The position of social justice in governance from the perspective of Morteza Motahari and John Rawls

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Abstract:

Social justice, as a concern of human society alongside concepts like freedom, security, democracy, and governance, has always received attention by justice-oriented thinkers. They have provided theories on the concept of justice and how to achieve it. Among them are Morteza Motahari and John Rawls who regarded as influential in global thought. This article focuses on the concept of social justice and its place in governance within the framework of the ideas of these two thinkers, utilizing a descriptive-comparative method by gathering primary data from related articles on social justice within a governance approach. For Martyr Motahari, justice is an innate matter, achievable only through the connection of human law to divine law. He sees justice as a fundamental reality created by natural order. In contrast, Rawls views justice as a civil matter, attainable through human consensus under conditions of fairness. This is why, they yield two different outcomes, while ultimately aim to shape reforms and essential concepts by emphasizing that governance cannot start without moving toward justice. Justice is presented as a marker, factor, and aspect essential for progress, development, and the attributes of fair and transcendental governance. Both theories assign duties to governments, as a principal pillar of public rights, in establishing social justice through legislation. However, their views diverge significantly in the origins and foundations of these perspectives, as Rawls approaches justice from a liberal viewpoint, Motahari articulates it in an Islamic context.

Keywords: Justice, Social Justice, Governance, John Rawls, Morteza Motahari

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Introduction

Justice has always been a matter of contention and discussion not only in intellectual and theoretical realms but also as a persistent human concern and aspiration. Although justice is a broad and inclusive concept and commonly understood by all, views differ on its scope, boundaries, origins, and indicators. Each philosophical and intellectual school holds a

unique perspective on justice based on its own framework. The divergence is to the extent that what one school considers just, another might deem unjust. This range of differing views on a single subject is remarkable, indicating that a deeper exploration into justice reveals its theoretical complexity and ambiguity. These complexities and divergent views keep justice a central topic for thinkers and philosophers, fostering ongoing dialogue and theoretical research.

A recurring question concerns how processes of acquiring political power, and the distribution of political benefits and privileges (such as positions and status), can lead to fair distribution, promoting public satisfaction with rulers and establishing a just society. Islamic thinkers view social justice as foundational, embedding it as a value into structures, institutions, behaviors, and all social elements. The type of perspective adopted on social justice can yield different outward manifestations. Therefore, more research is needed to clarify the theoretical and practical aspects of social justice. Renewed attention by Western and Islamic thinkers like Rawls and Motahari toward justice in recent decades highlights this. This study emphasizes the essence and nature of social justice in governance from the viewpoints of Motahari and Rawls. Alongside exploring the nature of justice, other related issues are also examined, such as the value of justice, approaches to establishing social justice, procedural justice, and duty-based justice.

The concept of governance is increasingly prevalent, and its meaning is growing in complexity. While we consider theoretical and practical flexibility in concept application both desirable and inevitable, we believe governance suffers from conceptual confusion, which hinders productive discussions and the development of more coherent governance theories. Justice should be implemented in a way that every individual can demand their rightful share of justice in society. However, establishing justice among individuals within society with relatively restrictive and limited laws is incompatible with some. This approach aligns with the divine tradition, positing that justice should be an enduring part of human character, where people inherently desire to act justly.

Throughout history, justice has been a fundamental human concern. God, through the prophets and the law, has provided humanity with the best teachings and highest methods for implementing justice, guided by reason. One of the most critical domains linked to the fate of society and the protection of people's rights is politics, involving the acquisition and exercise of political power. In today's world, ideal governance—what the ancients termed the "virtuous city"—is unattainable without a comprehensive theory of progress, with the "theory of justice" as its cornerstone. This necessity is such that its absence leads to failure in fulfilling societal duties and the spread of corruption. Despite its importance, justice, with all its theoretical and practical implications for individuals and society, remains inadequately structured and lacks comprehensive theoretical organization.

As power structures develop, issues such as the scope of rulers' authority, the mutual rights and responsibilities of the state and citizens, and numerous other core issues illustrate the importance of the discussion. Nearly all prominent thinkers in history have defined justice and its boundaries. Western and Islamic scholars offer differing theories on justice and social justice. In this research, Rawls,

recognized as the most influential contemporary Western political philosopher, and Motahari, representing Islamic theorists, are chosen. Rawls aims to provide impartial principles for justice, viewing it as a result of individuals' free agreement in the "original position," with key guides like the maximin principle and the veil of ignorance regarding future social status. Motahari, on the other hand, views justice as respecting rights, recognizing both natural (innate) individual rights and communal rights. He believes that the legitimacy of natural rights stems from accepting the purposeful order of the world. Furthermore, Islam, by establishing principles like general cooperation (the principle of universal solidarity) and social balance, demonstrates its sensitivity toward the fair distribution of resources within society.

Research Hypotheses
Main Hypothesis

1. Motahari and John Rawls have commonalities in their views on justice in principles and rules, such as understanding justice as the highest social virtue, considering human beings as ends, not means, emphasizing the central role of justice in societal structure, and distinguishing justice from equality. However, they hold serious differences in principles and rules regarding the contractual or consensual nature of justice, Rawls' deviation from the traditional conceptual analysis of social justice, Motahari's emphasis on defining social justice comprehensively and precisely, and the basis of justice as either right or benefit. Fundamentally, Motahari and John Rawls' views on social justice in governance can be found in areas such as rights-based governance and the degree of government involvement in achieving social justice.

Sub-Hypotheses

1. Motahari and John Rawls, in explaining their theories of justice and social justice, use two different foundations to arrive at the principles of justice. Motahari, considering divine justice and believing in the creation of the universe based on justice, explains his theory of justice through revelatory teachings and reason. Although Motahari is a realist, and his theory of justice is based on this truth, Rawls, by defending liberalism, attempts to establish his theory of justice and social justice on a contractual and hypothetical basis. Thus, Rawls is a contractualist, and the main foundation of his theory relies on the agreement and decisions of individuals in a completely hypothetical situation called the "original position."

2. In Rawls' theory, the establishment of justice is shaped by the natural state of the social system, where individuals are unaware of their social status, position, or fortune in the distribution of assets and natural resources, such as power and other factors. Principles of justice are chosen behind a "veil of ignorance," which is one of humanity's most general collective choices. However, the common principle of both philosophers requires that none of the individuals in society benefit or suffer from the result of natural luck or social success when selecting principles of justice. The establishment of true justice in terms of philosophical foundations, including anthropological and ontological aspects, is a shared concern of both philosophers, and its realization is a moral necessity in human societies since the existence of injustice and inequality in societies is not due to divine decree, and individuals are mutually responsible in society.

3. Rawls considers the realization of justice possible under a liberal society based on a

democratic government grounded in a constitution, while Motahari sees its fulfillment through establishing a social democracy grounded in Islamic spirituality. Thus, the function of justice in its social aspect is more important than its individual aspect from the perspective of both philosophers. Misinterpretations of justice (socialist, liberal, Islamic, etc.) without understanding the philosophical meaning and foundation of justice can unintentionally lead to misguidance, exploitation, and governmental inefficiency, resulting in oppression and injustice towards individuals in society. The place of justice and its relationship to concepts like freedom and morality is clearly defined from both philosophers' perspectives.

