

Ocularcentrism in Shakespeare's Sonnets 46 and 47: Through the Lenses of Plato and Descartes

Shakespeare'in 46 ve 47 Numaralı Sonelerinde Oküler Merkezcilik: Platon ve Descartes'in Perspektifinden

Sorumlu Yazar

Ajda Baştan

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Sivas/Türkiye, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi.

abastan@cumhuriyet.edu.tr

orcid: 0000-0001-8171-8644

Yiğit Güney

Lisans Öğrencisi, İstanbul/Türkiye, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği

yigitgüney@gmail.com

orcid: 0009-0006-3572-2507

Atıf CitationBaştan, A. & Güney, Y. (2025). Ocularcentrism in Shakespeare's Sonnets 46 and 47: Through the Lenses of Plato and Descartes. *BABUR Research*, 4(1), 63–75.**Gönderim Submitted**

28.03.2025

Revizyon Revision

22.04.2025

Kabul Accepted

12.05.2025

Yayın Tarihi Publication Date

19.06.2025

**Abstract**

This study investigates the concept of ocularcentrism in Shakespeare's *Sonnets 46 and 47*, employing the philosophical frameworks of Plato and Descartes to elucidate the interplay between vision, perception, and knowledge. These sonnets present a dynamic conflict between the eyes and the heart, symbolizing competing modes of sensory and emotional understanding in the pursuit of truth and love. In Plato's philosophy, vision serves as a powerful metaphor for intellectual insight, where true knowledge transcends physical appearances to grasp eternal forms. Conversely, Descartes' ocularcentrism prioritizes the clarity and certainty of rational thought, with vision embodying the mind's capacity to discern truth amidst sensory deception. Shakespeare masterfully applies the metaphor of vision to explore complex themes of love, presence, absence, and self-understanding, matching with Plato's notion of intellectual enlightenment and Descartes' method of systematic doubt leading to clear perception. This analysis not only emphasizes Shakespeare's engagement with visual epistemology but also reveals how these philosophical perspectives permeate his poetic expression. By bridging poetic and philosophical discourses, the study clarifies the complex relationship between sight, emotion, and cognition, offering a subtle understanding of human experience in Renaissance literature.

Keywords: Descartes, epistemology, ocularcentrism, Plato, Shakespeare, sonnets

Öz

Bu çalışma, Shakespeare'in 46 ve 47 numaralı sonelerinde oküler merkezcilik kavramını Platon ve Descartes'in felsefi yaklaşımları çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Söz konusu soneler, göz ile kalp arasındaki çatışmayı betimleyerek duygusal ve duygusal anlayışın bilgi ve aşk arayışındaki rekabetçi doğasını simgeler. Platon'un düşüncesinde görme, entelektüel içgörüyü açılan bir mecaz olarak yer alır ve gerçek bilgiye ulaşmak, fiziksel görünümünün ötesindeki ebedi formları kavramakla mümkün olur. Buna karşılık Descartes'in yaklaşımı, aklın açıklığına ve kesinliğine vurgu yapar. Bu bağlamda görme, duyuların aldatıcılığına rağmen gerçeği ayırt edebilme becerisini ifade eder. Shakespeare ise görme metaforunu özenle işleyerek aşk, mevcudiyet, yokluk ve öz-anlayış gibi çok katmanlı temaları sorgular. Bu sorgulama, hem Platon'un entelektüel aydınlanmaya dair düşüncesiyle hem de Descartes'in sistematik şüphe yoluyla berraklığa ulaşma çabasıyla örtüşür. Çalışma, Shakespeare'in görsel epistemolojiyle kurduğu derin ilişkiyi gözler önüne sererken aynı zamanda bu felsefi bakış açılarının şiirsel dile nasıl yansıdığını da ortaya koymaktadır. Böylelikle, şiirsel ve felsefi anlatımları bir araya getirerek, Rönesans edebiyatında görme, duygu ve biliş arasındaki karmaşık bağlantılara dair kapsamlı ve incelikli bir kavrayış sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Descartes, epistemoloji, oküler merkezcilik, Platon, Shakespeare, soneler

