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VOICES OF RESURGENT ISLAM

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SEVEN

Imam Khomeini: Four Levels of Understanding

MICHAEL M.J. FISCHER

I

Your vocal chords are silenced like anger in a fist
Your soul boils like a chained lion

...

You shouted at Iraq, Mashhad, and Shiraz
You warned Hejaz, Egypt, and Samarkand
You shouted at the whole world and to the free people
Through the heart of this imprisoned and repressed people
For the aggression of Zahak, the soul of the people of Iran
Is just like estand on fire

The masses rose like the chest of the Oman Sea
And they raised their fists like the peak of Alvand Mountain

...

The throne is yours in the whole Islamic world
From the Nile Valley to the banks of the Shatt al-Arab
You are the Imam among the ulema

...

Your thought is victorious by the glory of the Quran
And your name is everlasting, we swear by your name

M. Azarm (Nemat Mirzazadeh),
Be Nameto Sogand (We Swear by Your Name), 1965;
a well-known ode to Khomeini, used to open
his biography.¹

II

It is quite clear to revolutionaries—be they Stanford and Sorbonne educated or mullahs (religious leaders) from Qum and Najaf—that what seems to be the case can be far more potent than the actual facts of the matter. The Ayatullah Khomeini's life, for example, is itself a revolutionary instrument, a legendary corpus

to be utilized. The facts of the matter are vague and contradictory, and largely irrelevant. Both personality and program are malleable devices. To lose sight of this is to self-delude. Our vision must thus be quadrascopic: the biography of the man, but also the projected persona; the stated program, but also the different interpretations and the context of competing figures. The persona focuses attention on issues of charisma, mobilization, and legitimacy. The competing figures and contested interpretations ensure that the stated program not be taken at face value, that rhetorical red herrings be distinguished from what is politically advocated, that revolutionary masques (and their moments of greatest impact) be differentiated from millenarian or mystical masques (and their more encompassing claims).

What, after all, is biography that it can inform, if not viewings from multiple angles, portraits in the round, or wider social relations and cultural forms refracted through one living? Four sections follow in approximate order of gnosis: biography, persona, politics (with the aid of negatives or semiotic-like definitions through contrast with competitors), gnosis (with its politics).²

III

Ruhullah Musavi Khomeini was born on the birthday of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (20 Jummada Sani 1320) 1902, in the provincial town of Khomein. His grandfather, Sayyid Ahmad Musavi, had come to Khomein from Najaf at the invitation of Jusef Khan Kameri (whose daughter he married). The family claims descent from Mir Hamed Husain Hindi Nishaburi, the India-resident author of *Abaqat ul-Anwar* (Containers of Light), the first major effort in the Shiite genre of books attacking Sunni beliefs on the basis of Sunni hadith (i.e., turning their own documents against them). Ruhullah's father, Sayyid Mustafa, was killed shortly after he was born, in 1902; his mother and father's sister died when he was sixteen.³

At age seventeen, he went to study in Arak with Shaikh Muhsin Iraqi,⁴ a close associate of Shaikh Fazlullah Nuri. Nuri had been the leader of the conservative clerical faction during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–11). He had been instrumental in having a clause inserted in the Constitution giving a panel of five *mujtahids* the right to veto proposed legislation they felt inimical to Islam. Nuri argued that the fad for constitutions be restrained to those which were "conditioned" by the Quran, punning on the Arabic root in the word for "constitution" (*mashruteh mashrueh*), a slogan echoed in Khomeini's 1970 lectures on *Islamic Government*.⁵ Such conditions included rejection of Western notions such as equality of all citizens before the law (Muslims and non-Muslims should be treated separately), the freedoms of speech, press, and education

(nothing inimical to Islam must be allowed), and taxations systems different from the old Islamic taxes, *zakat* (for the poor) and *khums* (in Shiah Islam, a religious tax).⁶

In Arak, Khomeini attached himself to the circle around Shaikh Abdolkarim Haeri-Yazdi and followed the latter to Qum in 1920. Haeri-Yazdi was the modern founder of the theological center in Qum. Later one of Khomeini's sons married a granddaughter of Haeri-Yazdi. Haeri-Yazdi died in 1935, and after an interregnum by a troika leadership (including Sayyid Sadruddin Sadr, whose son became a prominent Shiite leader in Lebanon in the 1970s, and whose granddaughter married Khomeini's second son) was succeeded in 1944 by Ayatullah Hosain Borujerdi. Khomeini served as an aide to Borujerdi. He also taught in the Qum seminary system. He was somewhat unusual as a teacher in that he taught speculative mysticism, a subject often frowned upon by the orthodox as a threat to true faith, rationality, and orthopraxis. Khomeini, however, also wrote a defense of Shiite orthodoxy, including the popular customs of worshipping in shrines, invoking saints as intermediaries with God, and various forms of mourning the martyrdom of the imams, as well as the right of clerics to instruct others, to veto proposed legislation, and to live off donations and Islamic taxes. This defense, entitled *Revealing the Secrets* (1943), was a response to a book called *Secrets of a Thousand Years* by a disciple of Ahmad Kasravi. Kasravi, one of the leading Iranian intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s (until he was assassinated by the Fedaiyyan-i Islam in 1945), had originally been trained as a cleric, but then turned against what he saw as the superstition, obscurantism, and ignorance foisted upon lay believers by the clergy. Khomeini also took the opportunity to attack Reza Shah in bitter terms for arbitrary tyranny and failing to govern in a manner which would foster Islam.

In this attack on Reza Shah, he always referred to the monarch with his pre-royal title, "Reza Khan." There are some claims that Khomeini had participated in the 1924 anti-Reza Khan march led by Nurullah Isfahani, that he had befriended Mirza Sadiq Aqa after the latter helped lead an anti-Reza Shah march in Tabriz in 1927, and that his classes on morals were peppered with anti-Pahlavi innuendoes so that Reza Shah had them first harassed (by sending secret police among the students) and then closed. However, in the 1940s and 1950s, although part of the sullen opposition of the Pahlavis, Khomeini politically followed Borujerdi. Borujerdi in 1949 convened a meeting of clerics and urged withdrawal from the political arena. Fearing anarchy and leftists in the recovery period after World War II, Borujerdi cooperated with the monarchy to preserve law and order. Both Khomeini and Borujerdi were critical of the day-to-day involvement in politics of Ayatullah Abul-Qasim Kashani, a major figure in the National Front led by Dr. Muhammad Mosaddeq. Borujerdi argued that the moral power of the clergy would remain more effective if not dragged into

ordinary wheeling and dealing. In the early 1960s, shortly before he died, Borujerdi began to engage this moral power against a number of proposals of the Shah's government which were to become the White Revolution.

