



An Introduction to Morteza Motahari's Political Thought

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Abstract:

Although Motahari is not a political thinker but analyzing his political ideas and believes amongst the ideas of Iranian political thinkers in the last 5 decades is indeed essential because Motahari's political standpoint has a key role in Islamic revolution of Iran. This paper regards Motahari's vision to his time and studies his writings according to the questions he faced and posed in his time. The first class of questions was mainly set around his opposition with Marxism and Marxism-centrism of his age with few references to the rejection of science-centrism. The second class included the "decadence of the Muslims" and Motahari's views about that. This paper ends with a focus on reason-based vs. discourse-based and theological vs. philosophical methods and their relevance to Motahari's self-raised method for answering the above-mentioned issues.

Keywords: Motahari, The decline, Theological method, Philosophical method, Marxism-centrism

Introduction

In this paper, the author has intentionally used the terms like political ideas and believes instead of using terms like political thoughts because in the eye of author, Motahari cannot be called –essentially- a political thinker. The most convincing proof supporting this claim is that Motahari has never written even one single and independent book or article about his political thoughts¹. Motahari's last works could be a profound contemplation on how to produce and distribute power in a religious state or

polis but they remained incomplete (Pir-moun-e Jomhuri-e Eslami², 1357: 150-155). Accordingly, his political views and believes are now spread in different books and this has made it hard to study on his political believes. Moreover, these scattered views in different works do not demonstrate a coherent political thought.³

In the book "the reasons for tendency to materialism" (Elal-e gerayesh be maddigari) he has talked about "Sovereignty" saying that after contemplating on the roots and the causes of this orientation, one of its reasons

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has turned out to be neglecting the issue of people's sovereignty for divine sovereignty (Elal-e gerayesh be maddigari, 1995; 157-160). This not only shows his concerns but also depicts the way he approaches sovereignty.

However, lack of independent political thoughts, should not make us think that Motahari has no role in the history of political thoughts of Iran in the recent 50 years, in contrary, while investigating the political thoughts of this era, we cannot neglect the role of this man whom Abdolkarim Soroush has called "reviver of religion and religious intellectual" (Soroush, 1991, A: 359-366; 1991, B, 40-42 and 1995: 193) and there are others³ who have called him "Ideologue of Islamic Republic" (Ghadrdan Gharamaleki, 2000; 16 and 108) or "the introducer of its thought and policy" (Supervisory committee for publishing Shahid Motahari's works; in the collection of works or as it is pronounced in Persian: Majmu-e Aasaar, Volume 1, 1995: 27).

In fact, investigating the history of Islamic Revolution (since its emergence and development till the present day) would be impossible without investigating Motahari's ideas. Motahari's influence in developing and organizing the background thoughts of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and developing a special understanding of it after its victory is not only important but also brilliant and unique⁴. In addition, the evidences, which will be mentioned in this text, will be good proofs for this claim.

Motahari and his time

As some of the authors and thinkers have pointed out, Motahari's position in the history of thought in the recent 50 years of Iran is

gained and set because of the attentions he paid to his own era⁵. As a religious scholar, he has published different writings such as *Adle-e Elahi* (God's justice) and *Khadamat-e Moteghabel-e Eslam VA Iran* (mutual services of Islam and Iran) in response to his contemporary questions. In all of these publications, his concerns were only answering to the religious questions of the youth whom, in his opinion, have spent their time in "anxiety, reluctance and crisis":

"Since twenty years ago⁶ when I have started writing articles and books, the only thing which I have aimed in my writings was solving the problems and answering the questions⁷ which are about the Islamic issues of our time" (Majmu-e Aasaar, volume 1, 1995: 38).

In other words, based on what he himself has claimed, although "some of his writings are philosophical, some sociological, some ethical, some juridical and some historical" and "their subjects are totally different from each other", "their main concern was only one thing" (ibid:39) which was "providing general answers for huge amount of the questions asked by many people from different age ranges but especially from the young generation" (ibid: 40) which were mostly posed about religious issues.⁸

It is clear that answering to the contemporary religious questions in the issues of philosophy, sociology, history, etc. cannot be posed incommensurate with the bases of new western political thoughts. Accordingly, we find him regard in his works and publication the problems pertinent to the field of political thoughts.

Why Motahari was dedicated to answer the religious questions of his contemporary young generation was because of three fac-

tors: his religious family and the way they brought him up, his religious educating and finally his personal features and character. He was born in the last years of 13th century (Solar Hijri calendar) in a religious family and was religiously educated by his father-whom he praised a lot⁹- and learned his elementary school in a school in his hometown (Fariman). Then, at the age of 12 and in order to start his formal religious education (primary Islamic science), he went to an Islamic seminary school in Mashhad and started his education in that religious city. During the years when the first Pahlavi was experiencing the peak of his rein, which was the time when the clergymen and the seminaries did not have appropriate circumstances, he moved to Qom to complete his religious education and he spent 15 years there studying jurisprudence, the principles, philosophy, ethics and mysticism (adapted from Majmu-e Aasaar, volume 1, 1995: nine to ten). Motahari himself has claimed that an important portion of his intellectual and spiritual character was formed then when he was in Qom attending the classes of clergies whom he calls his most important instructors. (Elal-e gerayesh be maddigari, 1995: 10).

Although these trainings and educations are important but Motahari's personal qualities should not be neglected. He was a questioning and curious one, and a man of contemplation and deliberation. He himself claims that "since he was 13, he was always sensitive about the issues related to God" and since "the beginning of his seminary school, he used to regard the philosophers, mystics and scholastic theologians as more dignified scholars in contrast to scientists, inventors and discoverers" (ibid: 9)¹⁰. The other personal feature of him was his dedication to Islamic education to be able to wear the clerical robe: "my father was a clergyman. He

was 70 or 80 years old when they took him by force and defrocked him from his cleric robe but I insisted on going to Qom" (Seyyed Naseri, 1998: 17). His mother and his "scholar" uncle were against his decision to go to Qom and attend the seminary schools but he was insisting on that. He narrated this, some years later:

"One of the reasons for me to believe that Islam is right is that... they cut the clerical robe of a 60-70-year-old-man with scissors... but despite all this, his 15-year-old son insists on becoming a clergy" (ibid: 17-18).

