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THE CONCEPT OF ‘PERFECT HUMAN’ IN THE METAPHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SADREDDIN AL-KONEVI

Shameerali Hudawi Pallath⁸¹

Abstract:

Being one of the most important figures among the theoreticians of the Gnostic doctrine ‘perfect man’, Konevi has paid a significant attention to its delineation in his monumental masterpiece ‘Miftah al-ghayb (Key to the unseen). Though Ibn Arabi, father of the Sufi theoretical gnosis, develops the concept of perfect man in the first chapter of Fusus al-Hikam, Konevi takes this Gnostic anthropology into new levels of philosophical explanations and ontological reflections in the light of Ibn Sina’s al-Isharat, especially Khwaja Nasirudhin al-Tusi’s commentary on it. In the last quarter of Miftah al-ghayb, Konevi expounds on the special qualities of the ‘Perfect Man’ and notes that he will know the answers to sixteen key questions of paramount onto-theological significance.

Konevi’s metaphysical anthropology exerted enduring influence on the subsequent generations of the Islamic world through the works of his students Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi, Fakhr-al-Din Iraqi and his foremost commentator Mulla Fanari. Thanks to these towering figures, later philosophical discourses took an Akbarian/Avicennian turn in almost all Islamic lands stretching from the Ottoman Turkey, North Africa and Iran to India, China, the Balkans and elsewhere. This paper aims to study the significance of Konevi’s concept of ‘Perfect Human’ in his masterpiece Miftah al Ghayb, its impact on the later Islamic civilization and its relevance in a postmodern setting.

Keywords: *Perfect Man, Ontological Perfection, Metaphysical Anthropology, Sufistic World View.*

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INTRODUCTION

The well-known German Islamologist and scholar on Sufism, late Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003) starts her essay titled 'Man of Light or Superman? A problem of Islamic Mystical Anthropology' by quoting a passage from the great mystic poet of thirteenth century, Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273):

"What is man? The feather of an angel was brought and tied to a donkey's tail that the donkey perhaps might turn into an angel."

Schimmel continues, "Thus writes the greatest of all Persian-writing mystical poets of Islam, Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi in his conversations, *Fihi ma fihi*, when pointing to the mystery of man's existence: man is able to attain a rank superior to that of angels (who have no free will and are eternally good) provided he develops his God-given faculties of reason and love; but he can sink lower than a beast if he neglects his spiritual powers and falls prey to sensual pleasures and crimes owing to the misuse of his rational faculties."⁸²

Ever since its beginnings, Islamic Tasawwuf, as any other modes of spirituality and Gnosticism, has striven for the perfection of human condition and the realization of his Essence in its fullest bloom. For example, the great Persian Sufi of the third century of Islamic calendar Abu Yazid al-Bistami (804-874) speaks about human perfection achieved through realizing the mystical state of 'fana'. According to him, the man who attains 'fana' becomes perfect and completed (*Al-kamil al-tamm*).⁸³ Over the subsequent centuries, passing through Mansur al-Hallaj (858-922), Imam al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Ibn al-Farid (1181-1234), the potential idea of Perfect Man found its paramount actualization in the works of Ibn Arabi (1165-1240).

Ibn Arabi's stepson and closest companion Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi (1209-1274) further elaborated the delicate aspects of this concept and gave a coherent form to his master's otherwise enigmatic ideas regarding Perfect Man. Abd al-Karim al-Jili (1365-1424) still further

⁸² Annemarie Schimmel, "Man of Light or Superman? A Problem of Islamic Mystical Anthropology," *Sage Journal* 37, no. 146 (1989): 124-140.

⁸³ Hamid Dabashi, "The Sufi Doctrine of the Perfect Man: A View of the Hierarchical Structure of Islamic Culture," *Islamic Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1986): 1.

took this concept into new levels with his magnum opus *Al-Insan al-Kamil fi Ma'rifati al-Awail wa Awakhir*.

