



## Motahhari's Vision for an Islamic Economy in the Context of the Revolution: Insights from "An Introduction to Comparative Economics"

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study aims to examine Motahhari's unique contribution to Islamic economic thought, with a special focus on his analysis in the book "An Introduction to Comparative Economics." This research attempts to show how Motahhari's economic philosophy critiques Western economic schools while also presenting a unique Islamic approach, particularly within the ideological framework of Iran's Islamic Revolution.

**Methodology:** This study was conducted using a qualitative and analytical approach, relying on Motahhari's lectures in the aforementioned book. The present research examines Motahhari's economic ideas within the broader intellectual and historical context of Iran on the eve of the revolution.

**Results:** Our analysis shows that Motahhari's economic thought is distinguished by a precise differentiation between economics as a science and an economic school, an emphasis on justice and ethics, and a holistic view of Islam as a comprehensive way of life. He critiques both capitalism and socialism for their inability to achieve true justice, and instead advocates for an Islamic economic system that establishes a balance between individual initiative and social responsibility.

**Conclusions:** Motahhari's perspective on Islamic economics remains highly applicable to contemporary debates on social justice, Islamic banking, and the ethical foundations of economic policy in Iran and beyond. His works provide a strong intellectual framework for integrating Islamic values with modern economic challenges, ensuring that the pursuit of material well-being in Muslim societies remains inseparable from the quest for justice and spiritual perfection.

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## **Introduction**

The 1979 Islamic Revolution brought about a fundamental transformation in Iran's political, social, and intellectual spheres, placing the search for an economic system rooted in Islamic values and social justice at the forefront. Among the main architects of this intellectual change was Morteza Motahhari, whose economic thought played a pivotal role in shaping the ideological foundations of the revolution and the subsequent policies of the Islamic Republic. Motahhari's approach to economic issues was characterized by a precise distinction between empirical economics and normative economic teachings, with an emphasis on integrating ethical and spiritual principles into all aspects of economic life. Despite his significant influence, Motahhari's contribution to Islamic economic thought—especially as presented in the lectures compiled in "An Introduction to Comparative Economics"—has not been systematically studied within the context of its impact on revolutionary ideology and contemporary policy debates. The present study aims to fill this gap by analyzing Motahhari's critique of Western economic schools, explaining his unique Islamic alternative, and examining his enduring legacy in the discourse on justice, development, and social responsibility in Iran. To achieve these goals, this study will first review the relevant literature and explain its methodological approach. It will then introduce Motahhari as a scholar and a revolutionary thinker before analyzing the core elements of his economic philosophy and its relationship with the ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolution. The study also examines Motahhari's theoretical distinctions, his ethical framework, and his comparative standing among other Islamic economists. Finally, the article assesses the significance of his thought in the contemporary world, concluding with reflections on his lasting impact and areas for future research.

## **1. Literature Review**

Islamic economics as an independent discipline may not have a long historical background, but economic discussions among Islamic scholars and thinkers have been a significant part of the Islamic intellectual tradition. These discussions have historically been scattered and primarily focused on jurisprudence, centering on specific issues and problems. However, the emergence of a more comprehensive and systematic approach to Islamic economics can be traced in the works of some pioneering researchers. One of the most influential figures in the development of Islamic economics is the Iraqi scholar Muhammad Baqir Sadr, who is widely

considered the first to seriously and systematically address economic issues within the framework of Islamic sciences. His groundbreaking book, *Iqtisādunā* (Our Economics), revolutionized the field and established his position not only among Shi'a scholars but also among Sunni scholars. Sadr's contributions laid the foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic economics and highlighted its specific principles and values (Sadr, 1980: 2).

The book *Iqtisādunā* was written at the height of the confrontation between capitalist West and socialist East, in a climate where the question of Islam's ability to confront economic and social dilemmas was very serious. The book is organized into three parts: the first two parts provide a scientific critique of capitalism and Marxism. The third part is dedicated to explaining Islamic economics and reflects Sadr's greatest value and innovation. In this section, he presents the theory of distribution before and after production and explains the position of production and the role of the state in Islamic economics. The method of argumentation and the use of authentic Islamic sources are among the strengths of this work.