If we consider his training, educations and personal characteristics to be amongst the factors which made him deal with the religious questions of his time, we also should note that there is another and more important factor shaping the appropriateness of his proposed questions with the necessities of his time and that factor is Motahari's presence in Tehran and its university¹¹. In 1952, he immigrated to Tehran and in these years (exactly the years when Mosadeq was focused on nationalization of oil industry), the most important thing he did was teaching in Marvi seminary school. However, in 1955, he also started teaching at faculty of Theology in Tehran University.

Being at the university and attending the meetings of different Islamic unions (i.e. unions of physicians, engineers etc) and his presence in Hosseinie-ye-Ershad and different discussions made him more involved and more familiar with new issues. It can be claimed that during his stay in Qom, Motahari became intuitively familiar with the new questions through written works but it was then during his stay in Tehran that he faced these questions objectively and through talking face to face with academicians.

Logical order of questions

Based on what has been mentioned, Motahari's concern was answering the questions of his own era, which were mostly circulated around the realm of religion. Now, the question, which is posed, is to know whether he made a logical order among those "great amount of questions". In response, we can say that although Motahari did his best to do so but he did not find a chance to elaborate on them¹². In addition, the nature of those questions cannot also help to facilitate the logical order through the answers provided. Third, on his own way, Motahari faced some complicated questions and many issues which made it more difficult for him. When publishing the fifth volume of the book series of *Osul-e Falsafe VA Ravesh-e Realism* (philosophy principles and the method of realism) became postponed for 15 years, he pointed to an issue, which in our investigation includes all his works:

It is true that everything should be done in its right time (الامور مرهونه باوقاتها) and it is impossible to do them when it is not the time. Old Mother Nature is always busy working. Every birth is the result of an intercourse, a chance and a time, which result in what we call pregnancy. Linking the phenomena with the time that they have to pass through (like passing a bridge) and the time that it has to be in its context in order to be able to bloom is so much profound that it is impossible for a philosopher to imagine their separation (Majmu-e Aasaar, volume 6, 1996: 876).

Yes! The old Mother Nature took Motahari's publication in a direction, which made them get far from pre-designed classification, and division, which is called an academic work. They have quoted from him: "it has been thirty years that I am writing and speak-

ing however, there has been no lecture or an article close to my own satisfaction and desire; all those lectures, articles and writings were written just because of the need of the society and my religious duties. Yet I have not found time to do the things that I want" (Asadi-Garmaroudi in Seyyed Naseri, 1999: 213). Due to these explanations, we first have a short survey in Motahari's works and then we analyze his answers, which have background that is more political.

A short survey and analysis on his works

Motahari started his publishing career in the early years of 1330s with *Osul-e Falsafe va Ravesh-e Realism* (the principles of philosophy and the method of realism) in order to face and respond to "European philosophy" and its adaptation i.e. "dialectic materialism". He learned and wrote these lessons from his master Allameh-Tabatabaei' and that was because of his¹³ suggestion that Motahari wrote this book and added some explanations and footnotes to it during his stay in Tehran (cf. *Osul-e Falsafe VA Ravesh-e Realism*, Introduction X&XI). Volumes one to three of this five-volume set were published in 1953¹⁴, 1954 and 1956, respectively¹⁵ (cf. Soroush, 1981: 535). Due to the differences in the view points of Motahari and his master, Allameh Tabatabaei'-the author of the book on whose work Motahari added his annotations- the forth volume was not published in Motahari's life time and therefore, the fifth volume was published before the forth one but after 15 years (in 1971). In this interval, he had about 15 publications all on different issues. The variety of his works in these years -that is to some extent useful in analyzing his political views and beliefs- is also because of different external questions.

Among these books one can mention *Nezam-e Hoghough-e Zan Dar Eslam* (The system of women rights in Islam), *Ensan va Sarnevesht* (Mankind and the destiny) -in whose introduction, there is a question posed about the decadence of Muslims -, *Khadamat-e Moteghabele Eslam va Iran* (the mutual services of Islam and Iran, *Mas'ale-ye Hejab* (the issue of Hejab), *Akhlagh-e Jensi* (sex ethics), *Jazebah va Dafe'ey-e Emam Ali* (the Attraction and repulsion of Imam Ali), and *Velaaha va Velayat ha* (leadership and Loyalty) (cf. *ibid*: 536-537). His works in the other decades also follow the same rules. They spread from Islamic Economy to the issue of slavery, and from history to Hafez mysticism. But those of his books which are more useable for analyzing his political views and beliefs, are: *Elal-e Gerayesh be Maddigari* (the reasons of tendency to materialism), *Seiri dar Nahjolbalagheh* (a survey in *Nahjolbalagheh*), *Ghiyam va Enghelab-e mahdi PBUH* (the rise and revolution of Mahdi PBUH), *Dah Gofdar* (ten articles)-especially the article named as "The main problem in clerical system" which is his most political article-, *Bist Gofdar* (twenty articles), *Gofdarhaye Ma'navi* (the spiritual sayings), *Nehzat-haye Eslami-e Sad Saal-e Akhir* (the Islamic Causes of recent hundred years), *Moghaddame'I bar Jahanbini-e Eslami* (An introduction to Islamic ideology), *Emamat va Rahbari* (Imamah and the leadership), *Jihad* (Jihad), *Takaamol-e Ejtemai-e Ensaan* (The social evolution of the mankind), *Seyri Dar Sireye Nabavi* (A survey in prophet's biography), *Seyri Dar Sireye A'emmey-e At'haar* (A survey in Innocent Imams' biography), *Eslam va Moghtaziyyat-e Zaman* (Islam and the exigencies of the time) (in two volumes), *Ensaan-e Kaamel* (the perfect mankind), *Hemaasey-e Hosseini* (the Epic of Hussein) (in three volumes), *Falsafey-e Tarikh* (the

philosophy of history), *Naghdi Bar Marxism* (a criticism on Marxism), *Nazari Bar Nezaam-e Enteghaadi-e Eslam* (a glance at the economic system of Islam), *Hagh va Batel* (the right and the wrong) (with an appendix named as *Reviving Islamic Thought*), *Piramoun-e Enghelab-e Eslami* (about Islamic Revolution), *Piramoun-e Jomhuri-e Eslami* (about Islamic Republic)¹⁶ and *Masaleye Reba* (the issue of lucre) (with an appendix about insurance), *Fetrat* (Human nature) and etc.

