

THE WORK ETHIC IN THE WEST AND IN ISLAM

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In this paper we compare the concept of the work ethic in the West with reference to the Protestant work ethic of Max Weber and the work ethic in Islam with special reference to the work ethic of al-Raghib al-Isfahani(d.1060)

We are examining in particular the concept of their work ethic, and the related concept of frugality. Max Weber incorrectly remarks that Islam does not have a work ethic. We try to refute this view with reference to classical Islamic sources, and particularly to the view of Isfahani.

We conclude by way of two suggestions. The one is that there is a need to revive the work ethic in Islam as it will contribute towards building strong economies in the Muslim world. These strong economies in turn would act as a bulwark against the destructive effects in developing Islamic countries. The second is that in view of lack of reliability of the Protestant work ethic measurements with respect to non-Christian and non-western societies, we propose that a new form of work ethic measurement be devised: one that would be valid for empirical studies in Muslim countries.

Background to the Concept of Work in the West

1.1 The importance of work

Work is the sphere in which both the personal and impersonal combine; at the personal level it involves the interaction with other humans, and at the impersonal level it contributes to the transformation of the world through labour. Schumacher identifies three functions of human work:

To give a man a chance to utilise and develop his faculties, to enable him to overcome his egocentredness by joining with other people in a common task, and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence' (1973).

Work is so central to life as our whole being, body and soul, is

brought into play in one integrated activity. The ethical dimension of work lies in the fact that central to it is a human person, a free being, and therefore, the ultimate purpose of work is located in the producer rather than the product.

Work loses its spiritual value if it robs one of one's total being, and this occurs when one is no longer free, when the intellect is a servant of material production. All creativity is lost and one no longer identifies with the work. Marx refers to this as 'alienation', which basically means that the worker is alienated from the product of his labour, which he does not own. When people work merely for money, in order to survive, and do not find joy or creativity in the work itself, then work for them is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

This kind of work is dehumanizing; it is work by coercion, not by the creative free will, and such a worker finds pleasure in the kind of leisure that is also dehumanizing, that is totally passive, not creative, such as watching television the whole weekend or simply being drunk. The root cause of alienation is the idolatry of money; it is the divine power of money. 'He has become estranged from his own life-forces, from the wealth of his own potentialities, and is in touch with himself only in an indirect way of submission to life frozen in the idols. The idols are the images for money, which people worship.

Schumacher states that it is the production of the masses, rather than mass production, that is required. The latter type of production presupposes a sophisticated labour-saving technology and a great deal of capital investment. Surely, this can only be done in the rich, developed countries. Production by the masses presupposes a decentralised system, ecologically friendly, which is designed to serve the human person, and not to make him the servant of the machine.

Every human being needs work to survive, to subsist; but he also requires it for his striving towards perfection; a striving that is purposeful in accordance with the injunction: 'Whichever gift each of you have received, use it in service to one another, look good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms'.

1.2 The Protestant work ethic

Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was published in German in 1904, and it was first translated into English in 1930.

For Weber the central problem was to explain the fact that people

pursue wealth for its own sake and not because of necessity. He answered this problem in terms of puritan asceticism (a condemnation of self-indulgence of and the concept of calling for the person to fulfil his duty in this world. Puritans felt that they are chosen by God to perform good works in this world through their economic activity. Although Weber did not discount other factors in the rise of Capitalism, his theory of the work ethic received a number of reactions some of which suggests that Calvinism is not the father of Capitalism, and that his hypothesis cannot account for the rise of Capitalism in Western Europe, and that Capitalism is a result of material conditions rather than a religious impulse, and that the notion of hard work for a factory worker who has no chance of self-employment or wealth, can hardly be considered to be a creative economic pursuit that could be a calling, or spiritually elevating. Randall Stokes (1975) was of the view that PWE did not automatically apply to all Calvinists. He argued that the Afrikaaner Calvinists were identical to the European Calvinists but it had a conservative rather than an innovative economic impact in South Africa. They Afrikaaners were more concerned with upholding traditional values, and viewed all innovation with suspicion.

Max Weber describes work as a duty that lies at the core of capitalist culture in the sixteenth century. 'It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity, no matter in what it consists, in particular no matter whether it appears on the surface as a utilization of his personal powers, or only of his material possessions (as capital).'Labour must, on the contrary, be performed as if it were an end in itself, a calling'.

. The end of this work ethic, in conjunction with frugality, is increasing accumulation of wealth. But this wealth can only be achieved with high ethical qualities of industry and frugality. The PWE believer was not one for prestige, ostentation or consumption, but devoted himself to a life of frugality, free of unnecessary expenditure.

Luther and other Protestants provided the religious basis for the sanctification of worldly labour. Salvation according to Luther can take on any form, even in labour, which should be viewed as a calling ordained by God. This view for Weber provided the moral basis for his worldly labour. People in this way can create their own salvation through worldly work through God's glory. Hence, it was a person's

religious duty to work; wealth was no excuse, and idleness was deadly sin. Specialization or the division of labour lead to the development of skill, hence productivity serving the greatest number of people. Wealth is an external virtue that is enjoined; it only becomes morally reprehensible if it leads to temptations and sloth. To be poor is like being sick; it is derogatory in the sight of God. Begging on the part of one who is able to work is a sin of slothfulness. The accumulation of capital goes along with the ascetic compulsion to save and the rational use of wealth. Weber states: 'We must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can, that is, in effect, to grow rich'. However, the riches, he warns, eventually lead to moral corruption.

Richard Baxter the protestant preacher makes it clear that it is not enough to pray and meditate, but God also requires of us to work, to do our job as a matter of conscience. It is indeed a 'calling' but unlike the calling of Weber, which makes work an end in itself, the monastic preacher conceived of it as an end in itself (?), which is to humble the worker's soul. This was not necessarily the prevailing attitude of the church, but it existed within the monasteries, where the world of work spread beyond the monastery walls.

It is in work that the personal and impersonal are intimately connected: at the personal level it involves the co-operation of persons at work; at the impersonal level it involves the transformation of the world through labour.