Sadr outlines three fundamental principles for Islamic economics: "A pluralistic ownership system (private, public, state) that, unlike other systems, has a balanced and hybrid nature; limited economic freedom, which, constrained by ethics and public interest, distances itself from the absolutism of capitalism; and social justice, which is divided into the two principles of public mutual responsibility and social balance." Sadr distinguishes between economics as a science and an "Economic School," stating that Islamic economics is not an empirical science but a school with value-oriented and social goals. According to him, the role of the Islamic economic school is not to explain the current situation but to present a desired model based on Sharia. In explaining ownership, he emphasizes the limitations of private property, the continuous obligation to work, and the vital role of justice. Factors of production such as land, mines, water, and natural resources each have specific religious and social rules. The role of the state is very important in Sadr's thought. He uses the famous theory of the "Zone of the Void," according to which the state can intervene in areas where there is no religious text to achieve balance and social welfare, thus preventing the exacerbation of class divisions. This work, with its ecumenical and cross-denominational approach, examines the views of Sunnis alongside Shi'a jurisprudence, paving the way for a deep economic dialogue among elites in the Islamic and Western worlds. Today, *Iqtisādunā* is one of the main references in universities and Islamic circles for Islamic economics (Barri, 2007 AD/1386 SH).

In Iran, before the Islamic Revolution, several scholars and thinkers also contributed to economic discussions from an Islamic perspective. Among them were Mohammad Beheshti and Morteza Motahhari, both of whom presented various topics and ideas on Islamic economics. Their contributions played a significant role in strengthening the discourse on Islamic economics in the Iranian context. Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti is one of the prominent thinkers in Islamic economics who believed the Islamic economic system is based on principles and components that must evolve in light of social and historical conditions. In his collection of lectures, especially in the book "The Economic System in Islam (Practical Discussions)," he examined the theoretical and practical foundations of this system. From Beheshti's perspective, the Islamic economic system is based on several fundamental pillars: first, the originality of anthropology and a realistic understanding of human nature, which is selfish yet capable of productive work. Second, the originality of ownership based on work and production; that is, true ownership is the ownership of the work a person does, not merely the ownership of capital or means of production. In this regard, he emphasizes that the Islamic economic system must define ownership based on work and avoids the unlimited private ownership that exists in the capitalist system. Beheshti also highlights the key role of the state in guiding and supervising the economic process to establish justice and prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Other principles he mentioned include an emphasis on economic justice, the fight against corruption, and the return of public property to the treasury. Economic independence and the endogenous nature of production and consumption in accordance with the needs of society are also central to his thought. He has a serious critique of both capitalist and socialist economies, believing that both systems have fundamental differences with Islamic views on ownership and justice, and therefore a replacement based on Islamic ethics and justice must be offered. In the discussion of wealth distribution, Beheshti emphasizes that economic activities should not consume all of a person's time so that there is an opportunity for spiritual growth and self-improvement, and social justice should be manifested through the realization of public mutual responsibility and social balance (Beheshti, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 11-28).

## **2. Research Background**

Numerous studies have been conducted on Motahhari's thought in various fields. In the economic sphere, from Farahani's (2003 AD/1382 SH) perspective, Motahhari's economic

thought is a combination of Islamic teachings, moral philosophy, and an effort to present a comprehensive and coherent model that responds to the worldly and spiritual needs of Islamic society. Qalabch's (2010 AD/1389 SH) comparative study of the criteria for distributive justice in the views of John Rawls and Motahhari shows that Motahhari proposed a distribution system in three stages: "Equal distribution of initial opportunities, distribution proportional to individuals' deservingness in the income generated, and redistribution of assets to create social balance." Kalateh (2014 AD/1393 SH) compares Motahhari and Sadr's views on the relationship between science and school in Islamic economics, showing that Motahhari, by distinguishing between credit relations and natural relations in economics, believed that natural relations are about general economic laws that are not limited to a specific school. In contrast, credit or contractual relations are linked to laws within a specific school or philosophy. Kashian (2023 AD/1402 AH), by comparing Sadr and Motahhari's views on economic justice from a systems theory perspective, showed that by considering the four components of goal, parts, basis, and relationships as the main pillars of a system, Sadr and Motahhari's systemic theories of economic justice have significant similarities in terms of goals and basis. However, there are notable differences in the parts and relationships that drive the system toward justice.

A review of the conducted research indicates that the main focus of researchers has been on the professor's theories in the book "A Look at the Islamic Economic System," and despite Motahhari being recognized as one of the main architects of the intellectual foundations of the Islamic Revolution, a focused academic study on the book "An Introduction to Comparative Economics" has not been undertaken, not only in English but even in Persian academic literature. As far as we know, this article is the first comprehensive and scientific analysis of this work. Previous research on Motahhari has usually addressed his philosophical, theological, or socio-political thoughts, often neglecting his specific economic thinking and its implications for post-revolution Iran. By systematically examining "An Introduction to Comparative Economics," this study fills a significant gap in the research literature. This research places Motahhari's economic philosophy in both the broader context of Islamic economics and the unique context of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, offering new perspectives on the role of his thought in the development of policy and discourse on Islamic economics in Iran. This approach not only highlights Motahhari's innovation in addressing

economic issues but also provides a basis for further comparative and interdisciplinary research in Islamic economic studies.