Definitions and Concepts

This section addresses the fundamental definitions and concepts used in the research. Governance often suffers from conceptual confusion and is discussed differently and sometimes even contradictorily from various perspectives. On one hand, understanding its semantic scope requires distinguishing between "governance" and "government." Although both terms refer to a system of rules, the term "government" indicates activities supported by formal authority to ensure policy implementation and the essential challenges of global governance in the absence of a global government based on rights and law observance. Meanwhile, governance is defined as the "capacity to accomplish tasks without the legal authority to enforce them" (Heydari Fard, 2016, p. 152).

The term governance is relatively new and lacks a clear meaning in relation to the older term "state." In the American "Heritage" dictionary, "governance" is defined as "the activity, manner, or power of governing a state." In the Oxford English Dictionary, governance is defined as "the activity or method of governing, exercising control or power over subordinates' activities, a system of rules and regulations." In the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, there is no definition of the word "governance," nor is such a term listed in its index (Meidori, 2004, p. 192).

Governance is a concept that includes criteria, standards, procedures, and principles of governance through which governments conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and ensure human rights. Thus, human rights values and adherence to them play an important role in defining it, determining the quality of governance in the political system (Zarei, 2004, p. 156). In other words, good governance includes a set of views, mechanisms, policies, and processes that serve the realization of democracy and human rights. From this perspective, governance can be considered a desirable tool for realizing the ideals of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Zarei, 2004, p. 165).

Historical Background of Governance

The concept of "governance" is not new; it dates back to the beginning of human civilization. In its simplest sense, governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented) (Escop, 2005, p. 151).

Good governance is a new model introduced into global discourse by certain international organizations in the early 1990s. The United Nations Development Program, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations have examined this theory from various perspectives, and the World Bank has proposed it as the key to development architecture. According to the United Nations Development

Program, governance is defined as the political, economic, and administrative exercise of authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Good governance, according to this organization, includes mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens pursue their interests, fulfill their legal rights, and meet their obligations while resolving their differences. Over recent years, an extensive body of literature on good governance has been published by the aforementioned international organizations (Naghibi Fard, 2010, p. 23).

In the realm of fundamental international transformations, beyond the structure of sovereign states, a collective solidarity and consensus has emerged globally. The deepening and expansion of this solidarity and consensus has led to significant consequences, resulting in new relationships and systems of governance that embody principles that transcend sovereignty, with new patterns and criteria for exercising legal and contractual authority (Sharifi Taraz Kouhi, 2002, p. 18).

Governance Indicators

In this section, we examine governance indicators.

1. Examining Indicators Based on Performance in Governance

An indicator is an appropriate mechanism for presenting and measuring a phenomenon. In this regard, a rule in defining and identifying good governance is to state its indicators, so that by identifying good governance, indicators can be used to measure and evaluate it in different societies. For this purpose, individuals, groups, and national and international institutions have each introduced indicators and characteristics for good governance.

2.1 Rule of Law

The rule of law is one of the fundamental pillars of good governance, according to which equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all individuals before the law, as well as the existence of constitutional and real guarantees to protect the fundamental rights of the people, are considered essential requirements. The existence of a predictable legal system, and effective, efficient, and fair judicial institutions are inherent and inseparable conditions for protecting citizens' rights against the arbitrary abuse of power by government officials and the illegal actions of organizations and individuals. In many countries transitioning to democracy, the current laws are sometimes either unjust, or, if appropriate, they are not enforced justly and equally; judicial independence is often compromised by government or special political groups, or the rights of individuals and minorities are not genuinely and effectively protected. Additionally, governmental organizations and institutions may lack sufficient capability to enforce existing laws. In such a situation, without adherence to the rule of law, the executive and legislative branches act without a system of checks and balances or mutual influence, free, fair, and healthy elections are impossible, and civil societies lack the capacity to grow and thrive. Consequently, ineffective and inefficient legal and political structures in these countries endanger the process of popular reform and sustainable development within such societies (Zarei, 2004, p. 62).

Good governance requires fair legal structures that are impartially enforced. Good governance is also dependent on the full protection of human rights, especially the rights of those in the minority. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an

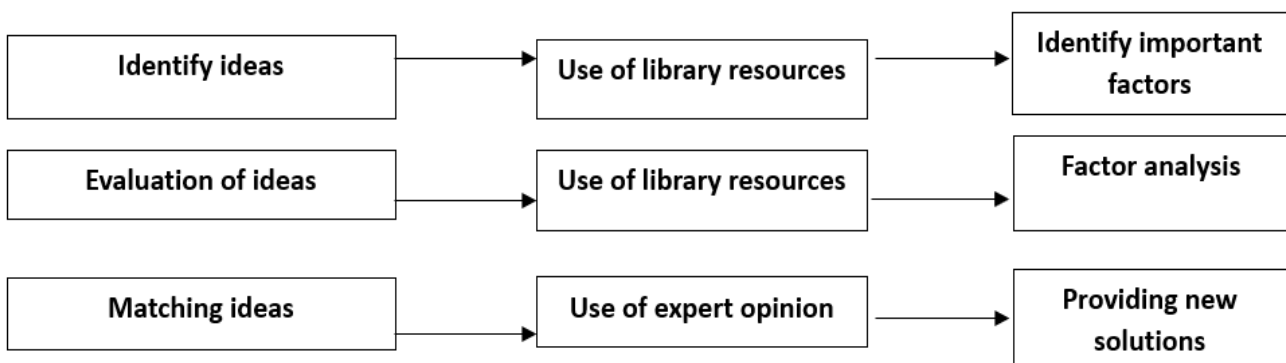unbiased, incorruptible police force (Hadavand, 2005, p. 80).

The importance of the concept of the rule of law as a key indicator of good governance lies in the fact that it encompasses a set of reasons and justifications for governmental actions that are accepted as norms within that legal and political system, and it forms the basis for the legitimacy of those actions, including legislation and administrative decisions (Markaz Malmiri, 2006, p. 86).

Only in a society where maximum assurance of meeting expectations is achieved can individuals foresee conditions by being aware of the laws, and use their knowledge of constantly changing conditions to fulfill their goals.

Another legal outcome of governments' adherence to the rule of law theory is the application of the natural justice doctrine in trials and, more broadly, the implementation and guarantee of individuals' fundamental rights and freedom. If laws are formulated in a way that treats similar cases in an ad hoc manner or are applied unfairly, the domain of rights and freedoms will be severely impacted. While the rule of law provides everyone with the opportunity to pursue their goals and ideas freely, more importantly, it establishes a secure and inviolable domain for individuals, enabling them to plan with confidence regarding their personal domain and the commitments of others towards them (Naghibi Monfared, 2010, p. 162).

Type of Research Method

This article is an applied research study in terms of its objective and a descriptive and analytical study in terms of data collection and analysis method. Moreover, the research is conducted through the following stages:

Identify ideas	→	Use of library resources	→	Identify important factors
Evaluation of ideas	→	Use of library resources	→	Factor analysis
Matching ideas	→	Use of expert opinion	→	Providing new solutions

Method of Analysis

A: In the current article, as the research method is theoretical and relies on an analytical-descriptive approach, and data collection is conducted through library research, the method of analysis is descriptive-analytical using the note-taking technique.

B: Based on the tools provided, the researcher first uses available sources and library studies to explain, elaborate, and define the dimensions of the topic. Then, after explaining the topics, the researcher evaluates and assesses the presented subject through analyzing and weighing questions, hypotheses, and variables involved, performing a comprehensive analysis from various angles and perspectives. Finally, after summarizing the information, the researcher derives their desired conclusions from this analysis and reaches a new definition. Therefore, the method of analysis in this article will be qualitative and reasoned.

