-Ḥallāj and al-Bisṭāmī. His understanding of Divine Vision in both spiritual intoxication and sobriety corresponds with this Bisṭāmī tradition, framing Vision as a dynamic and loving experience (Steinbock, 2007, p. 93). He believes that the friends of God and mystics, while in a state of intoxication, pursue the Vision of God, asserting, "There is no ecstatic utterer who did not seek the Divine Vision from God and did not claim to have it" (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1987, p. 132).

Moses (PBUH) exemplified this pursuit in a state of spiritual intoxication, requesting to "look upon" God (Biblica, 2011). Rūzbihān interprets 'Alī's declaration, "I have not doubted the Truth since I saw Him," as an ecstatic utterance (shah) signifying a "vision of Essence by Essence," yielding absolute certainty regardless of the mystic's state (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1995, pp. 90–91). He notes that divine vision, as "the manifestation of pure Divine Attributes in the garb of signs," is inextricably linked to theophany, peaking in intoxication (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 153). Rūzbihān further posits that Divine Vision manifests in three spheres—the pre-eternal world of Alast, this world, and the hereafter—varying according to the mystic's spiritual state (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 183). The Holy Prophet experienced both states, requesting "Show me things as they are" in sobriety, and proclaiming "I cannot enumerate Your praises" in intoxication (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 129).

3-6- The Relation of Divine Vision to Polytheism (Shirk)

Rūzbihān Baqlī posits that authentic divine vision entails perceiving only God, asserting that any focus on multiplicity constitutes polytheism (shirk) (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1987, p. 225). This pure vision transcends dualism, leading to unity with the Truth, where the phenomenal world vanishes and the mystic perceives nothing but God (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1987, p. 177). This

¹ A'araf/143: "So when his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain..."

² Baghrah/31: "And He taught Adam the names—all of them."

³ Najm/8: "Then he drew near and descended."

state of unity, achieved through annihilation (*fanā*), signifies the emptying of self and human attributes, saturating existence with Divine attributes and purifying from shirk (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1987, p. 228). While critics cite Quranic verses like 6:103 and 7:143 to deny the possibility of divine vision (Ījī, 1946, p. 115–119), Rūzbihān interprets this vision as an inner perception of the heart and spirit, not physical sight, emphasizing its esoteric nature. He quotes mystics like Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Khaffī, defining witnessing as "the awareness of hearts of the Unseen upon mounts of light" (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2014, p. 153).

3-7- Dimensions of the Vision of the Unseen

In *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ*, Rūzbihān categorizes the vision of the Unseen into three progressive dimensions: Paradise, the Divine Presence, and the Truth (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 183; Tamaddun & Naṣr-e Iṣfahānī, 2018, pp. 42–50). The "vision of Paradise," attained through contemplation (*murāqabah*), involves observing the angelic realm and divine blessings, serving as a precursor to higher stages. The "vision of the Divine Presence," through intimate discourse (*muḥāḍarah*), signifies an intuitive understanding of one's spiritual station and relationship with God. Finally, the "vision of the Truth," achieved through direct vision (*ru'yat*), represents the highest realm, entailing complete annihilation and unity with the Divine Essence, akin to prophetic experiences like the *Mi'rāj*. Rūzbihān posits that vision manifests across the pre-eternal realm, this world, and the hereafter, with love being paramount as both prerequisite and ultimate outcome, leading the mystic to unity with the Truth (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 183).

4- The 'Vision of God' in Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart

The concept of Divine Vision is one of the foundational concepts in Meister Eckhart's mystical thought and plays a pivotal role in elucidating his theological and mystical experiences. In his works, including Sermons and Treatises, Eckhart speaks of Vision as a transcendent experience in which the human soul unites with the Divine Essence and perceives God, not through sensible forms, but in the depths of being and through mystical union.

4-1- The Relation of Mystery and Unity

Eckhart posits that the Vision of God is a transcendent spiritual journey leading to union with the Divine Essence, asserting, "The purer the soul, the clearer it sees God" (Eckhart, 2009, p. 282). This vision dissolves the distinction between observer and observed, as "my eye and God's eye are one" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 206), revealing God as an internal truth. This "birth of the Son in the soul" necessitates detachment (*Abgeschiedenheit*)—a purity free from self-centeredness and material attachments (Eckhart, 1981, p. 205). Unlike traditional views, Eckhart believes this Divine Witnessing is achievable in this life for souls fully surrendered to divine will (McGinn, 2001, p. 94). This concept is intertwined with Unicity (*Gottheit*), which transcends the Trinitarian God and is "nameless" (Eckhart, 1986, p. 65). Drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart views Vision as immersion in divine "Luminous Darkness" (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987, p. 135), ultimately signifying a loving reunion with divine origin (McGinn, 2001, p. 54).

4-2- The Concept of Divine Vision and Its Relation to Being

Eckhart presents a dual conception of God: an ineffable, absolute Essence transcending being, and simultaneously the

Creator and source of all perfection, bestowing existence (Eckhart, 1981, pp. 277–278).

