

Original Research Article

Genealogy of the Term “Manzar”; Semantics and Conceptual Distinctions*

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Abstract

Problem statement: In contemporary environmental sciences literature in Iran, the word “Manzar,” as an equivalent for the Western concept of “Landscape,” is often understood as a concept equal to “external objectivity.” This reductionist usage is not merely a lexical error but stems from ignoring the semantic and historical structure of the word and, consequently, neglecting the ontological foundations that render “Manzar” a distinct concept for understanding the human-environment relationship. The persistence of this misunderstanding has led to the dominance of a formalist approach in explaining this concept and has undermined the possibility of an independent theoretical formulation of it.

Research objective: The aim of this research is a genealogical re-reading of the word “Manzar” within the context of language to extract its multi-layered meanings and semantic capacities, to elucidate the preeminence of this word over cognate terms in a determinate understanding of the environment.

Research method: The present research is conducted within the interpretive paradigm using a qualitative approach. For data collection, documentary and library methods (including lexicographical sources and literary-mystical texts) were utilized, and data analysis was performed based on a combined method of “Historical Etymology” and “Semantic Field Analysis.”

Conclusion: The findings indicate that “Manzar,” unlike “Sima” (which denotes the visual surface) and “Mazhar” (which is inherent to the phenomenon itself), is a “process-oriented” concept dependent on the “observer.” The research findings delineate five ontological features for “Manzar” that distinguish it from cognate concepts: 1. Simultaneity of being both Origin and Destination, 2. Quasi-objectivity (Object-likeness), 3. Processual nature, 4. Blendedness (Hybridity), and 5. “Created” nature. These components demonstrate that the reduction of “Manzar” to words with similar concepts in professional literature stems from an oversight regarding the ontological components of the word.

Keywords: *Manzar (Landscape), Sima (Visage), Etymology, Genealogy, Space, Ontology.*

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Introduction

“Language is the house of Being” (Heidegger, 1993). For Heidegger, no phenomenon can enter the realm of thought unless it has first been embraced by the word; as he famously quotes Stefan George: “Where word breaks off nothing may be” (Heidegger, 1982).

Naming the surrounding world is not merely a conventional act of labeling objects, but humanity’s first step towards “unconcealing” and “making sense” of the chaos of existence. The naming of phenomena marks the decisive separation of humans from nature and their entry into the realm of culture. “Manzar” is one of the many names that humanity has chosen to “reveal” a specific understanding of the relationship it establishes with its surrounding environment.

Although this word has been considered the equivalent of the Western discipline of “Landscape” for nearly three decades (Kasravi & Hashemizadegan, 2023), it is not a neologism. Rather, its historical richness and semantic multi-layeredness indicate that the Iranian human had cultivated such a concept of their relationship with the environment, yet had not formulated it within a scientific paradigm. This long-standing word began its journey from Semitic languages with rudimentary concepts, expanded its scope of application within Islamic civilizations, and is now spoken by many speakers.

Nevertheless, parallel to this long journey and geographical expansion, a kind of “semantic oblivion” has cast a shadow over this word. Emerson (1844) eloquently expresses that “Language is fossil poetry¹”. Words that are semantically and metaphorically rich become buried and rigidified over time under the influence of the transformation of our views on phenomena. An event from which “Manzar” has not been immune; today, in environmental sciences literature, and especially in its official form, it is rarely used alone and is often conjoined with the word “Sima” (Visage/ Face).

The juxtaposition of “Sima” alongside “Manzar” has been observed since its very inception in the modern Iranian context; namely, the first conference organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development under the title “Urban Sima and Manzar: Global Experiences and Future Outlook” in 2003 (Mansouri, 2005). It is as if

“Manzar” holds a strange and alien meaning, and without juxtaposition with “Sima,” its semantic coordinates are not clear to the audience. This adjacency continues to this day, and its function in the city has appeared in the form of organizations with this very title (Urban Sima and Manzar) in many municipalities across Iranian cities.

Although landscape professionals have attempted over these two decades to sever this link through writing and translating numerous articles and books, “Manzar” is still used—not only in governmental literature but also among professionals in other environmental sciences such as urban planning, urban design, green space, and environment—merely as a technical term referring to “Sima,” meaning appearance, figure (Hay’at) (Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017), form, and physical aspect (Kasravi & Hashemizadegan, 2023). This contrasts with contemporary landscape studies in the West, where “landscape” is understood not merely as a physical environment or a visual scene, but as a multi-layered concept formed through language, cultural interpretation, and historical ways of seeing (Olwig, 2019), with meanings changing across disciplines, cultures, and historical periods (Howard et al., 2019). Recent phenomenological approaches view landscape as an experience formed through embodied engagement with the environment, not through detached visual observation (Wylie, 2009).

These studies indicate that the conceptual distinction of this word from its cognates remains unclear to many. Perhaps one reason is the lack of attention to the philology and genealogy of the word “Manzar” and the inquiry into its distinction and superiority over other terms. Questions such as:

What latent features does the word “Manzar” possess that we use it for a special understanding of the environment? How do these features distinguish it semantically and philologically from similar terms (such as Sima, Mazhar, Image, Facade, Visual Reality, etc.)?

