

## Molla Fanârî and the *Miṣbâh al-Uns*: The Commentator and The Perfect Man

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First of all, as the keynote speaker for this international symposium on Molla Fanârî, I would like to start by speaking about why holding a conference now on Mullâ Shams al-dîn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah al-Fanârî (b. 751/1350-d. 834/1431)<sup>1</sup> in Bursa is significant.<sup>2</sup> Let us begin by

looking at how Stanford Shaw, the leading Ottoman historian among 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars in the West, regarded Molla Fanârî. According to Shaw, Molla Fanârî made an essential contribution to the formation of the overall intellectual framework of Ottoman scholars by helping to set the concept of *wahdat ul-wujûd* (unity of existence) into the very foundation of the Ottoman State. As Shaw stated, “The transition between the older Arab traditions and those developed under the Ottomans was provided by Davud-i Kayserî (d. 1350) and Molla Fanârî (1350-1431). They introduced the major Arabic works into Turkish while making Muhyiddîn-i Arabî’s ideas on the unity of existence

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar al-Asqalânî (d. 852/1448), *Inbâ’ al-Ghumr bi-Abnâ’ al-‘Umr*, Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut 1975 [reprint of Maṭbaat Majlis Dâ’irat al-Ma’ârif al-‘Uthmâniya, Hyderabad 1967], VIII, 243-245; and in (edition unknown) II, 81 ([www.islamport.com](http://www.islamport.com)); and also (edition unknown), 581.

<http://www.albwader.com/modules.php?name=library&file=btext&book=4253&id=581>;  
Taşköprüzade (d. 968/1560-61), İṣām al-Dîn Abî l-Khayr Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafa, *al-Shaqâ’iq al-Nu’mâniya fî ‘Ulamâ’ al-Dawla al-‘Uthmâniya*, Jâmiat Istanbul, Istanbul 1405, 22-23; Aşkar, Mustafa *Molla Fenârî ve Vahdet-i Vücûd Anlayışı*, Muradiye Kültür Vakfı Yayınları, Ankara 1993, 27, 75.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Uludağ University and the organizers of this symposium for having invited me to Bursa in order speak about *Molla Fanârî*. In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to three scholars, in particular: to Professor Mustafa Kara for his friendship and his tireless efforts to bring to light the wisdom and lives of the scholars and saints of Bursa; to Prof. Mustafa Aşkar, whose previous work on *Molla Fanârî* has helped to guide me; and to the esteemed Iranian scholar, Muḥammad-e Khvâjavî, without whose work on the *Miṣbâh al-Uns*, my work would have been impossible.

the bases of the philosophical and religious systems then being created among the ulema being trained to staff the Learned Institution [İlmiye] of the nascent Ottoman state.”<sup>3</sup> Hence one of the reasons for the significance of holding a conference on Molla Fanārī is that, even aside from the fact that he was the first Ottoman *Shaykh ul-Islam*, Molla Fanārī is significant because of central ideas that he contributed to Ottoman intellectual life in general.

In addition to the importance of the impact of Molla Fanārī’s ideas on Ottoman intellectual life, a second reason why this symposium on Molla Fanārī (and every conference on Ottoman intellectuals that can be held) is significant is that it makes a contribution toward moving cultures beyond the potentially harmful division between the secular and religious. Of course, it can be argued that a division between secular life and religious life (and even a dominance of the secular over the religious) has at times been important in human history for the sake of liberating creative and progressive thought from some religious constraints (such as occurred with the “Enlightenment” in Europe).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, I would argue that suffering, oppression, injustice, violence, and hatred are now extremely widespread among the peoples of the world, whether they have secular humanist or religious orientations. Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century CE, rather than arguing for the triumph of one over the other, what is needed is to empower the peoples of the world with resources for dealing with these problems (such as injustice, suffering, and violence), resources that can be found in both secular intellectual traditions and religious intellectual traditions such as those of the Ottomans. A specific resource that was present in Ottoman times and in the work of Molla Fanārī (a resource that can be useful in empowering people to face and transform the suffering that we see in the news every day) is the concept of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), which I will discuss in the paper.

A third reason for the significance of Molla Fanārī and this symposium is that it can contribute to correcting the mistaken assumption that it is not possible to lead a life of service to society and government, while at the same time being religiously devout. Especially in these days when politicians, judges,

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<sup>3</sup> Shaw, Stanford, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976, I, 144.