Discussion and Findings of the Research

The concept of justice in social justice has two aspects: one is substantive [1] and the other is formal or structural [2]. To elaborate on the distinction between these two aspects, a clarification is offered. For instance, if someone defines justice as the absence of discrimination or biased behavior, then anyone who behaves in a discriminatory manner is unjust, while non-discriminatory behavior is considered just. If discriminatory treatment occurs among members of society, creating inequality in access to resources and privileges, it would constitute injustice; if not, it would be justice. This definition of justice is formal, expressing a structural or procedural aspect rather than a substantive one.

For example, in a caste society, such as in India, there are distinctions based on social classes, including an upper class and an untouchable class. In contrast, our society does not recognize such distinctions; we do not engage in discriminatory behavior or practices. In such a caste-based society, behaviors that we consider discriminatory are, to them, expressions of genuine difference due to their belief that birth and race determine social worth.

However, if we ask a Hindu why they engage in discriminatory behavior, they might deny it, explaining that individuals genuinely differ based on their social status at birth. They believe someone born into the upper class is rightfully entitled to more privileges, while someone from a lower caste has fewer rights. A person who does not accept this caste system may view such differences as unjust discrimination, while a believer in the system sees it as the essence of justice. Thus, the dispute between society A and society B is a substantive conflict over whether individuals deserve this inequality or not.

Conversely, philosophers like Robert Nozick argue that if I am the owner of myself and my capabilities, any benefits derived from my personal talents and natural abilities are justly earned. This leads to a fundamental conflict over what constitutes justice. We might seek to resolve this by defining justice as the allocation of each person's due. But does this resolve the conflict? No, it does not, as both sides might claim their stance aligns with this definition. Rawls, for example, argues that someone's rightful share differs from Nozick's view. Hence, our debate on justice must shift towards its substantive dimensions.

The Basis of Motahari in Rights Discussion

Motahari's view on rights concerns only the distribution of resources and privileges, focusing solely on ownership. Social justice,

however, extends beyond distributive justice to include political justice, where questions arise about what constitutes a just political system. What are the criteria for political justice? How can we ensure fair access to power? This approach goes beyond natural rights concerning Earth's resources and does not suffice to address complex issues like educational justice.

For example, the issue of free education at different levels raises the question of whether higher education is a fundamental right. Should the government guarantee access to higher education as it does for elementary education, or is it a commodity to be purchased? Similarly, does the provision of quality health services fall under public rights, or should it be a purchasable commodity? Thus, natural rights alone do not address the complexities of social justice in areas like political and educational justice (Tarjoman, 2020, p. 9).

In ethical and justice-related discussions, we also face the challenge of justifying moral adherence. Knowing that justice is good and oppression is bad does not explain why one must commit to these values in practice. Here, the concept of "Justification" arises, which concerns the motivation behind moral adherence. Motahari alludes to the importance of considering normative values in defining justice, yet there remains some ambiguity. Does this normative sense contribute to knowledge, or is it only a motivational aspect? This question invites further exploration regarding the "should" of ethical obligations.

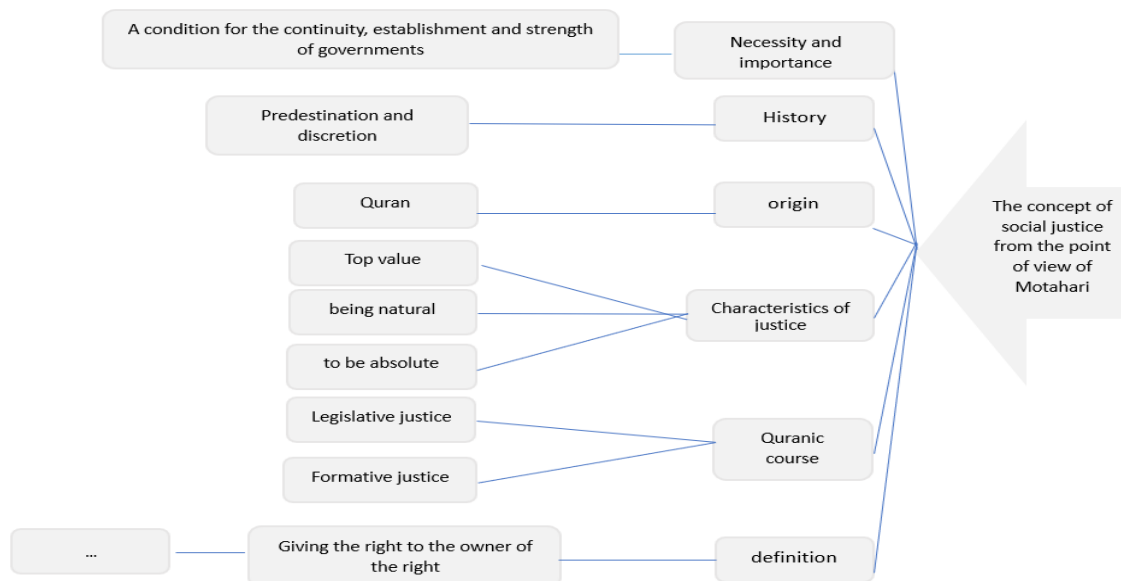This section concludes with three diagrams summarizing the content.

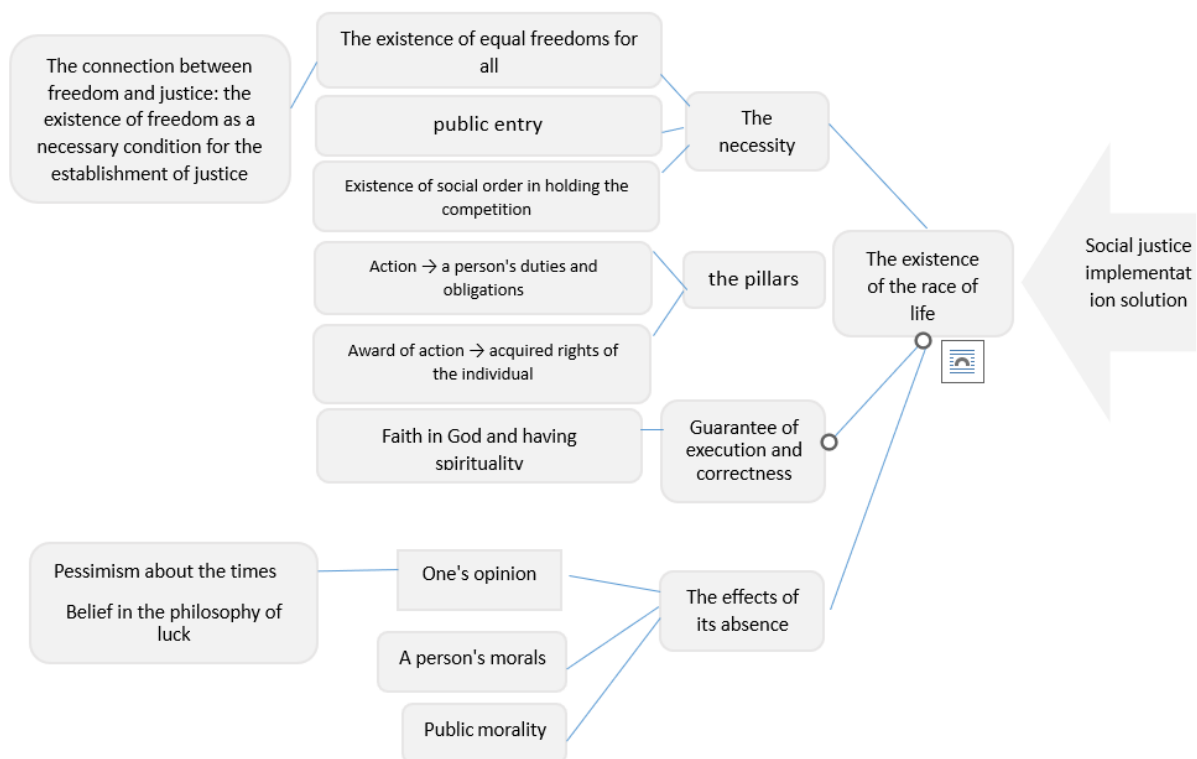Diagram No 1: The Concept of Social Justice