When Borujerdi died, the struggle between conservatives and anti-Shah activists among the clergy flared into the open. Borujerdi's designated successor, Sayyid Abdullah Shirazi, died within months of Borujerdi, and many conservatives drifted toward the leadership of Sayyid Muhsin Hakim in Iraq. Activists, however, began to propagandize the name of Khomeini. There were rumors that Khomeini had broken with Borujerdi shortly before the latter's death, a rumor which was to be exploited in 1982 by radio broadcasts from Kurdistan of Borujerdi's alleged will, ending in the sentence: "Do not follow Ruhullah, lest you find yourselves knee deep in blood."⁷ These activists included those who had privately soured on Borujerdi when he had in effect welcomed the Shah's return after the overthrow of Mosaddeq; they also included members of the Kashani faction which had first supported Mosaddeq and then abandoned him. In the provincial town of Yazd, for instance, Ayatullah Mahmud Saduqi hung a large portrait of Khomeini in the Hazireh Mosque; the poet and writer Muhammad-Reza Hakimi went around telling people that not to follow "Ruh-e Khoda" (the Persian form of Ruhullah, literally, "the spirit of God") was like committing adultery in the sacred precincts of the Kaaba in Mecca; and the preacher Muhammad-Taghi Falsafi dramatically interrupted his series of lectures to return to Tehran when Khomeini delivered a major speech. Saduqi had come to Yazd originally to run an unsuccessful parliamentary electoral campaign for a son of Shaikh Abdul-Karim Haeri-Yazdi; he had stayed and married into the mercantile elite of Yazd; later he would become part of Khomeini's entourage, an official of the Islamic Republic, and the ayatullah who would declare (in April 1981) that Bahais were *mahdour-e damn* ("those whose blood may be shed").⁸ Falsafi was a popular preacher who had been allied with Kashani and led the nationwide hysterical campaign against the Bahais in the 1950s. Muhammad-Reza Hakimi wrote a poetic article supporting Khomeini ("*Avazi-ye Ruzha*" or "Voices of the Days" in a collection by the same name⁹) and was a vigorous opponent of the idea that religious leadership be exercised collegially (the idea of a *shura fatwa*): there should be only one imam, and he is Khomeini.

The dramatic confrontation between Khomeini and the Shah's regime in 1963 secured Khomeini's leadership of the religious opposition to the Shah, although not necessarily of the religious institution itself (he became recognized as one of seven top rank *maraje-i taqlid* (a supreme authority on law). At issue were the enfranchisement of women, land reform, rigged elections, loans from the U.S., capitulations exempting American officials from Iranian courts, and in general, a modernization program perceived as political and economic subordination to the West. In March 1963, paratroopers attacked the Faisiyeq semi-

nary in Qum, killing a number of students. Khomeini responded on the fortieth day anniversary of this event with an emotionally and rhetorically powerful speech, in which he drew parallels with the killings and desecration of the shrine of Imam Reza in Meshad by soldiers of the Pahlavi regime in 1935 firing upon protestors against Western dress codes and general tyranny; he charged that the regime was intent on destroying the ordinances of Islam for the sake of oil and Israel and that it was attempting to place the affairs of Muslims in the hands of "Jews, Christians, and the enemies of Islam." Khomeini continued his attacks through the spring, delivering another powerful speech on the tenth of Muharram (3 June 1963), the most emotionally intense day of the Shiite ritual year.

He began with a *rawzeh*, a rhetorical form, normally occurring at the end rather than the beginning of a sermon or preaching, which elicits weeping and is intended to instill in listeners a stoical determination to re-dedicate themselves to the principles of Islam no matter what the odds and external pressures:

I seek refuge in Allah from the pursuing Satan. In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate. It is now the evening of Ashura. Sometimes when I review the events of Ashura, I confront this question: If the Ummayyids and Yazid, the son of Moaviyeh, were waging war only with Husain, why then the savage, inhuman behavior towards the helpless women and the innocent children of Husain? What had the women and children done? What had the six month old baby of Husain done? [The audience cries.] I think they wanted to destroy the foundation [of the family of the Prophet]. The Umayyids and the regime of Yazid were against the family of the Prophet. They did not want the Bani Hashem to exist and they wanted to uproot the sacred [family] tree.¹⁰

The metaphor of the arch-tyrant and destroyer of Islam, Yazid, standing for the Shah, used throughout the sixties and seventies in preachments, is made explicit:

I ask the same question here: If the brutal regime of Iran is engaged in a war with the ulama, why did it tear the Quran apart while attacking the Faisiyeh Seminary? What did it have against the Faisiyeh Seminary? What did it have against the students of theology? What did it have against our eighteen year old sayyid [Sayyid Younes Rudbari who had been killed in the March assault]? [The audience cries.] What had our eighteen year old sayyid done to the Shah? What had he done against the government? What had he done against the brutal regime of Iran? [The audience cries.] Therefore we must conclude that it wanted to do away with the foundation. It is against the foundation of Islam and the clergy. It does not want this foundation to exist. It does not want our youth and elders to exist.

Israel is then invoked as the root of all satanic evil and humiliation:

Israel does not want the Quran to exist in this country. Israel does not want the ulama of Islam to exist in this country. Israel does not want the laws of Islam to exist in this country. Israel does not want the well-informed to exist in this coun-

try. Israel, through her black agents, devastated the Faisiyeh Seminary. She is destroying us; she is destroying you. She wants to control your economy. She wants to ruin your commerce and agriculture. She wants to possess the property of this land. Through her agents she wants to remove every obstacle to her ends. The Quran is an obstacle; it has to go. The clergy is an obstacle; it has to go. The Faisiyeh seminary is an obstacle; it must be ruined. The religious students are future obstacles; they must be murdered; they must be thrown from the rooves; their heads and hands must be broken. Just because Israel must succeed, the government of Iran, following the blueprints and goals of Israel, must humiliate us.

Anger is expressed at the charge that the clergy are parasites; quite the contrary, it is the rich who are the parasites. And he admonishes the Shah:

I advise you Mr. Shah, Shah sir, I advise you to change your ways. If one day your masters decide you should go, I would not want the people to have cause to celebrate your departure. I do not wish for you the same destiny as your father. . . . God knows that the people rejoiced when Pahlavi left. . . . Listen to the advice of the clergy. . . . Do not listen to Israel. . . . I hope when you said that the reactionaries are impure animals, you were not referring to the clergy. Otherwise our duty will be most onerous and you will have a difficult time. You will not be able to live. The people will not let you continue. Are Islam and the clergy black reactionaries? But you black reactionary, you have created this white revolution. For what is this white revolution?

He charges that a group of preachers (*vaezin*) in Tehran were detained by the secret police and were threatened and forced to promise not to talk about three subjects: nothing against the Shah, nothing against Israel, and not to say that Islam is in danger. And he counter threatens:

Why does SAVAK say, "Do not speak about the Shah or Israel?" Does SAVAK mean the Shah is an Israeli? Is it the opinion of SAVAK that the Shah is a Jew? Mr. Shah! They want to portray you as a Jew so that I might declare you a *kafir* (unbeliever), so that you might be kicked out of Iran, so that you might be punished. Don't you realize that if one day you falter, none of these will stand by you. They are loyal only to the dollar. They do not have any faith; they have no loyalty; they try to blame you for everything. That little man whose name I will not mention [the audience cries] came to Madraseh Faisiyeh, blew his whistle, and the commandoes gathered around him. He ordered: "Forward, smash and ransack all the rooms; destroy everything." When he is asked, "Why did you do that?" he answers, "It was the order of His Imperial Majesty to destroy the Madraseh Faisiyeh, to kill and destroy."

And he ends:

Our country, our Islam are in danger. What is happening, and what is about to happen worries and saddens us. We are worried and saddened by the situation of this ruined country. We hope to God that things can be reformed.