In a short analysis of the collection of his works and by regarding the time, that Motahari was living in and generating answers for the questions of his era, one can say that:

First, he has made great efforts in criticizing the materialistic viewpoints and especially the materialism of dialectic and Marxism. Although two of his books i.e. *Naghdi Bar Marxism* (a criticism on Marxism) and *Osule falsafe* (the principles of Philosophy) were (mainly) on this topic, you can also find the criticism on Marxism in his other works such as *Jahan Bini-e Towhidi* (Monotheistic Worldview), *Jame-e va Tarikh* (Society and History), *Falafafeye Tarikh* (Philosophy of history), *Eghtesad-e Eslami* (Islamic Economy), *Ghiyam va Enghelab-e Mahdi* (Mahdi's Rise and Revolution), etc. In author's idea, his efforts in criticizing Iranian understanding of Marxism can be considered as serving the temple of thought. Although his understanding of Marxism was in contrast to what the Western founders of Marxism meant by it¹⁷, it was a criticism against the ideological and non-argumentative promotion of Marxism in Iran.

Second, most of Motahari's concerns were circled around the eclectic thoughts especially the thoughts concerning the combination of Marxism with religion. In author's

idea, Motahari's effort in this area did a great service to the political thoughts of contemporary Iran; since his efforts are of those opposing the "sociological ideologies" which were hindrances to thinking in this area for about 50 years.

Motahari's works such as *Elal-e Gerayesh be Maddigari* (Reasons for tending to Materialism) –especially the section about Materialism in Iran-, some parts of the introduction of the book *Jahan bini-e Towhidi* (Monotheistic ideology), *Fetrat* (the nature of the mankind), *Masaleye Shenakht* (the issue of understanding), *Ensan-e Kamel* (the complete man), etc were so much helpful in preventing Iranians from ideological dogmatism and especially party and organizational dogmatism. He unveiled the cover that some had put on religious thoughts by political intentions and revealed the eclectic structure of thoughts of some others who accepted such eclectic thoughts because of their weak understanding of Islamic thoughts and their passivity towards the dominance of newcomer ideas. Now, after two decades of analyzing the thoughts in Iran, it is quite clear that if such thoughts and ideas became rigid and dominant, we would be still talking about "the roots of such thoughts in our history" and remaining in delusion of self-indulgence because of the eclectic covers that some thinkers had put on their own understanding of Marxism and other newcomer ideas.

Third, besides avoiding eclecticism, Motahari made successful efforts in reconciling rationality and religion by choosing a language appropriate for his own era. His analysis of justice which provides a very big opportunity for human intellect to define it and recognizing the natural and innate rights (in the books: *20 Goftar -20 sayings-*,

Nezam-e Hoghough-e Zan dar Eslam -the system of woman's rights in Islam-, *Mabani-e eghtesad-e Eslami* -the principles of Islamic economy, etc), intellectual analysis of the issue of divine justice, explaining the rational relationship between piety and wisdom (in the book: *10 Goftar -10 sayings-*) and innovations such as differentiating between the credit of money and its intrinsic value in Islamic economy, etc. are of this type.

Motahari went on so far in updating religious beliefs and using interpretations and conceptions appropriate for his own era and criticizing the present religious beliefs that as -mentioned before, some have named him as "the reviver of religious thought". He redefined concepts such as ideology, worldview, etc. and introduced Islam as a school and ideology. It should be taken into account that the ideology that he introduced was very different from the ideologies that Marxist groups or their alleged sympathizers introduced. Not paying attention to this difference can mislead many people who are interested in analyzing Motahari's thoughts and his political beliefs. The main difference between Motahari and them is that Motahari made a great effort in defining and implementing religious views with the Quran and Sunnah, avoiding the begging question fallacy, and this makes criticizing his works possible-unlike ideologists.

Techniques like implementation (compliance of the assumption) with the (religious) text, argumentation and scrutiny (in books such as: *Khadamat-e Moteghabel-e Eslam va Iran* –the mutual services of Iran and Islam, etc.) can be found a lot in his works. However, in the works of ideologists, justification and rationalization are prominent methods. We will talk about the deficiencies of Motahari's beliefs

and views in the rest of this article under the issue of "method of thinking".

The study of decadence

Another important issue, which should be posed in order to explain the relevance of Motahari is thought to his era, is that: putting aside organizing the questions and establishing a logical order among them, did he himself have a specific question about his contemporary era? In other words, if the answers provided by Motahar to the questions of his contemporary young generation are considered as evidence for his passive position, has Motahari, as a thinker, actively reached to a fundamental question about his own era or not?

In response to this question, we can say that among all the social problems, the issue which not firstly but for most¹⁸ had occupied Motahari's mind was the issue of Muslims' decadence:

"I do not exactly remember since when I was dealing with the issue of the Muslims' decadence... and since when my mind was occupied by it; but I can definitely declare that it has been more than 20 years¹⁹ that this issue has caught my eyes and attention. I have been thinking about this issue and others' writings about it more or less during all these years." (Majmueye Aasaar- the collection of works- volume 1: 1995, 346-347).

The questions of "decadence", "crisis", etc. are amongst the most important and the most fundamental questions in (new) political philosophy (for example cf. Seyyed Javad Tabatabaei', 1995: 8). Furthermore, in the literature of political science, the issue of development and progress in west and mustiness in third world countries has allocated a huge portion for itself under the name of "Development and Underdevelopment".

The importance of this issue in Motahari's idea will be clear when we take into account

that Motahari reached to the political question of sovereignty out of a philosophical-historical question in his book *Elal-e Gerayesh be Maddigari* (the reasons for tending to Materialism; but here, in contrast, he poses the philosophical issue of "mankind and destiny" out of a social (political) question namely "the reasons of Muslims' decadence". He emphasized that "different historical, psychological, ethical, social, religious and philosophical issues which exist in different fields" lie under the issue of decadence and are compiled together (cf. the collection of works, volume 1, 1995: 346). Motahari pointed to the "vastness and wide range" of the issue of decadence and mentioned that studying "others' opinions about this issue - whether Muslim or non Muslim-" are crucial. He also expressed that it needs too much courage for entering this field "without connivance and deliberate neglecting". Therefore, he believed that one person could not investigate this alone unless he dedicates all his life to it and he pointed out that "he has investigated the issues just in short and as a sample. All he has done was just an attempt to shape a kind of collaboration and consultation for an important social, Islamic discussion" (ibid: 347).