Introduction: Ocularcentrism from Ancient Greece to Modern Philosophy

Ocularcentrism, the supremacy of eye and vision in philosophical discourse, has roots dating back to the ancient Greeks of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. This concept elevates sight above other sensory inputs such as hearing, touch, smell, and taste as the primary conduit for understanding and acquiring knowledge about the world and our environment. In this regard, the term embodies the idea that what is seen is often regarded as more truthful or real than what is experienced through other senses. One of the earliest and most influential proponents of ocularcentrism in Western thought is Plato. In his seminal work, *The Republic* (circa 380 BCE), Plato employs the famous allegory of the cave to depict the transition from ignorance to enlightenment, which is fundamentally visual. He describes how prisoners in a cave see only shadows projected on a wall, mistaking these for reality, until one breaks free, sees the light, and comprehends the true nature of things (Plato, 2005: 500-503). This allegory underlines the notion that true knowledge derives from seeing the “Forms” or ultimate truths, which transcend the physical world and are accessible only through intellectual “vision.” Aristotle, Plato’s student, further entrenched this ocularcentric tradition in his philosophical writings. In *De Anima (On the Soul)*, Aristotle (1984: 418a-424b) ranks the senses, placing sight at the apex, arguing that it is the most noble and informative of all senses due to its capacity for providing detailed information about the world. His endorsement of vision as the superior sense for comprehending the environment solidified the ocularcentric perspective in philosophy.

During the Renaissance period (14th to 17th centuries), the revival of classical Greek philosophy laid the foundation for new ways of understanding perception and knowledge. Thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as René Descartes, expanded upon these ideas with increased attention to the senses, particularly vision. In *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes, best known for his assertion *cogito, ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”), questions the reliability of the senses. He draws special attention to sight as both a source of knowledge and a potential source of deception, thereby encouraging scepticism about visual perception while still granting it a central role in shaping human understanding (Descartes, 2008: 23). As Enlightenment thought progressed in the 17th and 18th centuries, visual perception became closely associated with reason. The metaphor of the “eye of reason” reflects this association, promoting a vision-centred model of thought that shaped epistemological developments (Jay, 1994: 12). Immanuel Kant was a key contributor to this discussion. In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he explains that space and time are fundamental conditions of human sensibility, and he identifies space as something primarily grasped through vision (Kant, 1998: 23-27). For Kant, sight is not only a sensory input but also a necessary condition through which the external world becomes intelligible.

In the 20th century, John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* and the collection *Vision and*

Textuality edited by Melville and Readings addressed how visual perception operates within cultural and ideological structures. Berger (1972: 47) examines the role of images in reinforcing social norms, especially in relation to gender and consumption. Melville and Readings' work (1995) similarly interrogate the relationship between visual representation and textual interpretation, pointing to the cultural weight carried by what is seen. These studies draw attention to how vision is often treated as neutral, while in practice it is shaped by historical and ideological forces. Despite its prominence, ocularcentrism has not gone without critique. In *Being and Time* (1927), Martin Heidegger (2001: 143-153) reconsiders the hierarchy of the senses by emphasizing human experience as a situated, embodied process. He argues that perception cannot be reduced to vision alone, suggesting that meaning arises from an immersive engagement with the world. While Heidegger does not entirely dismiss the historical emphasis on vision, he urges a broader sensory approach to understanding human existence. Taken together, these philosophical traditions illustrate how ocularcentrism has maintained a lasting presence in Western thought. From the visual metaphors of Plato and Aristotle to the sensory critiques of Heidegger, vision remains a central concept. Though its authority is occasionally questioned, its influence continues to shape philosophical inquiry and cultural analysis.

Building on these philosophical traditions, this paper examines how ocularcentrism manifests in Shakespeare's *Sonnets 46* and *47* through the philosophical perspectives of Plato and Descartes. It argues that both sonnets reflect a sustained visual emphasis that echoes Platonic and Cartesian thought, particularly in their treatment of the relationship between inner judgment and outward appearance. By tracing how Shakespeare engages with these visual philosophies, the article suggests that the sonnets participate in and contribute to a longer Western discourse that places vision at the centre of meaning-making. The discussion begins with an explanation of key terms related to ocularcentrism, followed by a close look at the role of vision in Plato's and Descartes' philosophies. Next, it moves to Shakespeare's general use of visual language, before turning to detailed textual analyses of *Sonnets 46* and *47* in light of Platonic and Cartesian ideas. The article concludes by reflecting on how these findings inform a broader understanding of the relationship between literature, vision, and philosophical tradition.