To answer these questions, this article turns to the genealogy of “Manzar.” Returning to etymology and genealogy here is not merely a lexical excavation, but an attempt to “dust off” the pre-existing truth intended by its speakers. We must understand what this word referred

to in history and what it refers to now; what semantic journey it has traversed so far, and why we use it today to refer to a special understanding of space. Etymology in this research is a method to recall that “Manzar,” rather than being “a place to see” like “Sima,” is “a way of looking/gazing.”

Literature Review

A review of the literature and documents related to the concept of “Manzar” within the context of Iranian architecture and urban planning studies reveals a transition from “translation and equivalence-finding” towards “theoretical analyses” and ultimately “deep etymological inquiries.” This evolution can be recognized in the form of three main streams, each revealing a layer of this concept’s essence:

The first stream, which possesses a “translational and applied” character, began with the entry of the Term “Landscape” into Iran’s specialized literature. In this period, the primary concern was finding a Persian equivalent for this emerging concept. Although initial efforts were made to distinguish “Manzar” from purely visual concepts (Mansouri, 2005), in professional literature and legal documents (such as the resolutions of the Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Architecture), this term was often placed in a reductionist juxtaposition with “Sima” and largely reduced to the arrangement of surfaces and green spaces (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2008).

Responding to the shortcomings of the translational approach, the second stream emerged in specialized journals with a “theoretical and phenomenological” nature. Subsequently, numerous studies attempted to equate the concepts of Western theorists such as Spiro, Berque, Cosgrove, Lassus, Latz, and other renowned landscape theorists with the word “Manzar” (Atashinbar, 2009). By moving beyond formal discussions, this stream addressed the “nature of Manzar” as a mental and perceptual paradigm, emphasizing the bilateral interaction between “human and environment” by utilizing global theories. However, the need for a more precise understanding of the linguistic tools of this discipline paved the way for the formation of the third stream.

The third stream, which is “lexicological and genealogical” and forms the main context of the present research, focuses on analyzing the word “Manzar” itself and its cognates to prove the “merit” and “authenticity” of this word for fulfilling the role of the modern concept of “Landscape.” In this regard, Mansouri & Mokhles (2018) demonstrated the semantic evolution of this word from form to meaning by examining ancient poetic texts. Kasravi & Farzin (2016), in the article “An Inquiry into the Word Nazar,” rejected the hypothesis of Nazar being an Arabized form of the Persian Negar, emphasizing the Semitic origin of this root and its fundamental difference from mere looking. Furthermore, in more recent studies, Kasravi & Hashemizadegan (2023) in “A Comparative Comparison of Sima, Manzar, and Cheshm-andaz,” referencing global definitions, argued that “Manzar,” due to its simultaneous inclusion of objectivity and subjectivity, holds greater “merit” and “sufficiency” than terms like Sima and Cheshm-andaz (Prospect/Panorama).

The present research is defined as a continuation of this more recent stream, with the difference that while the aforementioned studies focused on “historical linguistics” and the “comparative superiority” of the word “Manzar” over its competitors, the problem of this research is to analyze the inner “semantic and ontological capacity” of this word that has made such merit possible. In other words, this article attempts to move beyond the level of comparison to answer the question of what “inherent features” the structure of the word “Manzar” (as a noun of place and an M-infinitive) and its historical evolution have cultivated within it. Ultimately, the synthesis of the literature review shows that what is absent is a study that, using an “analytical genealogy and lexical research” method, moves beyond conventional, theoretical, or instantiated definitions to answer how the lexical and historical structure of “Manzar” can reveal a different model of the human-environment relationship and why this specific word should be used in this context.

Research Method

The “ontological” nature of the questions in this research and the attempt to understand the hidden semantic

layers in the word “Manzar” demand an approach beyond positivist and quantitative methods. Therefore, the present research is organized within the interpretive paradigm with a qualitative research strategy. The logic governing this reading is not the discovery of cause-and-effect relationships, but the understanding of semantic transformations within the context of history. To achieve this goal, a combined method of “Historical Etymology” and “Genealogy of Concept” has been utilized. Etymology here acts as a tool to analyze the morphological structure and the primary matter of the word (the root n-z-r) in its linguistic purity; whereas genealogy provides the possibility of tracing the word within the context of discursive transformations (the transition from the Age of Ignorance [Jahiliyyah] to the Islamic era and subsequently Iranian mysticism).

Research data were collected using documentary and library methods from two main sources: 1) Reference lexicographical texts (such as *Lisan al-Arab*, *Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Quran*, and *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lugha*) to extract the original coined meaning; and 2) Literary and wisdom texts (focusing on ancient poetry divans and mystical treatises of the Middle Ages). Data analysis was conducted based on the “Semantic Field Analysis” method in three sequential steps:

Step one (Lexical level): Examining the trilateral root and its derivatives to understand the essence of the act of “looking” (Nazar).

Step two (Semantic-historical level): Tracing the semantic shifts of the word and its transformation from a “visual act” to a “multi-layered concept” in Persian literature.

Step three (Comparative level): Extracting the inherent components of the word “Manzar” through comparing it with cognate or similar words.

Genealogy of the Term “Manzar”

“Philology is that venerable art which demands of its votaries one thing above all: to go aside, to take time, to become still, to become slow- it is a goldsmith’s art and connoisseurship of the word which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it Lento” (Nietzsche, 1911).