### **3. Research Method**

This research employs a qualitative-analytical methodology to examine Morteza Motahhari's economic thought, with a special emphasis on his lectures compiled in "An Introduction to Comparative Economics." The study is primarily based on a careful textual analysis of Motahhari's main works, including published books and post-mortem lecture compilations. These primary sources are examined to clarify his conceptual distinctions, theoretical frameworks, and normative positions on Islamic economics. This analysis places Motahhari's thought within the broader intellectual and historical context of Iran before and after the revolution. By tracing the development of his ideas in light of the Islamic Revolution and its consequences, this study shows how Motahhari's economic philosophy contributed to the ideological foundations of the new Islamic Republic and continues to influence contemporary debates on economic justice, social responsibility, and policymaking in Iran. Through this multifaceted qualitative approach, the article seeks to provide the first comprehensive and scientific analysis of "An Introduction to Comparative Economics" and offers new perspectives on Motahhari's enduring legacy in Islamic economic thought.

### **4. Theoretical Foundations**

#### **4.1. Motahhari as a Scholar and Revolutionary Thinker**

Morteza Motahhari, known as Professor Motahhari, was recognized as one of the prominent Shi'a scholars, and his legacy shines in a treasure trove of valuable works that he created during his short but fruitful life. Each of his works demonstrated a meticulous and systematic research approach, designed to address the urgent needs of his time. Motahhari's academic efforts were accompanied by an unparalleled commitment to discipline, which distinguished him in the field of research and study; his precise research notes, which were meticulously organized and categorized both alphabetically and by topic, reflect his systematic approach and commitment to academic excellence (Vatheghi, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 223).

One of Motahhari's most notable characteristics was his exceptional ability to diagnose and differentiate issues with astonishing precision. With a keen eye for detail, he would find the gaps, branches, roots, and consequences of every topic, thereby accurately pinpointing the core essence of every idea and argument. Another striking feature of Motahhari was his unwavering sense of justice, especially when dealing with opponents. In presenting the claims of his opponents, he often surpassed them in clarity and precision, never allowing their ideas to be distorted in the slightest. Motahhari believed that the authentic and profound ideas of thinkers should be recognized and respected, and he rejected baseless opposition and denial, which went against the spirit of scholarship. He did not adhere blindly to clichés but rather sought to harmonize them with the principles and foundations of Islamic teachings. Motahhari's commitment to fairness and accuracy, even when facing opposing views, demonstrates his deep respect for intellectual rigor and his steadfast adherence to the pursuit of truth (Karami, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 337).

Motahhari was a prominent and unique figure in the world of Islamic scholars who left a profound impact on Iran's academic and religious landscape. Before the 1979 AD/1357 SH Islamic Revolution, he was one of the few clerics who successfully taught and conducted research at the university level, considered a pioneer in integrating Islamic thought with modern education. Motahhari was known for his unique approach to teaching and discussion; an approach characterized by an emphasis on the historical context of concepts and ideas. Before delving into any topic, he would first provide his students with a comprehensive understanding of its historical roots and evolution. This method allowed them to grasp the value of the topic more deeply and understand its relevance and importance in a broader context. Motahhari believed that understanding the historical context of a concept was essential for engaging in meaningful and insightful discussions. By explaining the origins and evolution of a concept, he helped his students see the connection between the past and the present and understand how ideas and beliefs have been shaped and have evolved over time. This approach not only deepened their understanding of the subject but also helped them appreciate the complexity and subtlety of Islamic thought (Sayyid Naseri, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 225).



## **4.2. Motahhari's Economic Thought and the Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution**

Morteza Motahhari's economic thought holds a central place in the intellectual architecture underlying the 1979 AD/1357 SH Islamic Revolution. As one of the key ideologues of the revolution and a close associate of Imam Khomeini, his engagement with economic teachings was not merely academic but fundamentally intertwined with the movement to establish an Islamic social order in Iran. His economic views expressed in works such as "A Look at the Islamic Economic System" and in lectures compiled in the book "An Introduction to Comparative Economics" before his martyrdom, provided a framework for the nascent Islamic Republic to align modern economic challenges with the ethical and legal principles of Islam.

One of the main pillars of Motahhari's economic thought is the concept of justice, which he considered an inseparable part of Islamic governance and social life. In the pre-revolutionary era, his critique of capitalism and socialism was rooted in their failure to achieve true justice, as defined by Islamic values. He rejected the materialistic and exploitative tendencies of capitalism and the atheistic and collectivist excesses of socialism, advocating instead for an Islamic economic system that harmonizes individual initiative with social responsibility. This vision was directly reflected in the revolutionary slogan "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic," where economic independence and distributive justice were presented as prerequisites for true freedom and sovereignty.