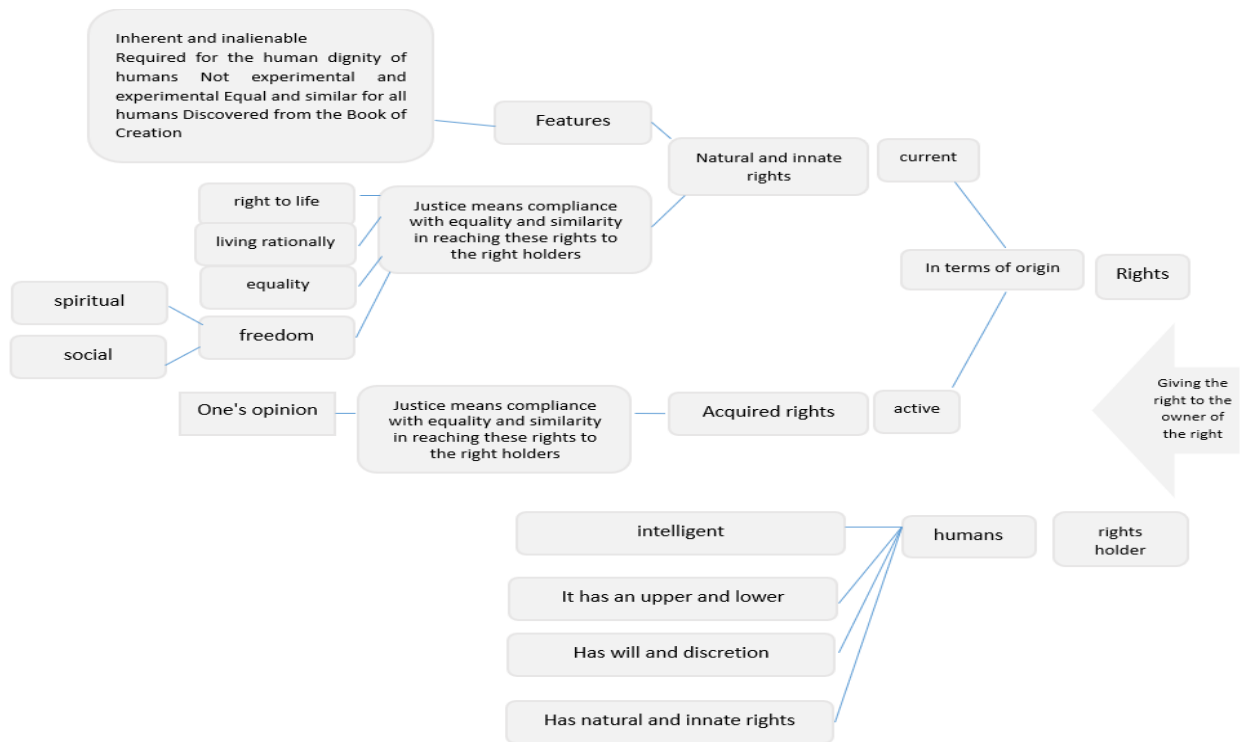Diagram No 2: Social Justice Implementation
Solution

Diagram No 3: Social Justice and human rights

Social Justice from John Rawls' Perspective

American philosopher and political theorist John Bordley Rawls (1921–2002) is considered the most prominent figure in 20th-century political philosophy. His initial work on this topic was a 30-page article published in 1958 (Rawls, 1958, p. 144).

The comprehensive and elaborate form of this theory appeared in his profound and voluminous book, 'A Theory of Justice', published in 1971. His last work on this subject, a book derived from his lectures at Harvard University, was published in 2000 with the help of one of his students (Rawls, 2000).

The publication of 'A Theory of Justice' generated considerable attention in academic circles and was reviewed and critiqued from various angles. The last three decades of Rawls' life were devoted to responding to these critiques and refining and reconstructing his theory of justice. The result of these efforts includes two books, Political Liberalism (Rawls, 1996) and a collection of essays (Rawls, 1999), both published in 1999.

Some scholars wish to divide Rawls' intellectual activities after writing A Theory of Justice into two main periods. The first period extends until 1982, during which Rawls focused on defending the main approaches presented in 'A Theory of Justice' and responding to his critics. The second period began in 1982 with his series of lectures known as the Dewey Lectures (Pettit, 1990, p. 120).

What distinguishes the later Rawls from the earlier Rawls is a shift in his orientation regarding issues such as the status of these principles (principles of justice), their intended goals, the method of justification and persuasion for these principles, and the necessary social and cultural background for the effectiveness of the theory of justice.

Given this intellectual shift, Rawls' thoughts can be divided into early and later periods. In this chapter, however, we will only examine and explain Rawls' early theory of justice. It should be emphasized that due to the focus of many prominent Western figures (such as Thomas Nagel, Herbert Hart, and Richard Hare) on Rawls' views and critiques of them, as well as Rawls' continuous responses to these challenges, which included frequent revisions and reconstructions of the main elements of his thought, it is not easy to outline the primary contours of his philosophy (Akhavan Kazemi, 2005, p. 51).

The prominent American philosopher (John Rawls) presents in his works, especially in 'A Theory of Justice', a version of liberalism that, in his view, embodies the content of social justice. His ambitious claim is that justice, as the highest social virtue, is realized in his proposed principles of justice, which largely align with the tradition of Western liberal thought. These principles provide objective and universal criteria for assessing the justice of any major social structure. Thus, any evaluation of the justice of the fundamental institutions of society, such as the political system, economic relations, legislative system, judicial system, education, and healthcare, must be based on their alignment with these proposed principles (Vaezi, 2009, p. 23).

In 'A Theory of Justice', Rawls introduces his principles of justice as a moral theory and a comprehensive doctrine, which should serve as the foundation for any just social structure.

In 'Political Liberalism', he presents liberalism and his theory of justice as the most suitable political framework for creating a stable social order and enduring social cooperation in contemporary liberal-democratic societies (Vaezi, 2009, p. 24).

Rawls' significance appears to lie in the dominance and influence of his theory over contemporary political philosophy and theories of justice. This dominance is such that other competing theories of justice and political philosophies that followed Rawls were formulated in opposition to his thought, with many of them defining their own theories by highlighting their disagreements with Rawls. Consequently, understanding Rawls' theory of justice and his intellectual contributions to political philosophy is a prerequisite for comprehending other competing theories, underscoring the exceptional importance of a political and social theory (Vaezi, 2004, p. 41).