1. Terms Related to Ocularcentrism

Ocularcentrism privileges vision as the dominant mode of perception, both through the literal function of the eye and its metaphorical associations. This emphasis on sight shapes philosophical, cultural, and epistemological discourses, often positioning visual terms such as "seeing," "sight," "vision," and "looking" as central to how individuals come to understand their world. Among these, the eye holds a dual role as a physical organ and a potent symbol. In classical philosophy, particularly in Plato's allegory of the cave, the act of turning toward the light signifies the transition from ignorance to

knowledge, where vision functions as a metaphor for intellectual awakening (Plato, 1961: 248-250). Similarly, in Descartes' philosophical language, visual terminology is closely tied to the mental process of comprehension. His famous assertion, "I think, therefore I am," rests on a model in which clarity of vision is equated with clarity of thought, where to "see" is to understand (Descartes, 2008: 17). Cultural narratives often reinforce this association by according knowledge with light and ignorance with darkness, emphasizing the link between visual perception and epistemology (Jay, 1994: 55). Beyond these abstract connotations, terms like "vision" and "looking" carry further implications. Vision is frequently extended to imply imagination and foresight, suggesting a capacity to perceive possibilities not immediately present in the physical world (Foster, 1988: ix). Meanwhile, the concept of looking involves more than passive observation. It engages interpretation and judgment, framing how individuals interact with what they see. Laura Mulvey's (1975: 6) film theory analysis highlights how looking, particularly through the "gaze," influences social dynamics and power structures, especially regarding gender roles. Together, these concepts reflect how ocularcentrism not only informs sensory experience but also shapes broader philosophical and cultural understandings.

Indeed, ocularcentrism not only shapes our sensory hierarchy but also deeply influences our cultural, epistemological, and technological landscapes. The eye and its associated concepts serve as central motifs in how we perceive, interpret, and construct reality. This visual dominance manifests across diverse domains, highlighting the central role of sight in shaping human experience. In the scope of art and aesthetics, ocularcentrism is evident in the way visual arts are often celebrated for their capacity to convey complex ideas through sight. Movements like Impressionism exemplify this, focusing on how light interacts with the human eye to shape our perception of the world (Gombrich, 1995: 577). Similarly, in science and technology, the reliance on visual tools such as microscopes and telescopes stresses the cultural emphasis on "seeing as knowing." These instruments have been vital in scientific discoveries, reinforcing the primacy of vision in our understanding of the natural world (Latour, 1987: 63). Philosophy and epistemology further demonstrate the centrality of ocularcentrism. Metaphors of light and vision are deeply embedded in philosophical discourses on knowledge. For instance, during the Enlightenment period, John Locke (1975: 104) conceptualized the mind as a "camera obscura," passively receiving images from the external world that highlights the interplay between vision and cognition. And in the modern era, media and communication provide yet another illustration of this visual bias. The dominance of visual media such as television, cinema, and digital screens reflects a cultural landscape where "seeing is believing" governs the dissemination and reception of information (Debord, 2000: 18).

However, in academic discourse, ocularcentrism is critiqued for its implicit exclusion of other ways of knowing, especially in fields like anthropology, where multisensory

ethnography disputes the dominance of the visual. It may be argued that this bias can lead to a diminished appreciation for the richness of human experience, which is inherently multisensory. For example, in the study of human communication, ocularcentrism might overshadow the significance of non-visual cues like tone, gesture, and spatial dynamics (Classen, 1993: 48). Jay (1994: 114) elaborates on this by discussing how visual culture has shaped philosophical thought, particularly in phenomenology, where seeing is not just a way to perceive but a mode of understanding existence. He points out that the ocularcentric bias is not just a modern phenomenon but has deep roots in Western philosophy from Plato's allegory of the cave to Descartes' emphasis on the clarity of vision in his method of doubt.