Motahhari's economic thought continues to shape contemporary debates in Iran about the compatibility of Islamic values with modern economic development. His subtle approach—which strikes a balance between tradition and innovation—remains a reference for those seeking to address issues of poverty, inequality, and social justice within an Islamic framework. By outlining a vision of an economy that is inseparable from the ethical and ideological goals of the revolution, Motahhari ensured that the pursuit of economic justice would remain at the heart of the Islamic Republic's identity and mission.

Morteza Motahhari, a prominent Islamic scholar and theologian, was a staunch advocate for the expansion and influence of Islam on all aspects of human life. He firmly believed that Islam is not merely an individual and devotional matter but a comprehensive and realistic school that addresses all human needs, both in this world and the hereafter. According to Motahhari, Islam has a holistic approach to human existence that provides for physical,



spiritual, intellectual, emotional, individual, and social needs. He rejected the belief that the scope of religion is limited to personal and otherworldly matters, considering such a view narrow-minded and a failure to grasp the true essence of Islam. Motahhari's view of religion is deeply rooted in the belief that Islam is a complete way of life that provides guidance and support for individuals and societies. He emphasized the importance of understanding and applying Islamic principles in all aspects of life, from individual and spiritual rituals to social and political structures.

In general, Motahhari's teachings and writings emphasize the importance of recognizing the breadth of Islam and its ability to transform individuals and societies. In refuting those who limit the scope of religion to individual and otherworldly matters, he noted that those who believe life and religion should be separated make a fundamental error by assuming that the various aspects of life are disconnected. In reality, all dimensions of life are interconnected, and the health or corruption in one area inevitably affects other areas. A society cannot have a clean religious foundation while having a corrupt culture, politics, judicial system, ethics, education, or economy, and vice versa. If religion is limited solely to devotional acts such as going to the mosque or church, praying, and fasting, the separation of religious matters from other aspects of life might seem justified, but this separation is not true for Islam. In Islam, teachings and rituals encompass all aspects of life and emphasize the integration of religious principles into every aspect of human life (Motahhari, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 16).

He further believed that the relationship between Islam and economics is deeply intertwined and has two key dimensions that are closely connected. The first dimension is the direct link between Islam and economic regulations, which includes a wide range of issues such as ownership, transactions, taxes, and other economic matters. This direct connection is reflected in the Islamic principles governing economic activities to ensure that these activities are conducted in a fair, just, and equitable manner. The second dimension of the relationship between Islam and economics is the indirect link through the moral principles that form the foundation of Islamic teachings. These principles include trustworthiness, justice, benevolence, and the prohibition of theft, betrayal, and bribery. By promoting these values, Islam seeks to foster ethical behavior in all aspects of economic life, from production and distribution to consumption. In essence, Islam's approach to economics is comprehensive and integrated, recognizing the importance of both direct and indirect links between religious principles and economic activities. By emphasizing the necessity of ethical behavior and fair

economic regulations, Islam seeks to create a just and equitable economic system that benefits all members of society (Motahhari, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 16).

Although Motahhari's entry into economic discussions may have occurred late in his life, the views and opinions he expressed in his final years were full of wisdom, depth, and a profound understanding of the subject. The discussion of Islamic economics is a topic of interest to economists and those who seek to explore the integration of religion into various dimensions of life. In this debate, there is a group that questions the concept of Islamic economics, either due to insufficient familiarity with religious principles or by comparing it to other disciplines. They argue that just as there is no Islamic physics or Islamic geometry, there should not be an independent field called Islamic economics. Their view stems from the belief in the separation of religious teachings from scientific disciplines; they believe that although Islam can provide guiding principles for economic behavior, it does not constitute an independent scientific discipline like economics itself. At the core of their argument is the view that economics, like physics and chemistry, is an empirical science that seeks to understand and explain human behavior through observation and hypothesis testing. They believe that the nature of empirical sciences, especially those related to human behavior, is based on objective evidence and the verification of hypotheses through observation and analysis. On the other hand, figures like Mohammad Baqir Sadr believe that entering the fields of economics or mathematics as independent sciences is not within the scope of Islamic teachings.

#### **4.3. Economics as a Science versus Economic School**

Morteza Motahhari, just like Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, believed that Islam has a distinct economic school and doctrine, which stands in contrast to economics as an empirical theory. In distinguishing between economic doctrine and economics as a science, Motahhari explains that there are two types of economic relationships: natural and contractual. Natural relationships are a series of cause-and-effect relationships that occur automatically in economic matters, such as supply and demand, inflation, unemployment, and economic crises. In this context, economics as a science is the study of natural laws and is considered a theoretical science. Disagreements in this area are similar to those in other empirical sciences and are less likely to arise.

