

Moral Education in QS. Al-Baqarah:186 through Emilio Betti's Hermeneutics: Responding to Contemporary Ethical Challenges

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Abstract

The moral decline in the modern era presents a serious challenge to Islamic education, particularly in shaping strong spiritual character towards Allah SWT. Qur'anic verse QS. Al-Baqarah:186 conveys the message of divine closeness that holds deep relevance for moral development. This study aims to analyze the verse using Emilio Betti's hermeneutic approach to uncover the moral education dimension from historical, linguistic, and contextual perspectives. The research applies a qualitative-descriptive method through textual and philosophical-hermeneutic analysis. The findings reveal that the verse contains not only theological meaning but also universal ethical messages such as spiritual optimism and obedience to divine commands. Through Betti's approach, the study finds that the objective meaning structure of the verse is both transhistorical and contextual. This research offers a synthesis between classical Qur'anic exegesis and modern hermeneutics, contributing practical insights for developing Islamic moral education curricula that are integrative and responsive to contemporary moral challenges.

Keywords: Al-Baqarah:186, Emilio Betti, Hermeneutics, Moral Decadence, Moral Education

Abstrak

Dekadensi moral di era modern menjadi tantangan serius dalam pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam membentuk akhlak spiritual yang kokoh kepada Allah SWT. QS. Al-Baqarah:186 memuat pesan kedekatan Ilahi yang memiliki relevansi mendalam terhadap pembentukan akhlak. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kandungan ayat tersebut melalui pendekatan hermeneutika Emilio Betti untuk mengungkap dimensi pendidikan akhlak secara historis, linguistik, dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif dengan pendekatan teks dan filosofis-hermeneutik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ayat ini tidak hanya mengandung makna teologis, tetapi juga pesan etika universal, seperti optimisme spiritual dan kepatuhan terhadap perintah Tuhan. Melalui pendekatan Betti, ditemukan bahwa struktur makna objektif dalam ayat tersebut bersifat transhistoris dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini menyajikan sintesis antara tafsir klasik dan hermeneutika modern serta memberikan kontribusi praktis bagi pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan akhlak Islam yang integratif dan responsif terhadap tantangan moral kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Al-Baqarah:186, Dekadensi Moral, Emilio Betti, Hermeneutika, Pendidikan Akhlak.

Introduction

The moral crisis is one of the most critical challenges facing contemporary society in the modern era. In Indonesia, various cases that reflect moral degradation—such as corruption, student violence, bullying, and the misuse of digital technology—illustrate the weak internalization of moral values in the national education system. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) in 2023 reported more than 2,000 cases of child violence occurring in educational environments, raising concerns about the failure of schools to serve as safe spaces for moral and character development. Simultaneously, Indonesia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score in 2023 was 34 out of 100, indicating that the perception of corruption remains high and signaling a structural moral crisis, especially in the public sector (Hamzah et al., 2023).

This phenomenon shows that conventional educational approaches—typically limited to cognitive and formal knowledge transmission—are inadequate in shaping individuals grounded in spiritual and ethical values (Al-Attas, 1993). There is a growing awareness that moral education must go beyond procedural teaching methods and should emphasize internal, spiritual, and divine dimensions. In this context, Islamic education is required to reform its approach to character formation by returning to its epistemological roots—the Qur'an as the principal source of values and moral guidance (Kamali, 1999; Esposito, 2001).

One of the verses that encapsulates the essence of spiritual moral education is Surah al-Baqarah verse 186. This verse emphasizes Allah's closeness to His servants, the importance of prayer, faith, and orientation toward divine guidance. Unlike other legal or ritual verses, this verse serves as a profound theological and moral basis for the relationship between humans and God. It teaches not only belief in God's transcendence but also awareness of His immanence—an awareness that can foster a deep sense of responsibility and ethical behavior in the believer (Syah Dewa et al., 2023).