4-3- Levels of Divine Vision

In Meister Eckhart's mysticism, the Vision of God represents a transcendent experience that guides the soul from egoic dualities to union with the One. Eckhart views this vision as an integrated, sudden experience rooted in the ground of the soul, where distinctions between Creator and creature dissolve (Eckhart, 1981, p. 282). He identifies qualitative degrees or levels of vision, distinguished by depth, clarity, and proximity to the Divine Essence.

A) Imperfect Vision through Contemplation on the Christ: The lowest degree of vision is attained through contemplation of Jesus Christ and participation in church rituals like the Eucharist. Eckhart states, "Whoever sees Christ sees God, for He is the Way and the Truth" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 183). He presents Christ as "the image of the invisible God" (Biblica, 2011, Colossians 1:15), serving as a mirror for God's manifestation in the soul. This imperfect vision relies on material images and rituals, which limit the soul's connection to complete unity with the Divine Essence. Although it offers a bridge between the material and divine realms and prepares the soul for deeper spiritual insight, it cannot lead to complete spiritual unity (Schürmann, 1978, p. 112; McGinn, 2001, p. 37).

B) Vision in the Realm of the Spirit: The second level of vision occurs in the realm of the spirit, where, after shedding attachments, the spirit finds God within itself. Eckhart notes, "God acts in a soul that He finds utterly poor" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 282). This vision arises from the spirit's purging of selfhood and material attachments, a process Eckhart describes as "detachment" (*abegescheidenheit*) (Milem, 2002, p. 38). Unlike imperfect vision, this level allows for direct perception of God without reliance on material forms. It leads to the "birth of the Son" within the spirit, representing the manifestation of the Divine Word (McGinn, 1981, p. 30).

C) The Perfect Vision in Absolute Oneness: The highest level of vision is the complete unity of the spirit with the Absolute Oneness, transcending personal and individuated conceptions of God. Eckhart states, "The spirit is submerged in perfect unity" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 282). In this stage, distinctions between Creator and creature are completely erased, allowing the spirit to merge with the undifferentiated Divine Essence (McGinn, 2001, p. 135). This perfect vision, the peak of apophatic mysticism, entails the spirit not only beholding God but becoming one with Him. In this unity, "the spirit is in God and God in the spirit" (Eckhart, 1981, p. 294). This culminates in a transcendent form of Divine Witnessing, immersing the spirit in the pure Divine Light, where no intermediary or distinction remains, representing the most profound mystical experience in Eckhart's thought (Milem, 2002, p. 38).

4-4- Stages of Divine Vision

Meister Eckhart regards the Vision of God as a spiritual journey that progresses through gradual stages, from the emptying of the soul from attachments and selfishness to complete union with the Divine Essence, namely with Absolute Oneness. In his sermons, especially Sermon 52, he elucidates this process through the concept of 'spiritual poverty', which includes: 'to ask for nothing', 'to know nothing', and 'to possess nothing' (Eckhart, 1981, p. 288). According to Eckhart, the stages of Divine Vision

are as follows:

A) Liberation from the self: The first stage of Divine Vision is “liberation from the self”, in which the soul is freed from material attachments, mental images, and self-regard, thereby preparing itself to receive divine light: “As long as the soul is attached to anything other than God, it cannot see Him” (Eckhart, 1981, p. 205). This stage, which Eckhart describes in detail in his sermons, requires abandoning all desires of the lower self and emptying oneself of all human concepts and images. Citing Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” he emphasizes that purity of heart is a prerequisite for entering the path of vision. This self-emptying stage transforms the soul into a clear mirror in which divine light is reflected (McGinn, 2001, p. 97).

B) Birth of the Son in the Soul: The second stage is the “Birth of the Son in the Soul,” which Eckhart considers a transcendent moment when God manifests in the depths of the human soul: “When the soul is emptied of all images, God is born in it, and the soul sees Him” (Eckhart, 1981, p. 206). This stage, linked to the concept of the Incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ, refers to God’s active presence within the soul, where humanity not only perceives God but also becomes a part of the Divine reality itself. Eckhart explains in his sermons that this birth requires profound faith and complete surrender to the Divine will, for only in this state can the soul apprehend God not as an external object but as an inner truth. This stage, though attainable by pure-hearted mystics in this world, remains incomplete, because the soul is still entangled in its existential limitations (Tobin, 1986, p. 79).

C) Immersion in Oneness: The third stage is “Immersion in Oneness,” which Eckhart regards as the pinnacle of vision and complete unity with the Divine Essence: “In Oneness, the soul is submerged in the endless light of God, and all distinctions vanish” (Eckhart, 1986, p. 66). In this stage, described in Divine Consolation, the soul is liberated from any duality between Creator and creature and becomes one in the Divine “Luminous Darkness”. Eckhart emphasizes that this vision transcends God as a personal being (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and reaches the apprehension of the nameless Divine Essence, which surpasses all human description. This stage, rarely realized in this world, requires complete annihilation in God and liberation from all self-awareness (McGinn, 2001, p. 133).