<sup>4</sup> Gay, Peter, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, W. W. Norton, New York 1977. See especially ch. 7.

and leading figures in governments are plagued with scandals due to reprehensible behaviour and corruption, we are in need of examples of people such as Molla Fanârî. He was someone who lived a life that was certainly exemplary in his own time, 600 years ago; but also his life can in certain ways serve as a model of what all religious people should aspire to, even today. Specifically, he lived as a man who was, on the one hand, actively serving and advancing his government and society by his work as a judge and *shaykh ul-islam*. On the other hand, he was also striving to advance human understanding through his writing for God's sake (*fî sabil Allâh*), while he was pursuing his own religious devotions. For example, even though Molla Fanârî held a prominent position in society, Lami'î Çelebi (in his biographies of saints of Anatolia contained in his Ottoman supplement to Jâmî's Persian text, *Nafahât al-Uns*) informs us that Molla Fanârî was also a devotee of Somuncu Baba, who, as a baker, was from a far lower social class than Molla Fanârî. Lami'î states that Molla Fanârî "was a devotee (*murid*) of his [Somuncu Baba's] and that he [Molla Fanârî] would always acknowledge and confirm his [Somuncu Baba's] excellence (*fazîlet*), his pre-eminence (*üstünlük*), and his worth."<sup>5</sup> In sum, like the Prophet Muhammad (*şallallahu 'alayhi wa-sallam*) –who lived an active life in the world while at the same time serving God– Molla Fanârî was, as is commonly said in Central Asia, "*dast be-kâr, del bâ yâr*" (lit. "hand at work, heart with the Friend"; namely, he was someone who was, "involved in some form of work in the world, while at the same time his heart is with God, his Beloved Friend").

In spite of the significance of Molla Fanârî and of his renown in Turkey and Iran, until now he has largely been ignored by Western scholars. So in bringing together scholars from Turkey and other countries to discuss our research in this international symposium, I am hopeful that Molla Fanârî will finally receive the worldwide attention that he deserves as a veritable "man of all seasons" a "*bahr ul-'ulûm*" (ocean of the Islamic sciences), whose writings encompassed and made advances in many fields of knowledge, such as Qur'anic commentary (*tafsîr*), *fiqh*, logic, grammar, theology, and Sufism.

<sup>5</sup> Lami'î Çelebi, *Evlîya Menkibeleri* (ed. Süleyman Uludağ & Mustafa Kara), Marifet Yayınları, İstanbul 1998, 833.

Aside from the West's preoccupation with political, social, and economic history of Islam rather than intellectual history and aside from a mistaken assumption in some circles that Ottoman intellectual life played an important role in the decline and backwardness of Ottoman civilization, probably the main reason why Molla Fanārī's thought has been largely neglected in the West is that his preferred genre of writing was the commentary (*sharḥ*, *ta'liqāt*, *ḥāshiyā*) on works of others. Judging from the list of his works supplied by Prof. Mustafa Aşkar, out of the twenty complete works that are definitely by him, roughly 75% are commentaries.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, it might seem that the simple fact that most of his works are commentaries on the works of other scholars should not be sufficient to cause a lack of interest in his works in the West. After all, he was not merely imitating other scholars, he was commenting on, explaining, and developing their works. Nevertheless, the reason why the fact that most of his works were commentaries would cause modern Western scholars to ignore him is that Western historians have often considered such commentaries written by Muslim scholars to be "unoriginal and pedantic" (as Randall Collins, the current President-elect of the American Sociological Association asserts).<sup>7</sup> In contrast to this consensus, Marshall Hodgson, a leading 20<sup>th</sup> century historian of Islam, argued that in spite of the fact that the overriding characteristic of Muslim intellectuals of the medieval period was one of conservatism and elaboration rather than innovation, many Muslim scholars, while using the traditional unpretentious genre of commentary, were in fact writing "quite original treatises", especially in the fields of Islamic philosophy (*falsafā*) and Sufism, where an axiomatic belief was that truths, through the process of *kashf* (unveiling), "could be discovered anew in every generation" as Hodgson himself stated.<sup>8</sup> So, in addition to difficulty of the often highly technical and specialized nature of the genre of commentary and supercommentary (like the difficulty that a text on quantum mechanics would present to most readers today), the point, which Professor Collins does concede, is that Western scholars may simply have confused the package with

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<sup>6</sup> Aşkar, M., 90-98.

<sup>7</sup> Collins, Randall, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge & Massachusetts 1998, 513.

