

# Problems Encountered in Teaching Logic in Faculties of Theology

## İlahiyat Fakültelerinde Mantık Öğretiminde Karşılaşılan Sorunlar

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### ABSTRACT

From the past until today logic has always been affiliated with religious education in institutes of higher learning. In the history of Islamic thought, education in logic has at times held an important place in the curriculum, while at other times it has only been represented symbolically. Throughout the history of thought, religious sciences have not only possessed a hierarchical structure based on classification, but have also been institutionalized in order to protect the accumulation of the knowledge that has been attained. As a result, in order to function as a vehicle in the structuring of this knowledge, logic has become what is known as an introductory science. Over time, as a vehicle of religious sciences and an introductory science, logic has become a productive method by which different academic disciplines can attain information. Thus, until today in religious sciences education, logic has been used as a method both in the higher religious education provided in faculties of theology and in the madrasas which continue this education. In this paper, the education of logic that is given in faculties of theology, including how much of the curriculum is devoted to this subject, the quality of instruction, the integration of this subject with other lessons, the interest of students in this subject and whether or not the necessary productivity in logic instruction is being attained will be examined. In addition, to what extent logic can make new contributions to new thought and comprehension techniques for solving the theological problems of today will be investigated. An additional research question asked here is the extent to which students enrolled in theology faculties in formal and informal education, the very people who will later act as instructors in religious sciences, are aware of the importance of being familiar and skilled in "correct reasoning techniques".

**Keywords:** Logic, Theology, Education, Positivism, Secularism

### ÖZ

Yüksek din eğitimi geçmişten günümüze kadar mantık eğitimiyle ilgisini hep devam ettiregelmiştir. Ancak İslam düşünce tarihinde mantık eğitimi ders müfredatında kimi zaman önemli bir yer tutarken kimi zaman da çok az oranda temsil imkanı bulabilmiştir. Dini ilimler, düşünce tarihi boyunca, sınıflandırmaya dayanan hiyerarşik bir yapılanma içinde ve oluşturulmuş bilgi birikiminin muhafazasını esas alarak kurumsallaşmıştır. Dolayısıyla mantık, bu yapılanmada araç görevini yerine getirmek üzere giriş ilmi olarak yer almıştır. Dini ilimler açısından araç ve giriş ilmi olarak mantık, zamanla bu ilimler için bilgi edinmenin elverişli bir metodu haline gelmiştir. Böylece mantık hem yüksek din eğitimi öğretimi veren İlahiyat fakültelerinde hem de tarihten günümüze eğitim-öğretim faaliyetini devam ettiren medreselerde dini ilimler için doğru düşünmenin kurallarını öğreten metod olma görevini sürdürmüştür. Bu makalede İlahiyat fakültelerinde verilen mantık eğitiminin, müfredattaki temsil oranından başlamak üzere, niteliği, diğer derslerle olan birlikteliği, öğrencilerin derse olan ilgisi ya da ilgisizliği ve dersten gerekli verimin alınıp alınmadığı sorgulanacaktır. Ayrıca bu çalışmada günümüz teolojik sorunlarının çözümlenmesine, mantık dersinin ne ölçüde yeni düşünme ve anlama teknikleriyle katkıda bulunmaya çalıştığı araştırılacaktır. Son olarak ise yaygın ve örgün öğretimde, dini bilginin öğreticisi olarak görev yapacak olan İlahiyat fakültesi öğrencilerinin "doğru düşünmenin tekniklerini" bilme, beceri kazanma ve yetkinlik hususlarında ne ölçüde başarılı oldukları sorgulanacaktır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Mantık, İlahiyat, Eğitim, Pozitivizm, Sekülerizm