Previous studies have generally interpreted this verse from theological and spiritual angles, often focusing on divine response to human supplication and the concept of *qurb* (closeness). While these studies offer significant insights, they tend to be descriptive and lack a comprehensive interpretive framework that explores the pedagogical and moral implications of the verse (M. Fatih, 2022; Sands, 2006). In particular, the educational dimension of the verse—especially how it can form divine consciousness and obedience as a moral construct—has not been systematically examined through a philosophical-hermeneutical lens.

The persistent moral crisis in society, such as corruption, violence, and the erosion of ethical values, reflects a serious disconnect between moral ideals and the current reality. While the Qur'an offers a comprehensive moral framework rooted in divine guidance, many Qur'anic commentaries—both classical and contemporary—have not yet developed a structured philosophical and pedagogical interpretation that can be practically applied to reform modern moral education. This indicates a gap in in-depth interpretation that connects the ethical teachings of revelation with contemporary educational needs and challenges.

To fill this gap, this study proposes the use of Emilio Betti's hermeneutics as a methodological framework for interpreting QS. al-Baqarah: 186. Betti's hermeneutics, based on the principle of *objective understanding* (*verstehen*), emphasizes the importance of uncovering the author's intent by analyzing the internal structure of the text and its historical context (Betti, 2021). Unlike the subjectivist approaches of modern hermeneutics such as those of Gadamer, Betti maintains that the text contains an objective meaning that can be accessed through a rigorous methodological process (Syauqi, 2022). This makes his approach particularly relevant in Islamic studies, especially in the exegesis of revealed texts, where the intent of the divine author (Allah) must be preserved and not reduced to personal or sociological readings.

The novelty of this study lies in its application of Emilio Betti's classical hermeneutical theory—rarely used in Qur'anic interpretation—to explore the moral and educational values of QS. al-Baqarah: 186. This approach not only provides a more philosophical and methodological framework but also offers practical relevance for the development of revelation-based moral education. While other hermeneutical approaches tend to emphasize socio-political or linguistic elements, Betti's framework enables a systematic reconstruction of meaning centered on the divine message's universality and timeless relevance (Baderin, 2003; Esposito & Rahman, 2007).

Therefore, this study aims to answer the question: How can Emilio Betti's hermeneutic approach be applied to interpret the values of morality in QS. al-Baqarah verse 186, and how does this interpretation contribute to the development of Islamic moral education? Through this analysis, it is expected that a more holistic and applicable understanding of the verse will emerge—one that bridges theological insight and educational practice, particularly in cultivating divine awareness (*ḥabl min Allāh*) as the foundation of morality in the Islamic worldview.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research type. The primary objective was to analyze the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah verse 186 through the lens of Emilio Betti's hermeneutics in order to uncover its moral educational significance. The data analyzed in this study consisted of both primary and secondary sources. The primary data included the text of QS. Al-Baqarah verse 186, along with relevant classical and contemporary tafsir, and selected hadiths related to the verse's themes. The secondary data comprised Emilio Betti's key works—such as *Die Hermeneutik als Allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften*—as well as modern hermeneutic literature and scholarly articles discussing hermeneutics, interpretation, and moral education.

The data were analyzed using Emilio Betti's hermeneutical method, which emphasized the objective structure of meaning, authorial intent, and systematic methodology to reach valid understanding (*verstehen*). The analysis was conducted in four stages: (1) Historical analysis, which examined the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, socio-cultural context, and editorial background of the verse to reveal the meaning intended in its original setting; (2) Phenomenological analysis, which explored the inner consciousness of human responses to the verse, including the existential relationship between human and God; (3) Linguistic and interpretive analysis, which focused on diction, grammar, and syntax—such as *ud'ūnī*, *fā-innī qarīb*, and *yastajībū lī*—to ensure the objectivity of interpretation; and (4) Morphological analysis and moral dimensions, which deconstructed moral symbols like sincerity, hope, and obedience, highlighting their relevance to contemporary Islamic moral education. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation by comparing findings from Betti's framework with interpretations from classical and modern commentators, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding and the identification of normative and pedagogical convergence. The strength of this method lay in its integrative interpretive model, though its limitation was the high reliance on textual and theoretical constructs, which may limit empirical generalizability.