The reasons for the appeal and focus of scholars on Rawls' intellectual contributions can be found in the following points:

1) For advocates of liberalism, it is a significant success if they can link their political-social school with a high value called justice, thereby giving liberalism a moral dimension. The establishment of Rawls' philosophical project in 'A Theory of Justice' implies that what occurs in Western democratic societies, particularly in the U.S., with minor modifications to strengthen its egalitarian aspects, has a firm moral and philosophical foundation. The social structure and distribution system of benefits and duties in such societies align with principles of justice. If rational and free individuals were to have the opportunity to build a just society from scratch, they would inevitably structure it on the same foundations as the current Western liberal-democratic societies.

2) Rawls' 'Theory of Justice' clearly opposes the tradition of utilitarianism, which, in various forms, has long dominated the tradition of liberal thought. Instead, it offers a different analysis and plan to support the existing liberal democracies in Western societies without presupposing utility as the standard for evaluating the justice of social structures.

3) Rawls' 'Theory of Justice' intends to link the validity of the fundamental values of liberalism with the agreement and decision of individuals in a special condition called the "original position", arguing that their justice and validity depend on a contract and rational choice by individuals in that situation. This approach is entirely novel in the realm of social contract theory. For this reason, Rawls states that his goal is to provide a higher interpretation of the social contract theory compared to existing versions by thinkers such as Rousseau and Locke.

4) Although Rawls' 'Theory of Justice' is focused on social and distributive justice, the scope of justice and the value aspect of the concept engage him in significant discussions from moral philosophy, adding depth and appeal to his work. In fact, Rawls began his serious academic research in moral philosophy, earning his Ph.D. in moral philosophy from Princeton University in 1950. Unlike the common approach of moral philosophers and the prevalent trends in contemporary political philosophy, Rawls does not start his analysis of justice with a conceptual definition but rather seeks to show what actions must be taken and on what foundations society must be built to

create a just society. This approach, which avoids analytical discussions and a defined conception of justice, provokes criticism from some moral philosophers (Tavassoli, 2007, p. 18).

5) The social-political background of this theory influenced its serious consideration. In the early 1970s, liberal society and the free-market world were still in fierce competition with the communist world, and socialist and egalitarian ideas were actively present in the West. Additionally, African Americans and other American minorities were struggling for their civil rights, and women and feminist movements were intensely advocating for gender equality. In this environment, a version of liberalism with egalitarian elements was well-received by proponents of legal equality and elicited defensive reactions from conservative liberal thinkers. The existence of these specific social-political conditions contributed to the exceptional attention given to Rawls' intellectual contributions (Nasri, 2003, p. 113).

The Characteristics of Rawls' Liberalism: First, it should be noted that liberalism is not a school of thought with fixed, universally agreed-upon elements and definitions, making it challenging to have a clear boundary or standard for assessing how liberal a person or political theory is. However, civil and political freedoms, individual independence, free markets, and private ownership are prominent examples of shared liberal values. Given Rawls' intellectual evolution, we highlight the features of his interpretation of liberalism based on the content of his main work, 'A Theory of Justice' (1971).

1) Rawls aligns with the official stream of liberalism in emphasizing basic freedom, yet, because of his belief in the distinction between freedom—dividing them into basic (such as freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and the right to vote) and non-basic freedom like economic freedom—he diverges from the official liberal tradition.

2) Rawls' liberalism is based on a moral and ethical foundation called justice. The core of his liberalism is centered on justice and the requirements of rational choice for individuals in a completely fair situation (Shaqoul, 2006, p. 15).

At first glance, it may seem that Rawls aims to conduct a completely scientific and impartial investigation to discover principles and standards that would form the foundation for establishing a just society and provide the basis for a fair distribution of social benefits. However, as he repeatedly emphasizes, he introduces his 'Theory of Justice' as an alternative to utilitarianism, which traditionally served as the foundation of democratic institutions and relations in Western societies.

He states:

"In modern moral philosophy, utilitarianism dominates, and its critics have not provided a replacement system, merely pointing out certain ambiguities. I intend to construct this moral system based on the social contract, albeit at a more abstract level than what Locke, Rousseau, and Kant proposed, to provide a systematic and structured analysis of justice to replace the prevailing and dominant utilitarian tradition. This conception of justice can serve as the moral basis of democratic society and is fully compatible with it."

This statement shows that Rawls pursues specific premises, arranging the groundwork and

conditions of the original position to ensure that this specific goal is adequately met, proposing a reform that retains the fundamental framework of liberal societies (Vaezi, 2004, p. 35).

Rawls' Methodology of Social Justice

The most significant innovation Rawls brings to the field of justice research concerns the methodology in the discourse of social justice. He explicitly distances himself from the traditional approach to value and ethical debates. According to the conventional method, the discussion begins with as precise a definition as possible of the virtue being considered (for instance, the concept of justice), and all subsequent debates about content, reasoning methods, and connection to other concepts are organized within the framework of the initial definition and conceptual analysis. However, Rawls does not favor this traditional approach and believes that basing the content of social justice on a specific definition of justice is misleading. From his perspective, it is impossible to ground something as critical as the content of principles of justice on definitions and logical analyses aimed at clarifying the concept of justice. We must remember that Rawls' perception of justice and his goal within an ethical theory framework is intended to fulfill a substantial objective, which cannot be supported merely by an initial definition of justice (Vaezi, 2004, p. 89).

Rawls writes:

"Definitions and semantic analyses cannot hold a particular position [in our theory of justice]. A definition is merely a device that forms the main structure of a theory. Once the entire framework is established, definitions will lack value and status, and their survival and relevance depend on the theory's content. In any case, it is entirely clear that one can never base the expansion of a theory and the content of justice solely on structured facts and definitions. Prior and moral concept analyses are too weak to serve as a foundation, no matter how traditionally understood and analyzed they may be."

Moreover, Rawls' theory does not align with utilitarianism, which is a consequentialist theory; as it assumes a specific criterion for rightness, which is to maximize the welfare of the majority in society.

As he repeatedly emphasizes, he seeks to propose a moral theory and perspective on social justice that is explicitly deontological and not grounded in any prior assumption or definition of goodness, human perfection, or happiness. Justice and rightness, according to him, result from an agreement or social contract made by particular individuals in a specific situation called the "original position." Consequentialism fails to meet Rawls' primary goal in the theory of justice. This is because Rawls sought a principle and standard by which to gauge a just society, whereas consequentialism does not emphasize stable principles as permanent and absolute criteria for determining right and wrong (Asghari, 2016, p. 9).

Rawls adopts a contractarian method to propose his principles of justice. A crucial point in Rawls' approach is demonstrating the fairness of the decision-making conditions regarding the content of justice. In his view, if the method is fair, this fairness will also extend to the outcome and content of the

agreement, making any contract reached in that situation appear just.

Rawls describes his theory of justice with various attributes and titles; for example, he calls it "pure procedural justice" and "constructivism-based justice", both of which require explanation. Thus, Rawls' theory of justice is a form of contractarianism based on pure proceduralism; he is also committed to constructivism (Zali, 2021, p. 5).

Pure Procedural Justice

Rawls distinguishes between three types of procedural justice and asserts that the "original position" is entirely based on the "pure procedural justice" approach. Thus, its results should be accepted as the content of social justice (Vaezi, 2005, p. 58).

He also contrasts "pure procedural" justice with allocative justice, insisting that his method and the content of his principles of justice are unrelated to the distributive interpretation of justice and stand entirely opposed to the utilitarian approach in social justice.