So what? Does this medieval mystical anthropology have any significance today? Do Ibn Arabi and Qunawi as well as other Sufi master's matter anymore in this Positivist and Scientific (in a Comtean sense of Auguste Comte [1798-1857]) stage of human evolution? Exploring these vital questions, William Chittick (born 1943), the renowned authority on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism, makes it very clear:

"The writings of Ibn Arabi and Qunawi (and those of numerous other pre-modern authors from many traditions) invite us not so much to a vision of 'the unity of existence' as to an assumption of human responsibility. What they tell us is that our human duty is to actualize the perfections for which we were created, and this depends upon following the guidance of the Real. The idea that human beings should be perfect – just as, in the words of the Gospel, their Father in heaven is perfect – has long been discarded by our own culture. Nonetheless, given the directions in which the world has been moving for the past century or two, this is no reason to dismiss it."⁸⁴

Akbarian Ubermensch

The doctrine of a metaphysical Ubermensch (superman) plays a key role in the *Weltanschauung* (world view) of the Akbarian school of philosophical / theoretical mysticism (Irfan Nazari) that was developed originally by Sheikh al-Akbar Ibn Arabi and systematized and ordered by his closest disciple and stepson Qunawi. Even though the concept of *Al-Insan al-Kamil* is the pivot around which the whole edifice of Akbarian metaphysics, including the 'oneness of being' revolves, it hasn't attracted the interest of the scholars as much as the doctrine of oneness of being, thanks principally to the critical reception of and the stiff opposition towards the latter from the literalist orthodox circles throughout the Islamic world.

⁸⁴ William Chittick, "The Central Point: Qunawi's Role in the School of Ibn Arabi," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 35 (2004).

William Chittick makes it clear when he explains the critical role the idea of Perfect Man plays in the Akbarian school:

“However, this maybe, one does not get the impression from reading Qunawi that he thinks that Wujud –not to mention Wahdath al-Wujud- is the key issue. Rather he makes it clear that the central point of Ibn Arabi’s teaching is the achievement of human perfection. If we were to ask to Qunawi what Ibn Arabi talking about, he would most likely say that he wants to explain how it is possible to be truly human. Thus, it would be much more appropriate in terms of Ibn Arabi’s own teachings – to refer to his school of thought as that of human perfection, or as the path to becoming “the perfect human being”, al-Insan al-Kamil.”⁸⁵

Basically both ‘Fusus al-Hikam’ and ‘Futuhāt al-Makkiyya’ of Ibn Arabi take the stations of human perfection as the central theme. In Fusus, each chapter is deployed to describe the stations of perfection that human souls attain in their journey on the path of becoming perfect beings.⁸⁶ In Futuhāt as well, each opening (fath) expounds the various levels of human existence based on the way the enlightened perfect souls view the world and its creator.⁸⁷ In ‘Miftah al-ghayb’ Qunawi devotes a large section of the last part to the discussion of the qualities of ‘Insan al-kamil’ who in his view must have realized perfections put forth in the form of 16 questions and their answers. Thus, it can be rightfully argued that the school of Ibn Arabi has more to do with ‘Insan al-Kamil’ than with ‘Wahdath al-Wujud.’

Doctrine of ‘Insan al-Kamil’

The very doctrine of ‘Insan al-Kamil’ is, to sum it up, the peak and climax of Akbarian metaphysics. In order to grasp the essence of this doctrine, a holistic idea of Akbarian weltanschauung (world view) is necessary as a pre-requisite. The hadith “One who knows himself knows his lord” (من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه) has had an enormous bearing on the Sufi perspective especially Akbarian tradition of God-man relationship. In the first chapter of Fusus, the wisdom of divinity in the word of Adam, Ibn Arabi describes the ontological purpose of

⁸⁵ Ibid.35

⁸⁶ William Chittick, "The Chapter Headings of the Fusus," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 2 (1984).

⁸⁷ Chittick, "The Central Point."

human existence as a polishing mirror reflecting the beauty and magnificence of God.⁸⁸ Thus human beings are gifted with the innate potential quality of reflecting all of God's most Beautiful Names as these names are the description of his Attributes.⁸⁹

Another point that must be noted here is the pre-eminent place the Divine Names occupy in the thought of Ibn Arabi. According to Ibn Arabi, the whole world of creation is the outward manifestation of God's Beautiful Names. Thus, each individual thing or entity in the world is a name of God where one of the names displays or manifests itself in a certain form. In the whole world of creation, only human being possesses the potentiality to manifest all of God's Beautiful Names as he is gifted with the divine Flame called spirit or soul within the inner realms of his body. Human being then comes in an intermediary stage between the physical world of creation and the transcendent metaphysical realm of divinity. This stage is called in the Akbarian terms 'Barzakh' an 'isthumus'. When human beings set out their journey to actualize these Divine Names (potentially inherent in their nature), they attain various levels of perfection as attained by the earlier prophets. Those human souls that advance far higher and attain the level of perfection represented by Prophet Muhammad (saw) are called the Perfect Men.