Early the next morning, Khomeini was arrested. Thousands of people in cities all over Iran protested. They were met with military force, and thousands were martyred. The 15 Khordad (5 June 1963) became a day of infamy. Khomeini was saved from execution by several ayatullahs, led by Ayatullah Muhammad-Kazem Shariatmadari, certifying his status (for the first time) as a grand ayatullah (*ayatullah al-uzma*), the top rank of the clergy, thereby putting the state on notice that his execution would have the most serious consequences. Upon his release, Khomeini again delivered a blistering public speech, denying that he had compromised with the regime while in prison, as had been reported in the *Ettelaat* newspaper. He began with the Quranic verse, "From God we come and unto Him we shall return," i.e., I cannot be intimidated. Again he utilized *rawzeh* techniques, eliciting tears and emotional responses:

Never have I felt incapable of speaking, but today I do, for I am incapable of expressing my anguish, anguish caused by the situation of the Islamic world in general, and Iran in particular, the events of the past year, and especially the incident in Madraseh Faisiyeh. I was not aware of the incident of the 15 Khordad. When my imprisonment was commuted into house arrest, I was given news from the outside. God knows the events of the 15 Khordad devastated me. [Audience cries.] Now that I have come here from Qeytariyeh, I am confronted with sad things: little orphans [audience cries], mothers who have lost their young ones, the women who have lost their brothers [much crying], lost legs, sad hearts—these are the proofs of their "civilization" and our being reactionaries. Alas we do not have access to the rest of the world; alas our voice does not reach the world. Alas the world cannot hear the voice of these mourning mothers. [Much crying.]

He turns his anger against the charge that the clergy are reactionary; that they want to return to the Middle Ages; that they oppose electricity, cars, or airplanes. He claims for Islam the legacy of the Constitution. Islam is the source of all freedoms, of independence, of greatness. It was the clergy who brought about the Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of expression and free press. He criticized the begging of dollars (loans), the elaborate reception of foreigners, the bureaucracy, the mispending of the money of the poor, the use of radio and TV to drug people into acquiescence, the alliance with Israel, and the subordination to colonial powers. He objects to using Israeli advisors and sending students to Israel; better they should be sent to England or the United States, lest Sunnis begin baiting Shiites as Jew-lovers. He urges that the Constitution be put into practice. He mocks the claims that the government wants to establish an Islamic university and compares their misuse of Islam with Muawiyeh's trick of placing Qurans on his soldiers' spears so that Ali could not fight him. He speaks of an insult to any cleric (himself in this case) as an insult to Islam and says that all must stand united in the defense of Islam. He ends with a

somewhat backhanded expression of gratitude to the clergy for having stood by him.

On 4 November 1964, Khomeini was exiled first to Turkey and then was allowed to go to Najaf in Iraq, where he spent the next decade and a half. He maintained his ties in Iran by serving as a *marja-i taqlid*, one to whom religious tithes (the *sahm-i imam*, one-half of the *khums* tax) are made for redistribution to students of religion and other purposes and by sending back missives, tape-recorded speeches, and writings. In 1971, for instance, he inveighed against the Shah's elaborate celebrations of 2500 years of continuous monarchy, reminding his followers that Muslims had nothing in common with the pre-Islamic heritage of Iran, and Islam had come to destroy the principle of hereditary monarchy. He appealed to his fellow clerics to protest, to the heads of state invited not to attend, and for all Muslims to refrain from participation. He charged that Israelis were arranging the festival, the same Israelis whom he charged with burning the al-Aqsa mosque, with attempting to pass doctored copies of the Quran from which verses critical of Jews had been excised, and with penetrating all economic, military, and political affairs of Iran, turning it in effect into a military base of Israel and by extension for America.¹¹

This was also the period in which he delivered the lectures in his *dars-i kha-rej* (the highest level of classes in the seminary system) which were published as *Islamic Government: Guardianship by the Clergy*. These lectures apparently began in a dispute with Ayatullah Abul-Qassim Khoi.¹² The latter responded to students' questions about whether the formula "guardianship by the clergy" (*vilayat-i faqih*) included the obligation or right of clerics to participate directly in the political process and indeed to govern. Khoi responded that no such guardianship existed. Khomeini thereupon devoted two weeks of classes to a rebuttal and defense of a maximalist interpretation of clerics as the only legitimate supervisors of politics.

He candidly admits that a textual demonstration from the hadith literature is not conclusive,¹³ but argues that supervision of politics, or even rule by religious scholars is logically self-evident from the nature of Islam. It can be supported by the examples of the Prophet and the imams and through the joint consideration of a series of hadith, none of which individually is unambiguous but taken together constitute a clear stand.¹⁴ Indeed, he says at the very beginning, it would never have occurred to anyone to question that religious scholars should supervise politics had it not been for the attempts of the Jews and the imperialists to suggest otherwise. It is they who have taught false religious teachers (now ensconced even in the very heart of the Islamic seminaries) to say that religion and politics should be separated, that Islam is not a comprehensive system of social regulations covering every possible topic¹⁵, that Islam demands no specific form of government, and that while Islam may have a few ethical

principles it is mainly concerned with ritual purity. Many ulama have descended to this false view of Islam. But what kind of faithfulness is it to Islam to treat its penal provisions as merely a text for recitation?

For example, we recite the verse: "Administer to the adulterer and the adulteress a hundred lashes each" (S. 24:2), but we do not know what to do when confronted with a case of adultery. We merely recite the verse in order to improve the quality of our recitation and to give each sound its full value. (Algar translation, p. 75)

So too, what sense would it make for the Prophet to have brought the divine law and not provided for successors to implement it?

The major portion of the argument is devoted to establishing that those learned in the law, who are also just (i.e., not enmeshed in personal worldly ambition), are the only ones who ultimately can judge what in society is according to Islam, and what is not. After all, a major traditional Shiite argument that the first three caliphs were usurpers is that they often did not know the law and its procedures.

As to specifics about what an Islamic government might look like, there is precious little. Islamic taxes are invoked as sufficient to run a government. These include the *khums*, defined as one-fifth of all surplus income of all enterprises from the farmer to the industrialist, the voluntary *zakat* (dismissed as a minimal amount), the *jizya* tax on non-Muslim "protected minorities," and the *kharaaj* (on state held land). But the argument about taxes is mainly used as evidence that such enormous sums as could be generated by the *khums* in particular were intended to support a state government and not just a minor parochial religious institution within society.

Legislatures are dismissed as unnecessary, since all laws have already been provided by God. Instead there need only be planning boards to set agendas and supervise ministries (Algar, p. 56). The executive and judiciary are distinguished (both in modern governments and in logical principle) (Algar, pp. 88, 96). Judicial functions are divided into civil disputes between individuals and crimes against society prosecuted by a state prosecutor (Algar, p. 91). Rulers are defined by their knowledge and morality, but any further specification of executive or administrative problems is dismissed by acknowledging that

the acquisition of knowledge and expertise in various sciences—is necessary for making plans for a country and for exercising executive and administrative functions; we too will make use of people with those qualifications. But as for the supervisions and supreme administration of the country, the dispensing of justice and the establishment of equitable relations among the people—these are precisely the subjects that the *faqih* [pl. *fuqaha*] has studied. (Algar p. 137)

The possibility is considered that a non-scholar ruler may consult scholars, but the issue is then mooted as to who is really the ruler:

In such a case, the real rulers are the jurists and the sultans are nothing but people working for them (JPRS translation, p. 20) or This being the case, the true rulers are the *fuqaha* themselves, and the rulership ought officially to be theirs. (Algar, p. 60)

The possibility is also considered that supervision of politics be in the hands of an individual jurist or alternatively be collectively the responsibility of a number of jurists (Algar, p. 62, 64). The principle is affirmed that no jurist has precedence over any other (Algar, p. 64). And a jurist who acts against Islam will be dismissed (Algar, p. 79), though it is not said according to what procedure.

Non-Muslims are only mentioned in passing to affirm that a society with both Muslims and non-Muslims must be under Muslim control (Algar, p. 89), "with the utmost force and decisiveness and without exhibiting the least trace of feeling" (Algar, p. 89). The annihilation of the Jewish tribe Bani Qurayza by the Prophet is given as a salutary example.