For Rawls, the principles of justice and access to them are not epistemological issues that individuals could attain through argumentative or intuitive understanding but rather something individuals create in the original position and base their observance upon. It is akin to the idea of a social contract, as if individuals in that situation engage in a social contract. Therefore, his proposed method is a form of social contract that, due to its lack of reliance on any prior assumption or predetermined definition of justice, is also "pure procedural."

The essential aspect of pure procedural justice as an idea, opposed to "perfect procedural justice," is that, in this approach, there is no independent or pre-established criterion for justice. Instead, what constitutes justice is defined and determined by the outcome of the proposed method (original position).

Understanding why Rawls' theory of justice is "pure procedural"—and how the procedure for achieving justice, namely the idea of the original position, serves the discovery of principles without relying on any preconceived notion of justice—lays the groundwork for understanding the theory's other ambiguous descriptors, such as its constructivist nature. This connection arises from the close relationship between the pure proceduralism of Rawls' theory of justice and his constructivist outlook.

Rawls' Principles of Social Justice

A well-ordered society is one based on a shared and public conception of justice. The principles of justice agreed upon by all individuals become the foundation of the essential structure of society and its social institutions, including cultural, judicial, legislative, political, economic, and service sectors. These principles serve as the sole criterion for evaluating the fairness of the distribution of primary goods, the formation of the essential institutions of society, and the major decisions in various sectors of society. These principles can only be understood through the assumption of a hypothetical position, which he calls the original position. In this situation, individuals are completely unaware of specific facts about their own personal circumstances, but they have full awareness of general aspects that do not relate to their personal attributes. They are free and equal individuals. The veil of ignorance, along with their freedom and equality, provides entirely fair conditions for

decision-making about the content of social justice. Thus, any agreement reached in that situation will be justice itself.

In that position, being free means that individuals are free from any prior and external obligations and are fully rational and independent beings. They are not selfish in the sense of being willing to harm others for their own gain, though they do seek their own benefit. They are impartial and unbiased toward each other, without envy, yet vigilant to make rational decisions in the process of deciding on principles of justice, so as not to jeopardize their future interests. They aim to establish a rational plan for their lives, striving to select principles of justice and the moral foundation of social cooperation and distribution of primary goods through rational contemplation and strict adherence to rational selection principles, ultimately reaching consensus and agreement. Rawls emphasizes that, despite all the limitations and ignorance individuals face about their personal circumstances in the original position, they necessarily reach consensus and agreement on specific principles that are called the principles of justice. Since access to the original position is not limited to particular individuals and is open to everyone, the only acceptable and unique interpretation of justice is the one that constitutes the core of his theory of justice.

Conclusion:

Despite the differences between the views of Rawls and Motahhari on justice, Rawls seeks a kind of broad coherence among moral perspectives and attempts to prove that justice as fairness is better aligned with the values of social justice. According to Rawls, only through this approach can we view society from an impartial standpoint. Therefore, the concept of human rights in Rawls' philosophy is based on a rational, liberal, and fair interpretation of justice that relies on rights and freedoms guaranteed for all free and equal citizens under a constitutional democratic regime.

Rawls' ideal society guides the people of liberal societies toward eagerly embracing the legal norms embodied in a fair law and acting according to them. In Rawls' ideal society, citizens possess a sense of the efficiency of justice that enables them to understand and apply the principles of justice. The welfare of the political community is such that citizens, as both individuals and legal persons, are committed to supporting a just regime founded on a constitutional order. Fundamental rights and equal freedoms are ensured for all free and equal citizens, guaranteeing fair opportunities. Therefore, Rawls' organized society does not imply a private society but rather a community in which citizens, like an overlapping consensus, share common ultimate goals, hold a similar understanding of justice, and thus make the goal of political justice one of the fundamental aims for all citizens.

Undoubtedly, democratic freedoms necessitate the active participation of citizens possessing the political virtues needed to sustain a regime based on constitutional law, finding their primary good in political life. This nature includes a deserved sense of pride and a worthy sense of honor, dignity, and patriotism. Over time, citizens develop an understanding of justice that drives them not only toward accepting the principles of justice but also toward acting upon them. In this society, success is not defined by military power but by other forms of success, including achieving political and social justice for all citizens, ensuring fundamental freedoms, freedom of expression, the civic culture of the society, and an

honorable economy for all people. Liberal societies are stable in that, by virtue of justice, they maintain stability, and their social culture supports principles of right and justice even when political, economic, and social tendencies continually shift. This is because their fundamental interests align perfectly with those of other democratic peoples.

In Rawls' society, democratic peace achieved through consent replaces peace through power, which becomes a stable and credible peace, verifiable by the historical record of democratic conduct. Analyzing Rawls' thoughts in comparison with Motahari's, derived from Islam, reveals that, in the ideal Islamic government, racial and sectarian differences are expected to be vanished. Under the Islamic mercy people turn to dialogue. Tolerance, intellectual discussions, and reasoning replace conflict. People are guided by both freedom and justice. Indeed, doesn't Rawls' idea align with that of the unified world government intended to be managed justly? Although the Islamic utopia extends beyond Rawls' elucidation, aiming for spiritual and faith-based unity among humans worldwide, shared spiritual faith is essential to this utopia. According to Islamic narratives, in the era of emergence, a single worldview will dominate the hearts and minds of humanity, creating true unity and solidarity in the worship of one God (monotheism), with people united in heart and speech, moving toward prosperity and righteousness based on divine faith. This is the vision that Motahari believes in, asserting that spiritual connection within society leads to spiritual maturity and fraternity among human communities, eliminating discrimination and establishing justice. In Rawls' utopia, however, the environment lacks this profound understanding of spirituality and justice.

While Rawls' ideal society does include honorable individuals and a reasonable pluralism that reflects a moral and spiritual perspective, in some ways, this might reflect a different expression within Rawls' society.

Justice as fairness, in Rawls' view, requires a democratic regime based on constitutional law. A democratic society built on constitutional and reasonably fair principles is one that incorporates two essential values: liberty and equality, within the framework of justice as fairness, and what human rights entail—such as the right to life (including access to resources and security), the right to freedom (freedom from slavery, feudalism, forced labor, and sufficient freedom of conscience to ensure freedom of religion and thought), the right to personal property, and formal equality, as seen in natural justice principles (treating like cases alike).

In fact, the primary issue in Rawls' theory of political justice is the simultaneous preservation and reconciliation of liberty and equality in liberal and non-liberal societies. This enables individuals in society to embrace differences and moral, philosophical, and religious diversity to create a fair and stable society. The reality of reasonable pluralism is a long-term cultural outcome of establishing these free institutions within society.

In a society organized around justice as fairness, citizens believe in a unified, comprehensive doctrine, inspired by Kantian ethical principles. Political liberalism, in Rawls' vision of a democratic regime based on a constitution, presents the doctrines of society according to truth or correctness without dependency on

any particular comprehensive religious or philosophical doctrine, while also not rejecting honorable religious or philosophical doctrines. Importantly, an agreement on laws that guarantee human rights among people is critical, and this consensus is not limited to liberal societies alone.

Liberal foreign policy gradually acts to bring non-liberal societies into the liberal fold, ideally making all societies liberal over time. The special significance of a liberal government based on a constitution is that through its democratic policies, citizens can express their opinions and take appropriate actions to defend their society, as Rawls' political liberalism endows citizens with an understanding of the two moral capacities of justice and the good.