This stage of spiritual ascension is, on various occasions, described in different terms. Analogous to Neo-Platonist interpretation of Logos, this concept in the metaphysics of Ibn Arabi has different names: "the Muhammedan Reality (Al-Haqiqa al-Muhammadiyah), the Intellect (aql), the Reality of Realities (Haqiqat al- Haqiqat) and ect..."⁹⁰

This can be summed up in a passage from *Fusus al-Hikam* where Ibn Arabi puts this idea in relatively simple terms:

God described himself as being the Manifest (zahir) and the Hidden (batin), and He created the universe as [constituting] the invisible (ghayb) world and the visible (shahada) world, so that we can perceive the Hidden with our invisible nature and the Manifest with our visible nature. He described Himself with (the two opposing attributes of) satisfaction (rida) and wrath (ghadab) and created the

⁸⁸ R. W. J. Austen, *Ibn al-Arabi: Bezels of Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 51.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁹⁰ R. A. Nicholson, "Al-Insan al-Kamil," in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 170.

universe as the possessor of Fear and Hope, for the universe fears the wrath of God and hopes for His satisfaction. God described Himself as the possessor of (the two opposing attributes of) Beauty and Majesty and created us as the possessor of Awe and Intimacy. He expressed these two (opposing) attributes with His two hands⁹¹ which are used for the creation of the Perfect Man, because he unites the realities (haqaaq) of the universe and its individual manifestations.⁹²

It was the great Sufi saint and poet Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) who declared in his *Nafahat al-Uns*⁹³ that Sheikh Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi is the gateway to the world of the greatest master Ibn Arabi. If Qunawi is the portal to Ibn Arabi, then it can be rightly said that the portal to Qunawi is Fanari. The fact that his *Misbah al-Uns* is still used as the principal text in the madrassas of Iran to get firsthand access to Qunawi's thought underscores such a valid observation. Thus, Fanari occupies the third rank in this hierarchy of the intellectual spheres of the Akbarian school i.e. the texts that delineate the metaphysical framework in which Akbarian School is systematically ordered and moulded during and after the time of Ibn Arabi. Here a brief overview of the personalities of both Qunawi and Fanari will be extremely helpful to appreciate their views on Perfect Man in a clear light as well to realize the enormous influence they had on the later generations of Ottoman era.

Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi

Abu al-Ma'ali Sadr al-Din Muhammad bin Ishaq al-Qunawi, popularly known as Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi occupies a formidable place in the history of Islamic civilization by dint of the overwhelming influence he has exerted on the course of the intellectual and cultural life of later generations in the larger Islamic world. Born in Anatolia under the Seljuks of Rum, Qunawi witnessed an era of Islamic culture when it was at its peak as Jane Clark observes:

⁹¹ William Chittick, "Commentary on a Hadith by Sadr al-Din Qunawi," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*.

⁹² Masataka Takeshita, "The Theory of the Perfect Man in Ibn al-Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam*," *Orient Journal* 19 (1983): 55.

⁹³ *Nafahat al-Uns*, edited by Mahmud Abidi (Tehran: Instishaat-i-Ittila'at, 1991), 555.

“There was a large educated elite and established modes of communication which allowed for a high level of intellectual exchange; in the sciences, al-Tusi (1201-1274) was working on astronomy in the great observatory at Maragha, and Ibn Nafis (1213-1288) was extending the understanding of anatomy in Cairo; poets such as Ibn al-Farid, Attar (1145-1221) and Jalal al-Din Rumi were contributing to a golden age of literature, and spiritual masters such as Najm al-Din Kubra (1145-1221), Abu Hafs al-Suhrawardi (1145-1234) as well as Ibn Arabi himself were establishing new modes of spirituality.”⁹⁴

It was during this period when Tasawwuf was experiencing a transition from practice to Metaphysics, the role of Qunawi became significantly relevant. Qunawi, with his profound insights into the earlier philosophical and spiritual traditions systematically explicated the teachings of Ibn Arabi, the greatest Sheikh restructuring and ordering the Akbarian school of theoretical mysticism in a way that defined the very fate of the school of Ibn Arabi for later centuries of Islamic civilization. William Chittick observes this fact as he writes:

“By the time of his death, Qunawi was recognized as a major transmitter of the teachings of al-Sheikh al-Akbar. His main contribution seems to be that he gave Ibn Arabi’s teachings a structured coherence that largely determined the way they were read by later generations.”⁹⁵

Perfect Man in the views of Qunawi and Fanari

Just as Qunawi was instrumental in determining the way Ibn Arabi was understood, Fanari was instrumental in determining the way Qunawi was understood thanks to his voluminous commentary on *Miftah al-ghayb*⁹⁶. Thus, the Fanarian metaphysical anthropology has little difference with that of Qunawi as he himself has little difference with his master Ibn Arabi notwithstanding minor variations in

⁹⁴ Jane Clark, "Toward a Biography of Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi," published by the Ibn Arabi Society.

