

Imam Khomeini: The Dialectics of Temporal and Presential Knowledge in his Outlook and Experience

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Introduction

Imam Khomeini extended Islamic thought from the theoretical aspect to the practical one, from mysticism and ethics to history and experience, and from legal reasoning and jurisprudence to revolution and the establishment of state. Thus, he presented a wide set of issues and matters of contention which had not been previously discussed in Islamic thought generally and in Shiite thought specifically. This took place before his revolution which created an intellectual uprising that did not fall short of the revolution's political and historical effects. However, the modern Islamic experience – through its internal dynamism- still results in current and newly arising issues.

Imam Khomeini's experience consists of many matters which we have not yet tried to discover and it is composed of a multitude of dimensions. The Imam only clarified a part of his endeavor but left the rest to be discovered in his words and throughout book pages. The issue which we are discussing is a compilation and study of a part of those scattered fragments in a way through which we can interpret one of the aspects of the Imam's outstanding endeavor – the knowledge aspect.

Imam Khomeini became politically involved and took upon himself a historical responsibility toward Islam, Shiism, and Iran. This made him involved in a mental and intellectual discussion relatively new to Shiite thought.

Shiite thought was mostly limited throughout its history to the domain of religious knowledge only. It presented theoretical preambles and created an intellectual atmosphere which limited the matters of concern, and established reasoning faculties solely appertaining to the methodology of that knowledge starting from Aristotilean logic to doctrine, ethics, jurisprudence and its principles, philosophy, and mysticism.

Imam Khomeini entered a sphere which necessitated an experimental mentality which was different in its concern, methodology, and contentions from the ordinary reasoning used in religious knowledge. He considered that this new discussion was “the utmost obligation” and he clarified that confronting tyrants is a part of monotheism which maintains that “there is no God other than Allah”. Thus, rejecting tyrants and every hegemony attributed to other than God is a prerequisite to asserting that there is “no other God than Allah”.

Religious knowledge on the doctrinal-philosophical level aims at providing knowledge of the Creator, while in jurisprudence and its principles it aims at understanding Divine Legislation. Our point of discussion is the part of knowledge which is concerned with knowing God. As for the other part which is related to legislation, religious texts, and the way of deriving laws, it is a purely intellectual domain which we cannot compare as a distinguishing element of religious knowledge as opposed to temporal knowledge. The distinction lies in spiritual and doctrinal divine knowledge in contrast to earthly material knowledge.

Temporal experimental knowledge has no specific theme whether in its aspects or on various levels. Themes are not limited to a certain domain and are not always proven; they are prone to change and can even be entirely rejected in addition to the difference in people’s awareness of them. The reason is because this knowledge deals with “contingent beings” and not the “Necessary Being”. Thus, temporal knowledge suffers weakness due to the limitedness of human senses and man’s perception of time and place, including the fact that this knowledge is solely restricted to the physical aspect.

It is not easy to claim knowledge of a certain issue on the experimental level because it is very easy for the individual and others to reveal any lack of knowledge. This is evident in thousands of scientific experiments and theories in all sciences with no exception. On the other hand, experimental knowledge is similar to religious knowledge in that it may be overruled in a certain issue, including whatever is linked to it. Thus, it is relative and not fixed in its methodology, theme, and details. Thus, experimental knowledge is

slightly dynamic and leads to intellectual activity. It is also a form of social knowledge in contrast to awareness of God which is individualistic; a group may delve into the experimental domain but the center of religious knowledge is an individual's heart.

The Main Issue

Imam Khomeini's experience has antecedence in both these types of knowledge. The Imam was an Islamic mystic on the spiritual level and at the same time he was an outstanding intellectual in the way he accomplished his complete political and revolutionary enterprise which encompassed all social aspects. So how was he able to draw the connection between knowledge and existence?

