

Traditional Islam in the Modern World

Written by Administrator

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Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. (1995) *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*. New York: Kegan Paul International. [Chapter 2 - Islamic Work Ethic, pp. 35-46]

Iranian-born Nasr (Islamic studies, George Washington Univ.) distinguishes traditional Islam from both modernist and resurgent "fundamentalist" forms, and explores its encounter with the modern world in such realms as education, science, and urbanism. A reprint of the 1987 cloth edition. Annotation c. Book News, Inc., Portland, OR (booknews.com)

Second chapter of this book deals with Islamic Work Ethic.

Here is an excerpt: "[...] in order to understand the ethical dimension of work from the traditional Islamic point of view, it is necessary to recall at the outset the fact that the term 'work' in Arabic is not distinguished from the word for 'action' in its most general sense and is treated by the Divine Law (*al-Shariah*) under the same category. In fact if one were to look for the translation of the word 'work' in an English-Arabic dictionary, one would usually find the two terms

amal

and

sun

given as its equivalents. The first of these terms means 'action' in general as contrasted with 'knowledge' and the second 'making' or 'producing' something in the artistic and artisanal sense of the word. Human beings perform two types of functions in relation to the world about them. They either act within or upon that world or else make things by molding and remolding materials and objects drawn from that world. Work ethics in Islam applies in principle to both categories: to both *amal* and *sun*, since the Divine Law covers the whole network of human actions. [...]" (p. 36-37)