Results and Discussion

A. Biography of Emillio Betti

Emillio Betti is a philosopher, theologian and legal expert. He is from Italy who lived in 1890-1968 AD. In his field of expertise, he is known as a multidisciplinary thinker who made significant contributions in the fields of hermeneutics, law and philosophy. His thinking is influenced by the thoughts of Schleirmacher, Dilthey, Hegel Husserl and Nicolai Hartmann,

especially in the fields of hermeneutics and philosophy. Emalio Betti's linguistics and philosophy of language are influenced by Wilhlm von Humboldt. Emilio Betti is a hermeneutic thinker who is an idealist-romantic, he emphasizes the importance of objective and methodological understanding (*verstehen*) (Falah, 2022) .

In terms of the epistemological status of hermeneutics Emilio Betti is at odds with Hans-Georg Gadamer . Betti rejects Gadamer's relativism and argues that interpretation must have an objective basis and to achieve valid *verstehen* must go through a strict methodology. Betti had a relationship with the Italian fascist regime, he supported fascism between the end of World War I and the early 1920s. In 1944 Emilio Betti was arrested and released in August 1945, the arrest was related to his involvement in the fascist regime, although he was eventually acquitted of all charges. Betti's political influence did not affect his work, in fact it remains recognized academically even outside of his political controversies. He was even a member of the commission for the drafting of Italian civil law in 1942 (Fahmi, 2018) .

B. Emilio Betti's Main Thoughts

1. Interpretation of Objects Through Hermeneutical Canons

Emilio Betti posits hermeneutics as a universal theory of interpretation that serves as a methodological foundation for understanding texts, works of art, and human actions—especially within the humanities. This approach draws inspiration from Dilthey's hermeneutics and builds upon Schleiermacher's concept of re-enacting the author's intent (Moules, 2002).

Betti's original contribution lies in his conception of “meaningful forms”—objective textual forms that mediate between the interpreter and the author's intended meaning. He argues that meaning is not arbitrary but embedded in these forms and must be retrieved through rigorous methodological processes to minimize subjectivity. Although he acknowledges that perfect objectivity is unattainable, Betti maintains that relative objectivity is achievable through careful method (Suryosumunar, 2022; Hermawan, 2017).

He introduced a canon of interpretation—a set of universal principles to guide the interpretive process. Betti rejects relativism and upholds that meaning can be understood objectively through a structured and disciplined engagement with the text (Mahudi, 2017; Sahiron, 2017). This orientation is crucial in interpreting divine texts such as the Qur'an, where understanding must be rooted not only in faith but also in objective, contextual, and linguistic analysis (Ulum & Hasan, 2024).

In the context of interpreting QS. al-Baqarah: 186, Betti's insistence on methodological rigor ensures that meaning is extracted not from the interpreter's subjectivity

but from the structure and content of the verse itself—especially in decoding divine-human communication patterns.

2. Norms in the Object of Interpretation

According to Betti, the text holds intrinsic meaning which is not merely constructed by the reader. To safeguard objectivity, he introduces the norm of autonomy, which asserts that a text possesses an inherent and autonomous meaning that should not be distorted by subjective interpretation. Meaning exists independently within the text and must be respected by the interpreter (Suryosumunar, 2022; Yusron, 2022). In the context of the Qur'an, particularly QS. al-Baqarah: 186, this norm emphasizes the importance of letting the divine voice—*fa innī qaīb*—speak for itself, free from speculative intervention. This approach reinforces the notion that revelation carries a truth independent of human projection.

Complementing this is the norm of immanence, which stresses that meaning must emerge from within the text itself. Interpretation must attend to the internal elements of the text, such as its linguistic structure, central terms, and thematic flow (Hermawan, 2017). In the interpretation of Qur'anic verses—especially within thematic tafsir—this principle becomes crucial. The Qur'an often presents meanings that are multilayered, requiring the interpreter to extract significance through close textual analysis rather than external assumptions. The immanent nature of the text calls for a reading that is faithful to its inner logic and coherence.