Moreover, ocularcentrism can have practical implications in everyday life and technology. The design of modern interfaces, for example, heavily relies on visual cues, which can marginalize users with visual impairments or those who might prefer or need multisensory input for interaction. This has led to discussions about inclusivity in technology design, advocating for a more balanced approach that considers all senses (Howes, 2005: 34). In contemporary cultural studies, the critique of ocularcentrism extends to media and art, where there is a push towards recognizing and valuing non-visual arts and media forms, like sound art or haptic experiences, debating the visual hegemony in aesthetic appreciation (Howes, 2005: 34). Thus, understanding and addressing ocularcentrism is crucial not just for philosophy or cultural theory but for broader implications in literature, education, technology design, and social inclusivity, urging a re-evaluation of how we prioritize sensory input in our interaction with the world.

2. Plato's Ocularcentrism

Plato's ocularcentrism is not just about the physical act of seeing but about vision as a metaphor for intellectual insight. The eye, in Platonic philosophy, symbolizes the mind's capacity to perceive the eternal and unchangeable forms, which are the true essences behind the transient, sensory world. This philosophical stance has significantly influenced Western thought, where the visual metaphor is often used to describe understanding and enlightenment. In Plato's works, especially within dialogues like *The Republic* and *Timaeus*, vision is not just a sensory mechanism but is deeply intertwined with the acquisition of knowledge, truth, and the understanding of reality. As mentioned before, Plato (2005: 111) in *The Republic*, uses the allegory of the cave to illustrate his theory of "Forms or Ideas", where vision plays a central role. He describes prisoners who only see shadows on a wall, mistaking these shadows for reality itself until one escapes and sees the true forms under the sun. This allegory is crucial in establishing the metaphor of light and sight as pathways to truth; the sun in the allegory is akin to the "Form of the Good", the ultimate source of knowledge and reality:

At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck

round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision,—what will be his reply? (Plato, 2005: 498).

This passage emphasizes the transition from sensory illusion to intellectual clarity through visual imagery. The journey from the darkness of the cave into the sunlight illustrates the philosopher's path from perception-based assumptions to knowledge that the intellect alone can grasp, described as being visible only to the "mind's eye" (Plato, 2005: 501). In *Timaeus*, Plato elaborates on the significance of vision, referring to sight as the most valuable of the senses and attributing its design to divine craftsmanship. He notes that "we must go on to describe the chief benefit of the function of sight" (Plato, 1977: 65), indicating that its value extends far beyond daily use. Plato (1977: 62) connects vision with humanity's capacity to perceive the natural order, suggesting that the eye was created to interact with light, which in his philosophy symbolizes knowledge and truth. By attributing a purpose to sight that transcends mere function, Plato integrates it into a philosophical system in which perception becomes a pathway to a rational understanding of the universe.

3. Descartes' Ocularcentrism

René Descartes, a cornerstone figure in the development of modern philosophy, significantly contributed to the concept of ocularcentrism with his emphasis on visual metaphor and epistemology. Descartes' philosophy, particularly his method of doubt and his views on perception, highlight vision as not just a primary sense but as an allegory for the clarity of thought and understanding. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes uses vision metaphorically to describe the process of gaining knowledge. The famous phrase "I think, therefore I am" can be seen as a mental act of seeing the self clearly, independent of all other sensory doubts. Descartes writes:

I am a thinking thing, that is, one that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many others, wills this and not that, and also imagines and perceives by the senses; for as I have already remarked, although the things I perceive or imagine outside myself do not perhaps exist, yet I am certain that the modes of thinking that I call sensations and imaginations, considered purely and simply as modes of thinking, do exist inside me (Descartes, 2008: 25).