<sup>8</sup> Collins, following Hodgson, gives the example of the originality of the Shi'ite philosopher, Jalāluddīn Davānī (d. 1502), who solved what is called the "liar's paradox"; Collins, *ibid.*; and Hodgson, Marshall G. S., *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1974, II, 437-39, 472.

the contents and allowed their stereotypical prejudice against the genre of commentary to blind them to whatever brilliance might be laying within. The lesson that scholars should glean from this mistaken state of affairs, I would argue, has traditionally been illustrated by the idiomatic expression in English “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Or, we could also say in this instance, “Don’t judge a text by its genre.” And consequently, it is incumbent upon future generations of scholars, especially in the West, to delve much more deeply in the genre of commentary.

We see this point confirmed by evidence from Iran concerning Molla Fanârî’s *Miṣbâḥ al-Uns*, which is his commentary on Şadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî’s *Miftâḥ al-Ghayb*. In Iran scholars first actually go to the trouble of gaining the prerequisite knowledge in Arabic, theology (*kalâm*), and *‘irfan* (gnostic theosophy) that is necessary for understanding what Molla Fanârî (and Qûnawî) was saying; and then, second, they thoroughly study the work. Consequently, among Iranian scholars, although it was considered a text of great difficulty, Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari informed us that Molla Fanârî’s *Miṣbâḥ al-Uns* was highly regarded by scholars of Shi‘ite gnosis (*‘irfan*).<sup>9</sup> Hence, as Seyyed Hosein Nasr states, it was considered to be one of the “premier texts for the teaching of theoretical gnosis especially in Turkey and Persia.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Chittick noted that, together with Qûnawî’s *Miftâḥ al-Ghayb*, it became part of the advanced *madrasa* curriculum for the study of *‘irfan*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, both Hamid Algar and Alexander Knysh have called the West’s attention to the well known fact of Ayatollah Khomeini’s studies in, appreciation of, and commentaries on the *Miṣbâḥ al-Uns*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Mutahhari, Murtaza, “An Introduction to Irfan”, *Al-Tawhid*, IV/1 (1407/1986).

<sup>10</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hosein, “Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today”, *Transcendent Philosophy*, VI (2005), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Chittick states, “In the *madrasas* of Iran, the *Miftâḥ* has been considered the most advanced work on metaphysics and along with its commentary by Fanârî [i.e., *Miṣbâḥ al-Uns*] was taught after the *Fuṣûṣ*”; Chittick, William, “The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ‘Arabî’s Foremost Disciple, Sadr al-Dîn Qûnawî: Notes on Sadr al-Dîn Qûnawî”, *Sophia Perennis*, IV/1 (1978), 43-58.

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/sadraldinwill.html>

<sup>12</sup> Khomeini, Ayatollah, *Ta’liqat ‘alâ Sharḥi Fuṣûṣ al-Hikam wa-Miṣbâḥ al-Uns*, Pâydar-e Islâm, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, Qom 1410/1989-1990. Algar, Hamid, “The Fusion of the Gnostic and the Political in the Personality and Life of Imam Khomeini”, *Al-Tawhid*, June 2003 < <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/fusion.htm> > and in *Echo of Islam* (November 24, 2008), 15-16. Knysh, Alexander, “*Irfan* Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy”, *Middle East Journal*, XLVI/4 (1992), 631-653.

Unfortunately the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* has been neglected in studies in English. Nicholas Heer and William Chittick have been exceptions to this rule; although even in each of their cases, their interest in Molla Fanārī has been secondary to other concerns of theirs. In Heer's case, in his translation of Jāmī's *al-Durra al-Fākhirā*, he discussed Molla Fanārī because Jāmī, in a few places in *al-Durra al-Fākhirā*, quoted substantial passages verbatim from (and with attribution to) Molla Fanārī in his *Miṣbāḥ*.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Chittick, who was working for a number of years on Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, in at least one article discussed Molla Fanārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* in relation to Qūnawī, although such discussion played a very minor role in Chittick's work.<sup>14</sup>

At this point I would like to turn to Molla Fanārī's Arabic work, *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* and its structure. For a number of years the only text of Molla Fanārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* with which scholars worked was a lithograph that included Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb* in the margins and which was published in Tehran 1323/1905-6. A copy of this has been scanned and is downloadable on the internet, but sadly the resolution is not very high; and so the quality not particularly good, making it is often difficult to read. The text that I have been using, however, is Muḥammad Khvājavi's modern edition, in which both works are included.<sup>15</sup> In addition to Khvājavi's Arabic edition, we are fortunate now to also have his Persian translation of the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, which has a numbering scheme for the sections that correspond to the sections in Khvājavi's Arabic edition.<sup>16</sup> This makes it easy for the reader to compare Khvājavi's translation with his edition of Molla Fanārī's Arabic original.

