



Explanation of Mystical Concepts of the Islamic Revolution from the Perspective of Seyyed Morteza Avini

Hossein Ebrahimi ¹ , Abbas Keshavarz Shokri ² 

1. PhD student in Islamic Revolution Political Studies at Shahed University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)
Email: Hossein.ebrahimi1387@gmail.com
2. Professor, Department of Political Science, shahed University, Tehran, Iran. Email: keshavarz@shahed.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:

Received: 14 February 2025
Received in revised form: 04 June 2025
Accepted: 05 June 2025
Published online: 23 September 2025

Keywords:

Iran, Islamic Revolution,
Morteza Avini, Mysticism,
Politics.

ABSTRACT

Mysticism, as a profound spiritual school and a key movement within Iranian culture, has played a significant role in the political and social developments of Iran. The Islamic Revolution was not merely a political upheaval but a spiritual awakening and an inner transformation in which mystical and philosophical dimensions were manifested. Understanding the relationship between mysticism and the Islamic Revolution enables a more comprehensive grasp of the Revolution's various dimensions and its impact on the Shia community and Iranian society. Seyyed Morteza Avini, as one of the intellectual elites of this period, addressed this phenomenon from a deep mystical perspective. This article examines Avini's approach to the Revolution through the lens of mysticism and religiosity, showing how this framework enriches our understanding of the Revolution and its message. The theoretical foundation of the study is rooted in mystical thought. Avini considered the Revolution a manifestation of divine love and a quest for truth, wherein people returned to their essence and sought to realize divine values. The study employs an analytical-descriptive method, drawing on three of Avini's works—*A Beginning at an End*, *Snails Without a Home*, and *Governance of the Wise*. Through textual interpretation, this research identifies connections between mystical ideas and the Revolution. The findings reveal that Avini's mystical approach not only distinguishes the Islamic Revolution from other global revolutions but also emphasizes inner transformation, monotheism, the interplay between love and reason, and divine encounter. For Avini, the Revolution transcends political change, constituting a spiritual journey and mystical ascent. He outlines stages of mystical ascent in politics—self-awareness, migration, struggle, and guardianship—suggesting that the Revolution is an opportunity for returning to one's essence and achieving a deeper understanding of life's meaning and purpose.

Cite this article: Ebrahimi, H.; Keshavarz Shokri, A. (2025). Explanation of Mystical Concepts of the Islamic Revolution from the Perspective of Seyyed Morteza Avini. *Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*, 15(3): 38-55. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.390520.1776>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.390520.1776>

1. Introduction

The Islamic Revolution of Iran, one of the most influential events of the twentieth century, has been interpreted in diverse ways, ranging from political and economic analyses to sociological and cultural perspectives. Among its less examined yet profoundly significant aspects is the mystical perspective. Although Sufi mysticism became central to Iranian-Islamic civilization from the seventh century onward, the relationship between mysticism and politics remains a subject of debate. The central issue concerns the compatibility—or tension—between authentic Islamic mysticism and political authority.

Some scholars argue that mystical doctrines, such as the inwardly-oriented concept of Imamate, *fana fi Allah* (annihilation in God), and divine illumination, are fundamentally distinct from social governance (Sorush, 2014: 283). Others contend that mysticism is largely incompatible with politics, since mysticism is rooted in metaphysical realities beyond human will, whereas governance operates through rationality and transparency (Daryoush, 2008: 12, 23). Conversely, proponents of the “unity theory” maintain that Islamic mysticism and politics are interrelated, with mysticism elevating human virtue and responsibility and thereby motivating governance (Jafari, 1999: 21; Javadi Amoli, 2005: 93).

Within this intellectual landscape, Seyyed Morteza Avini—a prominent thinker and artist of the post-revolutionary era—offered a unique mystical interpretation of the Islamic Revolution. His view aligns the Revolution with “spiritual and cultural revolutions,” emphasizing value-based, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions over purely political or economic concerns. Avini regarded the Revolution as rooted in inner awakening and monotheistic transformation, which ensured its endurance and idealism. Unlike Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who emphasizes the integration of mysticism with modern sciences, or Leila Ashighi, who interprets mysticism through philosophical and structural lenses, Avini’s distinct contribution lies in his focus on symbolic and spiritual dimensions, interpreting the Revolution as a manifestation of divine love and proximity.

The central question of this study is how Avini employed mystical concepts to interpret the Islamic Revolution. He perceived it not merely as a political shift but as a divine manifestation, a “spiritual jihad” directed toward truth, self-awareness, and perfection. This research explores the intersection of mysticism and politics in Avini’s thought, analyzing how mystical concepts are employed in his works to interpret the Revolution, thereby offering a novel perspective on the Revolution as a mystical-spiritual phenomenon..

2. Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis, defined as a systematic interpretive approach to textual data through categorization and conceptual mapping (Iman & Noshadi, 2011: 36; Tarbizi, 2014: 114). The analysis focuses on Avini’s writings, extracting recurring mystical categories and linking them to political interpretations of the Revolution.

3. Findings

In his writings, Avini emphasizes that the Islamic Revolution was not only a political transformation but also a return to mystical and spiritual identity. He considered Imam Khomeini the embodiment of this inner awakening, portraying the Revolution as a model for reinforcing spiritual values. In *A Beginning at an End*, he argues:

“Humanity can only undergo a historical transformation through revolution. Those who reject this theory are attached to the status quo. Within humans lies both a tendency to remain and a stronger desire to move. Since humans are habitual beings clinging to stability, historical transformation can only occur through revolution” (Avini, 2012: 95).