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The need for education in logic while attaining the skill of correct reasoning and expressing yourself accurately in institutions of religious studies has meant that logic has taken up a permanent place in the curriculum. Particularly, in higher religious education institutions logic is not just learned, but also practiced. The relation between religious sciences and logic was strengthened when al-Ghazâlî (d. 1111) transformed logic into a method of correct reasoning (al-Ghazâlî, 1992). While logic had an important place in the curriculum until the last periods in the history of Islamic thought, today this discipline is represented symbolically. Furthermore, while in the past lessons in logic responded to the epistemic and methodical needs of religious studies, today logic lectures are thought to be diverse from lectures in both *Fundamental Islamic Studies* and *Philosophical and Religious Studies*, as it is difficult to merge it with other lectures that are included in the curricula in faculties of theology. Again, the perception that logic is divorced from real life has decreased the level of the students' interest in logic. Therefore, problems are faced while teaching logic and the course is not as efficient as it used to be in the past. Although the importance and the value of courses in logic, in terms of teaching religious studies, are clear, the reason why logic is not as efficiently today taught and understood and the possible solutions related to this will be addressed by examining various questions.

What are the reasons for students in faculties of theology, who will serve as teachers of religious information in formal and informal education, lack interest in logic courses, even though they are aware of "*the correct reasoning techniques*" and the clear importance of the skills that are to be acquired? How can logic take its former role in theology as a science that provides the rules and principles for correct reasoning? Does the fact that the relation between logic, other courses and real life is still unclear affect the students' interest in logic and the efficiency of the lecture? Should logic courses be open to new techniques of reasoning and understanding in order to analyze and comprehend the theological questions that face us today? These questions about the teaching of logic will contribute to its efficiency and can increase the efficiency level of other lectures.

The curriculum in faculties of theology, an institute that offers higher religious education, includes not only religious studies, but also other studies that support the teaching of these studies. Therefore, from the first periods of theological education logic has been taught as "*the science of correct reasoning and explanation*" (Ibn Sina/Avicenna, 2005). However, logic does not usually draw the necessary interest, as both logic and its content are seen as a secondary course offered along with other lectures. There are various reasons for this situation. The first is the content of the lecture; according to the students this is of little interest. Actually today's youth is composed of different models in terms of information, thinking and values. More clearly, today's youth are referred to as "Computer Age" children; they have been familiar since a young age with a logical order that has been established with technology. We can assume that as the children spend most of their times playing

computer games, nearly all their mental activities are composed of learning how to analyze the logic in these programs. In these games, children are not just a simple performer trying to apply the rules; they also reflect and include their imagination into the game within the boundaries of the program. In this way, children become the performer of a game the rules of which they have partially determined themselves. This situation develops the imagination of children to a great degree and enables them to encounter global logic at a very young age. Moreover, search engines, such as Google offer students a great deal of information options with a general perspective, thus enriching their imagination. Accordingly, we can say that a multiple-choice logic functions in our world. On the other hand, we witness that the economy or financial order functions with a capitalist logic. However, the global logic that is referred to as "modern" has not been encountered until the last century.

It is in this context that with deep concern we follow the effort by global capitalist logic, supported by computer programs, to have a say in every field, including religion. Acting as the guarantor of information and values, the global capitalist logic tries to maintain the secular logic that is required by religion. Secularism separates religion and social order, and the individual comes to value a holy being that is formed around this world (Asad, 2007). In other words, religion is a structure that defines and completes real life according to the needs of the individual. The faculties of theology raise theologians who are faced by the threats of capitalist and positivist logic, as well as philosophical thought that was opposed by some religious thought movements in the past. The primary problem of the theologians, in terms of both itself and society, is that the minds of children are shaped by the logic imposed by computer technology. The second problem is the capitalist and positivist logic that has been imposed in relation to this. The result of these two modes of thought is a world order that functions in a secular logic.

At this point, value results can be obtained by analyzing the importance of the science of logic in the history of Islamic thought, as well as examining how the mission of logic has been applied. Based on classical cosmology and metaphysics, the scientific aspect of Islamic thought depends on a systematic organization which moves from being to reasoning. As religious studies are institutionalized based on the conservation of knowledge and in a hierarchical organization that is based on classification, logic has been constructed as an *introductory science*, and thus functions as a vehicle in the structuring of this knowledge. As far as logical reasoning is concerned, the argument that thought can realize the core of the being has become commonly accepted. In this global order, where the being is ranged hierarchically, the human being has the opportunity to realize the core of the being as "the complete human being", as expressed by the logician Yahya Ibn Adi (d. 974). The most powerful skill of the three skills that have been given to the human being is the ability of speech; with this the human controls their other skills and produces information. In order to use the skill of speech, the science of logic must be