⁹⁵ William Chittick, "The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to Al-Qunawi," in *Neo-Platonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: State University of New York Press, Stony Brook, 1992), 188.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

different traditions of interpreting the works of greatest master. The central place of ‘perfect man’ in the metaphysics of Qunawi can be discerned from the following statement of William Chittick:

“... all of Qunawi’s teachings revolve around the concept of Perfect man”.⁹⁷

As far as Mulla Fanari’s concept of the ‘Perfect Man’ is concerned, Dr. Mustafa Askar in his ‘Mulla Fanari ve Vahdet-i-Vucud Analisi’ gives a clear picture:

“According to Mulla Fanari’s concept, the universe is the ‘The Great book’. Mulla Fanari.....presents man as the most important example of this ‘Great book’. In another statement, man is the 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. Mulla Fanari, like other Sufis, by appraising man in this manner, has emphasized the concept of the Perfect man.”⁹⁸

From this statement, we can conclude that Mulla Fanari shares the same perspective of ‘Perfect man’ like Qunawi, Ibn Arabi and other Akbarian authors. Nevertheless, both Qunawi and Fanari had made huge contributions with their own additional interpretations of the Akbarian concept of Perfect Man. In order to appreciate Sadr-al-Din’s anthropology of perfection or realization it is necessary to have an outlook on his cosmology on whose basis the very idea of Perfect Man is fundamentally grounded. It can be substantiated from his correspondence and debates with al-Tusi on the metaphysical problems of Avicennian philosophy that he had a good understanding of the prevailing tradition of Avicennism to which owes a good deal his own cosmological hierarchy, to put it clear. This hierarchy is ordered in a manner similar to the ten emanations in the angelology of Ibn Sina. His cosmological model is as follows⁹⁹:

⁹⁷ Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi’s Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 66.

⁹⁸ Farghani, *Mashriq al-Darari*, 37–38.

⁹⁹ Qunawi, *Miftah al-Ghayb*, 31.

1. The First Intellect: The Sublime Pen = the Universal (Muhammedan) Spirit.
2. The Universal Soul = the Guarded Tablet
3. Nature
4. Prime matter = Universal Hyle
5. Universal (or Absolute) Body
6. The Outermost Sphere = the Throne
7. The sphere of the Fixed Stars: The Pedestal
8. The form of the Elements: The Supreme Element
9. The seven Planetary Heavens (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, The Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon)
10. The kingdoms of Nature (Mineral, Plant, Animal)
11. The Human Being

The First Intellect which is equated with the Sublime Pen (Al-Qalam al-A'la) is the very Muhammedan Spirit, the Universal Soul or the Perfect Man who contains within him all the levels of existence with its Unitary All Comprehensiveness (Al-jam' al-ahadi). Sa'd al-Din al-Farghani, one of Qunawi's foremost disciples explains the various aspects of this 'Muhammedan Spirit' and how it gets different names from different points of view:

“This sublime Pen has a name corresponding to each of its facets. Hence, from the standpoint of its taking its existence wholly and directly from the non-manifest, and its comprehending this within both the non-manifest and itself, it is known as First Intellect. Insofar as the existence comprised in its essence is then detailed in another through the divine command to write my knowledge of my creation, its name is sublime Pen. As the immediate locus of the primordial self-disclosure of being, it is the Muhammedan Spirit (ruh-i-Muhammadi). And by appearing in all degrees of existence in the capacity of governance, it is Muhammedan Rational Soul.”¹⁰⁰

In short, the cosmological framework of Qunawian metaphysics is based on the very concept of the Muhammedan Reality, which constitutes a significant part of whole esoteric idea of Perfect Man. The discussion about the Qunawian perspective of 'Perfect Man' basically seeks to answer about 16 metaphysical questions as Qunawi

¹⁰⁰ Ibrahim Muhammad Yasin, *Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi wa Falsafathuhu al-Sufiyya*, 206.

had started the discussion on the qualities of Perfect Man in his *Miftah al-ghayb*.¹⁰¹ The first six questions are as follows:

1. What is the reality of man?
2. From what has he become existent?
3. In what has he become existent?
4. How has he become existent?
5. Who brought him into existence? And
6. Why has he become existent?