Concerning the structure of Khvājavi's edition, Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb* is placed at the beginning of the book and occupies 144 pages; after it ends, the 722 pages of the Molla Fanārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* begin (its pagination

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<sup>13</sup> Heer, Nicholas L., *The Precious Pearl*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1979, 38-39, paragraph 14-16, notes, p. 79-81.

<sup>14</sup> Chittick, W., *ibid.* Chittick also noted that Stephane Ruspoli completed a dissertation on Qūnawī: Ruspoli, S., *La Clef du Monde Suprasensible* (Thèse présentée pour l'obtention du diplôme de l'école pratique des hautes études), Sorbonne, V section, sciences religieuses, n.d. 1976, but this has not been published.

<sup>15</sup> Khvājavi, Muḥammad (ed.), *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb* li-Abī al-Ma'ālī Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Qūnawī *na-sharḥuhu Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* li-Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza al-Fanārī, Intishārāt-i Mawlā, Tehran 1995, 1<sup>st</sup> printing; 2009, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing.

<sup>16</sup> Khvājavi, M. (trans.), *Tarjumi-yi Miṣbāḥ al-uns-e Ḥamza Fanārī yā Payvand-i istidlāl va-shubūd dar kashf-i asrār-i nujūd*, Intishārāt-i Mawlā, Tehran 1995.

starting anew). This is to say that Molla Fanârî's *Miṣbah al-Uns* is approximately five times the size of Qūnawî's *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, although in Khvājavî's edition, he adds (in footnotes) six commentaries: that of Mīrzā Hāshim al-Rashtī (abbreviated by shīn), Mīr Sayyid al-Qummī (qāf), Ayatollah Khomeini (khā'), occasionally comments from Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshīrī (indicated by full name), Ḥasan Ḥasanzādeh Āmulī (ā), and an anonymous commentary, titled *Fath al-Miftāḥ*.

The structure of the *Miṣbah al-Uns*, itself, is generally that there will be some words, phrases, or sentences from Qūnawî's *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, which are set in bold typeface; and these are followed by Molla Fanârî's commentary in ordinary typeface. Prior to typeface, however, in handwritten manuscripts in the genre of commentary, the embedded text that was being commented upon would generally be set off distinctly by being written either in very bold letters or in some cases in red ink. Even though Molla Fanârî may not comment on certain passages and in many cases may make only brief comments, at certain points Molla Fanârî engages in a lengthy discourse for many pages. This is why in the *Miṣbah al-Uns*, if we subtract Qūnawî's words, we are left with roughly 600 pages of Molla Fanârî's own words. The problem is that in the two printings of Khvājavî's edition that I have, which are the first (1995) and the third (2009), often the bold typeface is not very bold, making it very difficult (especially for someone like myself, whose eyesight grows weaker each year) to distinguish Qūnawî's words from Molla Fanârî's. Since it seems that the book will continued to be used in the advanced madrasa curriculum in Iran, we can therefore expect there to be future printings; hence I would recommend that the publishers should be notified of this problem so that it can be corrected. Until that happens, however, by carefully comparing the Qūnawî's *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb* in the beginning of the volume with Fanârî's *Miṣbah al-Uns* one can discern Molla Fanârî's words from Qūnawî's.

One of the virtues of the *Miṣbah al-Uns* is that in addition to being Molla Fanârî's view of Qūnawî's ideas, it is also a composite perspective of the school of Ibn 'Arabī. Molla Fanârî achieves this because he coherently integrates into the *Miṣbah al-Uns* a number of other sources: quotations from Ibn 'Arabī, to whom he refers as *al-shaykh al-kabir* (the Great master) –although today Ibn 'Arabī is commonly referred to as *al-shaykh al-akbar*; quotations from

other works of Qūnawī's (besides *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*),<sup>17</sup> referring to Qūnawī as “*al-shaykh quddisa sirrubū*” (the master, may his mystery be sanctified)<sup>18</sup> or simply “*quddisa sirrubū*”, and also he includes quotations from two other important figures in the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, Qūnawī's students Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300) and Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 695/1296).