Lastly, the norm of coherence or totality highlights the necessity of understanding a part of the text in relation to the whole. This holistic approach ensures that interpretations do not become fragmented or decontextualized. For instance, the phrases *ujībū da'wata* and *falyastajībū lī* in QS. al-Baqarah: 186 must be interpreted within the broader Qur'anic discourse concerning prayer, divine response, and the imperative of human obedience (Sahiron, 2017). These three interpretive norms—autonomy, immanence, and coherence—collectively function as safeguards against arbitrary or distorted readings, and they resonate strongly with the methodological framework of thematic tafsir, which emphasizes internal unity and textual integrity (Ulum & Hasan, 2024).

3. Norms in the Subject of Interpretation

In addition to textual norms, Betti also outlines two essential principles that relate to the interpreter's role in understanding a text. The first is the actualization of understanding, which requires the interpreter to reconstruct the author's original intention and integrate it meaningfully into their own lived experience (Simpson, 2020; cf. Yusron, 2022). In the context

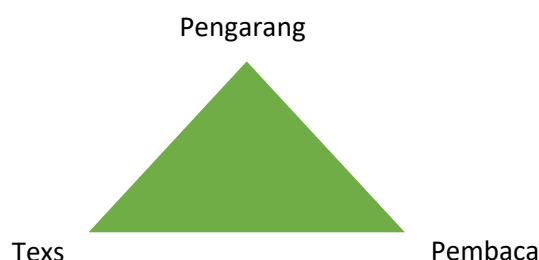
of Qur'anic interpretation, this norm implies that the message of the Qur'an—particularly its spiritual and ethical guidance—must not remain abstract but must instead shape the believer's conduct and consciousness. For instance, the divine statement "*fa innī qarīb*" (Indeed, I am near) in QS. al-Baqarah: 186 should not only be understood conceptually, but also be reflected in the way a Muslim internalizes the nearness of God in their daily life (Suryosumunar, 2022).

The second principle is the hermeneutical harmony of meaning, which demands consistency and constancy in interpretation. This principle cautions against fluctuating or contradictory understandings that diverge from the intended message of the text (Simpson, 2020). Within the Qur'anic context, it emphasizes that although verses may be interpreted through various methodologies, the essence of divine communication must remain coherent. Interpretive approaches that excessively rely on subjective or contextual shifts without grounding in the original intent may compromise the theological and moral clarity the Qur'an seeks to uphold (Hermawan, 2017).

A clear example of this interpretive harmony can be seen in QS. al-Baqarah: 186, where expressions such as "*ujību da'wata*" (I respond to the call) and "*fa-l-yastajībū lī*" (so let them respond to Me) indicate a mutual relationship between divine nearness and human devotion. Despite contextual variations in exegesis, the core message of Allah's consistent responsiveness and proximity must remain unaltered (Sahiron, 2017; Ulum & Hasan, 2024). Maintaining such interpretive coherence ensures fidelity to the theological foundations of the Qur'anic discourse and aligns with Betti's broader concern for safeguarding objective meaning.

4. Triadic Process in Betti's Hermeneutics

Betti formulates the hermeneutical act as a triadic relationship involving three essential elements. The first is the **object**, namely the author's mind objectified in textual form. In the Qur'anic context, this refers to the divine will articulated through the written revelation (Ulum & Hasan, 2024). This object contains autonomous and inherent meaning that must not be reduced to mere reader experience. This aligns with the *norm of autonomy* and *immanence*, which emphasize that meaning originates from within the text itself (Suryosumunar, 2022; Hermawan, 2017).



The second element is the subject, the interpreter's active mind attempting to understand this objectified meaning. In this framework, the interpreter does not create new meaning but seeks to uncover the meaning already embedded in the text. This task requires full engagement, demanding the interpreter to explore, interpret, and actualize the message responsibly, as underscored in the norm of actualization of understanding (Simpson, 2020; Yusron, 2022).