Here, the act of thinking is likened to an act of seeing one's own existence with clarity despite the scepticism applied to all sensory perceptions. Besides, Descartes' work on vision and the eye illustrates his ocularcentric tendencies. He explores how vision functions and how it can be deceived, which leads to his method of doubt (2008: 23). He discusses how the senses, particularly sight, can mislead us:

In this passage from *Meditations*, Descartes expresses initial scepticism toward the senses, including vision, emphasizing their potential to mislead. Nevertheless, his philosophical method gradually moves toward constructing knowledge based on what the mind can grasp with certainty. This reliance on mental clarity becomes more apparent in *Discourse on the Method*, where he introduces his fourth rule: “The last was to undertake such complete enumerations and such general surveys that I would be sure to have left nothing out” (Descartes, 2006: 17). Here, the act of surveying evokes a mental form of visual inspection, similar to how a surveyor scans a landscape to ensure completeness. This method reflects his pursuit of clarity through deliberate and structured reasoning. Further emphasizing the role of sight, Descartes conceptualizes the pineal gland as an internal centre where the soul interacts with visual input, assigning it a central role in cognition (Jay, 1994: 20). Thus, Descartes’ theory of the pineal gland as the “third eye” or the principal seat of the soul not only highlights the importance of vision in human experience but also illustrates how his philosophy might have perpetuated an ocularcentric approach to understanding the mind and body interaction. This interest in vision underlines his belief in the primacy of visual perception in the interaction between mind and body, suggesting that sight is not just a sense but a key to understand the world.

4. Ocularcentrism in Shakespeare’s Works

William Shakespeare’s works consistently emphasize ocularcentrism, placing vision and the act of seeing at the core of how knowledge, truth, and reality are shaped within his plays. This focus on the visual dimension is evident throughout his writings, where characters’ understanding of their world often hinges on what they observe or fail to observe. A prominent example is *King Lear*, where the contrast between blindness and sight plays a central role. Gloucester’s physical blindness contrasts with his heightened awareness of human nature, illustrating the tension between external vision and inner comprehension. This contrast raises questions about whether sight alone can be trusted or whether it is only part of the process of understanding (Shakespeare, 2007: 157). In *Hamlet*, ocularcentrism is highlighted in the “play within a play,” where Hamlet uses Claudius’s visible reaction as proof of guilt, demonstrating how seeing functions as a tool to reveal hidden realities (Shakespeare, 1992: 193).

However, Shakespeare’s treatment of ocularcentrism is complex and not without doubt. He often places sight in opposition to other senses or forms of inner knowledge. In *Macbeth*, for instance, the witches’ visions deceive Macbeth, showing how appearances can mislead and sight may not disclose the full truth (Shakespeare, 1974: 24). This indicates Shakespeare’s awareness of the limits of visual perception and suggests a broader questioning of how much can be trusted from the senses. Although Shakespeare lived before René Descartes, who famously doubted sensory knowledge, especially sight, their shared concerns reflect a wider intellectual mood of scepticism about human

perception rather than direct influence.

Shakespeare's engagement with ocularcentrism may have been shaped by Renaissance humanism, which revived classical Platonic ideas. His plays frequently demonstrate the gap between appearance and reality, a theme central to Platonic thought. Characters often misunderstand what they see, resulting in tragic consequences or moments of clarity (Kott, 1967: 45). However, Shakespeare does not follow Platonic ideals strictly. Instead of relying on reason or sight alone, his characters often achieve understanding through a mix of suffering, emotion, and both sensory and mental experiences. Furthermore, Shakespeare's questioning of perception continues in *The Tempest*, where Prospero controls what others see, creating illusions that deceive the eye. This manipulation of vision reflects scepticism about sensory experience, echoing concerns later expressed by Descartes (Shakespeare, 2002: 77). Given that Shakespeare's work predates Descartes by decades, these similarities probably reflect broader Renaissance doubts about sensory reliability.