The final section of the lectures is devoted to bringing about an Islamic government. It is thought here that the effort will be a long, slow one, over perhaps two centuries, involving first propagation and teaching of true Islam, utilizing communal forms of worship as political forums (communal prayers, pilgrimages, Friday prayers), reforming the seminaries, purging false clerics, and adhering to an ascetic dedication which shuns the goods of this world.

Amid the attacks on imperialism, monarchy and Jews, and the calls for political engagement and economic redistribution ("For that is your Islamic duty, to take from the rich and give to the poor," Algar, p. 74), there are scattered hints that the goals of Islamic government are transcendental and not merely concerned with justice in society: "a just society that will morally and spiritually nourish refined human beings" (Algar, p. 80); the interpretation of a hadith attributed to Imam Sadeq—scholars are the heirs of the Prophets since prophets bequeath not wealth but knowledge—as meaning not that the Prophets bequeathed only learning and traditions, but that they were men of God and not materialistic (Algar, p. 106); and the repeated reference to the hadith relating Ali's evaluation of rulership as being worth less than a goat's sneeze, it being a duty extracted from scholars by God to prevent the decay of Islam.

During the 1970s Khomeini was a clear reference point for militant religious opposition to the Shah. His *Islamic Government* and occasional other missives circulated clandestinely. In the fall of 1977, his elder son mysteriously died or was killed, and in January 1978 a newspaper attack on Khomeini helped spark

demonstrations which provoked government violence and helped fuel the revolutionary process. During the 1977-79 revolution, Khomeini was expelled from Iraq, denied entry to Kuwait, and was persuaded to center himself in Paris where he had access to the international media as well as printing and tape recording facilities. On 1 February 1979, Khomeini returned triumphantly to Iran to preside over the creation of an Islamic republic and to demonstrate his authority over all other potential leaderships: the more liberal constitutionalist leadership of Ayatullah S. Muhammad-Kazem Shariatmadari, the more socialist-leaning S. Mahmud Taleghani, the lay leadership of Engineering Professor Mehdi Bazargan, or the would-be heirs of Dr. Ali Shariati.

IV

Part of the appeal of Khomeini must be analyzed in terms of his persona, the image he projects, rather than either his personality *per se* or his program and tactics alone. The latter were often vague and changeable; in any case, people placed faith in Khomeini far above and beyond enunciated programs. There are, I have suggested elsewhere at greater length,¹⁶ five dimensions to the legendary figure of Khomeini, which taken together compose an emotionally powerful configuration.

First, and least distinctive, is a play upon the tension between Shiism as Iranian nationalism and Islam as universalistic. Khomeini's persona has an aura of ethnic marginality upon which people continually comment. His great grandfather moved from Khorasan to India (popular versions usually specify Kashmir); his grandfather returned to Khomein. These ancestral peregrinations allow a labeling that somehow Khomeini is "Indian." An elder brother took the name "Hindi"; and Khomeini himself as a young man used that surname to sign his poetry. It has been pointed out before that many nationalist leaders—the Corsican Napoleon, the Austrian Hitler, the Georgian Stalin—have had per-sonae which resonate with tension between nationalist and universalist ideologies. Khomeini himself rejects Iranian nationalism insisting on Islamic (albeit Shiite) universalism. The story is told that great efforts had to be exerted in Paris to persuade him to speak of Iran, a *sine qua non* if he was to appeal to a wide spectrum of Iranians. During the drafting of the new constitution, again the issue arose, and Khomeini's phrase of a supreme *faqih* (to exercise the *vilayat-i faqih* or guardianship of the clergy) to serve as head of state had to be modified to make sure that he would be an Iranian, something unimportant to Khomeini, though quite important to most Iranians.

More important is that Khomeini's persona cultivates a legend of distress, connecting him with the martyr of Karbala. There are several parts to this con-

struction, beginning with the death of his father at the hands of—depending on the variant—a bandit, a mayor, a civil servant, or a landowner, but whichever, an agent of Reza Shah. This deprivation is said to have occurred either when Khomeini was six months old or a year and a half. This would place the event around 1900, but Reza Shah did not come to power until the 1920s. The legend continues that his mother sought and obtained some revenge, either the execution of the murderer or the removal of the governor; but in any case, the theme is established that obstinacy in pursuit of justice is part of the family tradition and is ultimately rewarded. The second important component of the legend of distress is Khomeini's exile from Iran in 1964, made emotionally more compelling by the (apparently true) story that he narrowly escaped execution thanks to the intervention of Ayatullah Shariatmadari and others. Like the imams, Khomeini was denied his rightful position. Analogous to the theme of the eventual return of the twelfth imam, the Mahdi, there is also a legend that Khomeini performed a divination before moving to Qum in 1920 and learned that he would die in Qum; this was taken by his followers throughout his long exile in Iraq to mean that he would return to Iran in triumph. The third component of the legend of distress is the loss first of an infant daughter and, more importantly, in the fall of 1977, the death of his elder son, many Iranians believe, at the hands of SAVAK, the Shah's secret police. The themes of this persona of enduring distress and injustice include a father unjustly killed, a son deprived of rightful possessions (father, land, position, children), and the need to pursue justice in the face of overwhelming odds. These are the themes of Ali and Husain and of the imams. According to the Shiite account, all the imams were either slain or poisoned (except the last, who will return); the theme of poison—Westernization and colonialism as a poison—is one that Khomeini plays upon.

More interesting yet, a distinctive feature of Khomeini's persona is that he dabbled in mysticism, a subject that the orthodox fear can easily destroy faith. Part of the defense of Khomeini's supreme position and the attribution to him of the title Imam (which in Persian until the revolution was reserved for the twelve Imams alone) is the suggestion that he can control dangerous esoteric knowledge as well as power, both of which can easily destroy lesser men.

Closely allied to this mystical component is Khomeini's asceticism, his eschewing of humor and positive affect, the studied monotone in which he speaks. The contrast is striking here with the style of other ayatullahs, who cultivate humor as a way of engaging followers. Gnosticism or mysticism is dangerous, and the pursuit of the enlightenment it can yield requires much self-control. Islamic asceticism (*zuhd*) is not withdrawal from the world, but a refusal to be seduced by materialist concerns. Asceticism is a technique to avoid the madness (either manic ecstasy or depression) mystical pursuits can induce;

it is also a technique to avoid corruption in a corrupt world. Less profound, but of equal public relations importance, the ascetic style serves to ward off the suspicion that whoever exercises power must be self-seeking.

Finally, unlike the other top-rank ulama, Khomeini cultivates a populist language of confrontation and a propaganda style of comic-book-like hyperbole. Whereas other ulama speak in scholarly, considered language, Khomeini speaks the language of the ordinary man, attacking intellectuals and eggheads, the rich and the elite. He plays a politics of trusting the masses as well as occasionally intervening to balance factions of central political actors. When the Iran-Iraq war broke out, rather than turning to the army, Khomeini called for arms to be given to the people: if the young men cannot save the country, it is not worth saving; we have not fought a revolution just for security and economic well-being, but for Islam, for a just society, for non-alignment, for a society responsive to the common man, not one subservient to a professionalized army dependent on foreign arms, advisors, and control.