This work has a special meaning for the worker, not only in terms of the work itself, or the product that it produces, but it has a spiritual meaning, even in the century old tradition of the Catholic Church, and this has been reaffirmed by John Paul II: Human work has an ethical value of its own, which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, a subject that decides about himself

So the worker rather than the product is of greater importance. Technological development has made possible the greater possibility of transformation. Weil states that the twentieth century has a 'peculiar mission, or vocation-the creation of a civilization founded on the spiritual nature of work'

Thus, the purpose of work is in the producer, not the produced; work is for man, not man for work.

1.3 Empirical Studies

Max Weber has conceived the Protestant work ethic, essentially the

belief that work is desirable and rewarding in its own right.

Blum and Dudley argued that Weber's discussion about the economic effects ascetic Protestantism have focussed only the behavior of individual protestants and Catholics. And even here, issue has been taken with his thesis that

'Protestants would be more inclined to participate actively in economic life and would be more likely to refrain from consuming the fruit of his labours than would a representative Catholic'. He explains this in terms of the otherworldliness of Catholicism with its high asceticism and its indifference to things of this world. Protestants by contrast are this worldly in their orientation.

The authors are of the view that Weber's work ethic lacks empirical support. How does one explain, they say, the higher growth rates in Protestant rather than Catholic regions two centuries before the industrial revolution. They argue that this phenomenon could not be explained merely in terms of the Protestants inclination to save and work, but rather, 'the manner in which a group of Protestants interacted compared with a group of Catholics'. Furthermore, it is not because Catholic monks were averse to worldly involvement and ordinary Catholics felt guilt if they should indulge in worldly activity. Weber argued that Catholicism and Islam could not produce the work ethic of the Protestants which is responsible for the 'Spirit of Capitalism in the West. Weber believed that Sufism in particular encouraged a fatalistic way of life. A pioneering comparison between Turkish and Christian Cultures based on PWE values reveals that Weber's criticism of Islam in terms of economic behaviour is not valid in the Turkish case. The higher PWE values of Turkish managers should be understood in terms of their religious belief and also the economic and also political situation. Traditional Sufism became transformed into this-worldly Sufism, which could also be explained in relation to the Muslim struggle against the secularist establishment. Arslan therefore concludes that the work ethic in Islam should be considered as an important factor in business ethics in Turkey.

A widely used measure of Protestant work ethics is the Protestant work ethic questionnaire, which reflects a person's work ethic beliefs and which has been developed and tested and applied mainly in the West. This questionnaire is one-dimensional and has been criticized for not providing adequately valid data. This criticism could be confirmed by a review of recent empirical findings using the

Protestant Ethic Scale (PES) (Mirels and Garret, 1971) in Middle Eastern or Muslim countries.

In a study by Abdullah, the Protestant Ethic scale was used to test the work-related behaviour of Arab students. This scale was used in conjunction with three other Protestant scales, and it was found that they all reflect consistently the aspect of hard work, and that the PES reflected also the aspect of spiritual, moral and leisure issues. When applied to the sample of Qatar students it was noted that the aspects of hard work and ascetic life (aversion to laxity and laziness) were strong among the Qatar students, but the aspect of independence (endorsed by the Protestant ethic) was weak among them. It is usually taken for granted that hard work and independence are combined, but the results among the Qatar students confirm that that as correlation does not apply. The aspects of hard work and asceticism may be explained by the Islamic tradition that teaches these concepts which are both embedded in Qur'anic verses and Prophetic Traditions well known to the students. Independence is not a social virtue in Arab and Islamic culture that stress rather interdependence within the context of closely knitted and supportive families. Abdallah showed that these scales are moderately reliable, and only when applied in combination will they comprehensively reflect the four distinct factors of hard work, internal motivation, asceticism and leisure.

Thus, admiration for hard work was weakly associated with the values of independence and self-reliance. These findings differ from the Western findings of a strong connection between hard work and individualism. Arabs tend to praise excellence in inter-personal skills rather than merely a mastery of the task at hand. The author concludes therefore that no single scale will prove to be moderately valid, but a combination of scales would be cross-culturally useful as suggested by the study of Arab college students. Thus, studies of work ethics in Arab culture should use multiple measures of Protestant work ethic in order to fully explicate the PWE construct.

2. Work Ethic in Islam

2.1 The Qur'anic perspective

Both Isfahani and Nursi base their economic ethics on the Qur'an, which they quote from extensively. Striving is an important part of the work ethic, and the Qur'an clearly indicates its importance when it states that 'Man will get nothing but what he strives for and will get nothing but what he strives for or' (Q. 53:39); also, 'For men is the

benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn (Q.4:32). Prophet Muhammad (s) himself exemplified the work ethic. He used to pasture sheep and encourage others to do likewise to earn a living. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: If one of you should take a rope and bring a bundle of firewood on his back and sell it (to earn a living), it would be better for him than begging from others (Bukhari).

Work, honest lawful earning, is a religious obligation, and, religious duties such as prayer should not interfere with one's work. Hence, the Qur'an urges Muslims to even work on a Friday; that is, after the Friday congregational worship, they are asked to return to their work, to continue with their pursuit of livelihood (Q. 62:10). Work naturally generates wealth, but this wealth is not intended merely for one's selfish gain, but it is also meant to be a source of income that would benefit the community as a whole. How one uses this wealth is also connected to the work ethic. It is not to be abused or wasted on secondary desires at the expense of primary needs and important wants for one's family and community. It must uplift the economic and social standards of individual and of society so that no poverty can creep into the midst of plenty.

The Qur'anic approach is to enjoy the lawful pleasures of life moderately, and to follow the golden mean between the excessive expenditure on the gratification of personal desires and the abstention from the enjoyment of pure, lawful things of life. 'O you who believe, forbid not the good things which God has made lawful for you and exceed not the limits' (Q. 5:90). In other words the Qur'an teaches that Muslims should be frugal or thrifty in their consumption and spending.

