From Logic in Islam to Islamic Logic

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Abstract. Speaking of relations between logic and religion in Islamic world may refer to logic in two respects: (1) logic in religious texts, from doctrinal sacred texts such as Qur’ān and sayings of the Prophet (as well as Imāms, in Shi‘īsm) to the Qur’ānic commentaries and the texts related to the principles and fundamentals of jurisprudence, all of which make use of some reasoning to persuade the audiences or to infer the rules and prescripts for religious behavior of the members of religious community; and (2) logic as a discipline that is studied and applied both independently and as a tool for reasoning in (a) schools of Islamic theology (from Ash‘arīs to Mu’tazilīs and Shi‘īs), (b) systems of Islamic philosophy (from Peripatetics to Illuminationists), and (c) other types of knowledge in medieval Islamic world, all being strongly influenced by religious doctrines of Islam. Accordingly, this paper speaks of (i) the different manifestations of using logical reasoning, particularly analogy, in Qur’ānic arguments, e.g. for the existence of God and resurrection after death; (ii) some contradictions or paradoxes reported by different opponents in the verses of Qur’ān; (iii) the place of logic in the classification of disciplines and the courses taught at the schools and seminaries; (iv) the influence of the attitudes of different religious sects on logic; (v) the instrumental role of logic for both religious and secular reasonings; (vi) the relation between reason and dogmatic religious doctrines, and, finally, (vii) the reflection of this relation on progress or recession of logic in medieval Islamic world.

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Introduction

Logic has a central place both in Islam as a religion and in Islamic world of thought. It has found such a place according to its place in reasoning and inference of various relevant judgments in diverse fields, particularly in religious precepts, theology, and philosophy.
Qur’ân, as the canonical sacred book (with its so-called revealed origin), has shown some important manifestations of reasoning and logical inference of some judgments of religious practice and theoretical theology (concerning God’s existence, origin of the world, origin of the man, and the life after death).

Commonsensical reasoning as well as some traditions of genuine logical reasoning in the Arabia region and its neighbors helped Muslim religious leaders to use logic for their various religious aims. Islam was flourished within some cultural context shaped by some Greek, Christian, Jewish, and Iranian effective elements. Before Islam, there have been struggles between two deploys of widespread trust and widespread distrust towards Greek philosophy and logic within both Jewish and Christian societies. Researchers of the history of entering Greek philosophy and logic into those societies have reported of a “genre of literature—the defense raisonné of the religious acceptability of philosophical studies”, having been “developed on account of this antagonism” ([34], p. 55).

The presence of Greek logic, with its possibilities and leading role in various reasonings, helped to give it a central position in translating the Greek heritage in logic (along with the works in other fields such as philosophy and medicine) (for Arabic translation of Aristotle’s writings see [36] and [37]). Such a role for logic gave rise to studying, learning, and teaching it in religious and philosophical circles. In spite of some anti-philosophical trends, it is not surprising that the translation of Greek works in logic was welcome by most scholars with their own Islamic religious and theological attitudes. Such a position led to emersion of the great logicians and extension of Greek logic in Islamic world.

The author will arrange this paper in three main sections to show the place of

(1) reason and reasoning in Islam as a religion,
(2) logic in Islam as a religion, and
(3) what has been known as “Islamic logic” (a tradition in the history of logic developed in Islamic world largely by Muslim logicians), with an emphasis on its relation to logic in Islam as a religion that has its own sacred texts, on the one hand, and theoretical and practical issues that possibly makes using logic necessary, on the other hand.

1. Reason and Reasoning in Islam

Islam is a religion that has its own rich effective theology and jurisprudence. The author does not know a religion other than Islam that makes use of reason and reasoning in theoretical and practical issues within its mainstream various schools of theology and jurisprudence. We try to give a short sufficient description of the place of reason and reasoning in Islamic sacred texts and in theoretical issues of theology and practical issues of jurisprudence.