Analyzing the genealogy of the word Manzar requires examining the history of its evolution within a historical context and comparing it with cognate words; a journey that begins with the coined meaning of the word and its root in the Semitic language, and upon which new semantic layers are added within the context of wisdom (Hikmah) and literature. Therefore, the following sections will first address the application of this word and its root in historical texts, followed by an examination of its distinctions from similar words.

History of the Semantic Evolution of “Nazar”

A study of the semantic evolution of this Arabic—and prior to that, Semitic—verb shows that this word was used metaphorically in various meanings even before it entered the Persian language; although, after being borrowed by Persian, it acquired other metaphorical facets as well. This evolutionary course applies both to the word Manzar and its root, N-Z-R. Based on ancient Arabic texts such as *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur (1993), the Quran, Pre-Islamic poetry by poets like Imru’ al-Qais (1985), *Kitab al-Badi* by Ibn al-Mu’tazz (2016), *Al-Mughni* by Ibn Qudamah (1997), *Al-Misbah al-Munir* by Fayumi (1998), and *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lugha* by Ibn Fars (1979), the verb Nazar can be divided into five main meanings:

Seeing with the eyes (Al-Basar): This is the most common and primary meaning of Nazar. When accompanied by the preposition “Ila” (to), it almost always denotes the act of seeing.

“And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, ‘My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You [Anzur Ilayka].’” (Quran, Surah Al-A’raf, 7:143) Here, “Anzur Ilayka” directly means physical looking with the eyes. Ibn Fars (1979, 415) in *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lugha* describes this as the base meaning of Nazar.

Contemplation and reflection: This meaning can be accompanied by both prepositions “Ila” and “Fi”, but regarding “Fi”, it specifically implies pondering mental matters. “Nazar Ila” (in the context of the verse below) means “looking at phenomena to discover the truth.”

“Then do they not look at the camels - how they are

created? And at the sky - how it is raised?" (Quran, Surah Al-Ghashiyah, 88:17-18) In Tafsir al-Tabari (Tabari, 2000), Nazar is interpreted as contemplation and reflection on creation. Ibn Manzur (1993) in Lisan al-Arab states: "Al-nazar fi al-shay: al-ta'ammul fihi" (Looking into a thing: contemplating it). This is a metaphorical shift from "looking" to "thinking."

Waiting/Anticipation: Sometimes, Nazar means to wait and expect.

"On the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed, 'Wait for us [Unzuruna] that we may acquire some of your light.'" (Quran, Surah Al-Hadid, 57:13).

Fayumi (1998) in Al-Misbah al-Munir describes this as "waiting": "Unzuruna: Amhiluna" (Give us time/respice). This metaphorical meaning stems from "fixing one's eyes on something."

Judging and ruling: In jurisprudential and legal terminology, Nazar means a careful examination to issue a verdict. Ibn Manzur (1993) in Lisan al-Arab clarifies: "Nazara bayn al-qawm: ay hakama baynahum" (He looked between the people: i.e., he judged between them). This indicates an expansion of meaning from "contemplation" to "adjudication."

Facing and confronting: When two things are situated opposite each other, the form Tanazur is used. Ibn Fars (1979) in Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lugha writes: "Dari tunaziru darahu: ay tuqabiluha" (My house debates/looks at his house: i.e., it faces it). This usage shows that Nazar can denote orientation and the confrontation of two things.

If we examine the semantic evolution of Nazar based on the chronological order of available documents, it appears that in the early period and in Pre-Islamic poetry (Jahiliyyah, 5th-6th C. AD), Nazar was mainly limited to physical and practical meanings, focusing on seeing with eyes (Meaning 1), waiting (Meaning 3), and confrontation (Meaning 5). For example, Imru' al-Qais (1985), in describing rain and floods, says: "Nazartu ilayhi wa al-laylu bayni wa baynahu..." (I looked at it [the rain-cloud], while the night was between me and it...). Here, Nazar is a purely physical and visual act. It seems that the first meaning (seeing) provided a basis for the spatial concept

of "facing," because two things looking at each other must necessarily be opposite one another. Ibn Fars (1979) in Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lugha clarifies that one of the root meanings is "Muqabalah" (facing/encountering), and Arabs say of a house facing another: "Dari tunaziru darahu" (My house looks at his house). This metaphorical usage shows the first sparks of transition from "seeing" to "spatial location." In this period, the concept of "waiting" also emerged from "looking" (keeping an eye out). In Jahili poetry, the word Intizar (from the root Nazar) is frequently used to mean pausing and giving respice. As Antarah ibn Shaddad says: "Fa-unzurini ila an..." (So wait for me/give me time until...). These examples show that although complex judicial meanings (like ruling) were not yet established in the Jahiliyyah period, the seeds of abstract meanings such as "confrontation" and "waiting" had been sown in the language.