On the other hand, contractual relationships are rules related to individual or collective rights and properties. From the perspective of contractual relationships, economics is the science of

how relationships should be. In this view, issues such as justice and injustice, good and evil, and proper and improper are raised. This perspective emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations and principles in the study of economics and highlights the necessity of a normative approach to economic relationships (Motahhari, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 32-33).

Therefore, Morteza Motahhari considered the field of economics as a realm for evidence and analysis with a positive view, while the school or doctrine focuses on normative issues. He emphasizes that in Islam, the focus is on ethical economic behavior. Morteza Motahhari's economic ideas are mainly derived from his book "A Look at the Islamic Economic System;" this book is actually a collection of his notes published after his martyrdom. This book is considered the main source for understanding the professor's views on Islamic economics. The book "The Problem of Usury and Banking with an Appendix on the Problem of Insurance" is one of Professor Motahhari's prominent works, in which he addresses the issue of usury and provides a comprehensive analysis of interest rates. This book demonstrates Motahhari's mastery of the legal and economic principles that form the basis of his views on usury. In the section on usury, Motahhari provides a comprehensive explanation of its concept and effects and presents his criticisms of the conventional banking system. He also outlines the necessary prerequisites for implementing an interest-free Islamic banking system. In the field of insurance, Motahhari viewed the insurance contract as a tool that has no precedent in the legal contracts of the Islamic world. He compares the insurance contract to similar contracts and ultimately concludes that insurance is a new contract that reinforces the trust of the insured (Motahhari, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 68 and 190). The two books mentioned above are among Motahhari's earlier works that have been previously addressed in various studies and are not the subject of this article. The goal of this study is to review the analysis of the professor's later work, "An Introduction to Comparative Economics."

## **5. Research Findings**

The book "An Introduction to Comparative Economics," published in two volumes in 1400 SH (2021 AD), contains 28 sessions held by Morteza Motahhari with a group of economists and master's students from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tehran. These weekly sessions took place from July 23, 1978, to April 21, 1979, three days before Professor Motahhari's martyrdom. The main focus of the discussions was the text of the book "A History of Economic Doctrines" by Charles Gide and Charles Rist, which had been translated

into Persian by Karim Sanjabi (cf. Gide and Rist, 1975). In each session, one of the participants would usually present a report on a specific topic from the book, and then Professor Motahhari would offer his opinion, and the discussions would continue. This series of sessions originated from a proposal by students of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tehran to create a new field of study called Islamic economics, a proposal that was accepted by the faculty officials. These students asked Motahhari to collaborate in teaching this new field. Given the importance of interacting with professors of economics, Motahhari emphasized holding discussions on various economic schools, and these sessions were formed. Throughout these discussions, both the audience and Morteza Motahhari offered valuable opinions and insights. Motahhari introduced novel and precise economic, social, and philosophical views into the discussion, enriching the dialogue.

The first volume of the book examines the Physiocracy and Classical schools, analyzing the ideas of economists such as Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, and Thomas Malthus. The second volume continues the discussion on the Classical school, including Ricardo's theories, as well as unconventional schools, and examines the theories of cooperative socialists like Owen and Fourier. Despite the professor's heavy workload in the months leading up to the Islamic Revolution, these sessions continued. The book was published for the first time in 1400 SH (2021 AD), with the delay in publication due to the effort to find the audio files of the lectures and improve their quality using new technologies. In this book, Motahhari did not merely limit himself to critiquing or presenting Islamic principles in opposition to economic schools, but most of its content revolves around dialogues and exchanges of views among different schools of economic thought.

### **5.1. A Common Error in Most Schools of Thought**

One of the general topics Morteza Motahhari addresses in the first volume of his book is the common error found in many schools of thought, including economic schools. According to Motahhari, when a person studies different schools in any field, they usually find that each school has its own strengths and may even contain some correct points. However, the problem arises when a school, upon discovering a part of the truth, assumes it has found the entire truth. This belief causes the school to justify everything based on that single point, even though that point may not be applicable in all cases. Motahhari believes this tendency to rely solely on one aspect of the truth is problematic because it often overlooks the complexities

and subtleties of issues. When a single viewpoint is assumed to explain everything, schools of thought may omit important factors or perspectives, leading to an incomplete or incorrect understanding. This limited focus can lead to the justification of ideas or behaviors that are not valid or appropriate in a broader context. In summary, Motahhari's critique of this common error in schools of thought highlights the importance of a precise and comprehensive approach to complex issues. By recognizing the limitations of each viewpoint, scholars and thinkers can achieve a more complete and accurate understanding of social issues.