In investigating the reasons for the decadence of Muslims, he first mentions two primary discussions of a-"the grandeur and the decadence" of Muslims and b-philosophical discussion on the nature of era. Then he divides the subject into three sections of: Islam, Muslims and foreign agents. In the section of Islam, he poses different subjects in the areas of beliefs, ethics and Islamic rules (government and its functions, criminal and civil laws of Islam, etc.) and in second Section, he questions the role of Muslims (in general) and the role of the rulers and religious scholars (in specific) as the reasons of decadence.

In the third section, i.e. foreign agents, he points out the issues that have plotted against Islam during the early years of its spread among which one can mention "Jews, Christians, Magi, Manichaeans, and Laics" who – according to Motahari- have stabbed Islam in the back and have caused disputes among the Muslims. Moreover he points to the Crusades and the invasions of Mongolians and "other invaders who were more dangerous than Mongols, who were Western Colonialists" (ibid: 325-356). Generally, he declares these three sections in 27 subjects and points out that "he neither claims that he has regarded and categorized all of the issues nor has put them in a well-suited order":

1. grandeur and decadence (an introduction to other discussions)
2. Islam and the necessities of the time, which is divided into two sections. The first one is about the philosophy of history. In the second one, the quality of the conformity of Islamic rules with elements whose changes are sensitive to time, is mentioned and discussed (This issue contains two aspects: preparations and measures).
3. Destiny
4. Belief in the resurrection day and its effect in social progress and/or decadence of society
5. Intercessions and intercessory prayers
6. Taqiya (preference and caution)
7. Waiting for the savior during the age of occultation
8. Ethical system of Islam
9. The government in Islamic view
10. Economy in Islam
11. Criminal laws of Islam
12. The women's right in Islam
13. International laws of Islam
14. Points of deviation

15. Forging, distortion and narrating fake Hadith
16. Disputes among Shiites and Sunnis and its effect on the decadence of Muslims
17. Ash'ari and Mu'tazila theology
18. dogmatism and Ijtihad (reasoning about Islamic laws)
19. Philosophy and Sufism
20. The rulers of Islam's territory
21. Spirituality
22. Devastating actions, minorities in Islam's territory
23. Shu'ubiyya
24. The Crusades, the fall of Andalusia, the invasion of Mongolians, Colonialism.

Analyzing and criticizing Motahari's study of decadence

In a short analysis, focusing on the portion of above mentioned issues in Motahari's publications shows that among these 24 different subjects, only for issues 3 and 14, he has written an individual book completely dedicated to that issue. About the other issues, his discussions either are scattered in different books or are in the form of lecture none of which got an ultimate form for them. For instance, he has discussed the issue of "Islam and the necessities of the time", which is an introductory discussion for the reasons beyond the decadence of Islam, sporadically in the books: "Khatm-e Nabovvat" (the end of the prophet hood) (cf. the collection of the works, volume 3, 1996: 186-188), also in the book "Nezam-e Hoghough-e Zan Dar Eslam" (the system of women's rights in Islam) (1990: 103-111) and the introduction of the book "Eslam va Moghtaziyyat-e Zaman" (Islam and the necessities of the time volume 2) (1997:11-18). The rest of his discussions

about this topic include various lectures that were not written in his lifetime and were compiled by the "observatory council for publishing Motahari's works" posthumously. About the other 24 listed issues, the situation is the same²⁰.

Therefore, we can conclude that although in the beginning years of 1940s, he confronted the issue of decadence, his efforts for studying this topic and also other topics that he himself had posed, was stopped in the beginning and did not come to an end. Moreover, these topics were not comprehensive and ordered. In the middle of studying the question of decadence, he figured out that he has to dedicate most of his life to the "confrontation with" and "fight against" Marxism for that the Marxism, which was spreading in Iran, was a radical movement mostly ideological and party-based. That is why all these topics were postponed to a tomorrow, which never came. There was also another fight, which took much of Motahari's time; the struggle against the spread of materialistic beliefs amongst a group of Iranian intellectuals 1960s and 1970s. As was mentioned before, most of Motahari's publications are the answers he provided for the questions proposed by these two groups rather than direct answer to the issue of decadence.

Regardless of his historical failure in responding to the questions that he himself had posed about the issue of decadence, as some of the scholars in political philosophy have pointed (cf. Tabatabaei, 1995: 13-16, ...), his viewpoint about decadence is more important and decisive than posing the issue itself. Motahari's viewpoint about the decadence is an internal-external viewpoint. That is to say, he was dealing with both the role of internal and external factors in the process of decadence. In his idea, the internal factors are forgetting or leaving Islamic insights, behav-

iors, thoughts and deeds among the Muslims. In the other words, if Muslims "return" to divine teachings of Islam and let it determine their thoughts and deeds, they will have an outstanding role in the new world like before. That is to say, Motahari believed all the factors that led Muslims to greatness and fortune in the past are still effective in the contemporary world. It seems that there is no difference among basics of civilization in the past and present and this was Motahari's biggest mistake in analyzing the issue of decadence. He did not consider any strong point in insights, behaviors, thoughts and deeds of Westerners in his analysis of decadence. However, Muslims underdevelopment -at most- leads to their own mustiness and cannot explain the westerners' progress and development.