Ocularcentrism is also evident in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1609), a collection of 154 poems that explore love, beauty, time, and mortality. The first 126 sonnets address a young man, while the remaining ones focus on the "Dark Lady." Written in iambic pentameter with a clear rhyme scheme (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG), the sonnets use their structure to express layered emotional and philosophical ideas (Shakespeare, 1997: 95). Shakespeare enriches the poems with metaphor, personification, and sound patterns such as alliteration and assonance. For example, *Sonnet 19* personifies time as destructive: "Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws" (Shakespeare, 1997: 149), while *Sonnet 18*'s line "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" features soft, flowing sounds (Shakespeare, 1997: 147). Beyond their emotional tone and style, the sonnets show how early modern literature often connected vision with understanding. This is briefly but clearly seen in *Sonnet 46* and *Sonnet 47*, where the eyes and heart stand in symbolic opposition. These specific examples will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Plato's and Descartes' Ocularcentrism in *Sonnet 46*

Shakespeare's *Sonnet 46* (1997: 203) presents a conflict between sight and emotion, symbolized by the eyes and the heart, as they each lay claim to the beloved. This contrast reflects philosophical tensions found in ocularcentrism, particularly in the works of Plato and Descartes, where vision is often seen as the main path to knowledge, but other ways of understanding, such as emotional or rational perception, are also considered. The idea of such a dispute, described in the poem as a "mortal war," was a common theme in Renaissance literature, as pointed out by scholars including Rassokhina (2016, p. 64) and McGuire (1987: 309). The modern version of the poem is as the following:

My eyes and heart are locked in fierce combat,¹

¹ *Sonnets 46 and 47* have been converted by us into modern English, adhering to the ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme.

Debating who should claim the sight of you,
My eyes would keep your image where they're at,
My heart contests for that same privilege too.
My heart argues that you reside in it,
A secret space where no one else can peer,
But eyes protest, deny that heart's submit,
Claiming the beauty of your face they steer.
To settle this, a jury has been called,
Of thoughts, all loyal subjects of my heart,
Their verdict will finally be recalled,
Dividing eye's share from heart's loving part.
So, my eyes get your looks, your outward show,
My heart, your love, the inner warmth to know.

In Shakespeare's *Sonnet 46*, the dichotomy between the eye and the heart as claimants to the lover's image resembles deeply to Plato's concept of ocularcentrism. Plato's philosophy elevates vision as not merely a physical act but as a metaphor for intellectual and spiritual understanding. In this sonnet, Shakespeare metaphorically assigns the task of "seeing" or understanding the beloved to both the eye and the heart, which parallels Plato's allegory of the cave where vision leads to enlightenment (Plato, 2005: 248). The eyes in the sonnet argue for their right to "see" the physical beauty of the beloved, similar to the prisoners initially seeing only shadows, while the heart claims a deeper vision of love, matching with Plato's idea of seeing the true forms or essences beyond mere appearances. Besides, the heart's claim to house the beloved "where no one else can peer" echoes Plato's (1977: 47) notion in *Timaeus* of the eye being the most divine of senses, crafted for higher understanding. Thus, Shakespeare's use of this internal debate reflects Plato's ocularcentrism by illustrating that true understanding or love transcends mere physical sight, requiring an inner vision or insight. Within this framework, in *Sonnet 46*, the eyes insist on their ownership of the beloved's outward beauty, resounds like Plato's idea that sight provides access to knowledge, albeit through an imperfect sensory medium (Plato, 2005: 69). However, Shakespeare complicates this perspective by introducing the heart as an equally valid site of perception, one that perceives the "inner warmth" of love, which remains inaccessible to the eyes. This duality echoes the allegory of the cave in *The Republic*, where prisoners transition from the deceptive shadows of sensory perception to the truth (Plato, 2005: 500). Here, the sonnet suggests that neither the eyes nor the heart can claim exclusive access to the beloved's essence; instead, both faculties are necessary for a fuller understanding. Furthermore, the division between "outward show" and "inner warmth" reflects a Platonic hierarchy: while the eyes perceive the transient beauty of the physical, the heart adjusts with the eternal truth of love (Plato, 2005: 224).