We have noted above that in the work ethic, hard work must be accompanied by the ethical principle of frugality, which means to be thrifty in one's spending and moderate in one's indulgence. Hard work in Islam must come from lawful labour, and it will generate wealth. We have noted above the Qur'anic view that one should apply the principle of moderation in spending. One should maintain the mean between miserliness and extravagance. One should not be so attached to wealth, which is part of the transience of life, that makes one miserly; nor should one despise wealth, which is an important means of support and human sustenance. Extravagance may be defined as the spending of wealth on unlawful things such as gambling and drinking, and also on excessive expenditure on lawful

things that are not essential. The Qur'an condemns this kind of expenditure: And squander not (your wealth) wastefully. Surely the squanderers are the devils brethren.

And the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord (Q. 17: 26-27). Thus, Islam prescribes reasonable expenditure without being wasteful and economy without being miserly. It advocates moderation in both spending and saving. One should neither be so wasteful as to spend all ones wealth carelessly on luxuries and other needs beyond ones needs, nor should one be so miserly as not to spend anything on oneself or ones family or other good things of life, according to one's means. In short, people should spend their wealth according to their means. The Qur'an makes plain the moderate way:

And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes) (Q. 25: 67).

The work ethic in Islam is not a question of only working hard; this could imply mere physical labour or an unthinking factory worker, but it is also to work with wisdom, with intelligence. Man is no automaton, but he is a human being with the capacity for thought and creativity. Perfection and excellence in the product is a product of intelligence and innovation. Thus, merely to work hard is not enough; it will probably ensure provision for one's basic needs, but it is not sufficient for wealth creation, nor will it be spiritually fulfilling. The worker has to also combine hard work with the use of his intellect in order to be innovative and creative; otherwise, there can be no excellence and perfection in his work or in his product. Creative work is in keeping with the Prophetic tradition: Truly Allah is beautiful. He likes what is beautiful (or perfect), and he likes to see the benefits of his endowments on His servants. (al-Bayhaqi). Islam does not encourage a person to merely work for his survival, but also to work for abundant wealth so that he could even help the less fortunate. The need for creativity and excellence is connected to the culture of knowledge in Islam; a culture that makes the acquisition of knowledge compulsory; that requires a Muslim to upgrade his skills in order to produce better products. This is also linked to the Islamic exhortation to contemplate upon nature, to pursue science and to progress in technology. Knowledge is therefore important for the spirituality of work as it leads to scientific knowledge which provides worldly comfort to humanity, and at the same the knowledge of nature strengthens ones faith, bringing one closer to God. Hence, in

encouraging the culture of work and knowledge. Islam cultivates the professions that will not only bring physical progress to mankind but also spiritual salvation in the hereafter.

2.2. The Work Ethic of Isfahani(A classical view)

A key Islamic concept with regard to the acquisition of wealth is *kasb* (gain, acquisition). As a world-affirming religion, Islam encourages the lawful earning of livelihood. The Prophet himself was a merchant, and so were many of his companions. Theoretical reflections on the acquisition of wealth were more prevalent from the third/ninth century. It was positively affirmed, provided it was the fruit of honest toil.

As has been noted, wealth, according to Isfahani, is one of the moderate virtues, which could lead to either good or evil. Thus, he states: "The external acquisitions like wealth and rank are moderately good as they sometimes lead to virtue and sometimes to vice; to good if accompanied by wisdom and evil if accompanied by ignorance."

2.2.1 in praise of work

As mentioned, work in Islam is important not only for one's livelihood but also to create wealth; not as an end in itself, but also as a means by which one could be generous. The more you have, the more you can give. But this presupposes that you are a giving person, not only in fulfilling one's religious duties, but also as a free voluntary act. It is in such spontaneous, generous acts that one can help others, also oneself, in the cultivation of character, at least of a generous personality. Here we note in Isfahani the connection between ethics and religion, not as something separate, but for the latter to provide the foundation for the former. So the end of work is wealth, but is not a wealth for its own sake (as in the Protestant ethic), but for sharing with others. It is also not work for its own sake (as in the Protestant and Hacker ethic). It is not an all-consuming obsession that requires one to sacrifice one's own happiness, or even the happiness of one's family, for the sake of the current work, or for a much later happiness to look forward to; perhaps upon one's retirement, or upon passing away from this world. We are made to struggle and toil in this world, but not to suffer on earth in favour of a pie in the sky, which we must wait for patiently, throughout one's life until death do us part. The Islamic approach may be contrasted with the early Protestant monastic work ethic: "the highest purpose of work is to humble the worker's

soul by making him do what ever he is told'.

Work is aimed at providing joy in this world, not because of its material benefits, but because it is an expression of divine excellence and perfection. This joy, with all the material benefits that it provides, is conceived within the framework of divine bounties, for which one is naturally grateful for; but moreover, it is perceived as a limited joy in this world, and the believer is always aware of the bigger picture, the greatest of joy in the hereafter, which brings about eternal happiness. The earthly bounties are there to be enjoyed within the metaphysical framework of realizing God's bounty and as a taste of the eternal bounties awaiting the believer in the after-life. (By contrast, the Protestant ethic, because of its strict asceticism, is averse to the enjoyments of the world). Divine bounty is more in the nature of the work itself, than in the material fruits of it).

With this prefatory note, we proceed to discuss Is(faha(n)'s praise of work and the place of wealth within the context of his work ethic.

Wealth for Isfahani is one of the external virtues: it is a virtue if it acts as an aid to happiness. Thus, a noble person does not hoard wealth, but spends it in order to acquire virtues leading up to happiness. Wealth is acquired through the effort of ones craft, or some luck of inheritance. But whichever way one acquires it, effort is required for the nurturing of moral character. 'But as for those who desire the Hereafter and strive for it, as they should, while they are believers, their effort will be appreciated (Q. 17:18-19).

Thus, striving is essential for the virtue of the Hereafter, at least for those who have faith ((God's decree that a date becomes a date palm does not imply the absence of striving; rather the date pit still ought to be nurtured. Likewise, man ought to nurture his potential to acquire happiness of the Hereafter.