The third element is the medium, which refers to the meaningful form of the text itself. The text functions as the communicative bridge between the object (author) and the subject (interpreter). Within the framework of thematic Qur'anic interpretation, this triadic model serves as a fundamental principle, affirming that the Qur'an, as the medium, is the channel of communication between Allah as the divine author and the believing human as reader (Ulum & Hasan, 2024). Therefore, maintaining coherence and the integrity of meaning within the text becomes a hermeneutical responsibility, one that prevents arbitrary or purely subjective interpretations (Sahiron, 2017).

5. Types and Moments of Interpretation

Betti categorizes interpretive acts into **four types**, each with distinct goals and methods, which are especially applicable in analyzing QS. al-Baqarah: 186:

No	Moment of Interpretation	Focus of Study	Main Purpose	Application in QS. al-Baqarah: 186
1	Philology	Language structure and vocabulary	Grasping the literal meaning	Understanding terms like <i>qarīb</i> and <i>uḡību</i> based on classical Arabic syntax (Al-Mishbah, 2025)
2	Linguistic Criticism	Style, context, and rhetoric	Revealing communicative strategy	Highlighting Allah's direct style “fa innī qarīb” as immediate reassurance
3	Object Psychology	Divine intention and context of revelation	Exploring divine response	Unveiling Allah's intent to answer the anxiety of Bedouin Muslims seeking closeness

No	Moment of Interpretation	Focus of Study	Main Purpose	Application in QS. al-Baqarah: 186
4	Morphology	Grammatical forms (verbs, commands)	Detecting tones of command or appeal	Analyzing imperative verbs <i>fal-yastajībū</i> and <i>wal-yu'minū</i> as divine commands

This typology enriches thematic interpretation by showing how linguistic, psychological, and structural elements converge in conveying divine intent.

C. The Qur'an Surat Al-Baqarah: 186 and Its Asbabun Nuzul

1. Text of QS. al-Baqarah: 186

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

"When My servants ask you about Me, then indeed I am near. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me, that they may be rightly guided." (Al-Mishbah, 2025)

This verse affirms divine proximity and responsiveness, indicating an intimate theological relationship between Allah and His servants. The structure of the verse emphasizes divine initiative (“*fa innī qarīb*”) followed by human response (“*fal-yastajībū lī*”), which aligns with Betti’s triadic and relational hermeneutic.

2. The Reasons for the Nuzul of the Verse

Understanding the verses of the Qur'an demands not only linguistic analysis but also deep insight into the historical and sociocultural context in which the verses were revealed. This underscores the significance of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), which plays a vital role in illuminating the background and circumstances that inform a verse’s meaning (Desi Lestari et al., 2022). According to Ulum & Hasan (2024), situating a verse within its *asbāb al-nuzūl* framework helps prevent misinterpretation that may arise from ahistorical or overly subjective readings. Thus, knowing the reason behind a verse’s revelation is essential for grasping its proper intent and theological weight.

One prominent example is the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 186, which has been transmitted through various chains of narration. Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Wardawih, Abu Ash-Shaykh, and others reported from Jarir bin Abdil Hamid—through Ash-Shalt bin Hakim from his father and grandfather—that a Bedouin Arab came to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and asked, *"Is our Lord close so that we pray to Him quietly, or far so that we call upon Him*

loudly?" The Prophet remained silent until Allah revealed the verse: "*And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me—indeed I am near...*" (Ngatiran, 2011). This question from a sincere seeker of knowledge exemplifies the human yearning for spiritual intimacy with the Divine. Other narrations from Abdurrazzaq, Al-Hasan, and Ibn Asakir corroborate similar contexts in which companions asked about Allah's proximity and responsiveness, to which Allah's answer confirmed His nearness and availability to respond to prayer (Ngatiran, 2011; Saputra, 2022).

The recurrence of such narrations from different *riwayāt* (chains) reinforces the thematic coherence of divine nearness in Islamic theology. According to Imam Nawawi al-Bantani, as cited by Saputra (2022), this verse was revealed to answer multiple questions from both Bedouins and companions regarding the mode, timing, and directionality of supplication. Some asked whether Allah should be addressed privately or loudly; others asked about the timing of supplication. Even the Jews of Medina challenged the Prophet ﷺ, questioning how Allah hears prayers. These variations in the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reflect the diversity of human concern in approaching the Divine, and at the same time, they highlight the Qur'an's encompassing and comprehensive response to human spiritual inquiry.