In further discussing the commentarial structure of the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, I will briefly address three issues of literary-structural importance concerning Molla Fanārī's comments: their frequency, length, and content. First, regarding frequency, unlike many works in the commentarial genre, where often long passages of a text might lack commentary, Molla Fanārī generally gives his comments after only a few words of Qūnawī's, frequently interspersing his words and Qūnawī's; although occasionally he might let as much as a half of a page pass by without saying anything. This gives the reader the sense that Molla Fanārī was very much engaged in Qūnawī's text, like someone deeply involved in a conversation. Second, concerning the issue of length, Molla Fanārī's own comments vary in length from sometimes just one word to comments that are a few pages in length. In the case of such lengthy comments, they are instances in which Qūnawī has clearly planted a seed of an idea in the fertile soil of Molla Fanārī's mind, where it sprouts and flourishes as he expounds upon it. And third, regarding the content of his comments, unlike Rashtī's comments (which are cited in the footnotes by Khvājavi and which often focus on clarifying syntax, such as ambiguous pronoun referents), in most of Fanārī's comments he further articulates Qūnawī's theological concepts along the lines of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī.

So, now having discussed his commentarial approach, I would like to turn to Molla Fanārī's concept of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). According to William Chittick—who is one of the foremost scholars of Qūnawī, Ibn ‘Arabī, and his school—“all of Qūnawī's teachings revolve around the concept of the Perfect Man.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Other works of Qūnawī's that Fanārī frequently quotes are the *Fukūk*, *al-Nafāḥāt al-Ilāhiyya*, and the *I‘jāz al-Bayān* (i.e., Qūnawī's *tafsir* of the *Fātiḥa*).

<sup>18</sup> Molla Fanārī, *ibid.*, 617.

<sup>19</sup> Chittick, W., “The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to Al-Qūnawī”, *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought* (ed. Parviz Morewedge), State University of New York Press, Stonybrook 1992, 188.



Nevertheless, I would like to point out that we should not assume that simply because the concept of the “Perfect Man” is so central to Qūnawī that the same will necessarily be true for Molla Fanārī; also we should not assume that Molla Fanārī does not make any substantial contributions to advancing our understanding of the “Perfect Man.”

Fortunately, a summary of Molla Fanārī’s concept of the Perfect Man has already been provided by Dr. Mustafa Aşkar in his book *Molla Fenârî ve Vahdet-i Vücûd Anlayışı*. Hence, I will begin with that, abbreviating it slightly for the sake of time:

According to Molla Fanārī’s concept, the universe is ‘The Great book.’ Molla Fanārī ... presents man as the most important example of this ‘Great book.’ In another statement, man is a copy of the whole universe. Hence, man, who is considered to be ‘a little universe’ (i.e., microcosm), comprises the final point in the cycle of existence. Molla Fanārī, like other Sufis, by appraising man in this manner, has emphasized the concept of the perfect man.<sup>20</sup>

Let us now turn to a few of Molla Fanārī’s brief comments, in order to accomplish two purposes: one is to illustrate his style when he writes relatively brief comments (not extended discourse on a topic) and the second is to provide a point of departure for discussing his concept of the Perfect Man (*al-insân al-kâmil*).

Qūnawī in his *Miftah al-Ghayb*, in the last quarter of the book, in a chapter dealing with special qualities of the Perfect Man, notes, in particular, that the Perfect Man will know the answers to sixteen key questions, the answers to which had been revealed to him. Qūnawī states that:

This is a mystery (*sirr*) that was opened for me in the Noble Turkmen (*fi janâb al-turkuman*) in either 630 or 631 AH; from it I came to know on that day, by way of direct spiritual experience (*zevk/dhawq*), its universalities and collectivities, with a small amount of detail; and my

<sup>20</sup> ‘Molla Fenârî’nin anlayışına göre kâinat ‘Büyük kitap’ olmaktadır. ... Molla Fenârî ... bu büyük kitabın en önemli örneği olarak insanı göstermektedir. Diğer bir ifadeyle insan tüm kâinatın bir nüshası olmuş oluyor. Bu suretle bir küçük kâinat (microcosm) sayılan insan, varlık dairesinde son noktayı teşkil etmektedir. İnsanı bu şekilde değerlendiren Molla Fenârî diğer sufilerde de olduğu gibi bir insan-ı kâmil anlayışı ortaya koymuş oluyor.’; Aşkar, M., *ibid.*, 177.

conveying (*irād*) of it now is by means of an expression of my present state (*‘ibārat waqtī*).<sup>21</sup>

At this point Qūnawī lists the questions, after which he proceeds to expound upon each one at length. Similarly, Molla Fanārī discusses the questions, expanding upon them briefly at first. Later, however, he expands in great detail upon each one of the questions, just as Qūnawī does. What I will now discuss will be the first few questions, after which I will situate in a modern Western intellectual framework some of the concepts that are both explicit and implicit in Molla Fanārī’s comments.