Avini distinguishes between two types of revolution: the Rubīʿ Revolution, an external social transformation, and the Sayyām Revolution, an inner transformation of the soul. For him, the Islamic Revolution combined both, with inner transformation serving as the foundation for outward change. He viewed the Revolution as a turning point in human history, signifying the decline of Western civilization and the rise of a new spiritual era.

From this perspective, the Revolution functions as a catalyst for the emergence of the Perfect Human and as part of a cosmic process of spiritual evolution. Avini emphasized the Revolution's role in preparing humanity for the ultimate global transformation under Imam Mahdi's leadership.

4. Conclusion

Avini's mystical interpretation of the Islamic Revolution highlights its spiritual depth and distinguishes it from other revolutions. By framing it as a "revolution of values" rooted in divine love and self-awareness, Avini underscores the Revolution's enduring legitimacy. He describes the leader of the Revolution as a Perfect Human, whose inner transformation catalyzed social and political change.

Accordingly, the Islamic Revolution represents both a historical turning point and a mystical ascent—a movement that not only challenges Western grand narratives but also lays the groundwork for a universal revolution. From Avini's perspective, it is best understood as part of a spiritual journey, integrating politics with divine encounter and mystical realization.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization of the article and writing of the original and subsequent drafts.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Considerations: The authors avoided data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and any form of misconduct.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Avini, Morteza. (2004). *Governance of the Wise: A Review of Political Authority in Islam*. Tehran: Shaheed Avini Cultural and Artistic Institute.
- Avini, Morteza. (2011). *A Beginning at an End*. Tehran: Vahhā.
- Avini, Morteza. (2012). *Snails Without a Home*. Tehran: Vahhā.
- Birjandi, Ibn Maysam. (2025). *Commentary on Nahj al-Balagha* (2nd ed.). Tehran: Book Publishing Office.
- Dalir, Bahram. (2017). Mysticism and the Islamic Revolution. *Quarterly Book Criticism*, 18(81–82), 329–379.
- Darvish, Mohammad Reza. (1999). *Mysticism and Democracy*. Tehran: Qaseedah.
- Fazeli, Qader. (2008). *Political Mysticism or Mystical Politics*. Qom: Fazilat al-Ilm.
- Hosseini, S. (2023). An explanation of the homology of Avini's speech in mystical texts with an approach to classical Persian mystical works. *Shahed Andisheh*, 4(1), 9–31.
- Hujviri, Ali ibn Othman. (1992). *Kashf al-Mahjub*. Tehran: Tehran Offset Printing.
- Iman, Mohammad Taqi, & Noshadi, Mahmoud Reza. (2011). Qualitative content analysis. *Research Quarterly*, 3(2), 15–44.
- Jafari, Mohammad Taqi. (1999). *Footnotes on Islamic Mysticism*. Tehran: Karamat Publishing Institute.
- Jalali Shijani, Jamshed. (2012). Reason and love in the view of Attar of Nishapur and Neshat al-Din Razi. *Divine Literature Quarterly*, 1(1), 41–61.

- Javadi Amoli, Abdollah. (2005). *The Foundation of Imam Khomeini's Discourse and Expression* (8th ed.). Qom: Asra.
- Kaleemi, Mohammad ibn Yaqoub. (1429 AH). *Al-Kafi*. Qom: Dar al-Hadith.
- Kaleemi, Mohammad ibn Yaqoub. (2009). *Tuhfat al-Awliya* (M. V. Moradi & A. Masoudi, Trans.). Qom: Dar al-Hadith.
- Kermani, Asieh, Mirbaqeri Fard, Seyed Ali Asghar, & Rowjatian, Seyedeh Maryam. (2018). Examining the process of spiritual transformation among Muslim mystics. *Mystical Studies Quarterly*, 28, 145–164.
- Kroun, Patricia. (2010). *The History of Political Thought in Islam* (M. Jafari, Trans.). Tehran: Sokhan.
- Malasdar. (2010). *Asrar al-Ayat* (M. A. Javdan, Ed.). Tehran: Islamic Wisdom Foundation.
- Mihani, Mohammad ibn Manur. (1988). *Asrar al-Tawhid fi Maqamat al-Shaikh Abi Saeed* (M. R. Shafiei Kadkani, Ed.). Tehran: Agha Publications.
- Qaysari, Davud ibn Mahmud. (2002). *Rasael* (S. J. Ashtiani, Ed.). Tehran: Iranian Research Institute for Wisdom and Philosophy.
- Ragheb Asfahani, Hussein ibn Muhammad. (1984). *Al-Mufradat fi Alfaz al-Qur'an* (G. K. Hosseini, Trans. & Ed., 2nd ed.). Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Murtazawiyah lil-Ihya' Aasaar al-Ja'fariyyah.
- Sajjadi, Seyed Jafar. (2014). *Glossary of Mystical Terms and Expressions*. Tehran: Tahori.
- Sharif al-Radi, Muhammad ibn Husayn. (2009). *Nahj al-Balagha* (H. Ansarian, Trans.). Qom: Dar al-'Urfan.
- Soroush, Abdul Karim. (2014). *Tafreej-e-Sana: A Comparative Discussion on Creditable Perceptions* (9th ed.). Tehran: Sorat Cultural Institute.
- Tarbizi, Mansoureh. (2014). Qualitative content analysis from deductive and inductive perspectives. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 64, 105–138.
- Yaminpour, Vahid. (2019). *The Story of Avini's Thought*. Qom: Mo'arif Publishing Office.