With the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Quran (7th C. AD), the word Nazar, appearing frequently (over 100 times), underwent a profound semantic transformation and transcended purely sensory connotations. For instance, in Surah Al-A'raf (7:143): "Arini anzur ilayka", Nazar refers to the first meaning (physical seeing), whereas in Surah Al-Ghashiyah (88:17-18): "Afala yanzuruna ila al-ibil kayfa khuliqat", it turns into contemplation and reflection (Meaning 2) on creation. Tabari (2000, 384), in the commentary Jami' al-Bayan (3rd-4th C. AH), clarifies that the intention is a look that leads to admonition (Ibrat) and knowledge of the Creator, not merely superficial seeing. Also, in Surah Al-Hadid (57:13): "Unzuruna naqtabis min nurikum", the word is used in the sense of "waiting and respice" (Meaning 3) (Qurashi, 1992, 76), without the need for a temporal adverb. Raghīb Isfahani in Mufradat believes that the Quran elevated Nazar from the superficial Jahili usage to "inferential contemplation" (Ta'ammul Istidlali) and introduced it as a prerequisite for knowledge (Ma'rifah) (Kasravi & Farzin, 2016). For example, in the previously cited verses of Surah Al-Ghashiyah, Nazar is posited as a premise from which knowledge of creation results; therefore, although Nazar in this proposition can still be translated simply as physical looking, translating it as a look without deep thought, observation, and

deliberation (Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017) empties it of meaning.

In the Middle Ages, especially the Abbasid Era (9th-13th C. AD), Nazar acquired further legal and philosophical dimensions, and the meanings of judgment (Meaning 4) and facing (Meaning 5) were strengthened. In jurisprudential and principles texts, the term Nazar became established as “intellectual reasoning and inference.” Jurists used the phrase “Nazara fi al-mas’alah” to express “careful examination and issuing a verdict.” Fayumi (1998, 612) in *Al-Misbah al-Munir* also links Nazar with “deliberation and analogy (Qiyas)” in rational matters.

Simultaneously, in Islamic Mysticism (especially in the works of Ibn Arabi, 2010), Nazar was interpreted as “intuition and inner insight.” Ibn Arabi (*ibid.*) in *Futuh al-Makkiyya* considers the “People of Nazar” (Ahl al-Nazar) to be those who seek truth through rational argumentation, but in higher stages, Nazar can transform into cardiac intuition (Shuhud). This transformation was also reflected in Persian Literature (10th-13th C. AD). Although in ancient epic works like the *Shahnameh*, Persian words (like *Negaristan/Didan*) appear more frequently, in mystical and wisdom texts, Nazar found a special status. Many poets like Rumi and Hafez introduce Nazar as a tool to transcend from form to meaning: “Those who turn dust into gold with a glance [Nazar] / Could it be that they give us a fleeting look?” (Hafez, Ghazal 196). Mulla Sadra (17th C. AD) in *Hikmat al-Muta’aliyah* also used Nazar in the precise sense of “intellectual movement from the known to the unknown” (philosophical reasoning) (Sadruddin Shirazi, 1981, 25). In the Contemporary Era, this word has been established in the Persian language within specialized fields while retaining its previous semantic layers. Numerous derivatives such as *Nazariyeh* (Theory), *Munazarah* (Debate/Mutual looking), *Nazir* (Observer), *Manzur* (Intention), and *Tajdid-e Nazar* (Revision/Review) demonstrate the semantic breadth of this root. For instance, the word *Munazarah* (from the reciprocal form), which originally meant “looking face-to-face,” is now a metaphor for the “confrontation of ideas”; as if two ideas are arrayed against each other, gazing at one another.

History of the Semantic Evolution of “Manzar

The word Manzar has traversed a path of semantic evolution slightly distinct from its root. In the early period (Pre-Islamic Era/Jahiliyyah), Manzar was primarily used to mean “figure, appearance, and what is seen of the exterior of a person or object.” Ibn Fars in *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lugha* considers its root to be “contemplating an object with the eyes” and defines Manzar as something pleasing to look at (Ibn Fars, 1979, 444). In Jahili poetry, when Manzar was mentioned, it often referred to the “beauty and appearance” of the beloved or the praised one; such that in the poetry of that era, “Husn al-Manzar” (Beautiful Appearance) is contrasted with ugliness and repulsiveness.

The Holy Quran has not directly used the word Manzar (in the singular noun form), but has directed the derivatives of its root. The closest word is *Munzar* (the one given respite/time), which is repeated five times in the Quran and inherits the meaning of “waiting” (*Intizar*). However, early exegeses such as Tabari’s *Jami’ al-Bayan* (3rd-4th C. AH), under verses that invite looking (such as *Al-Ghashiyah*, 17-18), elevated the concept of Nazar from superficial seeing to “admonitory seeing” (Tabari, 2000, 384). This shift in attitude caused Manzar in the Islamic era to also transform from mere “appearance” to a “locus of contemplation.” Ibn Manzur (1993, 216) in *Lisan al-Arab* notes that Manzar is something that, looking at it, is pleasant or wondrous.

In the Middle Ages, particularly the Abbasid Era (9th-13th C. AD), Manzar acquired architectural and spatial dimensions. During this period, the words *Manzarah* (watchtower/belvedere) and *Manzar* became common in describing palaces and gardens. Ibn al-Mu’tazz (1961) used Manzar in his poetry to describe iwans and places overlooking gardens, indicating the consolidation of the meaning “place of looking.” Fayumi (1998, 612) in *Al-Misbah al-Munir* also defines Manzar as a “place of looking” or “locus of vision” (*Mawdi’ al-Nazar*). Simultaneously, with the rise of Islamic Mysticism, Ibn Arabi (2010, 445) in *Futuh al-Makkiyya* intertwined the concepts of *Mazahir* (Manifestations) and *Manazir* (Perspectives/ Scenes), considering the world as the “Manzar of the Truth”

(Manzar al-Haqq—the place of God’s looking or the locus of His manifestation).