Thus, the concept of liberty in Western social culture, as presently upheld, differs fundamentally and structurally from the concept in Islamic thought and the view of liberty as envisioned by Rawls and Motahari. It seems that Motahari accepted Rawls' concept of liberty, articulated in his two principles of justice, which include guaranteeing reasonable liberties, respecting individual rights, a constitutional government based on an initial status, and avoiding discrimination (such as slavery and class gaps) while strengthening civility and rationality in society.

Motahari recognized this aspect of liberalism correctly and appreciated the positive appeal of this intellectual capacity. He combined the positive attributes of a closed socialist economy (such as minimum living standards, equal opportunities, strong state oversight, preventing assets from concentrating in the hands of a few, and robust tools for social and economic

justice) with those of a liberal economy (like the empowerment of civil society, individual freedoms, rejection of ideological coercion, and rule of law) to create a synthesis. This synthesis presents an alternative view, sometimes referred to as "moral socialism" in the West, infusing it with an Islamic spiritual essence. Hence, the sensitivity Islam demonstrates in social justice, and its fusion with Islamic spirituality, finds no parallel in other philosophies like that of Rawls.

In response to which economic policy justice as fairness proposes, Rawls, after determining the form of government and presenting the principles of justice as fairness, offers several general remarks to guide such research. However, he relies on leading economists to specify how an economic system could maximize the prospects of the least advantaged. Consequently, the question of whether Rawls refers to his desired economic system as a command economy or, conversely, delegates such matters to markets—which may be interpreted as a form of socialism—requires clarification.

Rawls distinguishes between two types of socialism: capitalist democracy, which embraces a pure free market economy, and property-owning democracy, which seeks to control market effects and meet essential needs through public measures like taxes and antitrust laws. Both systems contrast with societies where the means of production are largely privately owned.

In Islamic thought, there is also a belief that capitalist economics, derived from liberal thought, does not recommend any interference or measures in the economy and is based on a natural order. Islam's perspective on economics is based on a philosophical principle that

the earth and its primary resources were created for humanity, and nothing should cause the hoarding of these resources in favor of certain groups in society, leaving others deprived. Motahhari, on this basis, also rejects the monopolization of natural resources for specific groups and any hoarding of these resources. He believes that both the individual and society have inherent value and mutually affect each other. The balance and inherent value of society are based on respecting individuals' rights.

The Islamic economic system respects the individual while also recognizing the importance of society and the ummah, respecting private ownership alongside endorsing public and state ownership. Islamic thought neither accepts the liberal doctrine of maximum freedom and individual supremacy in the economy nor limits individual freedom by relying on a purely Marxist view of the supremacy of society. According to Martyr Motahhari, while Islam is a social religion, it does not restrict individual rights in any domain, be it political or social, and sees the members of society as genuine individuals who possess all political, economic, and social rights, with the only limiting condition on freedom being the respect for humanity, which should manifest as a sense of cooperation and healthy competition in the Islamic economy.

Justice in Islamic economics opposes discrimination but not difference. In truth, the law of justice dictates that entitlements among individuals in society be respected, and if people are not in equal conditions based on their merits, then justice logic should not enforce equality among them. Motahhari does not, like socialist thought, favor giving everyone an equal share without considering individual merit, as

that approach signifies a hollowing out of human identity and exploitation, removing motivation for human endeavor and flourishing, and resulting in the restriction of human energy. Nor does he, like liberalism, endorse absolute economic freedom for individuals, as it would allow natural resources to be confined to a limited segment of society, which leads to exploitation and contradicts Motahari's principle of survival competition.

The ultimate aim of the Islamic economic system is to increase wealth within society, thereby enriching individuals and establishing public welfare within the framework of social justice and under the shadow of Islamic spirituality. This is because economic and social justice, in Motahari's thought, is the fruit of a divine worldview and the respect for human perfection, fundamentally believing that without a spiritual foundation, even justice based on legislation lacks the ability to provide identity and human evolution, reducing it to machine-like management based on law alone, which may bring forth justice's outcomes.

Motahari does not propose either a purely socialist closed economy or an entirely liberal open economy. Although he appreciates the positive points of both views in fostering economic growth and establishing a middle ground for economic justice, his model is based on social democracy, with spirituality as the foundation to keep justice alive across all aspects of life, ensuring that moderation in behavior, speech, and actions becomes ingrained in people. Thus, real justice will manifest based on the acceptance of God, and social justice will turn into the apparent form of the Quran.

In the later years of his life, Rawls decided to address global justice and eventually published 'The Law of Peoples' in 1999. By "The Law of Peoples," Rawls refers to a particular political conception of justice that relates to principles and norms of international law. Although Rawls's ideas on justice have had a significant influence in academic circles, they have had no real impact on the direction of American society or other societies. On the contrary, trends have moved widely against his views, despite the sale of hundreds of thousands of copies of his book and its translation into about thirty languages. It generally takes a century or more for philosophical work to begin shaping the cycle of human events. From this perspective, Rawls's 'Theory of Justice' might have a promising future. Thus, this opened a way for others to use the latent rationality in justice as fairness to address the issue of global justice.

In Motahari's thought, which stems from Islamic thinking, what exists in creation is difference, not discrimination. Therefore, justice expects that in equal conditions and identical entitlements, there should be no distinctions among individuals. However, both philosophers ultimately share the concern of establishing justice and eradicating discrimination in society, aiming to ensure that the underprivileged and oppressed are at the forefront of benefiting from justice. In both schools, class conflicts and social stances based on possessions and deprivations play a key role in establishing social justice. Both philosophers view the essence of justice as a worldview and a criterion for governance based on constitutional law. All the rational and intellectual stances, based on Motahari's Islam and Rawls's democratic governance, reflect the common concern for the deprived classes over the wealthy

and privileged, recognizing that it is impossible for a privileged individual to defend the principle of justice without genuine empathy, nor is it conceivable for an oppressed individual to deny the essence of justice.

Rawls, like Motahhari, regards the establishment of justice as a grand global philosophy and the ideal of humanity, believing that a reactionary, vengeful, racist, and lazy spirit is not conducive to advancing the ideal of global justice. Consequently, both philosophers' perspectives are inspiring, progressive, striving for perfection, and oriented toward a great expectation, reflecting the benefit of philosopher-statesmen in global leadership. Motahari is among the prominent Islamic thinkers who emphasizes the natural and intrinsic rights of humans. However, natural rights, from his perspective, are clearly distinguished from those of other theorists. He repeatedly stresses that the only legitimate basis for natural rights is the acceptance of the purposeful order of the world. In Motahari's view, if we believe in the randomness of the world, proving natural rights becomes impossible.

Another significant point in Motahari's views is his belief in both individual and social rights. He acknowledges both individual and social rights and, if a conflict arises between the two, prioritizes social rights. Belief in social rights justifies, from his Islamic perspective, government intervention to create balance, eliminate widespread inequality, and strive for social justice.

Neither philosopher succumbs to despair or nihilism, waiting instead for the ultimate victory of reform, peace, justice, freedom, and truth over oppression, tyranny, injustice, and deception, envisioning a global order based on

human maturity, rationality, intellectual freedom, and release from animalistic instincts, with maximum rational enjoyment of earth's resources under justice. Complete equality in wealth distribution, freeing souls from grudges, and abolishing wars to establish peace and harmony between humans and nature are seen as inevitable outcomes.