understood. As the person obtains more information the ability to become “the complete human being” by reaching the real being is related to logic being having an ontic character rather than being epistemic (Yahya Ibn Adi, 2013). Rising to the level of *al-Insan al-Kamil* (the Perfect Man in Tasawwuf) is only possible by obtaining knowledge and applying this to real life via religious thought. Classical religious thought perceives the applying of logic as necessary when trying to raise a “model human being”. Therefore, as the vehicle which enables the human being to realize the core of the being, logic is an indispensable vehicle for religious studies, making the comprehensible global order function.

On the other hand, the basic subject of theology, the science of Islamic *akaid*, or the problems related to religion have always been associated with logic. The argument that religion and doubt cannot exist side by side and the only way to banish doubt is to prove by logical evidence is one that is always on the agenda. Thus, Islamic thinkers have aimed to establish the faith correctly by proving the existence of Allah with evidence known as *hudus, imkan* (contingency) and grace, or with comparisons constituted by the premises known as reasoning (Emiroğlu, 2013). In addition, beginning with al-Ghazâlî, it has been stated the introductory page of almost every logic book that logic is a part of the science of Islamic *akaid*. The guarantee of correctness of these proofs by Islamic thinkers, which have been constructed in relation with existential, informational and metaphysical concept of their own eras, is its coherence with logical thought. The reasons why logic is found in the curriculum today and why it should try to attract the attention of students are clear.

It must be acknowledged that logic is responsible for convincingly responding to questions as to why religious studies in every period of the history of Islamic thought are in need of it. After al-Ghazâlî legitimized logic within the context of religion, on the introductory page of almost every logic book it has been stated that logic is a useful science that does not harm the religion; moreover, logic should be benefited from as a vehicle for structuring knowledge (Hallaq, 1998-1999). It has been established that the close relationship between logic and philosophy causes theologians to address religious studies that are counter posed to philosophy in order to explain the legitimacy of logic or to claim its inaccuracy according to religion. Therefore, those who accept the necessity of logic generally explain the fact that there is a need in religion for correct reasoning by separating logic from philosophy. Referring to the importance of logic at an early time, al-Ghazâlî clearly states in his *fiqh* (Islamic law), *kalam* and logic works that the knowledge of a person who does not understand logic has no worth. In the introductory part of his book *Miyaru'l-İlm*, al-Ghazâlî states that he wrote this work in order to demonstrate the ways of reasoning and reflection: “We have written this book in order to make it a criterion for reasoning, a scale for research and correct thinking, a sharpener for the mind and a grindstone for the power of the mind. There are many misleading things in mental subjects and the mind cannot be removed from polluting aspects such as doubt and the falsification of imagination” (al-Ghazâlî, 2013).

Explaining syllogistic logic in his book, al-Ghazâlî forms the terminology of logic from the Qur’an and tries to demonstrate that the languages of the Qur’an and logic are complementary to one another, just as they are in thought. Thus, logic is limited to a certain form in the education of religious studies.

