

they do not succeed in being isolated or remaining pure.

The fifth chapter discusses the place of doubt in Islam, keeping in mind the Eastern sources of such a manner of thinking and representing it as a salutary method for reaching the divine, so creating a viable and credible platform for their intellectual venture in the international arena through observing two giants of spirit, al-Ghazali and Descartes, with Hellenic and Indic connections regarding this issue.

The concluding chapter, “Modernity in Conversation with Islam and Buddhism: An Encounter of Intellect and Wisdom”, offers certain general concepts on the subject by considering possible challenges to modernity in view of globalization and its fragmentation.

**Nevad Kahteran**

doi: [10.21464/sp31222](https://doi.org/10.21464/sp31222)

### **Massimo Campanini**

## **Philosophical Perspectives on Modern Qur’ānic Exegesis**

### **Key Paradigms and Concepts**

**Equinox Publishing, Bristol 2016**

Many threads and various hermeneutical approaches were interweaved in *Philosophical Perspectives on Modern Qur’ānic Exegesis*, a book by Massimo Campanini, which is composed of two parts. Throughout the first part, which examines a number of hermeneutical problems, Massimo Campanini tries to stress a crucial point: truth is disclosure (*a-letheia*) and this highly phenomenological aim involves the necessity to decodify the symbols (*āyāt*), stressing the fact that contemporary philosophical hermeneutics seeks new methodology and horizons, which have not yet been assessed. Also, he insists that language and linguistic hermeneutics is the starting point of any other hermeneutics, even philosophical, while, in Part II, he puts forward a possible thematic interpretation of a circumscribed Qur’ānic aspect as his own hermeneutical key in this book, taking into account that this part explains the “conditions of possibility” of philosophical, or even better said, phenomenological hermeneutics of

the Qur’ān, especially because phenomenology offers a direct route to an investigation of the ontological reality of God. This is a highly hermeneutical key and an open question here.

So, how does one find common philosophical ground in order to enhance dialogue concerning these critical issues in the academic study of the Qur’ān and interrelated traditional teachings and beliefs which stem from it and which can be read in phenomenological terms, or to quote the author’s own term, *through the lens of a philosophical Qur’anology*?

This book is, without a doubt, Campanini’s own great contribution to the ongoing hermeneutical applications to the Holy Text, i.e. a contribution to the exploration of the conditions of possibility of philosophical hermeneutics of the Qur’ān starting with Ibn Rushd’s flexible utilization of language in describing metaphysical and ontological truth and including a modern philosophical approach. At the same time, he is well immersed and rooted in Western and Islamic philosophy alike, as a devoted pluralist and comparatist thinker, capable of speaking about reality in different ways. However, he stresses several times that the Qur’ān contains many verses that acknowledge pluralism, quoting Reza Shah-Kazemi who says that mutual knowledge and reconnaissance (*ta’aruf*) is the epistemological fundament of diversity while conditions of interpretation arise from the characteristics of the Qur’ān as *a-letheia* (knowledge emerges from a disclosure of Truth).

Also, the book enhances the need to (re)read the Sacred Text using new methods of inquiry within the broad framework of the mentioned hermeneutical key which he proposes in the field of contemporary (philosophical) hermeneutics of the Qur’ān, demonstrating the utility of finding a philosophical pattern in order to understand the Qur’ān as an open-textured dialogue with its internal coherence of language and the self-referentiality of the Qur’ānic language placing the Holy Text within a time-framed perspective, which is an essential element of hermeneutics developing a self-aware philosophical interpretation. Written in this manner, the book will become an unavoidable reference for contemporary philosophical Qur’anology, at least because of its insisting on harmonization between the Holy Text revealed 15 centuries ago and sophisticated modernity which is more and more sceptical about religious truths.

According to Campanini, Arabic is more than a key of interpretation and it is the real structure of the mentioned *a-letheia*. The translation of the Qur’ān is both a semantic task

and an effort to reconstruct the contextual meaning along with its symbolic interpretation. Aside from this, contemporary Islamic thought seems to be an *idéologie du combat*, as M. Arkoun says, missing to find this proper answer to the question mentioned about a common philosophical ground in order to enhance dialogue among Muslims themselves first, and then with all others world-wide.

As for the content of Part II, in choosing phenomenology for a study of the Qur'ān, I can recognize the same efforts in an Islamic context which started with Hasan Hanafi and his opening up of contemporary Islamic thought to phenomenology, the continuation of the work done by the late professor Anna-Theresa Tymieniecka (and valuable volumes in the series *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue*), who, as one of the first academics in the Western world, recognized the link which is capable of carrying out an exegesis of the Holy Book, because the Qur'ān should be examined and explained in the light of philosophy and, particularly, of phenomenology. I am pretty sure that Campanini's book will find its way to philosophical and theological seminars in the field of contemporary Islamic thought, owing to the ideas expressed with balance, nuances, and its profound informative structure, while his conclusion seems very clearly expressed: Islam shows its phenomenological tendencies and the study of the Qur'ān becomes a goal of phenomenological research. More and more researchers will find their own phenomenological path in the Qur'ān as philosophical exegesis, starting from a phenomenological standpoint. Also, it is quite obvious that the author's very aim and intention here is rather to pursue a line of enquiry that is exclusively philosophical, simultaneously providing useful tools for a philosophically constructive in-depth analysis of the Qur'ān and hermeneutics with full philosophical value.

In fact, in the book he repeatedly stresses that phenomenological hermeneutics respects the

transcendent value of the Holy Text, simultaneously revealing its historical (and historicizable) content, which is crucial within a Muslim conceptual context. Campanini's phenomenological journey (phenomenological characterization of the idea of God in Islam) leads us to the recognition of the fact of the central importance in phenomenological hermeneutics applied to ontology dealing with a viewpoint that is intrinsically Islamic and representing one of the most notable features of the Islamic theological outlook and, as Campanini underlines, how it is phenomenological in character. By doing so, he shows that phenomenology allows for a coherent, latitudinal, philosophical interpretation of a number of important Qur'ānic verses: the Qur'ān contains philosophical truths; it is a book of philosophy. The theoretical effort deployed in this amazing book is the paving of the ways to understanding that the Qur'ān is *bahr muhīt*, a deep ocean, and philosophy lands on its shores, including its characteristic emphasis of God's Oneness – metaphysically outlined in the divine ipseity, i.e. the absolutely transcendent God of Islamic philosophy and theology.

Finally, there is a certain kind of phenomenological hermeneutics or hermeneutical phenomenology through political praxis, as an active instrument in the interpretation of history, which depends on weak thought, or a phenomenological direction of a progressive contemporary Islam, instead of instilled herd philosophies; or, implicitly said, the book is an open invitation to humans to leave their dogmatism aside. According to Campanini's insights, Islam is quite fitted to do this today as a religion, as a philosophy, and as an instrument of social action and practical re-orientation of the masses (Hasan Hanafi's intellectual parabola presented as a phenomenological inclination and inspiring motive and outcome).

**Nevad Kahteran**