The total configuration of Khomeini's persona is one which draws on traditional images in a forceful way none of the other top ulama or lay leaders can match. Like Husain, he represents perseverance for justice against all odds, with an ability to endure injustice and suffering. Like Ali, Khomeini represents combined political and religious leadership, utilizing all means at hand, including force and cunning on behalf of Islam, the Muslim community, and the just society. Like the imams, Khomeini represents access to wisdom and ability to control the dangers to ordinary men of dabbling in esoteric knowledge or in power. It is an emotional configuration which stresses stoicism and determination in a tragic world where injustice and corruption all too often prevail. It is a continuation of the emotional configuration of the Karbala Story, which forms the central symbolic core of popular religion in Iran. It is a configuration which ought to appeal to the sub-proletarian populations of rural migrants to the cities as well as to the traditional petit bourgeoisies and some (if not all) of their sons educated in the modern university system.¹⁷

V

There are, of course, social strata who are less than enamoured of Khomeini, the man or his persona. Peasants of a village near Shiraz could skeptically dismiss Khomeini as another Shah and his clerical minions as so many capricious and corrupt bureaucrats.¹⁸ Many close to the clerical establishment recognize Khomeini's place within it and, consequently, are too close to allow any validity to his claims of sole supreme leadership. Outside detractors speculate about a new nepotistic elite around Khomeini bonded by kinship and filial ties. Angry

cartoonists, testing impolitic juxtapositions and Rabelaisian puncturings of pretension, portray him as the owl of death perched above a field of human bones, in the uniform of the Shah or counting a rosary of skulls.¹⁹

The sociologist, Said Amir Arjomand, charges that Khomeini in the early 1960s "set out to create . . . a traditionalist political movement," and that he has succeeded through the 1979 constitution in becoming the first Caesar-Pope in Shiite history.²⁰ Arjomand argues on organizational grounds, citing Max Weber, that with the emergence of mass politics, clerical establishments claiming political influence must also organize as parties. How much of such Weberian intuition or strategy is attributable to Khomeini himself and how much to the evolving dynamics of the Islamic Republican Party leadership, remains unclear. What is clear is that by 1970-71, Khomeini had given up his traditionalist language of urging the Shah to reform and engaged in an effort to formulate a justification for maximalist control of the clergy in the political sphere. By 1979 he was slowly shedding the veils of constitutionalist rhetoric by which he had engaged the alliance of such men as Mehdi Bazargan, Ibrahim Yazdi, and Abul-Hassan Bani-Sadr.

How much of this shedding was calculated deceit on his part (justifiable in terms of *taqiyya*, dissimulation in defense of Islam) and how much was self-delusion on the part of his allies may perhaps be illustrated in an anecdote from the time when he first led prayers in Paris. The prayers were held in a tent, and several women complained about having to remain outside while the men disappeared inside. Khomeini responded that their complaint would be heeded, that prayers should be done as the Prophet did early in his career, with men and women intermingled. The women were impressed, and a number may have taken this as a sign of Khomeini's relative liberality. To those who thought about the reference to Muhammad, however, it should have been clear that this was but a temporary device: when surrounded by unbelievers, one does not leave women outside unprotected.

Muslim religious opponents of Khomeini (excluding secularists) comprise an interesting set: former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan (who complained of Khomeini's deceit to Oriana Fallaci shortly before being squeezed out of power), Sayyid Mahmud Taleghani (the leading cleric sympathetic to the left), Ayatullah Muhammad-Kazem Shariatmadari, and in general, those who see themselves as heirs to Dr. Ali Shariati (including especially the "Islamic leftist" Mujahheddin party).

Shariatmadari is the most prominent of a group of conservative to liberal ayatullahs (including the late Ayatullah Bahaeddin Mahallati of Shiraz, Sheikh Ali Tehrani of Meshad, and Ayatullah Abdollah Shirazi-Qumi of Meshad) who have warned and protested against the autocratic style of Khomeini and of the Islamic Republican Party. In the first phase of the 1977-79 revolution, Shariat-

madari was the most important religious leader inside Iran. Throughout the 1970s he had adopted the strategy of the good shepherd, attempting to protect his followers, to tacitly negotiate with the government, to maintain a posture of moral critique of Iranian society. This strategy was in conscious contrast to Khomeini's confrontation style. It was thus a major signal that something revolutionary was occurring when Shariatmadari in January 1978 publicly condemned the Shah's regime for killing religious demonstrators in Qum. Throughout the first phase of the revolution, Shariatmadari exercised a leadership role, attempting to pressure the government while simultaneously urging his flock not to provoke unnecessary violence from a vastly superior military machine. Upon Khomeini's return, Shariatmadari quietly invoked his seniority, having Khomeini come to him to pay his respects first. He warned that Khomeini's acquiescence in the use of the title "Imam" was close to blasphemy.²¹ He reminded people that political decisions invoking Islamic authority should be made, if not collegially, at least through the consensus of the top ranked clergy. He objected to the railroading through of the referendum which established an Islamic republic. He objected to the proposal to have a small group of people around Khomeini draft a new constitution which would only then, if at all, have popular input through a similarly managed referendum. He objected to the insertion of the phrase *vilayat-i faqih* into the constitution, and to the referendum which ratified it. In general, until he was silenced, he served as the religious leader of the conservative-liberal forces of the revolution.

Ayatullah S. Mahmud Taleghani had, together with Mehdi Bazargan, led the Freedom Movement of Iran. Both had been involved with the group of clerical and lay reformers in the period 1960-63 which had held discussions and lectures, and had published a journal, *Gofar-e Mah* (Monthly Speeches) as well as the important volume, *An Inquiry into the Principle of Marj'yyat* (clerical leadership) and *the Clergy*. The central concerns of this group were how to reform the clergy and revitalize the religious institution. Such innovations as collegial decisions (*shura fatwa*) by top clerics, and the apportioning of technical areas of responsibility so that different religious leaders might acquire a degree of specialization in matters affecting a modern economy and polity were discussed. From 1965 to 1973 this group of reformers was centered in the buildings called the Husainiya Ershad. Similar institutions had been established earlier in Meshed by Sayyid Abdol-Karim Hashemi-Nejad and Sayyid Mahmud Abrahi, and subsequently in Shiraz by the Mahallatis. The leading light in Tehran was Dr. Ali Shariati who galvanized the youth by proposing to fuse the latest in Western social theory with Islam, thereby making possible a renewal of understanding of Islam for the contemporary world and a cleansing of Islam of decayed and corrupted scholasticism. Shariati argued against the scholasticism of the traditional clergy, arguing that since the Safavid period the clergy had

overseen a religion shot through with superstition, shrine worship, mediation between man and God, meaningless ritualism, and above all appropriation of authority by ignorant old men. This hierarchical, fossilized and superstitious religion he tagged "Safavid Shiism." Muslims needed a Protestant reformation, a cleansing and renewal that insisted upon each Muslim undertaking responsibility for his own actions and for helping to think through the moral, social and political meaning of Islam in a fashion relevant to a modern, technological society. Such an understanding of Islam, he tagged the original and true "Alavi Shiism." Naturally enough, the traditional clergy did not much like Shariati. They wrote some tracts against him, pointing out errors of doctrinal scholarship. But they tread carefully, recognizing in him not merely an ally against the Shah, but more importantly a generational hero: too open an attack would lose them much of the youth.