4-5- Conditions and Manifestations of Divine Vision

Eckhart regards the Vision of God as a spiritual journey that possesses conditions, which are as follows:

A) Liberation from the self: In the stage of “liberation from the self,” the soul is freed from material attachments, mental images, and self-regard so as to become prepared to receive the divine light: “As long as the soul is attached to anything other than God, it cannot see Him” (Eckhart, 1981, p. 205). According to Eckhart, such emptying transforms the soul into a clear mirror in which the divine light is reflected (McGinn, 2001, p. 97).

B) Birth of the Son in the Soul: Eckhart considers “the birth of the Son in the soul” a transcendent moment in which God manifests in the depths of the human soul: “When the soul is emptied of all images, God is born in it, and the soul sees Him” (Eckhart, 1981, p. 206). In Eckhart’s thought, this birth requires profound faith and complete surrender to the Divine will, for only in this state can the soul intuit God not as an external object but as an inner truth. This stage, which is

possible in this world for pure-hearted mystics, is still incomplete because the soul remains entangled in its existential limitations (Tobin, 1986, p. 79).

C) Return to the Origin: According to Eckhart, return to the origin and union with the Divine Essence is the pinnacle of vision: “In Oneness, the soul is submerged in the endless light of God, and all distinctions vanish” (Eckhart, 1986, p. 66). He believes: “The soul that sees God becomes God, and God becomes it” (Eckhart, 1981, p. 207).

5- Comparative Examination of Divine Vision in the Views of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart

A comparative analysis of the concept of “Divine Vision” in the mystical thought of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart highlights both the shared dimensions and the distinctive features of their approaches. Table 1 summarizes the main similarities and differences between their understandings of this concept.

Table 1. Similarities and Differences between the Views of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart

Basics of Divine Vision	Commonalities	Differences
Nature of Vision	Vision understood as union with the Divine	Rūzbihān: amorous, allegorical, imaginal Eckhart: abstractive, apophatic, formless
Mode of Appearance	Vision concerns manifestation of Truth	Rūzbihān: theophany in sensible/symbolic forms Eckhart: no images, absolute formlessness
Stages / Structure	Gradational movement toward perfection	Rūzbihān: five stages Eckhart: three stages
Inner Faculty	Heart / inner spirit as locus of vision	Rūzbihān: heart-centered, intellect guides Eckhart: soul/spirit, intellect silenced
Prerequisites	Detachment from lower attachments	Rūzbihān: purity of heart, Divine attraction Eckhart: spiritual poverty, absolute detachment
Role of Love	Love linked to Divine Vision	Rūzbihān: passionate, reciprocal love Eckhart: tranquil, will-alignment
Spiritual Path	Movement from multiplicity to unity	Rūzbihān: gradual, amorous wayfaring Eckhart: immediate, existential movement
Type of Knowledge	Vision yields transformative knowledge	Rūzbihān: symbolic, experiential Eckhart: unmediated, presential
Annihilation (Fanā)	Vision associated with annihilation	Rūzbihān: ecstatic, love-born Eckhart: silent, self-emptying
Metaphysical Orientation	Both seek Divine Unity	Rūzbihān: theophany, immanence, beauty Eckhart: transcendence, negation, unity
Language Expression	Vision expressed through distinctive discourse	Rūzbihān: poetic, symbolic Eckhart: theological, conceptual

6- Conclusion

The present study, employing an analytical-comparative

approach, sought to examine the concept of “Divine Vision” in the mystical thought of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart, and to elucidate the points of convergence and divergence between these two mystical traditions in this regard. The research findings indicate that both mystics understand Divine Vision not as sensory perception or outward observation, but as an inward, intuitive, and transformative experience within the existential realm of the human being. In both perspectives, Vision requires purification of the self, detachment from carnal attachments, and passage from multiplicity to unity, and is deeply connected with concepts such as annihilation (fanā), union, and the Divine presence within the wayfarer. Nevertheless, fundamental differences appear in the mode of articulation, language, and metaphysical foundations of Vision in the views of these two mystics. Rūzbihān Baqlī regards Divine Vision as a dynamic, amorous, and visually metaphorical experience realized in the sacred imagination through the theophany of the Truth in sensible and aesthetic forms. In his intellectual system, love is the driving force of Vision, and poetic-symbolic language serves as the primary vehicle for expressing this intuitive experience. For Rūzbihān, Vision is a gradual, staged process in which the heart, spirit, intellect, and secret each play a role in perceiving Divine Reality.

In contrast, Meister Eckhart conceives of the Vision of God as an apophatic, formless, and radically abstract experience that occurs in silence, spiritual poverty, and complete self-emptying. In his thought, any image, symbol, or determination constitutes an obstacle to true Vision, and the intellect must fall silent along this path. Eckhartian Vision is less a gradual process than an existential and instantaneous movement toward Absolute Oneness, in which the distinction between Creator and creature vanishes in intuitive unity. In sum, although Rūzbihān Baqlī and Meister Eckhart exhibit significant differences in language, method, and metaphysical horizon concerning Divine Vision, both emphasize the primacy of inward experience, the central role of self-purification, and the unitive goal of Vision. Thus, they converge toward a shared horizon in Islamic and Christian mysticism—one that enables profound dialogue between these two traditions.

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