Classical commentators such as Abu Hayyan and Ibn Kathir further elucidate the theological depth of the verse. Abu Hayyan (2010) argues that Allah's *proximity* is not physical but metaphysical—meaning He hears and responds swiftly, facilitating the needs of the supplicant as if He were physically close. This interpretation aligns with the broader Islamic view that Allah is transcendent yet immanent in His attributes, especially in hearing and answering prayers. Likewise, Ibn Kathir presents a hadith from Imam Ahmad in which the Prophet ﷺ instructed his companions to lower their voices in prayer during a campaign, reminding them that they were not calling upon a deaf or distant deity, but One who is *All-Hearing* and *All-Seeing* and closer to them than the neck of their mount (Nasri, 1999). This narration emphasizes the immediacy of Divine presence in the lives of believers and corrects theological misunderstandings of distance between God and His servants.

In the context of Qur'anic interpretation through a hermeneutic framework, especially one inspired by Emilio Betti's triadic model of author-text-reader, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of this verse serves as a vital component of understanding the divine will (object) communicated through the text (medium) to the believing subject (reader). As emphasized by Suryosumunar (2022), understanding the historical and dialogical backdrop of revelation is crucial in preserving the *autonomy of meaning* and resisting arbitrary subjective interpretation. This

verse, therefore, does not merely assert Allah's nearness, but also establishes a dialogical theology in which God actively communicates and responds to the human need for closeness—revealing His message in response to a deeply human question.

Thus, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:186 plays a central role in both *tafsir maudhū'i* (thematic interpretation) and hermeneutic reflection. It demonstrates that divine guidance is not revealed in abstraction but emerges in response to human concern, thereby affirming that revelation is both timely and timeless. In line with the aims of this study, which applies hermeneutic theory to thematic Qur'anic interpretation, this case exemplifies how understanding the historical and dialogical roots of a verse is indispensable for constructing an interpretation that is faithful to the text and meaningful for the reader.

3. Moral Education

Moral education is a human action that is carried out either intentionally or unintentionally, namely in other words consciously or unconsciously. Is the action a good action or a bad action . (Wahyuningsih, 2023) , According to Imam AlGhazali, morality is a natural trait that drives various actions with little or no conscious effort. (Febriani et al., 2024) . Moral education that has been formulated is an effort to develop internal attitudes that can encourage positive actions. This moral education seems to be based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah as the main sources of Islamic teachings (Asy'arie et al., 2023) .

Moral or ethical education is a process that instills ethical and moral values in students. In the Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 21 it can be understood that the figure of the Prophet Muhammad SAW is a measure of life and an example for mankind (Indana Ilma Ansharah, 2021) . Moral education is education that instills moral and ethical values in each individual (Indana Ilma Ansharah, 2021) .

The Qur'an is the main source of behavior and a guide to life, because it contains various norms of life that cover urgent to trivial matters (Wahyuningsih, 2023) . The Qur'an, which also reflects the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad. As narrated in a hadith, Sa'id ibn Hisham said, "I came to 'Aisha ra and asked about the behavior of the Messenger of Allah." 'Aisha replied, "Have you read the Qur'an?" I replied, "Yes, I read the Qur'an." Aisha said, "The character of the Messenger of Allah is the Qur'an." Indeed, the Qur'an provides lessons on manners (Ainusyamsi & Husni, 2021) . From the perspective of Qur'anic education, the indicator of a person's success and success is not only measured by material achievements alone, but when a person is able to follow the instructions and guidance of Allah SWT in its

entirety. This shows that true success according to the Qur'an is when humans (Ngatiran, 2011)

D. Implementation of Emillio Betti's Hermeneutics in Interpreting Morals towards Allah in Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 186

In this section, the author engages in a critical discussion regarding the implications of the research findings for the development of Quranic and Tafsir studies or other related issues. The purpose of this discussion is to

To obtain an objective and comprehensive interpretation of the meaning of a text, Emilio Betti emphasizes the importance of a methodological approach based on four interrelated aspects: historical context, phenomenology, linguistic structure, and morphological depth. These aspects are not merely analytical tools, but foundational components of a scientific hermeneutic method that aims to uncover the objective meaning of a text while still accounting for its historical and spiritual weight (Betti, 1990). This framework is particularly relevant when interpreting Qur'anic verses that touch upon divine-human interaction, such as Surah Al-Baqarah verse 186.