Shariati died in 1977. The Mujaheddin, who see him as one of their heroes, had earlier broken away from Bazargan's Freedom Movement over the issue of the use of violence. In the 1970s they began a small guerilla movement. They too experienced a split (in 1975) between those who wished to remain Islamic marxists and those who opted for a secular path. A son of Taleghani, Muijabai, led the secular faction. At the time of the first phase of the revolution, the father, S. Mahmud Taleghani, led the massive street demonstrations on 9 Muharram 1979, a month after having been released from prison. When Khomeini returned from Paris, Taleghani (like Shariatmadari) refused to join the clerical greeters; he was at the airport, but sat apart, allegedly responding ironically to invitations to join the other ulama by saying: that is the place for the ulama (literally "the learned"), I belong here with the *jahil* (street toughs, the ignorant). Just a few months later, he dramatically went underground in protest against the efforts of the Khomeini forces to monopolize the revolution, against the escalating rate of executions, and against the attempt to round up the Mujaheddin (including two of his own children). After a meeting with Khomeini, he was silenced for a few more months, but then returned to public criticism shortly before he died, warning that there was danger of a dictatorship worse than that of the Shah: dictatorship by religious students (*inhizab-i tulab*). He reminded Muslims that it was contrary to Islam to deprive people of the right to criticize, to protest, and to express grievances; that consultation in Islam did not mean decision-making by an oligarchy, but democratic councils at all levels of society.²²

It is important to stress that Khomeini's voice or the voice of the Islamic Republican Party are not the only Islamic voices in Iran. It is important to listen to those other voices to see where the limits are of Khomeini's claim to represent Iranians, to embody the values of freedom, transcendence of class divisions, authenticity, and social justice. These limits help define the line between a peo-

ple voluntarily struggling to live up to an Islamic ideal and imposing a tyranny in the name of Islam. But above all, in terms of evaluating Khomeini, the man and the persona, it provides a means to see where and why so many Muslims misunderstood him, and mistook his mystical vision for a revolutionary one. For these now disillusioned former allies and followers, who bitterly complain of deceit, revolution was the goal: a government to arrange social affairs in a more just way. For Khomeini, such a government is "not the ultimate aim; it is merely the means for advancing man toward that goal for the sake of which all the prophets were sent."²³

VI

The transcendent goals of Khomeini's Islamic Republic may be explored by (1) juxtaposing his lectures on Sura Fatiha with the work of the great seventeenth century Mulla Sadra; (2) tracing the evolution of his political pronouncements since the 1940s; and (3) considering those acts of the current regime clearly motivated at his direction in the light of the logically possible relations between rulers and the ruled. All three considerations confirm millenarian or mystical, rather than revolutionary, intentions and trajectories, in the dual senses of being transcendental (and having all the tyrannical dangers of forcing utopias on this world, dangers analyzed clearly by classical Muslim scholars), as well as being counter-revolutionary (traditionalist, invoking mediational levels of access to God, insisting upon hierarchical religious authority) over against the "Protestant" reformation goals of Shariati, of the Husainiye Ershad, and of the Freedom of Movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

Two sets of polar arguments about the relation between ideals and actualization are often debated in Muslim scholarship:

1a—Once each individual becomes truly Muslim, all need for social coercion and oppressive state structures will wither away; versus

1b—The Quran speaks of justice and iron (the sword) in Sura Hadid (Sura on Iron), i.e., force may be required to establish the social conditions to foster the development of true Muslims and a true Muslim society.²⁴

2a—Knowledge is accessible to all reasonable men, and so society can rely on consultation among men; versus

2b—Divine knowledge is the privilege of the few (an imam or amir; a body of ulama) and so society must be ruled by a tutelage dictatorship/oligarchy. Khomeini's writings have increasingly stressed the second of each pair.

He began in his 1943 *Revealing the Secrets* with a traditional advisory stance toward government: "Bad government is better than no government. We have never attacked the sultanate; if we criticized, it was a particular king and not

kingship that we criticized. History shows that *mujtahids* have aided kings, even kings who did wrong: Nasir-ud-Din Tusi, Mohaqiq Sani, Shaykh Bahai, Mir Damad, Majlisi" (p. 187). Or again:

Some say that government may remain in the hands of those who have it, but they must get approval [*jajaza*] from the legal experts [*faqih*]. Yes, but a *mujtahid* can give such approval only under condition that the law of the country is the law of God. Our country does not meet this condition since the government is neither constitutional nor the law of God. Yet bad government is better than no government, and *mujtahids* do not simply attack it, but if necessary help it (p. 189).

Indeed he goes so far as to argue (inaccurately²⁵) that despite the fact that the Umayyids were the worst government to date in their hostility to the family of the Prophet, nonetheless the fourth Imam composed a long prayer for their protection. One should remember that it was the clerics who prevented Reza Shah from declaring a republic in 1924. Fearing republicanism would also mean Atatürk-style secularization, they insisted on a monarchical form of government. In *Revealing the Secrets*, Khomeini complains about the materialistic and selfish motives of politicians and kings. His solutions are: taking advice from the ulama, allowing the ulama to appoint a just man as king, allowing the ulama to serve as a kind of parliament. In any case, he denies any desire to see ulama as kings or direct rulers.

By the 1960s, as we have seen, Khomeini is claiming the legacy of the Constitution for the ulama. It was they, he claims, who brought it about; it is they who are advocates of the liberal values of freedom of expression. This, of course, is an adversary stance, and can be interpreted as an argument: if not a fully Islamic government, then at least a constitutional one. By 1970, Khomeini is arguing that monarchy is incompatible with Islam, at least in the sense that any form of government must be subordinate to the law of Islam. The crimes of monarchs throughout Iran's history are recited, and gradually by the end of the 1970s the call is made to overthrow not only the particular monarch on the throne but monarchy as well. The argument over *ulil amr*, the Quranic formula in Sura Nesa: 62 ("Oh you who have faith, obey God, obey the Prophet of God, and obey the *ulil amr* [the issuer of orders]") was merged with the discussions over the formula *vilayat-i faqih*. The latter in traditional jurisprudence primarily referred to guardianship over persons not competent to look after their own financial affairs (orphans, widows, the mentally deficient, communal religious property lacking a designated administrator); occasional references in the literature hint at extending this meaning to political guardianship. It was Khomeini's purpose in *Islamic Government* to try to build a case for this expansion.

After the revolution, Khomeini's speeches became filled with calls for unity and steadfastness of purpose. There is an ambiguous fusion between pragmatic

necessity to defend the revolution and more long term efforts to reorganize social consciousness. There are his defenses of summary execution and dismissal of due process procedures: criminals need no lawyers, he insisted on several occasions. There are his calls for unity of expression (*vahdat-e kalam*), and his exhortations to parents to turn in children who seem recalcitrant to the new regime. There is the insertion in the preamble to the new Constitution of 1979 (which sees the history of the regime in terms of the career of Khomeini) of the term *maktabi*: once *maktabi* meant merely "bookish"; now it means "according to the Book, the Quran" and is a device used to exclude anyone who does not adhere to the interpretations of the regime.²⁶ It has been argued that Khomeini has thus for the first time turned the *shariah* into a tool for moulding consciousness, for invading man's private relationship with God.²⁷ Traditionally there was no *taglid* (following of a scholar's example, instruction or advice) in matters of faith, but only in matters of practice (and even then one should not follow blindly).²⁸ What one does is a matter of social concern, a matter between men; what one thinks is to be judged by God alone. Now, however, what one thinks, or at least what one says, is to be judged and sanctioned by the state. Rose points out that "Ayatullah"²⁹ Muhammad Beheshti, architect of the Islamic Republican Party, divided clerics by their ideological purity rather than their skill in traditional learning, and that Khomeini's overriding concern in all his speeches has been for long-term, difficult, reorganization of mass consciousness. One of Khomeini's more eloquent statements of concern for Iranian self-respect is his 1979 speech on the anniversary of the Black Friday (8 September 1978) Jaleh Square massacre:

... our problems and miseries are caused by losing ourselves. In Iran until something has a Western name it is not accepted. ... The material woven in our factories must have something in the Latin script in its sleeve edges. ... Our writers and intellectuals are also "Westoxicated" and so are we. ... We forget our own phrases and the word itself. Easterners have completely forgotten their honor. ... As long as you do not put aside these imitations, you cannot be a human being and independent. ...