When we attempt to answer these fundamental questions, we can extract the following conclusions from Qunawi as following: The Perfect Man's Reality is the expression of a distinct relationship in the knowledge of God from eternity. Also, Perfect Man has with all the five levels of existence both absolute and relative connection. He is the locus of theophany and the manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes. He is the Pole of existence who is blessed with exclusive perfection. He may be a prophet or a saint of God. And the most perfect one among these Perfect Men is 'Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Here, 'Muhammad' stands for the Muhammedan Spirit or Muhammedan Reality, which is the perfect locus for the manifestation of Divine Essence.¹⁰²

As for the first question concerning the reality of the Perfect Man, Richard Todd explains this 'distinct relationship in God's knowledge':

"In other words, to envisage God as the ground of all specific essences or haqaiq is, by that token to envisage Him as hearing some relation to determinate existence. According to Qunawi, what these 'distinct relationships in God's knowledge represent are the indefinite multitude of determinations comprised in Metaphysical Oneness. Nevertheless, just as he holds that all numbers are merely determinate aspects of arithmetical unity, so does he stress, lest this theory be taken as implying an irreducible plurality in God's Essence, that while in one respect such relationships give rise to the manifold

¹⁰¹ Todd, *the Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 88.

¹⁰² William Chittick, "Five Divine Presences."

appearances in the domain of existence, in another more profound respect they remain effaced in the oneness of God.”¹⁰³

Thus, the Perfect Man in Qunawi's thought encompasses both manifest and non-manifest worlds. He is qualified with the attributes of both God and the creation. He has integrated in him both the Divine and Natural presences.¹⁰⁴

The non-manifest (ghaybi) aspect of the Perfect Man derives its existence from God's Name 'Al-Batin' (the hidden) just like the non-manifest world derives its existence from the same Name. And the manifest aspect of the Perfect Man derives from God's Name 'Al-Zahir' (the manifest) just as the manifest world derives from the same Name.¹⁰⁵ In short, Perfect Man is a reality that encompasses everything manifest and non-manifest, containing in his inner fold all the Divine secrets and all levels of existence. He is the treasure house of the secrets of the universe and the locus of the manifestation for the hidden realities of non-manifest (world) and existence.¹⁰⁶ Qunawi says: "He (Perfect Man) is a book (copy) that encompasses all Divine Affairs; the form of his being is the treasure house containing all the secrets. He is all-encompassing circle in terms of meaning, form and level (that engulfs) all the beings.”¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Perfect Man is entitled with the highest level of perfection called the Unitary All-comprehensiveness (Ahadiyyat al-Jam'), the essence that embraces all ontological perfections, known also as the Reality of Realities, the Human Reality of Perfection and the 'Adamic Reality' on different occasions. This level encompasses all the Divine Names and Attributes.

In addition, this Perfect Man is the Pole of existence who can be a prophet, a saint or one of the great heirs of prophets and saints, the most perfect among whom is 'Prophet Muhammad (S)'. As mentioned above, Perfect Man is sometimes indentified with the 'Adamic Reality' in Qunawi's thought. Qunawi views 'Adam' as the form of God's knowledge of the world of creation. Given the fact that

¹⁰³ Qunawi, *Miftah al-Ghayb*, 136–137.

¹⁰⁴ Ibrahim Muhammad Yasin, *Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi wa Falsafathuhu al-Sufiyya*, 201.

¹⁰⁵ Qunawi, *Miftah al-Ghayb*, 138.

¹⁰⁶ Qunawi, *Al-Nafahat al-Ilahiyya*, 98–99.

¹⁰⁷ Ibrahim Muhammad Yasin, *Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi wa Falsafathuhu al-Sufiyya*, 213.

God created Adam in His own Form, Adam's outward form is the manifest world and his inner reality is the non-manifest world.¹⁰⁸ This is what Qunawi understands as the real meaning of man being the vice-regent of God of earth. He also postulates that this Adamic Reality will perpetuate itself through the descendants of Adam, as they are the particulars of this universal man.