Thus, our point in question relates to the relation between the two types of knowledge - *temporal* and *presential knowledge*- in their philosophical and intellectual bases and their methodological and practical implementations. Is there contradiction between them or is there complete harmony? How does *temporal knowledge* –which is invested for the purpose of maintaining strength and constructing the world - correspond with *presential knowledge* which aims at realizing one's individual need, his attachment to the Necessary Being, and the path to Divine Lordship through the humbleness of servitude?

What does the interaction between intellect and the soul and between knowledge by presence and temporal experimental perception signify? Accordingly, how is the internal structure of knowledge and logic in this interaction formed? How does each level of knowledge affect the other? Is combination a necessity or is it inessential? What are its effects and results? How is spiritual knowledge affected by experimental temporal mental preoccupation? How did Imam Khomeini determine the status of each type of knowledge with respect to one another and how can we understand the aim of this formation?

Line of Reasoning

Imam Khomeini benefitted from the experimental mentality in order to clarify spiritual religious intellect on the basis that "the worldly life is the seedbed of the hereafter". This is the primary statement which forms the base of our discussion. In other words, the path of worldly struggle is a crossing point to spiritual perfection through divine mysticism. The Imam's philosophical view emphasized the prohibition of forsaking struggle in the worldly life and he considered struggle as a key to knowledge of the heavenly domain. The Imam considered that the hermit leading a solitary life was merely a "mirror-recluse" who could not reach the true heavenly ranks of perfection. In

one of his speeches, Imam Khomeini said: "O mystic who considers that Allah is the only influence in the universe...why do you fear the tyrant?"

In conduct, Imam Khomeini considered that true faith exists when actions are compatible with what the heart embraces. As for the knowledge aspect, the Imam established a special school of thought and was among the few who presented themselves as mere students even though he possessed the highest wisdom. He never claimed that he had attained complete knowledge in mysticism nor did he praise the rank he had reached. When his daughter in law asked him to write her a counsel in mysticism, he replied: "You are asking an ant for Solomon's throne!"

He was also one of the few who did not criticize a person for holding a certain view but denounced the view itself because through his philosophical and value outlook he considered that humans don't have the capacity to attain complete knowledge and thus cannot be blamed for its lack thereof. He did not claim wisdom and declared incapacity in religious knowledge and these were a result of an actual experience which signified that we must fulfill our religious duty and should not to fret about the result for "victory is only granted by God". When it becomes difficult to achieve the intended results in a turbulent and ever-shifting world, fulfilling religious duty is a sign of true dependence on God. In the return trip to Iran from Neauphle-le-Château, Imam Khomeini was calm to the extent that he fell asleep because he had reached a level in which he did not yearn merely to achieve results but had centralized his endeavor upon fulfillment of religious duty because he was always "in God's presence".

Through his humbleness and servitude to Allah, Imam Khomeini was able to combine the two levels of knowledge. He once said: "I have not offered one [sincere] prayer to Allah", "I wish I were a member of the Revolutionary Guards", and at the beginning of the revolution he told Sayyed Al-Hakim: "Proceed and we are behind you". This combination was fused through the sacrifices, the anguish, the places of exile, and the subsequent victories. It was formed through spiritual and intellectual courage which brought Islam back to the scene of solving the problems of the modern era through fulfilling a temporal experience which was manifest in the establishment of an Islamic country.

Through his experimental and pragmatic reasoning, Imam Khomeini realized the limitedness in the domain of earthly human knowledge and through this very same reasoning and heart he perceived the incapacity to fully know God. The Imam –with his dynamic intellect and driven by a sincere spiritual motive - was prepared to fulfill all the great responsibilities which he undertook from the beginning of the revolution until its victory, throughout the early period of establishment of state, during the war, and also while leading the new Islamic society. In addition to this, the Imam possessed a wide array of knowledge in cultural and religious aspects.

Religious awareness enables an individual to ascend his reality and places him on the divine path through servitude, while temporal knowledge always reminds him of his human limitations as an individual in front of society, humanity, the universe, and God. This interaction between the two inverse aspects appeared intensely in the Imam's experience. It manifests the standard for the correctness of the movement towards God, and it prevents man from the loss which results from becoming a "mirror-recluse", getting arrogant, or craving personal praise.