Investigating the external factors, he only questioned the "repressive procedure" of western civilization. He believes the western civilization was somehow "alien" to Muslim because Muslims' familiarity with it was through events such as "the Crusades, Colonialism, etc." He did not pose any question about the foundation of Western thought which leads to the contemporary western civilizations. In Motahari's eyes, it is never clear how the new European civilization, which according to him is "a great and outstanding civilization which has starred eyes and bewildered the mind and is dominant to the whole world" (cf. the collection of works, volume 1, 1995: 348), could surpass "Islamic magnificent civilization". In his theory of decadence, Motahari neglected the fundamental differences between new and old generation and only because of superficial similarities among "social sciences, philosophy, art, ethics and sublime", he has compared the ancient times when "Muslims were prevailing the world for centuries and the people

were benefited from their services" with the same situation in the new era (indirectly). That is why, in his suggested researches, he never points to comparisons between Islamic thoughts and new western thoughts. It is as if nothing has happened in west and this civilization was created all of a sudden and without having reliance and dependence on new and solid thoughts.

According to him, decadence of Muslims is actually posed because nowadays compare their own past to their current situation and not because they compare their distance and relation to the contemporary west. However, he firstly posed the question of decadence - unlike what Motahari was trying to answer in this manner. He himself says: "nowadays, Muslims are suffering from decadence compared to most of the nations of the world and compared to their magnificent past²¹ and they are suffering from a miserable delay" (ibid: 350). Even with the evidences that Motahari, the question of decadence is not what we have asked ourselves but what others have asked us. We have either repeated the question or gave answers to some of them: "it was about 20 years ago when I was a student in the seminary of Qom when I figured out there are other scholars who have considered the Muslims' belief in fate as the most important reason for the Muslims' decadence"²² (ibid: 358).

Talking about others who have theorized the reasons for Muslims' mustiness, Motahari meant Washington Irving proposes whose theory was mentioned in a book written by Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, the famous Egyptian author. Heikal quoted Irving's theory in the second volume of his book, "the life of Mohammad". Motahari knew this book through Abolghasem Payandeh's trans-

lation since he had written comments on that (ibid, p. 358, ...). Accordingly, we can prove that in most of the cases, even questioning the decadence was posed by the westerns and we have repeated it and in some cases answered it.

Moreover, for criticizing Motahari's views on decadence, one can point to his analytic unit or the level of analysis. He mentions the decadence of "Muslims" and probably he means all Islamic countries or as he says "Islamic World" (ibid: 347 & 351) which are spread in today's three continents from Indonesia to Albania and from Middle Asia to Africa. He also considers the history, civilization, culture and special social and ethnic features for each of these countries or groups. He himself points out that:

"Islam emerged among Arabs and then some other nations such as Iranians, Indians, Copts, Barbarians, etc. converted into Islam. Each of these nations had special nationalities and historical and ethnic features. It should be investigated if all of these nations or some of them have deviated Islam from its original path due to features and special ethnic differences, which were necessary to their nature? (ibid: 355).

However, regardless of posing such features and mentioning the influences of different nations and ethnicities in decadence, he finally chose the analytic unit of "Muslims" as whole and neither paid attention to such ethnic and historical differences while proposing the above-mentioned 24 topics. Maybe Motahari's mental dependence to Muslims' destiny made him neglect the reality of historical, civilizing, cultural, geographical, etc. differences of various Islamic countries in his analysis²³. In any case, we cannot emphasize on our desires or on our imaginary

picture of Motahari and neglect this important fact-however unpleasant- while analyzing Motahari's works. His negligence has made a big damage on his attempts for theorizing the issue of decadence. Indeed, different nations have different portion in the process of decadence so that we cannot place them all in the same level of analysis. On the other hand, posing the theory of decadence is an introduction for recognizing the current situation of Muslims and is a prologue for moving towards progress²⁴. Even by assuming – however unlikely- that all the Muslims had the same and equal role in the process of decadence and they were all equally affected by it, we still cannot consider them to be the same in the current world or put them in the same analyzing unit and prescribe a single solution for their progress and development. Different level of development in Islamic countries in their contemporary era is another proof for this. The variety in these countries is so much obvious that it seems irrational to consider a single analysis for all of them.

Kalam (science of discourse) or philosophy: contemplation on the method

The last section of the present article is a reflection on Motahari's way of thinking. The reason beyond penning down this section is the fact that one of the ways for recognizing the thinkers' thoughts and beliefs is to know the method or methods they utilized for proposing, expanding and defending their own thoughts. The first question that comes to mind about a religious thinkers -and here Motahari- is his method for dealing with the issues which might be reason-based or discourse-based however these two are internally dependant for that no religious thinker can stop getting benefit from the science of discourse, without relying on the "reason" and vice versa, but the question is which of these

two comes first. That is to say, if a thinker first uses the discourse and refers to the old saying for proving his points then rationalizes it, or he starts by rational reasoning and then adds traditional evidences to the end of discussion²⁵. In both cases, religious thinkers depend on the religious discourse in its general sense to select the topics and explain the issues. However, selecting the topics (and in philosophers' term: discovering, gathering or catching the topics) (Soroush, 1991: 49-53), will not damage the scientific work²⁶.

Now, has Motahari made use of reason-based method or discourse-based method for proving his points? In order to answer this question, we should utilize an experimental to determine the frequency of each method but people who know about Motahari's works confirm that in most of his books, making use of reason-based method or rational analysis is dominant. For example, the books: *Nezam-e Hoghough-e Zan Dar Eslam* (the system of women's right in Islam), *Adl-e Elahi* (God's Justice), *Jahan bini-e Eslami* (the Islamic ideology), *Eslam VA Moghtaziyat-e Zaman* (Islam and the necessities of the time), etc. contain evidences for above mentioned claim. Regarding that the source of the topics that a religious thinker choose is the religious discourse (or from religion in general), the outcome of using reason-based and discourse-based method is that such religious thinkers moves forward and become revivers of religious thinking through posing the questions appropriate to their period and their writings will be relevant to their time and they become prominent criticizers of political and social thoughts while other religious scholars have stuck to the basics. In author's idea, because of the method that Motahari had chosen, his publications make him as an example of such thinkers described above.

There is another question, which should be posed about religious thinkers' way in another more important level; i.e. did the thinker choose to apply the method of philosophy in his works and publications or the method of Kalam (the science of discourse)? We cannot ask if religious thinker is a philosopher or a Motekallems (the expert in Kalam), because obviously anyone who has an open mind will answer that a religious thinker should choose between being philosopher or being religious; the word religious philosopher is paradoxical.