With the entry of this word into Persian Language and Literature (10th-13th C. AD), Manzar gained twofold semantic richness and was used across a wide spectrum of objectivity and subjectivity. Mansouri & Mokhles (2018) demonstrate in a study that the transformation of Manzar in Persian poetry has followed a trajectory from “appearance to inner reality” and “from object to subject.” Its first meaning, as mentioned, in early works such as Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, is often used to mean “form and panorama” (Kay-Manzar, Niku-Manzar) or “visage and face.” In some instances in these poems, Manzar is not the object being looked at, but the place from which one looks. In the 11th century AD (5th C. AH), Manzar in the poems of Farrukhi Sistani and Nasir Khusraw is often contrasted with Makhbar (Internal Reality/News), drawing a boundary between the inner and the outer. In these poems, Manzar is the very object being looked at, with the difference that by being placed alongside Makhbar, its materiality and exteriority are emphasized. Similarly, in later centuries, poets like Sanai, Attar, and Rumi employed it with meanings such as viewpoint, sky, beloved, and eyes (ibid). In Rumi’s poetry, Manzar takes on a mystical character and becomes a combination of mind and matter.

Rumi in the *Mathnawi*, by adding the locative suffix “-gah” (Manzargah), created a compound that oscillates between the subjective and the objective. In Rumi’s view, Manzar is sometimes “eyes and vision” (as the tool of looking) and sometimes “a window towards the Truth.” Mulla Sadra (17th C. AD) in *Asfar al-Arba’a* brought this progression to perfection in philosophy, describing nature and the material world as the “Mirror” and “Manzar” of Divine Names; such that Manzar is not a physical object, but a conduit to the realm of meaning (Sadrudin Shirazi, 1981, 28) (Table 1).

Linguistic Distinctions” and “Five Ontological Features” of the Word Manzar

Examining the history of Manzar and its semantic evolution was the first step, demonstrating that this word, both before its entry into the Persian language

and after being polished by the workshop of Persian literature, has absorbed a wide spectrum of meanings. In this journey, Manzar began with objective (Afaghi) meanings, gradually took on a subjective-metaphorical (Anfasi) character, and in its most complex usage, became gradational (Dhu-Maratib) (Kasravi & Hashemizadegan, 2023). This spectral and dual characteristic of Manzar is not solely due to the Arabic morphological form of Maf’al; for many other words of this form do not possess this dual nature and are used on only one side of the spectrum². Another evidence of Manzar’s gradational nature is the comparison of its root, Nazar, with its Persian equivalent and derivatives. If we consider Nazar as “looking accompanied by attention and contemplation,” we can equate it in Persian with *Negaristan*. The distinction that the verb *Negaristan* holds in Persian against *Didan* (seeing) is similar to the distinction *Nazar* holds against *Basar* or *Ra’y* in Arabic. *Negaristan*, like *Nazar*, is a sight accompanied by thought, not merely an objective and physical seeing; a role that *Basar* plays in Arabic.

Although this verb has been widely used in Persian literature, it has not been able to expand its meaning as much as *Nazar* and become established in literature and even everyday speech. As mentioned, today we use all derivatives of *Nazar*, despite the existence of Persian equivalents for them. For example, for the word *Muntazir* (waiting), we can use the word *Cheshm-Dukhteh* (Eyes-Sewn/Fixed); a meaning which, like *Muntazir*, is itself a metaphorical form of seeing. On the other hand, for other derivatives of *Nazar*, words derived from *Negaristan* exist. Golestani Daryani (Personal communication, 2025), a contemporary researcher of the Persian language, proposes equivalents for *Nazar* derivatives as follows: *Negareh* (Theory/Nazariyeh), *Negarmand* (Expert/Sahib-Nazar), *Negaristeh* (Intended/Manzur), *Negargah* (Viewpoint/Didgah), and *Negarandeh* (Observer/ Nazir). However, finding a Persian equivalent for *Manzar* is impossible without eliminating some of its aspects, because it has been used and refined in so many contexts throughout its history that there is no equivalent with such richness. Fundamentally, when words travel from

Table 1. The evolution of the meaning of landscape and its ontological nature (6th - 17th century C. AD). Source: Authors.

Historical era	Dominant meaning (Signification)	Ontological nature	Example	Source
Pre-Islamic Era (Jahiliyyah) (6th C. AD)	Visage & form (Destination of gaze)	Purely objective (Object of vision)	“Fi Manzarin Hasanin” (In a beautiful appearance)	Zozani, 2006; Ibn Fars, 1979
Early Islamic Era (7th–8th C. AD)	Sign & ayah (Destination of gaze)	Objective + Axiological (Object + Judgment)	“Afala Yanzuruna...” (Do they not look...)	Bukhari, 2001
Abbasid Era (9th–10th C. AD)	Edifice & structure (Origin of gaze)	Objective (Architectural) (Platform for viewing)	“Manzar al-Qasr/ Al-Manzarah” (View of the palace/ The belvedere)	Bayhaqi, 1971; Ibn al-Mu’tazz, 1961
Ancient Persian Lit. (10th–11th C. AD)	Appearance & shell (In contrast to Inner Reality)	Objective & subjective (Dualistic)	Contrast of Manzar and Makhbar	Dehkhoda, 1998
Mysticism & Wisdom (Hikmah) (12th–13th C. AD)	Locus of manifestation (Mirror of truth/Haqq)	Subjective - existential (Transition from materiality & unitive)	“Manzar-e Aali/ Manzargah” (Sublime Manzar/ Vantage Point)	Ibn Arabi, 2010
Transcendental Theosophy (17th C. AD)	Intuition & presence (Essence of appearance)	Purely existential (Unity of observer & observed)	“Mazahir & Manazir” (Manifestations & perspectives)	Sadruddin Shirazi, 1981