On the other hand, in order to achieve goals, Imam Khomeini did not rely upon experimental reasoning or structural innovation. He always devoted himself to God's presence and depended upon Him- whether in times of earthly strength or weakness. The loss of the hereafter –and the possible failure and loss in the worldly life - is manifest through being content with experimental reasoning without possessing a sincere intention devoid of the desire to gain power. It is also clear through not relying upon God and through forsaking experimental reasoning, materialistic means, knowledge methodologies, and the ways to gain authority.

We can search for a specific epistemology of Imam Khomeini in the domain of temporal knowledge and its rank with respect to the knowledge system. The evidence and elements are available and logic is compatible with it, but we have only found a reference to this in the Imam's book: "Soldiers of Reasoning and Ignorance" in his discussion of the jurisprudence pertaining to the administration of homes and cities, state-policy, and the necessity that this should be an introduction to the attainment of true divine knowledge. However, we are able to reach a view derived from the Imam's exploit and even though Imam Khomeini did not pose it in an organized and theoretical manner, but it was reflected in his speeches, texts, and actions. We can benefit from them to present a summary of the Imam's feat in his approach to the various theoretical, ethical, and practical issues (and Imam Khomeini referred to one of these which is the relation between Religious Seminaries and universities).

The Scholarly Domain

The argument which we will explore will address new issues concerning practical epistemology. In this study, we have resorted to the Imam's experience as a source of emulation on the intellectual and practical levels in order to conclude the determinants and general view on knowledge interdependence.

The size of this research and its complexity arise from different matters such as the diversity in its disciplines, the extension of the Imam's experience in aspects and time, the newness and uniqueness of his enterprise, the non-existence of previous

researches, the incompetence of myself in discussing the Imam's experience, time shortage, and the difficulty in managing this research due to the non-existence of a former scholarly methodology which discusses the type of research which connects the experimental temporal domain with the spiritual aspect of the individual.

On the other hand, the Imam's discourse sets forth a few matters of contention. Imam Khomeini did not present himself as a theorizing and philosophical intellectual. Instead of that, he presented a practical example and fulfillment of the Islamic view because he did not have enough time to systematically elucidate the philosophical basis from which he proceeded.

This research cannot present tangible, definite, or direct proof. It considers the Imam's discourse and enterprise and strives to offer a comprehensive view which links between them. The purpose is to attain an understanding of the Imam's reasoning and experience from the following aspect: Imam Khomeini possessed both types of knowledge - the spiritual and the temporal- so how did they affect one another and influence the Imam's personal perception?

We have chosen Imam Khomeini as an exemplar in order to elucidate the connection between temporal and spiritual knowledge. The reason behind this choice is because the Imam was a source of emulation in jurisprudence, ethics, and conduct and his experience was one of purity and asceticism. It was also documented in depth and resulted in historical accomplishments. Even though there were many scholars throughout the history of Shiism who had feats in temporal knowledge, but these enterprises lacked the distinguishing characteristics of Imam Khomeini's experience such as its wide range, depth, influence, continuity throughout time, and the extent of engagement.

Islamic thought was concerned with the establishment of truth and the continuity of knowledge. It did not examine the issue which arose from political and temporal practice and which was manifest in the interconnection of various realities, their influence over one another, and the cognitive human effort in revealing these connections in a way which can be benefitted from in everyday life. Thus, the philosophical concept remained aloof from reality and life issues due to the nature of the matters of concern in Islamic philosophy and religious doctrinal concerns.

Research Methodology

This study is divided into two main parts. The first is descriptive in that it presents the experience of the Imam in temporal knowledge and analyzes its methodology in addition to a general demonstration of the methodology of spiritual advancement which aims at attaining true *presential knowledge*. As for the second part, it tackles the issue of the connection between the two types of knowledge through a primary introduction

to the dialectic structure philosophically and methodologically, and through a detailed approach which clarifies the internal dialectic connections.