God created worldly accidents as a means to the greater end of otherworldly happiness, but most people make the worldly accidents themselves their end. Wealth is a trust, and the wise should use it profitably, knowing that it must be returned to its Owner.

Work is essential for creation of wealth, without which one cannot provide for the essentials of food, shelter and clothing. To fulfil one's basic needs one must earn a decent wage, and not be exploited with

meagre earning for valuable services. One should be compensated for one's work with money, which is an instrument of justice.

Humans naturally fear poverty; and this drives them to work hard, but this fear should not reach phobic proportions. It should not make a person stingy. A rich man should be frugal, not wasteful; the poor man should be content with the little that God has given him to satisfy his needs (Compare with Nursi below). Thus, it is lawful to earn a livelihood,

and if a person has to employ others to fulfil his basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), he should pay them a just wage, otherwise he is an exploiter.

Begging as noted above is a sign of sloth, and it is contrary to the principle of hard work. There is no indication from the sources that Isfahani was a Sufi, nor are there indications from his writings that he was against Sufism. But what is clear is that he condemned those extreme Sufis who prefer begging to hard work. (It is interesting to note that Weber associated Islam's absence of a work ethic with Sufism.) It is not true that Sufis are in general averse to work, and we could cite for example of Sufis such as Ibrahim bin Adham and Ahmad Sabti (the son of Harun al-Rashid) who would not take what does not belong to them, and will only eat from the fruit of their own labour. There were however lazy Sufis who lived in the tenth and eleventh century and whom Isfahani criticised.

For this [reason] the Sufi pretender should be chastised for not working [for a living]. He can provide no knowledge and can be no model for righteous action. He should be rebuked, as his only aspiration is to satisfy his stomach and his sexual desires. [Like a parasite], he profits from people; benefit no one (because of his uselessness) and cramps people's livelihood. Such idle vagabonds spoil the drinking places and are the cause of high prices. Because of this, Umar ibn al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him) used to ask a holy man whether he had a craft. If he did not, Umar would have a low opinion of him. The Prophet praised the group of Abd Qays who in reply to the question, 'What is manliness (ah)'; they said: 'temperance and professional skill.'

It is interesting to note that the answer combined work with temperance, which is essential for a life of thrift and frugality. Frugality therefore, even in the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab was not separated from work. And work was interestingly connected to having

a skill, a profession. As mentioned, the result of work is wealth, and here too Is(faha(n(provides the guidance as to how to utilise it. Wealth should be used for ones basic needs but should not be wasted through extravagant spending on luxury and superfluous wants. If a person works hard because of his poverty, he should be satisfied with what suffices him for his present need, and should not worry about his future need.

Thus, the poet states: 'Whoever strives to gain wealth out of fear of poverty, his effort is poverty itself.' Also: 'If you truly rely on God for sustenance, He will give you sustenance like the bird that goes hungry and returns full.'

(This is not the pursuance of wealth for its own sake, but it is a philosophy of hard work, but also of contentment with the little one has.)

Poverty for Is(faha(n(is a positive driving force for work, but its excessive fear should be condemned as it leads to dissatisfaction rather than contentment with little. A person should depend on God for his sustenance, work for his current basic needs, but not be paranoid about a future poverty. Thus, fear of poverty, as a driving force for work should be balanced out with trust in God, the ultimate Sustainer.

But there is a deeper driving force within innate human nature that impels people to work, and that is the spirit of 'restlessness' (id((irab(). Man's fear of poverty is connected to his external condition of poverty; but this innate restlessness is aimed at satisfying man's basic needs, which is both material and spiritual, and which encompasses the needs of the three faculties of the soul. Indolence and sloth militate against this, and should therefore be condemned in the strongest terms. 'The idle, inactive person is stripped of humanity, even of animal existence, he is rather like a dead body.'

This 'restlessness' comes from his three faculties of the soul. The concupiscent faculty is satisfied by earning a livelihood; the irascible faculty (is satisfied) by protectiveness; and the rational faculty is satisfied by knowledge for sake of guidance. It is the rational faculty, which makes one think, that will lead one to happiness. Thus, Is faha? n? states: 'Furthermore, [he should apply his intellect] to realize his restlessness urthermore, [he should apply his intellect] to

realize his restlessness, and to effect his means of subsistence which is a fact [of human nature] and which is the cause [of moving from] humiliation to dignity, from poverty to wealth, from lowliness to loftiness, and from simple-mindedness to cleverness.’

(Unlike the Protestant ethic, work for Is(faha(n(is not an end in itself, it is a means of subsistence. It is not even the ultimate means of happiness, which only lies within the rational soul or with rational activity. Work, which is therefore also related to rationality, and knowledge-based skill, will have a higher meaning for the creative human spirit. But it does not provide the ultimate happiness if it is only directed to worldly comfort, nor is it a spiritual calling only directed at the accumulation of wealth as an end in itself).

Whoever is slothful because he wants to rest, in reality he has no rest, for leisure and laziness will lead to his suffering of disease. Thus, it is said: ‘Beware of laziness and tiredness; laziness makes you disinterested in fulfilling the rights of others, and tiredness makes you persevere in the pursuance of the truth.’

God created animals with movement to obtain sustenance, and man, with thinking to be used, not to be idle, for then his soul will be tainted. ‘As laziness spoils the body, the neglect of insight and reflection will spoil the soul which will become dull and revert to the class of animals. Man’s duty is not to waste his time, but to perfect his religion and his world, and thereby correcting the matters relating to the Hereafter and caring for it.’

Thus, there is no hope of attaining high rank without effort and struggle. (Compare here the condemnation of sloth, rest and wasting time with the Protestant ethic, and note that in the case of Is(faha(n(, the alternative, which is an ethic of hard work, is directed to both this world and the hereafter.)

Thus, Is(faha(n(commends work and condemns sloth and time wasting. All one’s talents and faculties, especially the rational faculty, should be used, and not fall into disuse. The rational faculty should be directed at taking care of the affairs of this world and the Hereafter.

2.2.2 The moderate way in material acquisitions

There are three seekers after worldly goods.