An example of this phenomenon is visible in moral philosophy. In this field, Motahhari states that different thinkers present varying views on the nature of virtue and ethics. For instance, Plato considers virtue the basis of ethics, believing all aspects of morality revolve around virtue and the pursuit of moral perfection. On the other hand, Aristotle emphasizes the concept of moderation, viewing it as the core of ethics. For Aristotle, achieving moderation in all matters is the key to a moral life, and he recommends solving ethical problems through a balanced approach. Another group highlights the importance of self-sufficiency and the soul's transcendence over the body, believing true ethics lie in the soul's independence and self-sufficiency. In contrast, some prioritize a strong will, emphasizing the power of will and the ability to resist external influences. For this group, ethics are synonymous with the perseverance and resilience of the will in the face of challenges. These diverse views demonstrate the multifaceted nature of moral philosophy, where each school of thought provides unique insights into the foundations of virtue and ethical behavior. By examining different dimensions of ethics, these thinkers enrich the ethical discourse and provide valuable insights into the complexities of human behavior and decision-making (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 81).

Motahhari believes that each school has found a part of the truth, but the main deviation occurs when it tries to justify everything based on that one point alone, which is not entirely correct. In his critique of the Physiocrats, he points to their tendency for over-generalization and making broad claims based on a limited perspective. He critically notes that the Physiocrats place too much emphasis on land as the sole factor of production, which he considers a fundamental error in their economic framework; while Motahhari acknowledges the value of understanding naturalism and the distinction between agricultural, livestock, and industrial production, he disagrees with their belief that production only originates from land and that industry is inherently unproductive. The Physiocrats' attempt to build a

comprehensive economic system based on this single principle is the point Motahhari takes issue with. They try to justify other economic concepts, such as ownership and the role of industry, solely from the perspective of this fundamental belief, but Motahhari believes this approach is no longer valid and fails to accept the complexities of economic reality. Motahhari shows that the Physiocrats' strict adherence to a simplified explanation of economic processes causes them to overlook the multidimensional aspects of production and the interdependence of different economic sectors (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 17).

## **5.2. The Difference between the Concept of Ownership in Jurisprudence and the Capitalist System**

In his analysis of the Physiocracy school, Motahhari distinguishes between the concept of ownership in jurisprudence and the ownership prevalent in capitalist systems. He believes that the understanding of ownership in Islam is fundamentally different from ownership in capitalist societies. He states that ownership can be likened to the relationship between God and man, where creation belongs entirely to the Creator. This developmental view gives the owner absolute authority over their property, including the right to destroy, wastes, or transfers it to anyone or even a pet. However, the concept of ownership in Islam is completely different. Although an individual is considered the owner, they do not have unlimited authority and do not have the right to use their property in any way they desire. In Islam, the owner is absolutely forbidden from wasting or destroying property and does not have the right to transfer property to an ignorant person or a pet, because the Islamic framework imposes limitations on the use of property. The rights and responsibilities of the owner in Islam are not absolute but are subject to ethical and religious considerations. This stands in contrast to the concept of ownership in the capitalist system, which grants the owner broader authority.

Citing the jurisprudential principle "*al-Nās Musallaṭūn ‘alā Amwālihim*" (The people have authority over their properties) (Majlesi, 1982 AD/1361 SH: 273), Motahhari emphasizes that this rule does not mean absolute authority but that property must be used in a rational, legal, useful, and constructive way for the individual and society. Therefore, he considers ownership a kind of right to use property. In examining the Physiocracy school's view on ownership, Motahhari finds common ground with the Islamic jurisprudential approach, including attention to land reclamation and its consequences. However, he disagrees with the core belief of the Physiocrats that value is only in the agricultural sector and that they consider industry

unproductive. He believes that the origin of value is in both nature and industry and rejects the Physiocrats' limited view of agriculture as the sole source of economic value (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 18).

### **5.3. Ownership of Means of Production in the New Era**

Within the framework of the Physiocracy school's views on ownership, Motahhari also addresses the issue of industrial rights, such as inventions and their effects on the ownership of the means of production in the modern era. He believes that the inventor should not be recognized as the sole and exclusive owner of the invention. According to Motahhari, every invention is the result of a collective process in which the inventor has only taken the final step based on the accumulated knowledge in that field. Therefore, an invention is not solely the product of the individual inventor's efforts but the result of collective knowledge and progress in that field. Motahhari's view shows that the ownership of the means of production in the new era should not be attributed only to the individual inventor. He emphasizes the collective nature of knowledge and the gradual progress that leads to innovations, challenging the idea that the inventor is the primary or sole owner of the means of production. This analysis highlights Motahhari's precise and complex understanding of ownership issues in the context of technological advancements and the evolution of the means of production in the modern era. His view offers a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective on the ownership of the tools and resources that drive economic and social development.