Molla Fanārī makes it clear that, like Qūnawī, the perfect man will know through direct knowledge (*ma’rifā*) the answers to these questions. What follows are the questions with Molla Fanārī’s brief commentary before he expands in detail upon them (the words in boldface type are Qūnawī’s):

1. He **knows** (*ya’rif*) the reality of his self in order to know his Lord-Sustainer (*rabb*). So he knows [the answer to this and the following questions:] **What is the reality of man**, which is the absolute unmanifest [reality] of His true form –I mean the process of how it becomes an entity in God’s knowledge (*‘ilm*)?

2. **And from what has he become existent?** Namely, from which one of the planes of being and Lordly (*rabbānī*) theophany has he become an entity and has become manifest?

3. **And in what has he become existent?** Namely, in which one of the degrees that gather together and are related to God (*al-jāmi’a al-ilāhīya*) [on the one hand] and that are particular to him and related to being engendered (*al-ḵbāṣṣa bi-bi wa-al-ḵawnīya*) [on the other] –which are the loci related to the suprasensory domain (*al-ma’nanīya*) –has what has been “brought together” become existent?

<sup>21</sup> Qūnawī, *ibid.*, 102; Molla Fanārī, *ibid.*, (section 5:64-65), 616-17; Molla Fanārī, *Tarjumah-yi Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, *ibid.*, (section 5:64-65), 674-75. Unfortunately, Molla Fanārī did not clarify Qūnawī’s intriguing expression “in the Noble Turkmen” (*fi janāb al-turkumān*), and neither did Khvājavi in his translation. It is possible that *fi janāb* here could have been a copyist’s error for *fi jānīb*, meaning “with regard to”. According to Khvājavi, Qūnawī in his *al-Nafahāt al-Ilāhīya* provides the date of this “opening” as being 631 AH. Hence the *Nafahāt* may clarify this (Khvājavi, [trans.], *Tarjumah-yi Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, *ibid.*, 674). For an online ms. of the *Nafahāt*, see < [http://www.4shared.com/file/82895911/a2d0a29f/\\_\\_\\_online.html?s=1](http://www.4shared.com/file/82895911/a2d0a29f/___online.html?s=1) >.

4. And **how has he become existent**? This implies two meanings: the question about the process of how his existence (*wujūd*) occurred, from the perspective that he issues from the Real, while the Real is what brings him into existence; and [the question] about the process of how his existence occurred, from the perspective that he is brought into existence by that process?

5. **And who brought him into existence** and created him?

6. **And why has he become existent**, namely what benefit and wisdom occur due to his existence (*wujūd*)?<sup>22</sup>

From these questions and Molla Fanārī's brief initial commentary on them (which is in fact an introduction to both Qūnawī's and his expanded discussion of them), we can begin to lay the groundwork for a synopsis of his worldview. In what follows, in order to facilitate the understanding of Molla Fanārī's ideas in the West and for secular readers, I will look at those ideas through the lenses of six western philosophical categories: epistemology, ontology, anthropology, psychology, teleology, and methodology.

Concerning epistemology, whatever one regards as valid sources of knowledge will govern the remaining aspects of one's worldview. Consequently, we must ask "What are the implications of the foregoing commentary for Molla Fanārī's ideas about the basis of valid knowledge?" On the one hand, this commentary on Qūnawī's questions (that I have mentioned above) does not explicitly inform us that Molla Fanārī believed that valid knowledge should be based on Divine Revelation, hadith of the Prophet, statements of the saints (*awliyā*), transmissions of such knowledge, and use of the intellect to develop them (*al-'ulūm al-naqlīya wa-'aqlīya*). On the other hand, these beliefs underlie his work and are implicit in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* and in his works in general. Hence, as we would expect, throughout the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* Molla Fanārī quotes numerous Qur'anic verses and hadith.<sup>23</sup> In addition to these sources of

<sup>22</sup> Molla Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, ibid., (section 5:24-39), 608-9; Khvājavi, M., *Tarjumah*, ibid., (section 5:24-39), 665-66; cf. Qūnawī, *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, ibid., p. 99.