1. Historical Aspects (*Asbāb an-Nuzūl*) and Social Context

QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 was revealed in response to a deep and recurring existential question among the early Muslim community. Both the Prophet's companions and the Bedouins questioned whether Allah was near—so they could whisper to Him in prayer—or distant—so they had to raise their voices (Ibn Kathir, 2000). This historical context, known as *asbāb an-nuzūl*, reflects the intrinsic spiritual longing of humanity to understand their relationship with the Divine. It signifies an important moment where the Muslim community sought affirmation of the nearness and accessibility of Allah in their acts of devotion.

Emilio Betti's hermeneutics calls for sensitivity to the historical position of both the author (in this case, the divine source) and the community receiving the message. For Betti, understanding the *Sitz im Leben* (life-setting) of the text is essential for grasping its objective meaning (Palmer, 1969). This verse, therefore, cannot be isolated linguistically, but must be seen as an answer to the community's existential anxiety. Their question was not merely informational but deeply moral—how one should relate to God in prayer. This moral orientation resonates with Betti's insistence on understanding the intention embedded in the historical circumstances of the text (Betti, 1990).

2. Phenomenological Aspects

The phenomenological layer of this verse uncovers the universal religious experience of human beings seeking divine presence through prayer. The expression “*fa-inni qarīb*” (Indeed, I am near) is not just a metaphysical affirmation but a direct response to the spiritual condition of believers. This verse presents God's closeness as intimate and immediate, cutting through theological distance and reaffirming a personal connection with the Creator.

In Betti's hermeneutical model, texts embody and express objective human experiences across time and culture. Thus, a verse like this one is not restricted to its original audience but resonates with a perennial human condition: the search for divine nearness (Grondin, 1994). The phrase “*ujibu da‘wata ad-dā‘i*” (I respond to the call of the supplicant) becomes a crystallization of faith experience—concrete, dialogical, and morally charged. Betti would argue that such a passage is a textual manifestation of universal spirituality that can be rationally accessed and interpreted across generations.

This moral dimension of divine response highlights the ethics of prayer—not only as a ritual act but as a sincere, trusting submission to the One who listens. Thus, morality in this verse is not abstract but practiced in supplication, a relational act affirming God’s attentiveness and the believer's dependence.

3. Linguistic Aspects of the Verse

From a linguistic standpoint, QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 exhibits a unique rhetorical and syntactical structure. Notably, unlike other question-response verses in the Qur'an, this verse omits the directive “*qul*” (say), thereby indicating that Allah answers directly without intermediary. The immediacy of the divine speech (“*fa-inni qarīb*”) underscores a profound theological point: God is inherently near, requiring no mediation in responding to His servants.

Emilio Betti emphasizes that language in a text carries a rational and consistent structure that reflects the intention of the author and can be understood through scientific interpretation (Betti, 1990). In this case, the syntax of the verse, which places Allah as the direct responder to human prayer, reveals an ethical orientation—closeness is not merely ontological but demands a moral response: faith and steadfastness (*yastajībū lī* and *yu‘minū bī*). This linguistic construction weaves together God's nearness and the believer’s duty in a harmonious sequence that reflects divine-human moral reciprocity.

4. Morphological Aspects

Morphologically, key terms in this verse carry deep ethical and educational implications. The word “*yastajībū*” is derived from the root *j-w-b* (ج و ب), which connotes an active effort to answer or respond. It emphasizes that responding to divine guidance is not passive, but involves conscious, ongoing moral commitment. Similarly, “*yu'minū*” from *'-m-n* (أ م ن) suggests not merely belief but the affirmation of trust and security—a central value in divine-human ethics.