Therefore, Motahhari states that the main challenge is the ambiguity regarding the inventor's ownership. When the inventor's ownership is unclear, with whom does the capitalist prefer to do business? It must be made clear to the inventor that their contribution is only the final touch on a collective effort that generations have advanced, and this is a shared achievement of humanity. Therefore, the concept of ownership of the means of production in the new era diverges from traditional jurisprudential criteria. This new perspective creates a specific paradigm shift in this area, which is different from the usual understanding of jurists who view the means of production like a property rental (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH).



#### 5.4. The Scope of *Zakāt*

In the study of the Classical school, and specifically the ideas of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the theory of value and its origin were discussed and debated. In this context, Motahhari believes that the issue of whether the categories of wealth subject to *Zakāt* are fixed or variable has been widely discussed. Many argue that these limitations are not absolute and point to instances where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exempted specific individuals or properties from *Zakāt*. They believe that this act of exemption demonstrates the system's flexibility and the Prophet's authority, as the guardian of the Muslim community, to make exceptions when necessary. They say that the existence of these precedents refutes the idea that the categories of *Zakāt* are unchangeable. This debate continues as scholars examine the historical context and principles of Islamic jurisprudence to determine the scope of *Zakāt* and how it can be adapted to changing times and conditions (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 94). Motahhari also emphasizes that Imam Ali (AS) mandated *Zakāt* on horses, contrary to the view of jurists who considered it optional, which shows a difference of opinion in their views. This difference of opinion does not concern the acceptance of *Zakāt* on horses. In this regard, Motahhari believes that perhaps during wartime, when horse breeding was common and horses were as prevalent as cattle, sheep, and camels, Imam Ali (AS) used his authority to impose *Zakāt* on horses (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 92-93).

#### 5.5. The Philosophy of the Prohibition of Usury

When examining Ricardo's theories in the Classical school, the concept of the time value of money becomes a focal point. Motahhari believes that the essence of usury lies in the application of profit and loss (with actual loss, not merely a decrease in price) to the subject of the transaction. In this regard, he states that when a commodity like money, wheat, or currency is loaned to another, the ownership of that asset is completely transferred to the borrower, and from the moment of delivery, they are considered its legal owner. The previous owner may have benefited from advantages like an increase in the commodity's value or related returns, such as the offspring of an animal, but at the same time, they also bore the risks associated with the commodity being damaged or destroyed. Therefore, by lending, both the potential benefits and the potential risks related to that asset are transferred to the borrower (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 80).

Motahhari believes that the nature of a loan lies in the fact that one party gives money to another, thereby creating a debt obligation. In other words, the lender provides a sum of money, and in return, the borrower assumes a responsibility. Motahhari states that when money is given as a loan to someone, its ownership is temporarily transferred to the recipient of the loan, and the lender gives up ownership of it, but in return, the recipient of the loan is obligated to return a fixed amount to the lender. This debt usually remains constant, and its amount does not change regardless of the passage of time. In some cases, this relationship can change in a way that a transaction similar to a sale occurs instead of a loan. This means that money is exchanged for receiving a commodity, such as gold coins, and the repayment obligation also relates to the same commodity or its equivalent. In this case, even if the price of the commodity changes in the market, the repayment obligation remains fixed, and price fluctuations do not affect the principal of the debt. In this way, the nature of the transaction changes from a loan to a sale, and the financial obligations are determined precisely and specifically based on the agreed-upon commodity.

Here, Motahhari explains the difference between money given for *Muḍārabah* (profit-sharing) and money given as a loan. He explains that if my money is in your possession, it is like a contract in which you act as the agent and I act as the investor, and the capital is actively employed. In this situation, the capital may suffer losses for a period, but these losses are my responsibility as the owner of the capital, not yours as the agent. I have invested a sum and expect the same amount or an equivalent profit to be returned, regardless of whether the entire capital is lost at once or a profit is made. As the owner of the capital, I have the right to both receive the profit and accept the risk. However, if I lend the money to you, I am no longer its owner from the moment of delivery, and your subsequent profit or loss is of no importance to me (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 81).

## **5.6. Islamic Socialism**

The second volume of the book delves deeper into heterodox schools by carefully examining the views of cooperative socialists. After extensive analysis, Motahhari suggests a kind of ethical socialism, a socialism based not on legal compulsion but on spiritual kinship and faith. He quotes Ghazali, who advocates a type of socialism that emphasizes the priority of individual choice over coercion. According to Ghazali, attempting to impose a communal structure through legal decrees and compulsion is neither just nor logical. He states that

everyone has the right to use their property, and this right should not be forcibly taken from them. Instead, Islam intends to educate individuals to willingly participate in creating a communal society. Islam does not seek to abolish ownership or deprive individuals of their rights; such actions are considered unjust. Rather, Islam encourages individuals to voluntarily share their wealth and promotes a spirit of collective responsibility and cooperation.