On the other hand, Descartes' ocularcentrism, which ties vision to clarity and intellectual rigor, provides a different lens for interpreting *Sonnet 46*. The sonnet's court-like resolution, where thoughts adjudicate the claims of eyes and heart, mirrors Descartes' (2008: 14) method of doubt and his pursuit of clear and distinct ideas. The jury of thoughts represents the Cartesian emphasis on rational judgment, striving to reconcile sensory data (the eyes' perception) with internal truths (the heart's emotion). The sonnet's resolution, granting the eyes dominion over "outward show" and the heart over "inner warmth," matches with Descartes' distinction between physical perception and intellectual insight. Descartes (2008: 23) explains how vision can be deceived but also rehabilitated through reason, suggesting a collaborative relationship between sensory and intellectual faculties. Similarly, Shakespeare suggests that the eyes and heart, while in conflict, are interdependent in their grasp of the beloved's totality. In this regard, Descartes, with his focus on clear and distinct ideas alike to visual clarity, would interpret this sonnet through the lens of his method of doubt, where sensory perceptions, including sight, are initially questioned but ultimately serve to clarify or validate inner truths. Thus, in the sonnet, the conflict between the eye and the heart can be seen as a Cartesian exercise in epistemology. The jury of thoughts summoned to decide between the eye and the heart mirrors Descartes' process of introspection and doubt, where one seeks clarity through mental visualization or "seeing" with the mind (Descartes, 2006: 19). The division of "your looks" for the eyes and "your love" for the heart reflects Descartes' dualistic view of sensation and emotion; the eyes correspond to the sensory world, which can deceive, while the heart deals with the essence or the "clear and distinct" understanding of love, which Descartes would argue is the domain of the mind or soul (Descartes, 2006: 120).

4.2. Plato's and Descartes' Ocularcentrism in *Sonnet 47*

In *Sonnet 47*, Shakespeare (1997: 205) develops the theme introduced in *Sonnet 46* by shifting from conflict to harmony, portraying a mutual understanding between the eyes and the heart in their shared devotion to the beloved. Rather than competing, these faculties now support each other in maintaining the beloved's image, alternating between emotional presence and visual remembrance. This progression from division to unity invites reflection through the lens of Platonic and Cartesian ocularcentrism, both of which examine the role of vision in relation to other cognitive and affective processes. As has been observed, *Sonnet 47* serves as a direct continuation of the ideas in *Sonnet 46* (Fineman, 1984: 59), reinforcing the interconnected roles of sight and feeling. The modern version of the sonnet is as follows:

Between my eyes and heart, there's now a pact,
 Each one helps out the other in their deed:
 When my eyes starve for just one simple act,
 Or heart aches, drowning in love's urgent need,

My eyes then feast upon your pictured face,
And invite my heart to join the visual meal;
Sometimes, my heart gives my eyes their place,
Sharing in love's thoughts, a mutual deal:
Thus, through your image or my love's embrace,
You're with me even when you're far away;
You're bound no further than my thoughts can trace,
And I'm with them, and they with you each day.
If sleep should take them, still your sight's so bright,
It stirs my heart, delighting both my sight.

Plato's conception of vision as a metaphor for intellectual and spiritual insight resonates again in this sonnet. The eyes, depicted as feasting on the beloved's image, resemble to Plato's (2005: 69) idea of sight as a bridge to eternal forms and deeper truths. The interplay between the eyes and the heart reflects the duality of sensory perception and intellectual understanding that Plato describes in *Timaeus*. In the sonnet, the eyes provide a physical representation of the beloved, while the heart internalizes this image, embodying a "mind's eye" capable of perceiving love's essence beyond mere appearances (Plato, 1961: 46-47). This partnership mirrors Plato's allegory of the cave, where vision moves from the shadows of sensory deception to the illumination of truth. The beloved's image in the sonnet, whether physically seen or mentally imagined, serves as a form that the heart and mind continually strive to grasp, emphasizing the Platonic notion that true understanding transcends the physical (Plato, 1977: 148). Shakespeare's *Sonnet 47* echoes Plato's ocularcentric philosophy through its exploration of vision not just as a physical sense but as a conduit for deeper emotional and intellectual connection. In this sonnet, the eyes and heart form a "pact" where each aids the other, reflecting Plato's idea in *The Republic* where vision is a metaphor for enlightenment (Plato, 2005: 248). Here, the eyes "feast upon your pictured face," which can be interpreted as the Platonic journey from seeing mere shadows or representations of reality to grasping the essence of love or beauty, similar to seeing the Forms. Plato would argue that this "feast" of the eyes on the lover's image is not just visual but an act of soul communion, where the heart joins in, suggesting a shared intellectual vision or understanding that transcends the physical. Besides, the sonnet's depiction of the heart sharing thoughts with the eyes mirrors Plato's (1977: 47) concept in *Timaeus* of sight being divinely crafted for the pursuit of truth and reason. Thus, the sonnet portrays a Platonic ideal where love's true nature is "seen" through an internal, intellectual vision rather than merely observed.