An enlightened heart cannot stand by silently and watch while traditions and honor are trampled upon. An enlightened heart cannot see its people being drawn towards baseness of spirit or watch in silence while individuals around Tehran live in slums.

The second commandment which God gave to Moses was "remind people of the Days of God" ... some days have a particularity. The day that the great Prophet of Islam migrated to Medina ... the day that he conquered Mecca. ... The day of Khawarej ... when Hazrat Ali unsheathed his sword and did away with these corrupt and cancerous tumors ... the fifteenth of Khordad (5 June 1963) when a people stood against a force and they did something which caused almost five months of martial law. But because the people had no power, they were not consolidated, they were not awake, they were defeated. ... The seventeenth of

Shahrivar (8 September 1978) was another one of the Days of God when a people, men, women, young people and older people, all stood up and, in order to get their rights, were martyred. ... A nation which had nothing broke a force in such a way that nothing remained of it. ... Empty-handed, a monarchical empire of 2500 years, 2500 years of criminals was done away with.

Note that the speech utilizes themes generally identified with non-clerical revolutionary spokesmen: the phrase "Westoxification" comes from a famous essay by Jalal Al-Ahmad; the theme of imitation/alienation was popularized in the 1970s by Shariati, drawing on Sartre and Fanon. The rhetorical device of iterated Days of God is a powerful cosmogenic image derived from both preaching skills and literary metaphorizations (which also provided power and popularity to Shariati's formulations). The themes of alienation, Westoxification, and false understanding of Islam mean to Khomeini that Iran is faced with a deep-seated problem beyond any simple political or economic reconstruction.

Thus, as we have noted, when Iraq attacked Iran and President Bani-Sadr suggested releasing military personnel from prison to fight, Khomeini reminded the country that the revolution had not been fought merely for economic well-being, a different political system, or territorial integrity, but for Islam. If the country could not be defended without giving the army the hegemony of force it had previously used to oppress the people, then Iran was not worth saving. As he put it elsewhere:

Once someone asked Imam Ali a question concerning the divine unity just as a battle was about to begin, and he proceeded to answer it. When another person objected, "Is now the time for such things?" he replied, "This is the reason that we are fighting Muawiya, not for any worldly gain. It is not our true aim to capture Syria; of what value is Syria?" (Algar, p. 400-401)

Such transcendent and long-term attitudes towards Iran's problems have provided practical politicians and interpreters of Khomeini (Prime Ministers, Presidents, leaders of the Islamic Republican Party) with contradictory instructions at times, as well as with a certain inflexibility towards pragmatic issues. Economics, Khomeini is alleged to have said at one point, is for donkeys. Legislation, we have seen, is an unnecessary activity: the role of parliament is merely to set agendas and to oversee implementation; the laws themselves are divine or deducible from the Quran and the hadith. This is not senile obtuseness but an insistence that details of administration are inconsequential, can be handled in any number of ways, as long as over-all policy is rightly guided, and a faith that right-guidance is either intuitively obvious or is simply decided by consulting with a few people who know the basic facts of a case.

Thus, Khomeini was first influenced to kill a land reform proposal which had been approved by the Revolutionary Council in 1979; and more recently in

1981, after renewed interest in Parliament, he overrode the objections of the Council of Guardians and approved the same proposal.³⁰ Or more starkly, Khomeini's response to the public outcry at the early pace of executions and the range of crimes for which people were executed, led him initially to direct that only those who killed and tortured for the Shah be executed. But the directives were ignored, and his, at minimum tacit, acquiescence since indicates that he still believes as he wrote in *Islamic Government*, "Islam is prepared to subordinate individuals to the collective interest of society and has rooted out numerous groups that were a source of corruption and harm to human society" (p. 89). The legal procedures and civil rights protections of Islamic law, on which the example of Imam Ali is often cited with pride by Shiites in contrast to the arbitrary rule of the Caliph Omar apparently do not apply in a society not yet Muslim (although Ali's example would deny this as his was also a period of struggle to create a Muslim society).

That Khomeini ordered a return to customary folk techniques of mourning the martyrdom of Husain during Muharram 1981 is a further indication of his transcendental rather than revolutionary concerns. In 1978 Khomeini had invoked the distinction between passive weeping and active witnessing and fighting for Husain's cause, and so he called for suspension of flagellations, processions and passion plays in favor of political marches and mobilization against the Shah. By 1981 the revolutionary moment has passed for him, and he is concerned with passive order, obedience to the regime, consolidation and stabilization, and has returned to his 1943 defense of all the psychological devices which aid people in their belief. His television defense of mysticism (the lectures on Sura Fatiha) suggested that while all Muslims should strive toward spiritual advance, certain people are already further along and can serve as leaders to the rest.

It is perhaps too easy to point out that there is nothing in this vision that remotely compares with a notion of politics as give and take between conflicting yet just group interests within society. There is nothing in this vision that considers the possibility that the business of administering society is anything more than a technical detail. Khomeini's program, when it comes down to it, consists of critique (of colonialism, imperialism, monarchy, bureaucracy, coercion based on economic inequality, alienation through erosion of cultural authenticity and self-confidence), of abstract moral vision (constructed from traditional parables, mystical philosophy, scholastic argumentation, and faith in the righteousness of Islamic jurisprudence), and strategic defenses (the construction of such legalisms as *maktabi*, *vilayat-i faqih*, a Council of Guardians, revolutionary courts). It is a valid expression of (especially petit bourgeois) exasperations, and it has claims to universalistic values (anti-imperialism, social

justice, cultural authenticity). As the example of the Imams so vividly and tragically demonstrated so long ago, this is not enough.

Such Western critique may frame the tragic struggle of Khomeini for us. But there is also a tragedy from an Iranian philosophical point of view as well, as can be appreciated by juxtaposing Khomeini's lectures on Sura Fatiha with the work of Mulla Sadra.³¹ Khomeini's philosophy draws deeply on Mulla Sadra. Both are inspired by a vision of simultaneous progress in social justice and spiritual consciousness. Both see the role of philosophical mysticism to be to integrate social norms (a stage of ethical agreement among men) with higher philosophical values, and thereby to give society a direction toward developing greater justice, equity, and fulfillment. Both maintain a creative tension between transcendent and ordinary perception. Both spoke out at critical historical junctures when there seemed to be a possibility of guiding public interpretations and symbols of man's destiny. Both deride literalist clerics, and defend the language of mysticism. Mulla Sadra, however, attacks the notion that *mujtahids* or *fuqaha* should serve as interpreters for the ignorant masses, whereas Khomeini has adapted it as the cornerstone of his state policy. The difference is not resolved if one considers that Khomeini's distinction between false clerics and those who understand Islam might parallel Mulla Sadra's distinction between *fuqaha* and *urafa* (enlightened mystics). Mulla Sadra keeps attention focused on the goals, the understanding, and the striving towards man's highest potential. The tragedy of Khomeini is that he has averted the gaze to the relative strength or weakness of one man (or at best a council of particular men), the *faqih*. Khomeini unintentionally has fulfilled Shariati's charge of practicing Safavid Shiism, which would institutionalize the power of a clerical profession and find justifications for traditional folk practices used to subordinate the masses to that power. As Imam Ali put it many centuries ago:³²

The people are dead except the ulama; the ulama are dead except those who practice their knowledge; all those who practice their knowledge are dead except the pious ones, and they are in great danger.