<sup>23</sup> Among the most frequently occurring Qur'anic verses in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* are the following: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (Nūr, 24:35); "Those who give their allegiance to you give their allegiance to God; God's hand is above their hands" (Fath, 48:10); "Nay, they are in the garb of a new creation" (Qāf, 50:15); "Each day He is in a different condition" (Raḥmān, 55:29); "You will not find a substitute for God's way (*sunnā*)" (Fath, 48:23); "You did not throw when you threw; rather, God threw" (Anfāl, 8:17); "He is with you wherever you are" (Ḥadīd, 57:4). In addition to the hadith of self-knowledge and *ma'rifa*

knowledge, what he refers to directly in his commentary is that *ma'rifah* (direct knowledge of God) should also be a valid source of knowledge for the Perfect Man. In his commentary on the first question, when he states “He knows (*ya'rif*) the reality of his self in order to know his Lord-Sustainer (*rabb*)” he is alluding to the report: *Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu* (Whoever knows his self, knows his Lord-Sustainer). Concerning this, al-‘Ajlūnī (d. 1162/1748-9), a prominent hadith scholar, stated that Ibn ‘Arabī was reported to have said, “Although this hadith has not been authenticated by means of a chain of transmission, for us it has been authenticated by means of ‘direct unveiling’” (*kashf*).<sup>24</sup> Clearly, Molla Fanārī, like Ibn ‘Arabī, accepted that direct knowledge of God though means such as *ma'rifah* and *kashf* was not only possible but was an important source of valid knowledge for the Perfect Man.

Ontology (in which I include the categories of theology and cosmology) involves inquiry into whatever we believe about reality. Molla Fanārī states clearly in the fourth question that God is Ultimate Reality and Ultimate Being. Often, he calls God “al-Ḥaqq” (the Real). For example, we see in his commentary on the fourth question (how man he become existent), that what is meant by man’s coming into existence can be understood as “the process of how his existence (*wujūd*) occurred, from the perspective that he issues from the Real, while the Real is what brings him into existence.” Theologically, Molla Fanārī address God as the *rabb* (Lord Sustainer) in the first question. In addition, there we see, in the second question, that God has knowledge.

Cosmologically, in question four, we find mention of a level of reality called *wujud* (implying here non-existence as well). In discussing Qūnawī’s first question, Molla Fanārī speaks of an unmanifest level of reality (*ghayb*), implying also the manifest level (*shahada*), as well as absolute reality. Also in the second question he speaks of planes of reality (*badarāt*), implying the well known five

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noted in the text, among the more frequently cited purported hadith in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, are “God was and nothing was with Him”, “God said, ‘I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created creation in order to be known’”, “God said, ‘My servant continues to get closer to Me by works of devotion, until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand through which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks.’”

<sup>24</sup> al-‘Ajlūnī, Ismā‘īl ibn Muḥammad, *Kashf al-Khafā’ wa-Muḥḥil al-Ilbās*, Mu’assasat al-Risāla, Beirut 1979, 343-44.

planes of reality of the school of Ibn ‘Arabî and among other Sufis, although he addresses them directly elsewhere in *the Mişbah al-Uns*. In the third question, Molla Fanârî notes a suprasensory level of reality, implying also the presence of the sensory level. Finally, the entire cosmos is a theophany (*tajallî*) from God, the Lord-sustainer, a point which Molla Fanârî notes in Question 2, where he also notes that the cosmos consists of entities (*‘ayn*), which come about through the process of entification (*ta‘ayyana*), which he alludes to in Question 2 and refers to in question 4, when he speaks about the process by which we come into existence.

Anthropology or philosophical anthropology concerns beliefs about our identity as humans and beliefs concerning human nature. We see that Molla Fanârî informs us about such beliefs in the first question, considering man to be an entity (*‘ayn*) in God’s knowledge. Also in the first question, he implies that we are a mirror of God in the microcosm (as was noted also by Prof. Aşkar), since by knowing ourselves, we can know God. Elsewhere in the *Mişbah al-Uns*, in this regard, he refers to the hadith, “God created Adam in His image.”<sup>25</sup> This is our true nature, which elsewhere he refers to as the *fitra* (primordial nature), referring to the hadith: “Everyone is born in accordance with the primordial nature.”<sup>26</sup>

In utilizing psychology as a category of inquiry, I will only touch on the psychological perspective that investigates beliefs about one’s own faculties of consciousness. Molla Fanârî, in the first question, briefly addressed the faculty of consciousness that is our *nafs* (self), implying that the Perfect Man knows his self to such a degree that he comes to know God. In various places in the *Mişbah al-Uns*, Molla Fanârî mentions the heart (which for the Perfect Man becomes purified) as the place of realization, stating “That when the heart of the one who receives theophanies is purified of all attachments ... the sun of the Essence illuminates the mirror of the truth of the heart.”<sup>27</sup>

Teleology involves inquiry into people’s views about the purpose of life. Molla Fanârî remarks about the purpose of life and existence in the sixth question, speaking of its benefit and the wisdom therein. Elsewhere in the

<sup>25</sup> Molla Fanârî, *Mişbah al-Uns* (section 4:762), 148, (section 3:250), 493.