In author's idea, such an answer is a fact, especially if we consider religion as a collection of propositions that even if they are not irrational, they are at least wisdom-digressive. If somebody talks about "Mahdi's revolution" or "God's justice", he cannot be labeled as philosopher for that a philosopher is somebody who does not accept any priority or restriction in his thought –However, according to the new views of the philosophers of science, such an absolute philosopher has not yet been born. A scholar may use an argumentative method to prove his point but according to what we said before, he still cannot be named a philosopher. It seems that changing the name of philosophy to Qur'an name of Hekmat (wisdom) in Islamic period has was a response to such definition of philosophy and it was influenced by the change of priorities in thinking due to the faith-principles (Soroush, 1998: 108-118).²⁷

What was mentioned above shows why there are debates about Motahari being philosopher or Motekallems? By referring to Motahari's quote about increase in the number of philosophical issues from 200 to 700 which was because of the works of Islamic philosophers (Osul-e Falsafe va Ravesh-e Realism, Volume 1, introduction), Javad

Tabatabaei' debates that non of such issues added to philosophy by Muslim philosophers have a philosophical nature and accordingly considers Motahari to be a Motekallems not a philosopher (Tabatabaei', 1994: 7). However, Abdolkarim Soroush believes that Motahari has chosen the philosophers' method (Soroush, 1984: 264). It is noteworthy that in a work named "Defa az Falsafe" (Defending the philosophy), Reza Davari considers Motahari's book "Osul-e Falsafe va Ravesh-e Realism" (the principles of philosophy and the method of realism) as an example of books in Kalam, declaring that Motahari's most important piece of writing about philosophy should be yet categorized in the field of religious discourse however he confirms that in the book, philosophy and Kalam were compiled in a new way. The reason beyond what Davari says is that in all of his works, Motahari's main intention was "defending the religion and proving its rightfulness" (Davari, 1987: 1990)²⁸.

The author of this paper has not read a discussion which was more detailed than Reza Davari's about Motahari's method being discourse-based or philosophy-based (ibid: 69-124). By restating Motahari's words in the book *Adl-e Elahi (God's Justice)*²⁹ which says his method in this book is philosophers' method and not Motekallems' (the collection of works, volume 1, 1995: 41), Davari explains the difference between the new Kalam and philosophy which are separated due to their objectives not their method. What differentiate between the new Kalam and the old Kalam is also their objectives not their method. In other words, it can be said that the similarity between the new Kalam (Motahari's Kalam) and philosophy is exactly like its difference with the old Kalam.

More fluently, Abdolkarim Soroush points out to this issue, saying that: if we consider the definition of Kalam to be: a method in which we make use of the principles of practical Hekmat to prove the goals of theoretical Hekmat, -this is a logical paralogism- Motahari cannot be labeled as Motekallems. This is possible and allowed a philosopher to have reason-based contemplation and still respect an ideology. His rationalism may also help him prove that worldview. Motahari did not believe in his predecessors' definitions of Kalam and philosophy and believed that the thing, which differentiates the philosophers' works from that of a Motekallem, is not commitment and non-commitment; but the essence of Kalam is using some kinds of preliminaries in his arguments while the philosophers do not permit such preliminaries to lead their arguments. The most important preliminary that a Motekallems enjoys is the issue of rational good and evil but the philosophers do not accept the rational good and evil as a cornerstone for reasoning. What philosophers do is to distinguish the practical rationales from theoretical rationales while Motekallems mix them and Motahari did not accept this (cf. Soroush in Vaseghi, 2000: 361-262).

Therefore, we can claim that Motahari is a

philosopher; that is to say, his method in proving his claim is mostly logical in most of his publications and he is a Motekallems because in all of his writings, his intention is to defend the religion. However, the important question is that if commitment to defend religious propositions does or does not damage his philosophical and logical method-and freedom in his way-. In other words, does it not lead such scholar to justification? Davari and Soroush have not posed this question in their works but one of the authors has claimed that Motahari was well committed to the philosophical method. That is to say; he first relied on philosophical basis and then tried to defend religious propositions (Souzanchi, 1999: 207-208). However, it seems that at least in some areas of political and social issues- and especially in distinguishing the freedom of thought from the freedom of belief and omitting the word democratic from the Islamic Republic³⁰ - in Motahari's terms, the argument is confiscated in favor of intention (here we do not judge his intentions and motives to be right or wrong)³¹.

The author's idea is strengthened by a supposition that there are firm relations between method, basis and objective and one cannot simply adjust any method with any basis and objective.