First, there is the person who blindly indulges in worldly goods, hoarding them and making wealth his idol.

The second is the one who partakes of the world, but is satisfied with less than his needs to eke out an existence. The Sufis are like this, and they make it compulsory (far(d)ah) upon themselves, even with what is permissible. They even make is supererogatory They even make is supererogatory compulsory upon themselves.

The third is one who also partakes of the world, but as God

The third is one who also partakes of the world, but as God's trustee confines himself to only what he needs, leaving the rest to others in need.

Such a person will become the vicegerent of God.

The third approach is the moderate way as suggested in sura 28, verse 77

. Most people are engrossed in the indulgence of worldly goods and are in the first category. The Sufis support the second category, which leads to the kind of discipline that helps in attaining moderation. The third category is the moderate way as one partakes of essential goods for one's basic needs, and according to what one requires. Correspondingly, there are three kinds of people who care for the affairs

of the world and the Hereafter.

First, are engrossed in the world, but pay no attention to the Hereafter. Secondly,

are delighted with the Hereafter but pay no attention to the welfare of the world. Thirdly, the mutawassi are in between these two types, fulfilling the rights of both the Hereafter and the world. The third category, which includes the Prophets, is the best.

2.2.3 The Natural Inclination and Practice of the Crafts

We alluded earlier to the natural inclination for creative work because of our humanity as free intelligent beings. As noted above, work also provides the space of interacting with other persons, precisely because it requires people to co-operate with one another in the work place.

Isfahani holds that no single person has been endowed with all abilities and talents, but different people have been endowed with different gifts, and therefore it is only by co-operating with one another, that certain crafts can be produced. Through such co-operation in the work place or on the production of the product or the craft, can one enhance one's material and spiritual life.

It is difficult to live alone and acquire basic needs without the

assistance of others. Consider the effort involved in producing a piece of bread, from the sowing of the wheat to the making of flour and bread. Furthermore, how can one still account for the making of the required equipment to produce it. This is difficult. Thus, man must be part of a group, to co-operate and help each other. It is said: Man is political (madan()) by nature

He cannot live alone; he needs others for the welfare of religion and the world.

Man's natural inclination for particular crafts is part of divine determination; yet, each person should be free to choose whatever craft he wishes to pursue.

He created a hidden relation and a Divine congruence between their crafts and their natures, making each person prefer his own craft-loving it and pursuing it with the endowed faculties suited for it. If the person were to be given the responsibility of another craft,

(other than what he has been endowed with), he would have been disinterested and dissatisfied with it. God has created each person to pursue his own specific craft. If not, the whole of mankind would choose one craft, by which nourishment (through the help of others) and mutual assistance (within each craft) would be nullified. Furthermore, they would all choose the best names, countries, crafts and actions, and be proud of that. But God in His wisdom created man free to choose a craft; yet determined his inclination for a particular craft. [That is to say, man is born with an inclination for a particular craft, but at the same time he has a choice as to the craft that he pursues.] If he chooses the craft that conforms to his natural inclination, he will be happy; if not, he will be sad. Man, therefore, is either contented with his craft, like a contented tailor not wanting any change of craft, but finding fault with the cupper, or like the cupper who is content with his craft, but finds fault with the tailor. In this way their affairs are organised.

Or man is discontented with his craft, struggling with it as he finds it detestable, not having an alternative.

Thus, the Prophet said, 'Everything is made suitable for what it was created for' and the people will remain good as long as they are different, but if they are equal, they will be destroyed.'

and the people will remain good as long as they are different, but if they are equal, they will be destroyed.'

By citing this quotation, Isfahani wishes to emphasise that

differences in people's preferences. for the crafts brings about unity rather than disunity; he compares this notion of unity in diversity with the dissimilarity in the forms of writing that make a system of writing possible.

Therefore, one should take proper care of one's lawful craft.

There is however also the recognition that a person could be dissatisfied with his craft or work; it becomes drudgery, and he is unable to find any other alternative. It becomes a source of misery and 'alienation' to use Marx's term.

Apart from the psychological fear of material poverty that drives people to pursue the crafts, there is a deeper drive, intrinsic to the human soul, which Is(faha(n) calls id(t(ira(b (restlessness). This 'restlessness' is man's will to work in order to satisfy his physical, emotional and rational needs, which emerge from the faculties of the soul. The soul's innate restlessness determines all things around it; perpetually impelling man to rise above his dependence, helplessness and ignorance.

On the classification of the crafts, rafts, Isfahani follows the Ikhwa(n in identifying three essential crafts, namely agriculture, building and weaving, which serve the basic human needs of food, shelter and clothing, respectively. Is(faha(n) adopts the three essential crafts from the Ikhwa(n, but adds a fourth essential craft, namely, the craft of ruling follows the Ikhwa(n in identifying three essential crafts, namely agriculture, building and weaving, which serve the basic human needs of food, shelter and clothing, respectively. Is(faha(n) adopts the three essential crafts from the Ikhwa(n, but adds a fourth essential craft, namely, the craft of ruling, which also includes the Prophets.

The classical classification of crafts by Isfahani

The classical classification of crafts by Is? faha? n? (followed by Ghazzali?) paved the way for later classifications, and we note some parallels in a much later figure, Ibn Khaldun, who also acknowledged the three essential crafts as natural ways of earning a livelihood, the importance of human labour, the unnaturalness of political professions and government positions, and the vice of sloth emerging out of the sedentary lifestyle of the city.

2.2.4 Frugality

In harmony with the teaching of the Qur'an, Is(faha(n) states: There are two kinds of spending: the praiseworthy, such as charity (s(adaqah) in spending on one's family; and blameworthy, as to be extravagant or miserly. Extravagance is to give to the corrupt and to spend on what is unlawful.

The greatest giving is Divine generosity; giving to those who are deserving and needy.'

3. The Implications for Globalization

Globalization refers to 'the widening and deepening of international flows of trade, capital, technology and information within a single integrated global market'

There are two major perceptions of globalization; one is the capitalist mode of global production, and the other is political project of transnational capitalist class.