<sup>26</sup> Molla Fanârî, *ibid.*, (section 4:209), 359, (section 5:135), 639.

<sup>27</sup> Molla Fanârî, *ibid.*, 613-14.

*Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, he quotes the Qur’anic verse, “I (God) only created non-material beings and humans in order for them to worship Me.”<sup>28</sup> The implication is that by realizing one’s true nature as the perfect man, one fulfills the purpose of life and shares in the ultimate purpose of existence. Molla Fanārī in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* discusses this in a number of places in relation to the hadith qudsi, where God states: “I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known, so I created creation in order to be known.”

Methodology: Of course many of the methods of fulfilling the purpose of life, like with epistemology, are to a large degree implicit and unaddressed in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*. Molla Fanārī, no doubt, especially if we recall his position as the first Ottoman shaykh ul-islām, must have understood that following the shari‘a (Islamic law) and the sunna are essential as a basis for the method of fulfilling life’s purpose. Nevertheless, Molla Fanārī went beyond these and instead asserted that one fulfills the purpose of life by gaining self knowledge in order to gain knowledge of God.

In conclusion, it has long been my impression that, especially in the West, the field of Ottoman history has long been seriously distorted because it has been dominated by political historians, by social historians (influenced to some degree by Marxist theory) focusing on economic issues, and by the mistaken assumption that Islam and religious scholars played an important role in both hampering the development of Ottoman civilization as well as in its ultimate defeat. Nevertheless, at this point in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, now that in Turkey the paradigm that Islam is inimical and detrimental to social and political progress is beginning to be overcome, I am hopeful that increased scholarship of Ottoman intellectual life will bring to life giants of scholarship such as Molla Fanārī, in particular, and Ottoman intellectuals in general. In this paper, using Molla Fanārī as an example, I suggested that the bias (especially in the West) against the genre of commentary writing, which was a major activity of Ottoman intellectuals, should be overturned. Furthermore, because of the importance of the concept of the Perfect Man to Ottoman intellectual life, one of the unfortunate consequences of the marginalizing of Ottoman intellectual life from the center of contemporary scholarly research was limiting access to people in general and the Turkish people, in particular, to the richness of the

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<sup>28</sup> Molla Fanārī, *ibid.*, 127, 138, 358, 360.

concept of the Perfect Man. In my paper, by highlighting Molla Fanârî's discussion of the Perfect Man in his *Miṣbah al-Uns*, I am hopeful that today's scholars will use this as a stepping-stone for further research into the Ottoman intellectuals understanding of the Perfect Man and Ottoman intellectual history in general. Finally, I would like to say that even though Molla Fanârî's discussion of the concept of the Perfect Man requires in depth scholarly training to understand, it does have important implications even to non-scholars –implications that traditionally were communicated to ordinary people by Sufis and poets. One of these implications of the concept of the Perfect Man is the idea that –even if we are not aware of it– each of us, at our core (*fîtra*), is the Perfect Man, who is continually conscious of the fact that he or she is unconditionally sustained by God, who is the *rabb al-'âlamîn* (the Sustainer of all worlds). Even for those of us who in our daily lives are unconsciously of God's constant sustenance, this idea (even as a suggestion or hypothesis) –that God might be constantly sustaining us– can produce a human response of gratitude. Such gratitude, as research psychologists are now demonstrating, can in turn become both a strong antidote to the widespread suffering, hatred, and addictions present in the modern age as well as a powerful force transforming individuals and societies.<sup>29</sup> So as Allâh (*subhāna ve-ta'ālā*) says in the Qur'ān, “*fa-dhkurūnī adhkurkum, wa-shkurū lī wa-lā takefurūn*” “Remember Me, and I will remember you; Be thankful, and do not be ungrateful.”

So, in closing, I wish to thank you for inviting me to Bursa to give this presentation. I am most grateful to the city and people of Bursa, to Uludağ University and Bursa Metropolitan Municipality for sponsoring this conference on Molla Fanârî and for leading the way to what I hope will become a revival of research into Ottoman intellectual life. *Wa'l-hamdu lillāhi rabb il-'âlamîn.*

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<sup>29</sup> Emmons, Robert A. & McCullough, Michael E., *The Psychology of Gratitude*, Oxford University Press, New York 2004; and Emmons, Robert A., *Thanks: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, Houghton Mifflin, New York 2007.