1. In the fourth part of his book "Seyri dar Nahjolbalagheh" (a survey on Nahjolbalagheh), Motahari discusses "government and justice". His discussions there cannot also describe his political thoughts about governing and authority because he does not speak about how authority is shaped (the right for governing and justification of sovereignty) and the distribution of power is missing in his debates. The issues like confessing that people have right and the authorities must keep such rights for people are amongst the issues, which cannot be neglected, and accordingly he talks about them in his book but the links between them are unclear. In the other words, one cannot simply understand the quality of "political connection" between citizens and states from his text for that he just mentions the quality of behaviors, which people and political leaders should have. It must be noted that one of the most important focuses of this paper is on the semantic relevance of authority and justice. Motahari's viewpoint and Islamic insights indicate that justice shapes the nature of authority which even marginalizes the important issue of survival. (A study on Nahjolbalagheh, 2000: 131-132). This subject will be covered in another paper in which the focus is on pillars of Motahari's political views and ideas.
2. Because in this paper Motahari's name gets repeated frequently therefore the names of his books are usually used for referring to him
3. According to what was mentioned, one cannot extract a well-shaped political theory from Motahari's writings (which can explain issues like power and government in the time of the absence of Imam Mahdi- PBUH)
4. About this issue, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami says that: "the thoughts of Imam and Motahari created Islamic revolution of Iran and helped it win." (Thalami's paper is indexed in Seyyed-e Naseri and Sotudeh, 1387: 285). Reza Davari says that: "new Islamic theology, one of whose founders was Motahari, was one of the exclusive marks of our Islamic revolution." (Davari, 1987: 104). Hashemi Rafsanjani says that: "Motahari, more than anybody else, provided the ideological inputs of our revolution through his philosophical and sociopolitical lectures, papers and debates." (Rafsanjani quotes are mentioned in Soroush, 1363: 5).
5. Imam Khomeini who has said his works are all "instructive and reviving without exception" has also approved Motahari's works. This approval is one the reasons why his works are such promoted and effective in Iran.
6. Seyyed Mohammad Khatami describes Motahari as "a man of his time, a Maestro of Islam who knows the issues of his time and can recognize the political status and thoughts in the Islamic world and Iran as well" (See: Seyyed-Naseri, 1387: 284, 287 and 288). Abdolkarim Soroush believes that "Motahari knew the ideas of his age and their root very well and he had vast knowledge about that" (Soroush, 1363: Introduction). Reza Davari believes that "Motahari revived the religion, and established new Islamic Kalam (the science of discourse) and he was one the greatest figures of our time as an expert in issues like Islam and infidelity". (Davari, 1987: 69, 72, 123, 124).
7. This was written in 1349
8. In the same book (Justice of God) he mentions his objectives in the next pages, saying that "the book is for solving the complexities in Islamic issues and the author tries to present the realities and enlighten the readers –as far as possible- about the questions to which the oppositions cling for shaping doubts about Islam" and also "fighting the intellectual deviations regarding the most important issues". (Collection of works, Vol1, 1995: 39).
9. In the same book (Justice of God) he mentions his objectives in the next pages, saying that "the book is for solving the complexities in Islamic issues and the author tries to present the realities and enlighten the readers –as far as possible- about the questions to which the oppositions cling for shaping doubts about Islam" and also "fighting the deviations in thoughts by regarding the most important issues". (Collection of works, Vol1, 1995: 39).
10. Motahari declares that: "as far as I remember –like when I was 4 or so- I could see that this great and righteous man never sleeps later than 3 after midnight. He used to wake up when it was two hours to the dawn. In the weekend, he used to wake up three hours to the dawn. He –at least-

- used to recite Quran and say his prayer with the upmost peace of mind. He is now about 100 and that divine pleasure has kept him such healthy. (Seyyed Naseri, 1998: 21 as mentioned in Haghva-Batel)
11. One of the examples of his perseverance and determination is his revision on "al-Tahsil" written by Bahmanyar. He had purchased the hand written issue of this book from Aleppo (in Syria) and he compared and contrasted it with other four issues he found in Iran. In addition, this process took 6 years of his life. (See: Soroush, 1981: 540). To see his determination see: Vaez zadeh Khorasani, Ibid:351)
 12. Seyyed Kazem Akrami –the former minister of education- in a dialogue with the author of this paper has said that: "we both came from Hamedan. Therefore, we often used to see Sahid Mofatteh. In one of our visits, we talked about Motahari. Mofatteh told me that Motahari has once told him that before attending Tehran's university I could not regard and analyze such issues in this way. This may help us know how he has convinced and pushed Mofatteh to attend the university.
 13. Motahari founded "Sadra Publication" in the last year of his life. He wanted to focus more on his works and revise them. Because he had just one year to do so, it was natural to see that publication did not realize its proposed objectives. In addition, must be noted that it was the dawn of revolution and he was accordingly too much busy doing other things. He set a logical order for working on his former writings, which started from Islamic theology. He became martyred and so he did not finish what he started. His works were posthumously gathered and published by a specific council, which supervised the job. The collection of Motahari's works, which was published by this council, contains 4 volumes –which are not interrelated but they are all about "basic Islamic believes". The discussions in volume 2, 3 and 4 have too much overlaps and accordingly it is natural to believe that if Motahari himself were alive, he would have changed the content of these books.
 14. Regarding this issue, Allameh Tabatabaei has said that: "about the basics of philosophy it was only one person-Motahari- whom I was sure can comprehend all I say. After a while, he started writing annotations on my book (the basics of philosophy). What has been published up to now shows his vast understanding and great way of thinking. Until now, three volumes of his annotations have been published and the fourth book is ready to be published. He brought his book for me. I read it and told him this is a new book not an annotation on my book. That was the time when I could see he has his own theories. He provided explanation for "the basics of philosophy" in the best possible way. That was why I trusted him and told him that YOU should be the one who writes annotations on my works not others.
 15. Motahari wrote the first volume of "the basics of philosophy and the method of realism" in February of 1953. Therefore, the book must have been published and distributed in 1954. The year of publication is not mentioned in the first edition
 16. In 1950s, Motahari did not write any book. In the last of year of this decade, he published "dastan-e rasta" (the story of righteous people). This book also shows that Motahari used to write because he could see there is a need for his book in his society. He had a mission for himself and a immaterial motivation which made him pen down his thoughts. Accordingly, it is not true to say he had a logical hierarchy in the questions that he has written about. In 1959 and 1960, he has written 4 articles in a magazine called "Maktab-e Eslam" (the school of Islam) whose subjects are not a matter of importance for our discussion here. (See: Soroush, 1981: 5- 541)
 17. The discussions gathered in two of his books (whose names are about Islamic revolution and about Islamic republic) are falsely set. For example the role of women in Islamic revolution is mentioned in "about Islamic republic" and Motahari's interview with the national TV of Iran about Islamic republic is mentioned in "about Islamic revolution"
 18. Javad Tabatabaei believes that Motahari's book (the basics of philosophy and method of realism) shows Motahari's wrong perception of Marxism and all of his debates regarding the new western philosophy are unimportant. (See: Tabatabaei, 1995: 217). This subject will be covered in another paper.
 19. The question of decadence in Motahari's thought is just a matter of social issues. Before that, Motahari's main matter of interest was about "existence of God" which he describes as "the