There are two major responses to globalization; one is the inevitability of globalization perspective, which is to determine how a particular country can adjust to the changes in the world economy and insert themselves into the globalization process under the most favourable conditions.

Petras and Veltmeyer view globalization in a critical light, and as a process, which will eventually bring about a deepening crises in Asia and Latin America, leading to an enormous growth of informal workers with incomes at below subsistence level. For them the technological innovations will produce a small elite of well-paid software engineers, and a mass of poorly paid information processes. The new information systems are really an assault on productive capital and the living standards of wageworkers.

We are not going to indulge in these fundamental debates about globalization, but we would like to suggest that the cultivation of the work ethic in Islam can help; not in providing an alternative to globalization, but in preserving and using profitably much of what is already of value in the Muslim world, namely unskilled labour and rich natural resources. If the work ethic was mainly or partly responsible for the rise of Capitalism in the West, then the cultivation of an Islamic work ethic, as exemplified by Isfahani and will certainly be a key factor in building stronger economies in the Muslim world. It is not true to suggest that the work ethic does not exist in Islam, and

we have shown above that Muslim scholars exhort it and condemn sloth and begging. If the Protestant work ethic, notwithstanding its limitations, could be the principle factor in the rise of Capitalism in the West, and as we know globalization is just an extension of Capitalism, then it is by nurturing the qualities of the Islamic work ethic, including that of frugality, that will foster stronger economies in Muslim countries, which will act as a bulwark against the destructive impact of globalization.

The empirical studies above indicate that the Protestant work ethic is not valid for all denominations, cultures and religions, and that for a study of the work ethic in the Muslim world it would be prudent for someone to work hard at producing an Islamic work ethic scale, which will be pertinent to Muslim countries.

Today, because of globalization, the ways in which people earn their income and spend it, and the way they save their wealth, are linked to the income, spending, and saving of people in other countries. If Muslims can be more frugal in both their spending and consumption, they will be economically stronger in terms of building up their capital. Furthermore, if they cultivate the work ethic as suggested by Said Nursi, they will be able to concentrate on labour intensive products, an aspect of strength, which can complement the superior technologies of advanced countries. In this way, they can contribute to the global economy, and to their own countries. The key word here is 'complement' rather than 'compete' and the Muslim world is not equipped to compete or participate in the knowledge-based economy of globalization. Professor Amer who states has noted this point: 'Globalization is changing the labour requirements in favour of highly skilled workers, a condition which is lacking in many of the developing countries. Wages may be low in these countries but the bulk of the labour force is made up of unskilled workers who cannot be employed in the new knowledge-based economy'.

An elementary feature of world trade is that countries specialize in the production of different goods and services, exporting those in which they specialize and importing other countries' specialities. But that perspective has to be modified when we try to examine some of the complexities of world trade. The classic explanation of international trade is the theory of comparative advantage, which argues that countries will specialize in producing those goods and services in which their cost advantages are greatest. Countries' specialities are determined by their relative supplies of labour and capital (factors of

production). A country with a large labour force and a low stock of capital—like many Third World countries—will specialize in producing labour-intensive products, while a country with a small labour force relative to its stock of capital—such as the United States—will specialize in capital-intensive products. That process represents a globalization of production itself. A Division of labour on a global scale.

Muslim countries have to cultivate the work ethic, for both skilled and unskilled labour. Currently they are a source of power for unskilled labour; hence they are able to produce labour intensive products. This has an advantage for the future development of the Muslim world. With cheap labour, benefits can be harnessed to increase production for both the local and global markets. Use of modern communication technologies combined with proper co-ordination and management, could speed up the process of development in the Muslim world.

In this way, the national economy of Muslim countries could improve, and they could co-operate with advanced countries to gain finance and investments to create more employment. The Muslim world could take part in the global division of labour; they can produce and export labour-intensive products in exchange for goods that require sophisticated technology, and in exchange for supply of capital, which is essential for production. Individual Muslim governments, on a national scale, have less power to determine the global economy, but with co-operation, they can definitely be an economic force and shape the global economy to their advantage.

But it is not enough to sit back and make use of current strengths, the Muslim world must rise to the challenge of becoming scientifically and technologically up to date, they must heed the message of Said Nursi, which is to study science and technology. We therefore support the view of Amer who states that integration into the global economy will not only depend on trade and the acquisition of goods and services, but also on knowledge and technology 'to support the capacity of the economy to produce knowledge-based products'.

There is no short cut to adapting to the challenges of globalization, it is imperative that Muslims improve technologically in order to promote sustainable development and improve competitiveness in production and trade.

4. Conclusion

There is a work ethic in Islam which is similar to that of the Protestant

work

ethic in so far as both religious traditions cherish industry and frugality. Hard work is an act of calling and an act of creativity, and it expresses the glory of God. Sloth and begging are vices; they militate against the work ethic, and should be condemned in the strongest terms. Both the Protestant work ethic and that of Isfahani's work ethic contains the belief in predestination, which, in no way should mar human initiative. Frugality is commended and waste is condemned in both

traditions. If the former is practiced it will help a great deal in enhancing developing countries.

The protestant work ethic, however, differs from Islam in certain respects, and the empirical studies above reveal that questionnaires based on this work ethic does not always apply to Muslim societies. It is therefore important for an independent work ethic scale for Islamic societies be developed. The results from these scales would therefore be more reliable.

There are also differences with respect to the nature of work in Islam compared to the Protestant work ethic. Whereas the Protestant work ethic promoted Capitalism, Islam, while encouraging free enterprise, condemns interest in the strongest of terms. Also, in the Protestant work ethic the accumulation of wealth is valued for its own sake, but in Islam, although one should be frugal, stinginess is a strong vice. Although in the Protestant work ethic there may be an organized system of charity, in Islam it is also Organized, not merely as an act of benevolent initiative, but as part of a divine imperative, whereby the poor due (zakah) is actually a pillar of Islam.