Notes

1. Translation by Mehdi Abedi from the text in *Zendigi-Nameh Iman Khomeini* (Teheran: Fifteenth of Khordad Publishers, n.d.), volume 2, p. 1.
2. This essay complements arguments already laid out in 1) "Becoming Mullah: Reflections on Iranian Clerics in a Revolutionary Age" (see especially part three, "The Ayatullah as Allegory: A Walter Benjaminite Interpretation of Khomeini's Mesmerism"),

Iranian Studies 13:1/4 (1980); 2) "Islam and the Revolt of the Petit Bourgeoisie" *Dædalus* 111:1 (Winter 1982); and 3) *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

3. *Nahzat-e Imam Khomeini*, vol. I, The anonymous author is probably Shaikh Mahmud Razi. The work has been republished by the Houston chapter of the Islamic Students Association of North America.

4. Gregory Rose, "Vilayat-i Faqih: Alienation, Ideology and the Recovery of Islamic Identity in the Thought of Ayatollah Khomeini," Paper presented to the Society for Iranian Studies, November 1981, p. 15.

5. "Islamic government . . . is constitutional . . . not constitutional in the current sense of the word, i.e., based on the approval of laws in accordance with the opinion of the majority. It is constitutional in the sense that the rulers are subject to a certain set of conditions . . . set forth in the Noble Quran and the Sunna . . ." Hamid Algar translation, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 55.

6. Compare again Khomeini in 1970: "What connections do all the various articles of the Constitution, as well as the body of Supplementary Law concerning the monarchy, the succession, and so forth, have with Islam? They are all opposed to Islam; they violate the system of government and the laws of Islam." *Ibid.*, p. 31.

7. The broadcast explains that at the time of Borujerdi's death, people interpreted "Ruhullah" to refer to "Isa Ruhullah," Jesus in his manifestation at the end of time; and that this had confused people (one should follow not reject prophets) and had alienated people from Borujerdi.

8. "They are irretrievable apostates (*mortad-e fitri*, apostates by nature) and [thus] their blood may be shed (*mahdur-e dam*, whose blood may be wasted) [by anyone]." (*Inha mortad-e fitri va mahdur-e dam hastand.*) Apostasy is a capital crime. The phrase *mahdur-e dam* implies that there need be no trial or decision by a constituted authority, but that anyone may perform the act on his own initiative.

9. Meshad: Tus Publishers, Esfand 1344.

10. Translation by Mehdi Abedi from the text in *Zendigi Nameh Imam Khomeini*, pp. 38-43.

11. See his declarations to the Hajj pilgrims of February 6, 1971, and his missive on the 2500 year celebrations of October 31, 1971.

12. Rose, "Vilayat-i Faqih," p. 11.

13. "If the only proof I had were one of the traditions I have been citing, I would be unable to substantiate my claim." Algar translation, p. 99.

14. Rose points out that in the long rehearsal of the argument from the hadith, Khomeini selects hadith in collections from the late Safavid period (especially from the *Wasail al-Shia* of Amili) in preference to earlier collections, and that by so doing he can salvage a crucial sentence not given in an early hadith, and can drop the last part of a hadith which he uses in a central way (the *maqbulah* of Umar ibn Hanzala). The abbreviated version in the *Wasail al-Shia* does not raise the issue of the fallibility of even the most pious and most learned, an issue centrally posed by the full version in the classic collection *Usul al-Kafi*. Rose thus provides a nice demonstration of Shariati's charge that the clergy, including Khomeini, tend to practice a Safavid Shiism. Said Amir Arjomand further points out that Khomeini's citation of Mullah Ahmad Naraq as a precursor is not quite just, "The State and Khomeini's Islamic Order," *Iranian Studies* 13:1/4 (1980).

15. "There is not a single topic in human life for which Islam has not provided instruction and established a norm." (Algar, p. 30). See also the paragraph beginning, "First the laws of the shari'a embrace a diverse body of laws and regulations, which amounts to a complete social system." (Algar, p. 43).

16. "Becoming Mullah."

17. See "Islam and the Revolt of the Petite Bourgeoisie" for a fuller statement of this analysis of the social base of Khomeini's appeal.

18. Mary Hooglund, "One Village in the Revolution" *MERIP Reports* No. 87 (May 1980).

19. See the June 25 and July 26, 1981 issues of *Iran Times*.

20. "The State and Khomeini's Islamic Order" *Iranian Studies* 13:1/4 (1980): 153.

21. In pre-revolutionary Iranian Persian, "imam" was generally reserved for the twelve Imams. In Arabic, in Iraq, "imam" served as a title equivalent to ayatullah. Shariati provided leftists a rationale for using the title in Iran by comparing it to the Weberian definition of charismatic authority. In older philosophical usage, as in Mulla Sadra, it referred to a state of spiritual achievement. Khomeini initially carefully captioned his official portraits, "Nayeb-e Imam" (Aide to the Imam), a nineteenth-century title.

22. His television lectures on Sura Nazeat have been published by the Mujaheddin under the title, *Ba Quran dar Sanah* (With the Quran in the Battlefield). In them he distinguishes metaphysical interpretations of the Quran from their everyday social meanings. He had previously published a somewhat different interpretation of the same Sura in *Partoi az Quran* (Rays from the Quran) and says he modified his opinions while he was in prison. The Islamic Republican Party refused to publish these talks and instead issued a book by Khomeini using the same title.

23. Lecture 5 on Sura Fatiha (1980), in Algar translation, p. 415.

24. This verse has interesting populist implications which the Islamic Republican Party would like to deny: "We sent down with [our Messengers] the Book and the Balance so that men [us, the people] might uphold justice. And we sent down iron, wherein is great might . . ." (Arthur J. Arberry translation, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 567.

25. Ironically, the *dua* or prayer of Imam Sajad does not mention the Umayyids but only prays for the soldiers of Islam. It is Khomeini who draws the inference that since the government at the time was an Umayyid Caliphate, the prayer was in their defense.

26. Indeed on 6 Khordad 1360, Khomeini issued a *fatwa* in the course of a public speech that those who make fun of *maktabi* Muslims are *mortad-e fitri* and *mahdur-e dam* (see n.8): "their wives shall be forbidden (*haram*) to them, their property shall be seized and distributed, and their blood may be wasted" (Anonymous, *Munafiqin-i Khalq Ru Dar Ru-ye Khalq* (Teheran: Political Office, Revolutionary Guards, 31 Shahrivar 1360), p. 48).

27. Rose, "Vilayat-i Faqih."

28. The chapter on *taqlid* in *Usul-i Kafi* (the first of the four canonic collections of Shiite hadith) gives but two hadith (one with two different chains of transmission), both censuring blind *taqlid*. Imam Sadeq is asked in one about the Quranic verse which charges Jews and Christians with raising their rabbis and priests to the level of divinity. Asked if this is true, Imam Sadeq replies: not in the sense that they prayed to these leaders or fasted for them, but in the sense that when these leaders allowed what God had forbidden and forbade what He had permitted, the Jews and Christians had followed them. (Implication: the misled is as guilty as the misleader; you who practice *taqlid*, beware.)

The other hadith condemns the Morjeh (a Muslim group which believed that faith alone would bring salvation) for practicing excessive *taqlid*.

29. A title acquired thanks to the revolution.

30. Drafted by Reza Esfahani, then in the Ministry of Agriculture, it would 1) distribute land confiscated by revolutionary courts; 2) distribute uncultivated land; and, 3) distribute farms above a certain size according to local conditions determined by a council of seven. The third is the controversial provision.

31. See especially the new introduction and translation by James W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. Princeton University Press, 1981.

32. The first poem in *Divan-i Ali ibn Abi Taleb*.