Another critical term, “*yarshudūn*”, derived from *r-sh-d* (ر ش د), denotes spiritual growth and rational direction. It implies that the ultimate fruit of prayer and divine closeness is moral insight and ethical clarity. According to Betti, such morphological consistency confirms the text’s internal coherence and supports its objective interpretability. Each term builds on the other to create a system of meaning that reflects both divine intentionality and human ethical potential (Palmer, 1969).

Thus, morphological analysis, in Betti’s framework, is not only philological but ontological—it seeks to uncover the formative structures of human ethics as embedded in divine language. The verse encourages believers to build an ethical relationship with God, marked by sincere faith, active response, and a journey towards spiritual maturity.

5. Synthesis and Actualization

Based on the previous findings, Emilio Betti’s hermeneutical theory can be operationalized through four key principles in interpreting QS. Al-Baqarah: 186. First, the principle of objective meaning reconstruction reveals that this verse delivers a direct and emphatic affirmation of God’s nearness. This meaning is not merely spiritual but also addresses the moral and existential needs of the early Muslim community who were still shaping their religious identity. Betti emphasizes that the meaning of a text is objective and can be methodically reconstructed by interpreters with integrity and openness (Betti, 1990; Palmer, 1969). Second, the principle of structural coherence is evident in the verse’s logical sequence: prayer → divine response → obedience → guidance. This structure not only presents a rational theological flow but also forms an ethical framework that invites the reader’s participation in a reciprocal transcendent relationship (Thiselton, 2009; Arkoun, 2006).

Third, the historical significance of the verse lies in the socio-religious context in which it was revealed. At that time, the Muslim community was in the process of consolidating a strong monotheistic commitment amidst a pluralistic environment. In this setting, the affirmation of God’s nearness served as both spiritual reassurance and a

reinforcement of a growing Islamic identity (Rahman, 1982; Nasr, 2002). Fourth, the actualization in the modern context is especially relevant in light of today's conditions marked by spiritual alienation, moral disorientation, and secularism. QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 revitalizes awareness of the divine presence and reaffirms the ethical imperative of sincere supplication (Nasr, 2006; Esack, 1997).

Ultimately, through the lens of Emilio Betti's hermeneutics, this verse demonstrates that divine closeness is not a distant metaphysical abstraction but an active moral relationship. Prayer becomes the central practice of this moral theology—a sacred space where God listens and humans ethically respond. In an era defined by existential crises and spiritual disconnection, QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 offers Islam's foundational message: that God is near, and moral consciousness begins with prayer.

Conclusion

The interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 through the lens of Emilio Betti's hermeneutics highlights the depth of moral meaning in the relationship between humans and Allah. Betti's approach, which emphasizes objectivity, historical consciousness, structural logic, and contextual actualization, provides a systematic framework for understanding the divine message in this verse. The revelation of this verse in response to the early Muslim community's spiritual inquiry demonstrates the Qur'an's responsiveness to the existential and moral needs of its audience. Through its affirmation that "Indeed, I am near," the verse offers a theological reassurance that Allah is both transcendent and immanent—present and responsive to the sincere prayers of His servants.

Furthermore, the linguistic and morphological analysis reveals that divine nearness is not a passive notion but a moral invitation to active obedience, sustained faith, and continuous spiritual growth. This structure—beginning with prayer, followed by divine response, and culminating in moral guidance—reflects a coherent ethical system rooted in monotheism. In the context of contemporary spiritual alienation and moral uncertainty, this verse remains highly relevant. It revitalizes the awareness that divine nearness is the foundation of human dignity and ethical consciousness.

Thus, Emilio Betti's hermeneutical framework not only enables a rigorous and objective interpretation of the verse but also bridges the spiritual aspirations of the early Muslim community with the moral needs of today's believers. QS. Al-Baqarah: 186 is not merely a theological statement; it is a profound moral discourse that affirms the centrality of prayer as both a spiritual act and an ethical responsibility.

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