To sum it up, we can see that Qunawi's concept of Perfect Man is an extension of the earlier esoteric views of the 'Qutb' (Pole) and the 'Muhammedan Reality'. To be precise, Qunawi's Perfect Man revolves around three main Sufi doctrines. First, it is the doctrine of Perfect Human Reality known as the 'Reality of Realities'. Secondly, it is the doctrine of the Eternal Muhammedan Reality or the Muhammedan Spirit which functions as the perfect locus of manifestation for Divine Essence. Thirdly, it is the doctrine of the 'Universal Man' identified with 'Adam' or the form of 'Human Reality', an ontological level that can be actualized only after what Qunawi calls 'Mi'raj al-Tahlil'.¹⁰⁹ By this Mi'raj (ascension), Qunawi means the journey of the human soul ascending through various levels of perfection by disengaging (tajarrud) from all determinations (ta'yyunat). Concerning this process of disengagement Chittick remarks:

"This important technical term is much discussed in both Sufism and philosophy and is defined in a number of ways. We can say that it means the detachment of perception and understanding from form and appearance of things and the simultaneous vision of the realities of things at the level of fixed entities, that is, within God's own knowledge"¹¹⁰ Regarding this level of perfection known as the 'Station of No Station' Qunawi says:

"The tasting of the Perfect human beings has affirmed that everything is in everything. Nothing has any essential stability in something from which it cannot change. On the contrary, everything is on the verge of being transformed into something else.... This is the situation of all Wujud... This constant flow is the divine journey from the first, non-manifest

¹⁰⁸ Chittick, "The Central Point."

¹⁰⁹ Qunawi, *Al-Nafahat al-Ilahiyya*, 263–266.

¹¹⁰ Chittick, "The Central Point."

Unseen to the Realm of the Visible... No one tastes this journey and reaches its source except he whose essence has come to be non-delimited. Then the bonds are loosened – the contingent properties, states, attributes, stations, configurations, acts and beliefs – and he is not confined by any of them. By his essence he flows everything, just as Wujud flows in the realities of all things without end or beginning.”³⁰

Conclusion

The doctrine of Perfect man in the metaphysical anthropology of Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi is, in the best analysis, an extension of the earlier Islamic mystical tradition of Perfect Man developed at the hands of Sufi masters beginning from Abu Yazid al-Bistami and Hallaj and culminating in its fullest bloom in the works of Al-Sheikh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi. Building on the firm foundations of Akbarian metaphysics, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi developed his own theory of human perfection coining even new terms like Mi'raj al-Tahlil and Five Divine Presences. It can be also understood that when Abd al-Karim al-Jili wrote his magnum opus, *Insan al-Kamil fi Ma'rifati al-Awakhir wa al-Awail*, he was borrowing many elements of his thesis of Perfect Man from Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi who, before al-Jili extensively explicated the same doctrine in a systematic and coherent form.

Similarly, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi and his followers in the Akbarian tradition left an enduring imprint on the intellectual and cultural life of the Ottoman empire by dint of his magnum opus *Miftah al-ghayb* and its commentary *Misbah al-Uns* by Mulla Fanari. With his voluminous commentary on *Miftah al-ghayb*, Fanari too like his predecessor Dawud al-Kayseri, contributed significantly to define the very character of religious life of the empire for the next six centuries. Under this influence of Akbarian teachings, Ottoman Empire turned out to be the most tolerant dynasty in the history of Islamic civilization, a fact that ensured the internal stability of the empire and bestowed on it the long life of six centuries.

Likewise, following in the footsteps of Fanari, a number of Ottoman scholars wrote path-breaking commentaries on *Miftah al-ghayb* adding a rich legacy of scholarship on the teachings of Ibn Arabi and Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi.

Lastly, the researcher would like to conclude this paper on the concept of Perfect Man according to Qunawi and Fanari by the concluding remarks of William Chittick regarding the relevance of the doctrine of Perfect Man in our postmodern era. Chittick says in his article on Qunawi's role in Akbarian school, "Once it is understood that the proper human role in the cosmos is to manifest the Divine Essence in a global and plenary fashion, it is easy to see that the main currents of modern thought are designed to keep people as far away from the central point. This is because science, technology and the other branches of modern learning – not to speak of politics –are grounded in ignorance of human nature. Modern forms of knowledge falsify the human self by defining in terms of ever more narrowly focused disciplines – biology, neuropsychology, genetics, anthropology, psychology, history, economics and so on. Modern intellectual currents, the media and popular culture make people comfortable with the false notion that they belong to fixed stations. Once people lose sight of the non-delimitation of the true human state, they lose the possibility of thinking about perfection, much less achieving it. Modern knowledge tells us who we are not. It can never tell us who we are. Only a perspective rooted in the station of No station can show the way to the central point."¹¹¹

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¹¹¹ Ibid.

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