a source language to a destination, they sometimes acquire richer or even entirely different meanings. Words are nothing but signifiers that, when used in different contexts and language games, point to another signified. Manzar is no exception to this rule and has acquired multi-layered meanings in Persian linguistic processing. Thanks to the multiple meanings examined in the history of this word and its comparison with similar and cognate words, five ontological features can be enumerated for this word, making it unrivaled compared to similar terms.

• **Manzar is both the origin and destination of the gaze**

The most mature meaning of Manzar in Persian can be found simultaneously in the words “Negargah & Negareh” (Viewpoint & Theory) and “Negareh & Negaristeh” (Image & Observed). In a sense, Manzar is both the place from which one looks and the place at which one looks; both in objective and metaphorical senses. Manzar is “Negareh & Negargah” insofar as it is a physical and metaphorical place from which looking occurs. It is also “Negareh & Negaristeh” in the sense of an objective place (Image) and a mental one (Observed) that is looked at, at least in the sense of the equivalent Golestani Daryani (Personal communication, 2025) considers for it (Manzur). In summary, Manzar represents both sides of the locus—whether as the destination or the origin of the gaze—and on both sides, it possesses

conceptual dynamism between objectivity and subjectivity (Fig. 1).

• **Manzar is “Object-like”(Maf’ul)**

Manzar, whether objective or metaphorical, is a “grasping of place” (Tamassuk-e Makan); because the comprehender either uses it as a “platform” for looking or makes it the “subject” of looking. This quasi-objectivity sometimes slides towards one side of the spectrum of object and subject. In other words, Manzar can be a

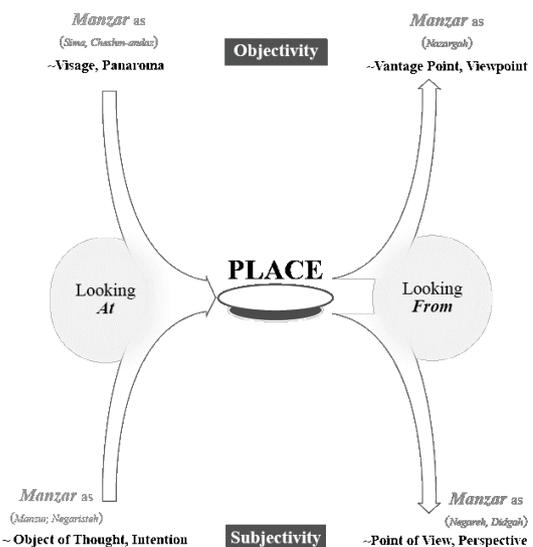


Fig. 1. Different meanings of "Manzar" in the two aspects of destination and origin of thought; and on the spectrum of objectivity and subjectivity. Source: Authors.

“platform” for looking in two senses: objective (Nazargah/ Vantage Point) and subjective (Didgah/Point of View); and it can also be the “subject” of looking in two forms: Manzur & Nazariyeh (Subjective/Intention & Theory) and “Seen Object” (Mubsar) (Objective).

• **Manzar is “Blended”**

The word Manzar is never used alone in a purely objective or purely subjective context. Regarding its subjective aspect, the distinction between the meanings of Manzar and Manzur demonstrates this well. Manzar, unlike Manzur (Intention/Intended), is not a pure mental idea and always retains “spatiality.” A spatiality that can be closer to objectivity, yet it never refers to pure physics, as shown by the semantic distinction between Manzar and Faza (Space). Manzar is spatial but has no meaning without an observer, whereas space can exist independent of an observer. As mentioned earlier, Ibn Fars (1979) in *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lugha* defines Manzar as *Manzur-ilayh* (looked-at). This interpretation clearly indicates that Manzar gains existence only through the attention of the observer.

• **Manzar is a “Process”**

The processual nature of Manzar is a characteristic owed to the Arabic morphological form *Maf’al*. In addition to being a noun of place, *Maf’al* is also a “M-Infinitive” (*Masdar Mimi*). This type of infinitive, formed by adding the letter “M” to the beginning of the root, indicates the totality of the verb’s action. Therefore, Manzar is not only a noun of place but also translates to “contemplative looking.” Ibn Fars (*ibid.*, 418) counts this meaning for Manzar: “*Al-Manzar: Al-Manzur ilayh, wa huwa aydan al-masdar*” (The Manzar is the object looked at, and it is also the infinitive/source action). Documentary examples also show this usage. Fayumi (1998) in *Al-Misbah al-Munir* states: “*Al-nazar fi al-qadiyah wajib*” (Looking/Investigating the issue is necessary). In *Asfar al-Arba’a*, Mulla Sadra also speaks of “*Manzar al-Wujud*” (The Manzar of Existence) and states that “*Manzar towards Divine Beauty is the very act of witnessing (Shuhud)*” (*Sadrudin Shirazi, 1981, 258*). Manzar in *Manzar al-Wujud* is not a quasi-object (like *Tajalli/ Manifestation* used by Ibn Arabi), but the act of witnessing itself. Rumi’s “*Manzargah*” also points to this aspect of the word³. This shows that Manzar, as a noun of place, always holds both the observer and their action

within itself. This very characteristic distinguishes Manzar from Manzur.