Also, Descartes' emphasis on clarity and distinct perception provides another lens to interpret *Sonnet 47*. The relationship between the eyes and the heart mirrors Descartes' method of doubt, where sensory input is scrutinized to ensure it with intellectual clarity (Descartes, 2008: 23). The sonnet's portrayal of the eyes transmitting the beloved's image to the heart parallels

Descartes' theory of the pineal gland as the conduit for processing visual information. When the speaker's heart "feasts" on the image provided by the eyes, it evokes Descartes' belief in the interdependence of sensory data and intellectual verification. This union creates a composite understanding of love that satisfies both sensory and intellectual faculties, alike to Descartes' quest for knowledge that is both empirically grounded and mentally verified (Descartes, 2006: 14). Furthermore, Descartes' insistence on the mental "vision" that leads to truth is reflected in the sonnet's final couplet, where the beloved's image persists even in sleep. This persistence parallels with Descartes' (2008: 120) idea of innate ideas and the mind's ability to reconstruct clarity independently of sensory input. Descartes would interpret the "pact" between the eyes and heart in *Sonnet 47* as an example of his epistemological method where vision serves as a metaphor for clear and distinct perception. The mutual aid between eye and heart conforms with Descartes' process of introspection where sensory input, particularly vision, is scrutinized for truth. The phrase "When my eyes starve for just one simple act" might be seen as an echo of Descartes' scepticism towards sensory data; however, the subsequent lines where the eyes "feast" and the heart joins suggest a process similar to Descartes' reconstruction of knowledge from clear perceptions (Descartes, 2006: 19). Therefore, the heart's role in this sonnet could be likened to Descartes' notion of the mind or soul interpreting sensory data, especially visual, to understand and confirm love, which is beyond mere physical sight. The idea of the beloved's presence through "your image or my love's embrace" reflects Descartes' (2008: 120) method of achieving certainty through mental visualization or introspection, where even in absence, the lover is "seen" with the clarity of thought. Moreover, Descartes' interest in the mechanics of vision and its role in understanding would resonate with the sonnet's imagery where the heart, metaphorically akin to the pineal gland, processes the visual input to experience love (Descartes, 2006: 106). Thus, in this sonnet, the ocularcentric philosophy of Descartes is reflected in the interplay between sensory data and the mind's clear perception of love.

Conclusion

In examining Shakespeare's *Sonnets 46* and *47* through the philosophical perspectives of Plato and Descartes, rich evidence of ocularcentrism emerges within these works. These sonnets engage in a significant dialogue between the physical act of seeing and the metaphorical implications of vision as a pathway to deeper understanding and emotional connection. The analysis displays how Shakespeare's portrayal of the conflict between the eyes and the heart mirrors Plato's ideal of vision as an ascent from the sensory world to the realm of true knowledge. Here, love transcends mere visual perception, becoming a journey towards intellectual and emotional enlightenment. On the other hand, Descartes' influence is evident in the way Shakespeare deals with the reliability of sensory data, particularly sight, to convey the essence of love beyond the physical, towards a clarity of thought and understanding. In this regard, the study not only highlights Shakespeare's nuanced use of visual metaphors but also points out how classical and modern philosophical thoughts on vision have shaped literary expression. By employing the eye and heart as dual protagonists in a narrative of love,

Shakespeare invites readers to consider the complexities of human experience where sight, emotion, and cognition intersect. The enduring relevance of these sonnets lies in their ability to explain universal themes through the prism of ocularcentrism, offering insights into how we perceive, love, and understand. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper appreciation for how philosophical ideas of vision can illuminate the human condition, suggesting that our engagement with the world is as much about seeing with our eyes as it is about seeing with our minds and hearts.

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