This discussion will proceed according to a set of methodological courses.

-The first is descriptive and relies upon presenting and discussing the theory of temporal knowledge before presenting an extrapolative demonstration of the Imam's exploit taking his speeches into consideration.

-The second course is the field of religious theory in that it analyzes the Imam's methodology in the path to perfection.

-The third is analytical in that it explores the dialectic interactive relation between the two epistemological dimensions.

Connecting the theoretical methodology to extrapolation rests upon the conformity of Imam Khomeini's words to his actions. Islam emphasizes the consistency of words with actions, and this is achieved through piety and self-examination. Through the Imam's words, we can witness the extent to which he kept watch over his knowledge and temporal experience and how he presented reviews and criticism of them while on the pulpit- and this was all facilitated by his social and historical position.

The Imam's spiritual and ethical words in his lessons, speeches, letters, and books reflect that piety and self-examination. His asceticism and full adherence to Islamic laws show us that Imam was highly devoted. He combined the theoretical aspect to the practical one and embodied religious texts more meticulously than his counterparts.

It is important to point out that Imam Khomeini proceeded from religious thought and through it he specified the theoretical and practical framework for application. He developed religious thought from its conventional frame and transformed it into a guide for society in all dimensions through a comprehensive consideration of religious texts and full adherence to it. This is what drives us to state that the Imam's experience was based on the principle of the necessity of the conformity of words with actions as opposed to enterprises which gave minor significance to actions or those which were not genuinely Islamic and mainly heeded actions without giving importance to thought. Thus, we are able to establish a view for our methodology which is based upon Imam Khomeini's enterprise *and* texts.

The integration of these methodologies leads us to an intellectual system which is based upon the Imam's unification of knowledge and at the same time explains his monotheistic outlook. This forms a modern knowledge set which regards temporal disciplines in the light of a monotheistic outlook. On the other hand, the separation of disciplines limits the scope of vision, the potentiality to connect and interpret, and the realistic aspect when taking matters into consideration. Linking methodologies together does not cancel their distinguishing features or the specialized and scholarly nature of each, but it is an attempt to achieve an integrative connection which links them together in a comprehensive understanding.

In earthly knowledge, Imam Khomeini depended upon observation and direct experience. This enabled him to comprehend the main issue of this knowledge in a way which specified its connection to other existential ranks and other disciplines according to the principle of the compatibility of words with actions. The perspective which we will implement consists of a multitude of knowledge domains because Imam Khomeini was acquainted with many fields of knowledge and had many concerns. Thus, the issue which we will discuss is composed of various domains which are fused with each other. The integration of disciplines is a process for the establishment of a positive relation between the contrasting results in the different domains. Through integration, new knowledge is gained and disciplines are developed.

This knowledge system which relies upon the integration and interaction of a variety of methodologies aims at providing an in-depth view of the Imam's knowledge enterprise in earthly disciplines. This view displays the dialectic interaction between the Imam's temporal and spiritual knowledge. When we want to consider Imam Khomeini, we need to consider a variety of methodologies and viewpoints because of the numerous dimensions in his personality and the way they overlap in his experience.

Ahad Karamalki considers that this is a general quality of theological research. He maintains that "the roots of religious phenomena extend to various domains and are linked - through mutual ties- to a multitude of psychological elements and different social entities at the level of the infrastructure of human civilization. This matter attests that a religious phenomenon has various aspects and different levels¹". In a critical view he states that "disregarding the specialized approach while dealing with the issues of this field of knowledge and while considering religious phenomena leads to discovering only one side and aspect of the phenomenon. This means ignorance of the other aspects and thus an individual becomes prone to falling in the trap of omission"².

¹ قراملكي، أحد فرامرز / مناهج البحث في الدراسات الدينية / معهد المعارف الحكيمية، بيروت / 2004 / ص 394.

² قراملكي / مناهج البحث / ص 395.