• **Manzar is “Created”**

The creative nature of Manzar can be discovered by comparing it with the cognate word *Mazhar* (*Manifestation/ Locus of Appearance*). *Mazhar*, from the root Z-H-R, like *Manzar*, is a noun of place that can be looked at, but with a fundamental difference: *Mazhar* is of the nature of “*becoming/appearing*,” while *Manzar* is of the nature of “*act/doing*.” *Mazhar* refers to the taking-form of a mostly abstract concept, and its viewer/receiver is not the creator of its existence; rather, they only give meaning to its quiddity. Whereas *Manzar* comes into existence through the creation of the observer. *Mazhar* does not need an observer for presence and is a vehicle for the unconcealment of a concept. The second fundamental distinction is that *Mazhar*, unlike the third feature of *Manzar* (*Blendedness*), refers entirely to an abstract concept (*Isar/Self-sacrifice*)—e.g., “*The martyr is the Mazhar of self-sacrifice*”—while *Manzar*, considering the meanings enumerated, can both refer to an abstract concept (*Point of View*) and slide more towards objectivity (*Landscape/ Panorama*).

Another word that, like *Mazhar* and *Manzar*, can be received by the subject is *Madrak* (*Perceived/Locus of Perception*). *Madrak* is also a noun of place from the root D-R-K. Like *Manzar*, it refers to a place that is either capable of being perceived or where perception occurs. Like *Manzar*, *Madrak* needs a receiver (*Madrak*) for existence. Their difference lies in the fact that *Manzar* always has one foot in “*looking and gazing*,” but *Madrak* can be, in Mulla Sadra’s terms, in *Asfar*, an immediate perception or a mental process. Just as *Dark* (*Perception*), like *Nazar*, originally possessed a physical meaning (*reaching and encompassing*)⁴. It can be said that *Madrak* is more general than *Manzar* because it includes any kind of receiving, and thus does not have the determination specific to *Manzar*. This determination can also be understood from the structure of the word’s usage. *Mazhar* is never added (in a genitive construction) to an object noun. The phrase “*Manifestation of the Mountain*” (*Mazhar-e Kuh*) is meaningless. The mountain itself is the manifestation of a concept noun (subjective), but *Manzar* finds meaning when added to an object noun (*Manzar-e*

Kuh/ View of the Mountain). These distinctions reveal a fundamental point: Manzar remains imbued with looking, but it is not its objective product; rather, it is the product of the subject's frame of gaze, and at the same time, stripping it of objectivity is an error.

An example of a phenomenon can clarify the conceptual coordinates of Manzar. The concept of "Street" is a phenomenon that is naturally meaningless without a comprehender. A street can be the Mazhar of an abstract concept like "Civility," and the existence of this concept also depends on the comprehender, but the reality of the street as a Mazhar is independent of the comprehender. Manzar is not so; if we speak in the most objective mode of the "Street Landscape" (Manzar-e Khiaban), this word refers neither solely to the street—as a collection of objects (trees, paving, lighting, etc.), nor solely to our mental viewpoint. Rather, Manzar here refers to the entire phenomenon of "our looking at the street through its manifestations and symbols." This also indicates the relativity of Manzar. Subjects may understand different manifestations from the objective world (Afaq), and thus, different Manzars will appear. Therefore, when we speak of the "Landscape of the Street," although we consider it affected by absolute physical objectivities (length, width, asphalt), it does not mean a direct reference to form and shape like the word "Sima" (Kasravi & Hashemizadegan, 2023). Sima is a raw material that the historical subject perceives as manifestations (Mazahir), and Manzar is a selected and narrated blend of these manifestations; a narrative that the observer constructs from Manzar in the sense of their physical and mental station. It is here that the ontological difference between "Beautification of Sima" (decorating the physical body) and "Landscape Management" (enabling historical understanding) becomes revealed, a difference whose neglect is the foundation of many contemporary professional misunderstandings.

Discussion

The genealogical and semantic analysis of the word Manzar conducted in the preceding sections demonstrates that the historical transformations of this word cannot be understood merely as episodic semantic shifts across different eras. On the contrary, this historical trajectory

allows for the extraction of enduring components that, beyond temporal and discursive differences, form the ontological structure of the concept of Manzar. In other words, the history of the word in this research has not been the ultimate goal, but an analytical tool to achieve a theoretical formulation of Manzar.

The outcome of this reading indicates that Manzar, in its most mature signification, possesses a set of correlated features that distinguish it from cognate concepts such as Sima (Visage), Mazhar (Manifestation), or Faza (Space). These features are identifiable not abstractly, but in direct connection with the semantic evolution of the word and its usage in various texts (Jones, 2017). Among the five ontological features of Manzar, the first and second features have a temporal and dynamic character, whose evolution was examined in historical periods. To this end, Fig. 2 summarizes the relationship of their transformations in the studied periods in a condensed and analytical manner.

