

Towards A New Spiritual Economic System

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Our present economic system, sick and dying, cannot meet the needs of humanity.

The gap between rich and poor continues to grow wider and wider, which has increased the suffering of the masses. The solutions that can heal that suffering have been largely ignored.

The time has come to re-examine the fundamental assumptions that this system was built on and replace them with humane and moral ones. There is a great need to build an economic system fit to help humanity achieve its goal of an ever-advancing civilization, a world free of economic injustice, where people have all the necessities of life so they can live peaceful and fulfilling lives.

To accomplish all this, we need a shift in thinking. The Baha'i Teachings provide insights and suggestions to lay the foundation for a better economic future. We have the solutions and the technology to build a new system; all we need is the resolve and the will. Everyone has an inherent power to contribute and participate in this wonderful process. The time for action is upon us:

“The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity’s collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours’ or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. A stubborn obstruction, then, stands in the way of

meaningful social progress: time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good. Unconscionable quantities of wealth are being amassed, and the instability this creates is made worse by how income and opportunity are spread so unevenly both between nations and within nations. But it need not be so.

– The Universal House of Justice, 1 March 2017.

Unfortunately, today money is the yardstick we use to measure failure and success. This yardstick has derailed humanity from its spiritual path. Baha’is all around the world work towards a day when we will grow and expand our horizons, and will adopt a more spiritual yardstick for human achievements.

Money cannot and should not be the only means of measuring our lives. But now we are far from that future, and need to remember that a new economic system will occur when the spiritual transformation of humanity and society has been accomplished, and with it man’s awareness of his spiritual station and his destiny.

In that future state of society, we will have subordinated our lower nature, and will therefore behave less selfishly. Yes, at this time it is almost impossible to imagine such a society. But by introducing more of the spiritual qualities in our individual lives, we are laying the foundation for such a society and such an economic system. This goal may seem idealistic—but we are all dreaming of a better world, and with it a new economic system. First let us try to understand economics from the Baha’i point of view:

“The secrets of the whole economic question are Divine in nature, and are concerned with the world of the heart and spirit.”

– Abdu’l-Baha, *The Baha’i World*, Volume IV, p. 448.

We can empower ourselves to accelerate this fundamental change by being aware of things we can do in order to reach the goal of a better economic system. If we find an answer to the important questions in life –“who am I,” “what is the purpose of my life” and “how much is enough,” we may then choose to live a simple life and determine to resist the consumer mentality and the tendency to buy the latest models when the old ones still function.

If we approach work as a form of worship, and spend as much energy in being contented and detached from material possessions as we spend getting them, we will transform ourselves into happier beings. Using honesty as our yardstick, we can avoid following society’s shortcuts with regards to taxation, insurance and expense claims. As business owners we can practice contentment with a reasonable margin of profit and charge just interest rates, provide medical coverage, pay fair wages and share the profits we make with our employees. We can be honest about our products and in filling out tenders and contracts, also look for opportunities to help employees, co-workers and even competitors. We can use good quality material with no wastage and no environmentally harmful ingredients.

As consumers, we can be knowledgeable about the lure of advertising and be honest in job interviews. We can report when we have been undercharged. We can replace competition with co-operation. If we truly follow a moral path in all our dealings, we will find ways to change the status quo by voluntarily contributing to charities and funds that will help bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

Small changes in our attitude will change our daily economic activities, and that will eventually lead us to a new economic system based on humanity and not greed. We have an amazing power as individuals to transform society and raise the standards for economic interactions. We owe it to all the poor and underprivileged people of the world who have been ignored by our present economic system. Their suffering is our failure to make a change.