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Oliver Leaman

The Qur'an: A Philosophical Guide

**Bloomsbury Academic, London
– New York 2016**

The book that is here under review, *The Qur'an: A Philosophical Guide* by Oliver Leaman, is a part of the *Corpus Coranicum Project* by the same author, including previously published works *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Leaman, and *Islam: The Key Concepts*, written by Kecia Ali and Leaman. Also, the publisher of this book, Bloomsbury Academic, has already published several works on Islam, e.g. *Interpreting the Qur'an* by Clinton Bennett, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies* edited by Clinton Bennett, and *The Composition of the Qur'an* by Michel Cuypers.

Leaman's new book is not a concordance of the Qur'an like, for instance, Rudi Paret's book. In addition, in this book Oliver Leaman elucidates certain aspects of the philosophical and the rational structure behind the language of the Qur'an, which is the very heart of Islam. This implicates a further important distinction, namely, the distinction between the Holy Qur'an, on the one hand, and its interpretations, on the other hand. According to a long development of the philological efforts of Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence, which is simultaneously supported by a growing activity of translating foreign scientific books and intensified by the transfer of academic life for the sake of practical needs, such convergent developments supported philosophical thinking in Islam. As a result, the Qur'an is clearly the major source of authority in the religion of Islam, i.e. sacred, but its interpretations are not sacred and they have been shaped and have changed through time since context changes from time to time and place to place, so we cannot speak about their own sacredness – whatever the personal commitment happens to be. This is worth bearing in mind when dealing with the perennial question of how scripture and philosophy actually work together. It should be emphasized that Leaman is one of the rare scholars able to work on such a project.

Broadly speaking, in his new book Oliver Leaman is looking for a hermeneutic strategy which will be valid, philosophically based, and at the same time he is trying to remind

his readership that Islamic philosophical investigations are not just a blind cult of authorities, but that they also really do deserve our full attention or appreciation of Islamic philosophical thought. Set within the context of philosophical interpretations, ranging from the most Islamophobic to the extreme apologist, this volume offers philosophically critical, innovative, and productive dialogue with a valuable philosophical interpretation of the Qur'an, which makes it an immensely learned and stunningly good book of choice for every serious seeker in this field.

We do need to remind ourselves how to approach the Holy Qur'an as a rich and multi-faceted book, and how it has come to be understood in a variety of cultural contexts. The value of this is evident and presented in Oliver Leaman's book in a more academic setting through the development of different Qur'anic topics, and it will constantly remind us of this unravelling of the religious and philosophical language involved in its hermeneutical machinery presented here. Finally, I would like to mention Leaman's own words about himself, according to which he is "writing carefully so as not to raise the hackles of those who would be hostile to the ideas he is presenting".

Nevad Kahteran

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Snježana Veljačić-Akpınar

**Buddhist Meditations on
Islamic Contemplative Paths**

**Less Traveled Roads &
Abandoned Junctions**

**Dharma Realm Buddhist University,
Ukiah, CA 2015**

Snježana Veljačić-Akpınar, a daughter of the late professor Čedomil Veljačić, was somehow predestined by this key fact in her life and successful academic career. She is President Emerita of the Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU, since 1995), Director of the Institute for World Religions, a scholar of Middle Eastern studies and comparative religion, etc.