Manzar, in its conceptual structure, possesses a set of interconnected features that preclude its reduction to a merely physical, visual, or mental category (Vamini, 2015). In this framework, Manzar can be formulated neither as an independent object nor as a solitary perception, but as a relational and process-oriented phenomenon whose realization depends on the interaction between the observer, the place (Ingold, 2020), and the act of looking. Therefore, the five extracted ontological features must be considered components of a single conceptual formulation that finds meaning only in mutual relation to one another. This formulation provides an analytical basis for distinguishing between the concept of Manzar and its cognate terms, enabling a critical re-reading of contemporary applications of this word in professional literature.

Conclusion

The genealogical journey and the analysis of semantic layers of the word Manzar in this research, beyond a mere lexical discussion, unveil an epistemic rupture in the contemporary literature of Iranian urbanism and architecture. Findings from the etymological and historical analysis show that reducing the concept of Manzar to the body of external space and its synonymous juxtaposition with the word Sima in institutional and specialized

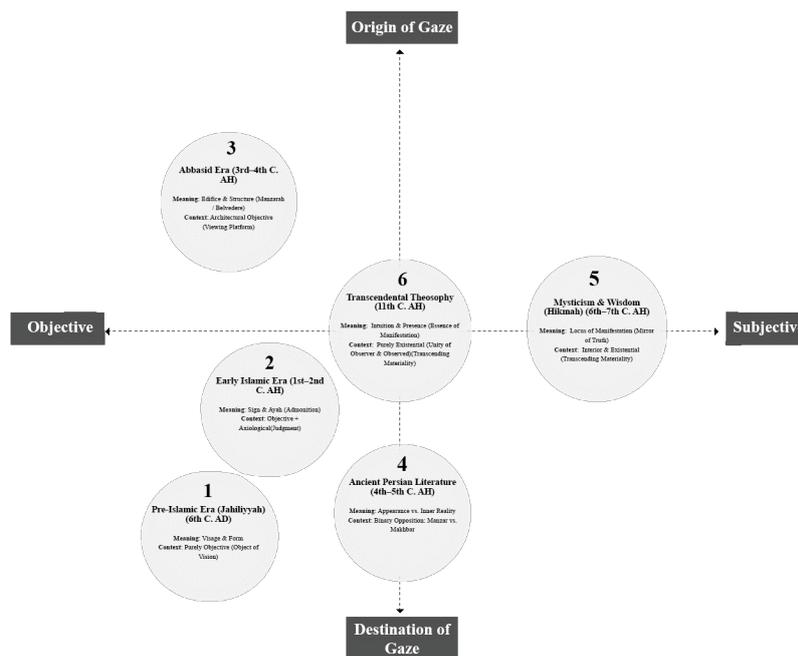


Fig. 2. The evolution of the ontological conceptual attributes of the term “landscape” in different eras. Source: Authors.

documents is not an administrative simplification, but a deviation from the ontological truth of this word.

The five-fold analysis of Manzar’s features in comparison with cognate words proves that Manzar, in our historical and linguistic memory, has never signified a “merely visual object.” If Sima refers to the outer shell and formal quality of objects, and Mazhar emphasizes the self-willed unconcealment of a phenomenon (an objective matter), Manzar signifies the “blended event of looking by the subject” in connection with “place.” The present research demonstrated that Manzar is a “process-oriented” and “two-sided” phenomenon; a place where the external world (Afaq) finds meaning only on the condition of the presence and participation of the inner world (Anfas). Therefore, contrary to common perception, Manzar is not a “found” and pre-existing matter, but a “created” and “constructed” truth. The observer is not passive in confrontation with the environment; rather, through the act of “Looking” (Nazar)—which is mixed with contemplation, judgment, and anticipation—they transform the chaos of the environment into the order of Manzar.

Consequently, “Landscape Management” should not be limited to decorative measures on the Sima (facade), but must be understood as making the event of looking possible. In authentic Manzar, the subject is the author of the scene, not its spectator.

Endnotes

1. Die Sprache ist das Haus des Sein
2. Words such as “Markab” (vehicle), “Mash’al” (torch), “Mar’ta” (Lawn), etc., are often used only in an objective and external sense, while words such as “Marja’” (reference), “Ma’na” (meaning), “Maslak” (Creed), etc., are used in a subjective sense.
3. “A ruined heart is like the place of vision for God / How fortunate is the soul that has built it” (Rumi). “Enter the heart, for it is the place of God’s vision / And if it is not a place of vision, it can be made one.” Here, “Manzar-gah” means the place of intuition, the heart’s outlook, and the station of contemplation. This usage is a combination of the physical meaning (a high place for viewing) and the mystical meaning (a high station of cardiac intuition).
4. Dark (perception/comprehension), as understood from the examination of ancient texts, also began its journey from a physical meaning towards a metaphorical one:
 “Old age overtook him” (based on the interpretation of Surah At-Tin, verse 6, explained in Tafsir al-Tabari as “the arrival of old age”). Here, Dark holds the physical meaning of “the time of old age arriving.” This usage indicates a transition from “physical reaching” to “temporal reaching” (Tabari, 2000).
 “And soon deaths will overtake us... predestined for us, and we (await) them” (Mu’allaqa of Amr ibn Kulthum).
 “Whoever reaches (catches) one Rak’ah of the prayer has reached the prayer” (Bukhari, 2001).

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