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fahani is an Islamic ethical philosopher who died around the middle of the eleventh century. He wrote an ethical work Means to the Noble Qualities of the Law), which became an important source for the ethics of Ghazza? I? . For some details on his life, works and ideas,

see. Yasien Mohamed, 'The Ethical Philosophy of Ethical Philosophy of alIsfahani', Journal of Islamic Studies, 1996, 6(1) 51-75; also, Yasien Mohamed,

Journal of Islamic Studies, 1996, 6(1) 51-75; also, Yasien Mohamed, K? ? ? ?

and Purification

of the Soul. An Annotated Translation with Introduction of (58-76; 89-92). In: Journal of Islamic Studies. 1998; 9 (1) :1-34.

Augustine Shutte, Philosophy for Africa, UCT press, Cape Town, p. 125.

Augustine Shutte, Philosophy for Africa, UCT press, Cape Town, p. 125.

Ibid, p. 126

Ibid, p. 126

Ibid, p. 130-131

Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, Frederick Ungar Publishing co., New York, p. 44

Ibid, p. 139

E.F. Schumacher, Good Work, Abacus, p. 3.

Adrian Furham, The Protestant Work Ethic, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 1-6.

Pekka Himanen, The Hacker Ethic, Vintage, London, 2001, p. 8:

Furnham, The Protestant work ethic, pp. 275-6.

Furnham, The Protestant work ethic, pp. 276-281

Ibid, pp. 10-12.

Augustine Shutte, Philosophy for Africa, UCT Press, Cape Town, 1998, p. 126.

Ibid, p. 126.

Furnham, The Protestant work ethic, p. 273.

Ulrich Blum and Leonard Dudley, 'Religion and Economic Growth: Was Weber right?' in Journal of Evolutionary Economics (2001) 11: 207-230, p. 217.

Mahmut Arslan, 'The Cross-cultural comparison of British and Turkish managers in terms of Protestant work ethic characteristics' in Business Ethics: A European Review, 2000, 13-19, pp. 13: 19.

Ihkias, A. H. Abdallah, 'Construct and concurrent validity of three Protestant work ethic measures in an Arabian Gulf society' in Journal of Managerial Psychology, 12 (4), 1997, pp. 251-260.

Ibid, 251-253.

Ibid. p. 259-260

Afzalur Rahman, Muhammad: Encyclopaedia of Seerah (II), London, 1982, p. 504.

N. M. Affandi Bin Nik, Yusoff., Islam and Wealth, ed. I. Noor, Peluduk publications, Selangor, pp. 2001, pp. 17-21.

Ibid. pp. 17-21.

Cahen, 'kasb' in Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed. 4, p. 690f. The author alludes to the influence of Bryson on Islamic economic thinking. Contrary to ho

onest labour, some of the false Sufis taught spiritual poverty to the extent of begging, and to living on the labour of others. Later we will see that this will be the practice in the eleventh century, and ? ? ? faha? n? 's condemnation of sloth was with reference to these pseudo-Sufis. al-Dhar(cah, p. 131.

Himanen, The Hacker Ethic, p. 10.

The comment following the verse differs in the 1980 edition, which conveys a different meaning, that is, that striving is not a condition of faith; nor is the Divine will and wish mash('ah) a condition for the Hereafter. If this was the case, they could never be transcended a condition for the Hereafter. If this was the case, they could never be transcended ((By human effort. [note the printing error in cAjami's edition; the negation lam is omitted].

al-Dharcah, pp.392-393. Compare the chapter on divine decree in al-Ictiqada(t. The intelligent person should realize his goal, and upon attaining it, he should continue to pursue it. In al-Ictiqada(t, p. 271f., Is(faha(n(makes a distinction between

al-Dhar(cah, pp.392-393. Compare the chapter on divine decree in al-Ictiqada(t. The intelligent person should realize his goal, and upon attaining it, he should continue to pursue it. In al-Ictiqada(t, p. 271f.. Is(faha(n(makes a distinction between and mash('ah : ' make no distinction between them, but their derivatives indicate a distinction. The latter is more specific and denotes the divine wish that conditions and precedes human action as in Q. 81: 28; however, such constraints do not proceed from God's

. When mashi'ah is used for God it pertains to what he creates, and used for humans it pertains to what they acquire. If all things, including human actions, were not based on divine wish, people would not utter conditional expressions as 'if God wishes' with regard to specific actions which ultimately rest on God'. Cf. Mufrada(t, p.

211f. and p. 278 for the linguistic and semantic definitions of Cf. Mufrada(t, p. 211f. and p. 278 for the linguistic and semantic definitions of i? ? ā? ?

and mash('ah respectively. The style here is similar as al-Ictiqa(da(t except that there are more Qur'anic verses.

al-Dharcah, p. 396; Isfqa(n(cites Q. 34: 13; 61:10-11.Q. 20; 115.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 396f. Is(faha(n(concludes the section with another vivid anecdote.

See Chap. 7, and section 3.5 below.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 380; cf. trans.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 380; Is(faha(n(cites Q. 5:2; 9:71.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 380.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 381.

Cited in al-cah, p. 381.

note in addition Muh(a(d(ara(t, p. 515.

al-Dhar

al-Dhar? cah, p. 382, 2-3.

forth, occupied in his affairs for the means of subsistence.'

al-Dhar(cah, p. 382, 3-7. This concept of restlessness is a fresh contribution by Is(faha(n(; see concluding remark of this section.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 382, 3-7. This concept of restlessness is a fresh contribution by Is(faha(n(; see concluding remark of this section.