- most sensitive and sensational subject ever that from the dawn of history the humankind has dealt with". According to him, how the mankind regards this issue and how he determines his whole system of thinking sets his moral and social orientations." (See: *The reasons for tending to Materialism*, 1995: 8-9)
20. This was written in 1345
 21. Motahari talks about the issue of "intercession" (Shefaat) –as the fifth subject amongst 27 subjects he mentions- in one of his book which is called "the justice of God" (See: the collection of works, 1995: 223-265). Waiting for the ultimate savior (Entezar-e Faraj) –which is the seventh subject- is covered in another book, which is called "the uprising and the revolution of Mahdi" (1991: 6-68). These two subjects were not directly related to the "issue of decadence". About government from the standpoint of Islam, there are some notes at the end of his book named as "about the Islamic republic" (Darbareye Komhuriye Eslami) and about Islamic economy he has published a book called "a survey on the economical system of Islam" (Nazari bar Nezam-e Eghtesadi-e Eslam) (This book with this name has been published by Sadra publication but Hekmat publication has published it under another name which is: a short study on the economical basis of Islam). Intellectual dogmatism and Ijtihad have been discussed during other discussions in the book of "the rights of women in Islam" (Nezam-e Hoghough-e Zan dar Eslam) (1990:117-124) and "the end of prophecy" (Khatm-e Nabovvat) (See: collection of works, Vol 3, 1996: 189-202). These last two subjects are somehow related to the issue of decadence but it is hard to claim that all the things Motahari wanted to say about decadence are summarized there. Moreover, "the council of publishing Motahari's works" declares the book "a survey on economical system of Islam" is just a collection of Motahari's lectures and as if he himself wanted to publish his lectures, he would have add so much more to his former discussions. (See: *Islam and necessities of the age*, Vol 1, 1991: 8). About clergies, he has a paper called "the fundamental problem in the system of clergies" (Moshkel-e Asasi dar Sazeman-e Rohaniat) published in 1962 in a book named "Bahsi Darbareye marjaiyyat va rohaniyyat" (a discussion on clergies and religious Marjas) (other papers in the book are seemingly gathered by him). This paper is also published as the 10th speech in a book called "ten speeches" (Dah Goftar) in 1986 when he was alive. This also cannot be seen as a sufficient example for supporting the argument that Motahari rises about decadence. The other subjects amongst those 27 above-mentioned subjects are also scattered and unorganized.
 22. If we did not live in this age, it was unlikely to compare our current situation with past and raise questions about it. In the other words, feeling the regret for having such a great past, which is lost now, and asking why it has been lost is because of comparing our current situation with the situation of others.
 23. This has been mentioned by Motahari in 23rd of Farvardin 1966 in his book called "the man and the destiny" (See: collection of the works, Vol1)
 24. The 14th subject amongst the subjects proposed by Motahari is "the points of deviation". It seems that while regarding this issue, he was considering the differences between races and nations and the impact of such differences on deviation. If we consider this true –which is unlikely- it will just cover 1/24th of the completely essential reasons and Motahari has not elaborated on that to make it as well-shaped explanation for the question of decadence. Moreover, while talking about the differences between Muslims he puts more emphasis on religion-based factors (like forging Hadith, Ash'ari and Mu'tazila-thinking, clericalism, Shu'ubiyya etc) rather than factors which have roots in the realities of cultures and the history of races and nations.
 25. Motahari, himself, mentions this saying that: "finding a way for revising the situation in the world of Islam depends on finding the reasons for their decadence now and in the past" (See: collection of works, Vol1, 1995: 347)
 26. For instance: the method of Allameh Tabatabaei for interpretation of Quran starts with rational debates at end of which, he adds traditional religious sayings. It must be noted here that sometimes referring to such sayings were used as a counter-method to rational method. The old scholars believed that referring to the sayings contradicts what rational method results in. In the other

- words, for understanding, describing and analyzing the world we need to choose one of the methods. We can have a rational method or we can just rely on the old sayings. Using the sayings in a radical way ended to some schools of thoughts like Akhbari-thinking in jurisprudence and Ashari-thinking in Kalam. The first one was used for a while amongst Shiite sect and the second one was used amongst Sunnis. The first school had an intellectual dogmatism during interpretation of Quran and the second one had an intellectual dogmatism, which did not tolerate any interpretation of Quran but facial interpretation, specially rejecting the rational interpretations. It seems that in the old days, Motekallems (theologians) were mostly interested in textual method (which means refereeing to the religious sayings as an argumentative method) while the religious philosophers were interested more in the rational method. In this new age, the religious thinkers are not considered pure rationalists because today ration is set free from any adjective bounding it. In the other words, the realm of reason and intellect is divided from the realm of interpretation and meaning. The first one deal with the actual matters and the other deals with textual matters –also it does not neglect the influence of outside knowledge on the interpretation of inside meaning. The divided realms accordingly overlap in their applicability not their nature.
27. The question of how much Motahari's method is as Falsifiability is not our main matter of concern here. Perhaps with such criteria many of religious debates turn out to be not falsifiable. This is maybe because most of such debates deal with meaning and interpretation not providing explanation. Falsifiability is about explaining the relation between two (objective and) experimental variables while religious propositions try to prove their conformity with the religion. Of course while talking about their instances; their relation is neither of explanation nor conformity but of interference which means that as far as the religious texts talks about actual (and historical) events and happenings, such interference increases
 28. Abdolkarim Soroush believes that when philosophy entered in Islamic culture and they changed its name into "Hekmat", it doubtlessly accommodated divine and spiritual content accordingly "pagan Hakim" is a paradoxical composition; that is why the concept of philosophy in this culture is different from the concept of philosophy in European culture. Muslim Hakims have declared that believing in God and following the laws of religion (Sharia) are of the necessities of Hekmat. They also believe that the essence of philosophy is changed in Islamic culture and now it has a different nature accordingly, they reject any kind of philosophy, which contradicts the laws of the religion, and have declared it false and corrupting. (Soroush, 1998: 109)
 29. Reza Davari believes that: "Motahari had not published any philosophical work since he was alive. The reason beyond his revisions on Bahmanyar's "Al-Tahsil" and publication of some philosophical articles was that they were necessary in his job as an instructor and most of his attempts in this field can be considered as an introduction he needed to provide for his students (Davari, 1987: 69).
 30. This also has been proposed by Motahari in "the reasons for tending to materialism" (p:8-13)
 31. Another paper will be dedicated solely to the political ideas and believes of Motahari
 32. Mr.Suzanchi rejects this and believes that in eye of Motahari, emancipation was defined as the lack of barriers and since something is a barrier standing against one's growth, it cannot be categorized under the term of emancipation. Accordingly, he does not believe in freedom for expressing such believes that he considers as a barrier against growth. (See: Suzanchi, 1999: 230)

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