Motahhari, referring to a narration from Musa ibn Ja'far (AS), recounts that a guest from a distant land came to Musa ibn Ja'far (AS) and asked about the state of Muslims and Shi'as. The guest praised their state and said they were doing great. Musa ibn Ja'far (AS) then posed a scenario: are you in a situation where you can freely and without any worry take what you need from a shop or another's pocket?. The guest admitted that their state had not reached such a level of trust and generosity. Musa ibn Ja'far (AS) concluded that their state had not reached the peak of excellence. This anecdote highlights Islam's ideal of fostering a society characterized by deep trust, self-sacrifice, and mutual support (Motahhari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 274).

After participating in numerous sessions to examine the ideas of cooperative socialists, Professor Motahhari's life was tragically cut short just three days after the last discussion, as he was martyred in May 1979. This untimely event brought a sudden end to the opportunity for further examination and expansion of these thought-provoking dialogues.

### **5.7. The Relevance of the Discussions to the Contemporary Era**

Motahhari's engagement with the dominant economic ideologies of the 20th century—capitalism and socialism—was not merely theoretical; it was deeply influenced by the ideological and social currents that culminated in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Through his comparative analysis, particularly as expressed in

"An Introduction to Comparative Economics," Motahhari positioned Islam as a distinct "Third Way" capable of addressing the shortcomings of both systems while aligning with the revolutionary ideal of justice and independence.

In this context, Motahhari presented Islamic economics as a comprehensive system that incorporates the strengths of both capitalism and socialism while avoiding their respective problems. He emphasized the importance of individual rights and social obligations, advocating for a balanced approach that fosters economic initiative within a framework of justice, compassion, and accountability. This perspective played a crucial role in shaping the

ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolution. Therefore, Motahhari's economic philosophy provided a blueprint for the post-revolutionary Islamic Republic and influenced policies aimed at reducing poverty, promoting social justice, and resisting Western capitalism and Eastern socialism. His insistence on ethical economic behavior, the prohibition of usury, and the promotion of Zakāt and charity became core principles of the new economic order.

Motahhari's insights remain highly relevant to contemporary debates in Iran and the Muslim world, especially in the fields of Islamic banking and social justice. His critique of interest-based financial systems provided the intellectual groundwork for the development of Iran's interest-free banking system after the revolution. By framing usury as an economic and ethical problem, Motahhari underscored the need for financial practices that are not only efficient but also just and spiritually sound. Furthermore, his emphasis on distributive justice and the ethical responsibilities of the wealthy continues to influence discussions on poverty reduction, welfare policies, and the government's role in ensuring economic fairness. In an era grappling with rising economic inequalities and the search for alternative models of development, Motahhari's vision of an Islamic economy—rooted in justice, ethics, and social solidarity—offers a compelling framework for addressing contemporary challenges.

## **Conclusion**

This study has sought to illuminate Professor Morteza Motahhari's unique engagement with economic thought, particularly as reflected in his discussions and comments in the book "An Introduction to Comparative Economics." By placing Motahhari's contributions within the broader context of Islamic intellectual history and the dynamic environment preceding the Islamic Revolution, this article has shown how his approach to economics was both systematic and deeply rooted in Islamic ethical and philosophical principles.

Motahhari's methodology—characterized by fairness, intellectual precision, and a commitment to historical context—enabled him to critically evaluate Western economic schools while articulating a distinct Islamic alternative. His subtle distinction between economics as a science and as an economic school provided a conceptual framework that continues to influence debates about the legitimacy and scope of Islamic economics as a scholarly discipline. Furthermore, his insistence on integrating ethical values into economic life and his critique of capitalism and socialism positioned him as a pivotal figure in shaping the ideological foundations of post-revolutionary Iran.

Through his analysis of concepts such as justice, ownership, usury, and social responsibility, Motahhari not only addressed the immediate challenges of his time but also laid the groundwork for ongoing discussions about Islamic banking, distributive justice, and the role of religion in public policy. His legacy endures in the continued relevance of his thought to contemporary debates in Iran and the wider Muslim world, where the search for just and ethical economic systems remains pertinent. In sum, Motahhari's engagement with economic thought exemplifies the potential of Islamic scholarship to offer meaningful alternatives to dominant economic paradigms. His works invite scholars and practitioners alike to further explore the intersection of faith, ethics, and economics, ensuring that the pursuit of material well-being remains inseparable from the quest for justice and spiritual perfection.

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