al-Dhar

al-Dhar? cah, p. 382, 10-12.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 382, 4-7.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 382, 4-7.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 398f. Cf. Quasem, The Ethics of al-Ghazza(l(, p. 128, al-Ghazza(l(, in trying to harmonize the concept of superfluous wealth with the Shar(cah, he identifies five conditions of beneficial wealth. The third condition concerns us here as it corresponds to the third condition of Is al-Dhar(cah, p. 398f. Cf. Quasem, The Ethics of al-Ghazza,p.128, al-Ghazza(15, in trying to harmonize the concept of superfluous wealth with the Shar(cah, he identifies five conditions of beneficial wealth. The third condition concerns us here as it corresponds to the third condition of Is: 'to preserve the necessary amount for oneself, and the excess for the needy, and to give this to them when they approach'. The fourth condition also corresponds to Is the third condition: to be cautious in spending, that is, to be content with little in ones own case and mode. rate in spending money for others. Contentment [in contrast to greed] is also a philosophical

concept, but philosophers consider it a main factor in preventing sorrow in this world; however, al-Ghazza(l(considers it a way of preventing harm in this world and in the hereafter. See, Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazza*, p. 129. Q. 104:3

S(u(f(abstention is to refrain from food, drink and sexual intercourse; and to partake of food within the limits of one's need. See Winter, al-(l(*On Disciplining the Soul*, p. XXXf. Although Is(faha(n(condemns the sloth of Sufi pretenders who do not want to work, he supports here their kind of abstention. This shows that Is(faha(n(is not anti-Sufi but condemns those who escape from the world of economic responsibility. It is therefore the moral discipline of the Sufis that he finds praiseworthy. The 1980 print, p. 282, gives the opposite meaning that makes no sense in the context.

Is(ahani supports the moral discipline of the Sufi , but favours the third approach. The Sufi approach appears to Is(faha(n(to fluctuate between extremity and moderation. The third approach is the moderate way of the khal(fah who enjoys the world, but takes of what is sufficient for one's needs, and leaves

the rest to the needy. This way is unlike the Sufis approach that fluctuates between the obligatory and the supererogatory. Is(faha(n('s citation of the verse above refers to the third approach.

-Dhar(cah, p. 399f. ; Is(faha(n(further supports it with numerous other Qur'a(nic verses: Q. 7:32; 21:105; 21: 106; 53:42; 2:198; 4: 32. Further, on having a positive attitude to the world: Q. 10:7; 11: 61; 30: 9.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 402, 1-10; cf. M(z? f, p. 382, 20-23; 383, 1-8, for similar passage; and for identical passage corresponding to the same theme: al-Dhar(cah, 403, 5-8; M(za(n, 384, 2-6. Compare also with Muh(a(d(ara(t, IV, p. 404, where the content is similar but the terms are different; he uses ha(likin for the first category, cabid(n for the second, and al-mukha(t(ir(n for the third.

al-Dharcah, p. 403ff.

Cf. Miskawayh, *Tah(dh(b*, p. 140/trans. Zurayk, p. 127; Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1. 1253a, 2ff./ trans. Barnes, II, p. 1987, 36ff; see chap. 8, sec. 2. 'Man is a political animal' is a famous expression from Aristotle; it comes from the Greek politikos (political) , and polis (city, city-state). The Arabic madan(is the equivalent of politikos. One could also translate it as 'civic' insofar as it pertains to the citizens of the city-state. The word 'political' has a narrow usage today. In the Greek context it is not divorced from ethics, and in the

context of Is work, it includes the ethical, material and the religious welfare of the community.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 374. Is(faha(n(cites the following authentic Tradition:

al-Dhar(cah, p. 374. Is(faha(n(cites the following authentic Tradition: 'Similarly, in their love and mercy, the believers are like a single body, if an organ is in pain, the rest of the body suffers of sleeplessness and fever.' There is an echo of this idea of man's need to co-operate for a civilised existence

need to co-operate for a civilised existence
((1501); cf. Fakhry, Ethical Theories, p. 146. This idea that co-operatio? n allows for division of labour is also found in Ibn Khaldu(n; see A. Battah, Ibn Khaldun's Principles of Political Economy, p. 87.

By 'craft' we not only mean a particular manual skill, but also occupations that require intellectual ability and religious knowledge. Is(faha(n(uses the term in a wider sense than in the Rasa('il, as he includes the craft of ruling as one of the four essential crafts. See further.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 375; cf. Rasa('il, I, p. 290ff. Is(faha(n(and the Ikhwa(n agree that man has an innate inclination for a particular craft, but they differ as to how it comes about. For the Ikhwa(n, it is mediated through the stars, and for Is(faha(n(, it comes directly from God. There is no similarity in style except that they both use the term

Although the Arabic connotes nourishment through food, the context of the craft suggests that reference is being made to every kind of basic need, even clothes. In section 3.1., reference is made to the process involved in producing a piece of bread, and the various human skills and technical tools required for it.

Q. 23:53.

al-Dhar(cah, p. 375, 4-14; Q. 43:32; 25:20; 17:84. There is an element of predestination here in the fact that man's inclination for a craft is predetermined, but he nevertheless chooses whatever craft he pursues either freely or through force of circumstances.

Bukhari, Qadr, 2; cf. Wensinck, Concordance de la Tradition Musalmane, VII, 364 for the original Tradition which Isadapted.

Not a Tradition. See edition, al-Dhar(cah, pp. 161, 376. See 'The Translation'.

Different crafts are separate and different according to the separate and various letters of the Arabic alphabet. Without the

distinctive identity of each? ? ? ?

h letter. there can be no unity, no system to the written language, and consequently no sense can be made of it.

al-Dharcah, p. 376.

al-Dharcah, p. 385, 1-11; cf. M(za(n, pp. 328, 14-21; 329, 1-5.

Ghazza(l brings in this idea in the section on knowledge and the intellect. The passages are almost identical. In single instances Ghazza(l changes certain words and terms: p. 328, 17: muhayya' tah replaces murashshah((ah; p. 329, 9: hadab replaces yad.

al-Dharcah, p. 113f.

al-Dharcah, p. 415:

Is(ahani ends the entire chapter with poetic verses from Isfahani ends the entire chapter with poetic verses.

James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, Globalization Unmasked, Fernwood Publishing, Helifax, 2001, p. 11.

Ibid, p. 11

Ibid, pp. 24-25

*Amer al-Roubaie, Globalization and the Muslim World, Malita Jaya publishing House, Selangor, 2002, p. 14.

Ibid, p. 54

Ibid, pp. 61-62.

Ibid, p. 86.