Undoubtedly, as anticipated, signifies the actualization of justice, preparing the path for divine sovereignty and fulfilling God's promise that the world will ultimately belong to the righteous, establishing global justice. This noble goal appears to be progressing through revival and evolution, reflected in the UN General Assembly's 2007 declaration of February 20 as "World Day of Social Justice," aimed at promoting justice development, eradicating poverty and deprivation, racial and gender equality, universal social welfare, and defending the rights of the deprived. Recent social justice movements also signify a global trend toward maximizing justice, an awakened demand for rightful justice, seen as a divine duty aligned with human nature and ultimately elevating humanity.

Today, more than ever, especially within the Islamic Republic, the need for justice is strongly felt, as the sacred Islamic Republic requires committed, justice-seeking, and expert forces to achieve its new goals and ideals. Without this, the Islamic system will face executive and legal challenges. The absence of justice in administration strikes irreparable blows to the society's true values, steering officials and managers away from the main path of governance and management. Unjust management sows the seeds of injustice within the very structure under its supervision, and undoubtedly, its repercussions will eventually impact them. Apathy in responsibility and despair about the future among individuals stem from the seeds of personal biases planted in place of justice. Unfortunately, the principle of justice in Islam has been misinterpreted by some narrow-minded individuals, resulting in the current state of Muslims.

The results indicate that in all schools of thought, there is an emphasis on justice and the pursuit of justice, and many thinkers have discussed this topic. Both Morteza Motahari and John Rawls have addressed the concept of justice, accepting freedom and equality as principles of political and social justice, and view social freedoms and equality in society as its realization. Both regard justice as the most desirable and fundamental human right, which, in the vision of a human justice-centered city, becomes a truth and reality. Additionally, they state that justice is an exalted concept. Motahari mentions that all religions, especially Islam, have made the realization of justice a cornerstone of their goals, and the Holy Qur'an also presents justice as one of the objectives of the prophets' mission. Justice in Islam is considered among the principles of the faith and is itself a measure of Islam and at the forefront of the causes for rulings.

A study of the thoughts of Western and Islamic thinkers across history shows that, first, justice does not have a clear and universal meaning across ages and among thinkers; second, there has been a general inclination towards finding a fundamental or predominant basis for judging behaviors, actions, and practices, reflecting humanity's intrinsic need and desire for a blissful and elevated life; third, similarities and differences among Western and Islamic thinkers stem from epistemological foundations and social and religious

contexts. Similarities lie in the emphasis on moderation and natural balance, while differences are seen in the principle of equality among humans, especially among classical thinkers, which may exemplify this claim.

Fourth, tendencies in Western thinkers, from the classical period towards the new era, demonstrate a shift away from sanctification, avoiding absolutism, and bringing justice into practical life (practical actions and policies), whereas in Islamic thinkers, absolutist and sanctification-oriented tendencies are generally predominant. For example, a ruler must be characterized by justice both in private life and in public and social domains. Fifth, the divergence in views between Westerners and Muslims is more transcendent of space and time. Islamic thought leans more towards being eternal and both retrospective and prospective, while Western thought is oriented towards retrospective traits and the practical aspects of justice. This characteristic appears in the appointment or election of rulers, where the individual must first be just and then practicing justice after being established.

Sixth, considering the last two points, Western justice is inductive and aimed at problem-solving based on secular and humanistic foundations, thus, the best laws are not necessarily interpreted as just but rather focused on outcomes, whereas Islamic thought is holistic and based on spiritual epistemological foundations. Furthermore, the results indicate that in Muslim scholars' perspectives, justice holds a special status, and Motahari, as one of the most prominent Islamic intellectual leaders, has also extensively discussed justice. In the discussion of justice, he first refers to definitions (balance, equality, respect for individual rights, and observance of capabilities), noting

that except for respecting individual rights and observing capabilities, the other concepts are specific to social justice.

According to Motahari, whenever the masses are loyal to the rights of the government, and the government fulfills the people's rights, then (so that people may stand in justice) will be realized, and the signs of justice will appear. The implementation of justice is also based on adherence to law supported by Islamic spirituality, and the way to achieve it is to prevent discrimination in society by creating fair competition. In this system, efforts should be made so that individuals voluntarily grant their rights to others; of course, the state is also obliged to establish justice in society. Therefore, any system that deviates from the correct implementation of justice in society will certainly create the conditions for revolution and the establishment of a new system. By examining Motahari's theories, issues such as prioritizing rights over justice and granting rights to those entitled are seen as critical points in Motahari's view, while criticism of the idea of Rawls' "original position" and justice principles can be regarded as criticisms of Rawls' ideas.

On the other hand, both Motahari and Rawls regard the government as one of the main pillars of public rights with duties in creating social justice, and they see this social justice as achievable through legislation. Legislation through the parliament elected by the people is emphasized by both thinkers as another pillar of public rights. However, the views of these two thinkers diverge where the origin and foundations of these views are entirely different. John Rawls, from a liberal perspective, with some adjustments, and Motahari,

from an Islamic perspective, offer their theories on justice.

The final result indicates that these two thinkers have serious differences in principles and rules, such as considering justice as a contract or agreement, Rawls' deviation from the traditional conceptual analysis of social justice, and Motahari's emphasis on it for providing a comprehensive and precise definition of social justice. In this, Motahari presents justice as innate and based on Islamic teachings that align with human nature, viewing it as a universal concept beyond time and place. In contrast, Rawls sees the realization of the principle of political justice within the framework of liberalism and democratic societies with freedom, somewhat limiting it within liberalism.

Clearly, justice in Western thought and John Rawls' view is contractual, arising from a social contract where individuals, behind a veil of ignorance, are unaware of their position, whereas, in Motahari's thought, justice is innate and genuine, where individuals are aware of their position and create just laws based on this awareness. While Rawls tries to universalize his theory of political justice, many thinkers believe his universal claim is practically unproven, and this theory is specific to liberal societies. In Motahari's view, justice is innate and applicable to all humans and relates to all times and places, thereby substantiating its universal claim.

Another fundamental point is that one of the foundations of justice in Rawls' thought is reason, which bases justice in this school on humanistic and human-centered grounds. However, in Motahari's thought, justice is derived from divine essence, with its foundation being monotheism. Despite all these differences in

principles and foundations, they also share some similarities in mechanisms, such as where Rawls states that inequalities should benefit the least advantaged, which aligns with Motahari's view of paying attention to the deprived and oppressed in society. Furthermore, given that the conflict between justice and efficiency is one of the controversial issues of justice, this article fundamentally addresses this issue.

In this regard, four theories were presented and analyzed in the context of deontology and consequentialism. Rawls is a prominent example of deontology among Western justice theorists. He considers himself committed to Kantian deontology, striving to establish justice principles that are independent of interpretations of the good. In Motahari's view, justice is both deontological and teleological. For him, due to the perfection-seeking nature of humans, implementing justice and fulfilling duty not only has moral value but also brings a sense of joy for the individual.

Based on the discussed points and in response to the main question of the research, it can be concluded that Morteza Motahari and John Rawls, approaches to justice, share commonalities in principles and rules. They both consider justice as the highest social virtue, regarding humans as an end, not a means. They emphasize the central role of justice in the social structure, and distinguish justice from equality. However, they have serious differences in principles and rules, such as the contractual nature of justice. Rawls departures from the traditional analysis of social justice, and Motahari's emphasizes on provision of comprehensive and definitive definition of social justice, as well as the foundation of justice as either a right or a benefit.

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