The tradition of explaining the priority and legality of logic in the teaching of religious studies began with al-Ghazâlî; today this tradition is continued so that students will be convinced of the necessity of the knowledge of logic (Bolay, 2005). One of the most interesting examples of this is found in the logic book written by ‘Kilisli’ Abdullah Enverî (d. 1887) in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire. Quoting Mullah Câmî (d. 1492), Abdullah Enverî says that the difference between being a human and an animal is determined by logic. He continues: “*The privilege of being a human is to know the unknown and this is possible by logic. The one who does not understand logic cannot be called a human being*” (‘Kilisli’ Abdullah Enverî, 1874). In the same work, Abdullah Enverî states that it was essential for an imam of that time to allow for logic to be taught for 20 hours by an experienced teacher; a fatwa was given which said that abandoning this practice was a sin (‘Kilisli’ Abdullah Enverî, 1874). In other words, the director of an educational institution at this time would be responsible for providing sufficient logic education to every person who was concerned with religious subjects. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ‘Kilisli’ Mehmet Tahir (d. 1889) states the following: “*Thanks be to God, Who gave us a powerful mind and made us superior with the ability of speech. Greetings to Mohammad who is the everlasting proof. Greetings to his family and friends who discovered the great doubts with their thoughts*” (‘Kilisli’ Mehmed Tahir, 1871). The student who begins his lesson with the prayers that are located in the first part of his logic books will be persuaded that they can protect their mind against errors only by withdrawing into a religious environment. It is possible to say that the religion of the people and the Shi’a and Alawî ways of thinking, separate from Tasawwuf and ahl al-Sunnah, have not been affected by syllogistic logic at the same rate. With an education in classical logic in the madrasas, the preservation of philosophical theories, *kalam* and some times *fiqh* sciences was possible (Rescher, 2013; Makdisi, 2012).

Here it is possible to enquire whether the same reasoning is valid for including instruction in logic in today’s universities. Today education in religion includes an aim to establish religious thought that has been idealized by imitating a historical Islamic understanding or tradition. However, this imitation is intended to help raise an idealized religionist human model or, in the words of logician Yahya Ibn Adî, a “complete human being/al-insan at-tam”. Yet, we are dealing with an individual who experiences the living conditions of their era and who is attempting to integrate with the events around them, struggling to adapt. As mentioned above, without abandoning the value or the facts, the followers of ahl al-Sunnah inquired into how to connect Islam to the truth; they responded by taking into account the conditions of the day. Today, without understanding *what is happening* and *what is wanted*, and without taking into consideration value or fact, we must ask how this can be con-

nected with the truth. In other words, how two things can be connected in a single logical lattice? How a single logical fiction can be sufficient in different fields, one of which is *happening*, the other of which *will happen*?

Before choosing between the way of thinking belonging to a person living with a religious understanding that is idealized by imitating traditions and the way of thinking belonging to a person living in the real-life with a positivist understanding, there is a question that needs to be answered by logic. This question, which we can accept as the greatest problem in logic, is what kind of a reality are we in and moreover, how can we connect with these in the most rational way. What we call logic, as Muallim-I Sâni al-Fârâbî (d. 950) stated, is trying to protect reasoning from making errors as the inner voice of the human mind, but rather act as the voice of the main truth (al-Fârâbî, 1996). Obviously, in terms of metaphysics and philosophy, logic is the voice of existence. Thus, an ontological and epistemological approach has been developed in our tradition of reasoning.

The question we are supposed to respond to today is whether logic and human beings should be approached realistically or idealistically. This question suggests another question: Are we going to be realistic or idealistic when providing instruction in religion? The question of whether we should be realistic or idealistic is centered in the determination of the field of reality when teaching logic. In fact, in history, what is realistic or idealistic occurs at the same time. al-Ghazâlî and Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1038) combine realism and idealism. Indeed, logic is realistic when it is included in the field of *metaphysics* and idealistic when it tells *what should be*. However, if one considers that life started with problems and that we face new ones today, the need for new ways of thinking will automatically emerge. According to Islamic scholars, historically in logical structuring, the logic of Aristotle allows us to formulate the principles that appear in the Qur'an and Hadith; at the same time, this approach allows us to solve problems. Moreover, in order to delineate comments those emerge under the name of religion and culture the logic of Aristotle is also necessary. On the other hand, we face the problem of whether religion exists or not today. In this case, logic can be applied to all these problems.

The attempt of philosophy to reconstruct reasoning plays a part in the struggle of the existence of religion. For instance, a method that goes from reasoning to existence was formulated by R. Descartes (d. 1650). This method works in the light of abstract principles of the conscious. In addition to this, Descartes describes Aristotle's concept of comparison as "a vicious circle" (Descartes, 1997) and claims that there is no ontological quality involved in attaining information the method; rather it needs to be reconstructed epistemologically, and this means that philosophical reasoning moves onto another field. This break in philosophical reasoning reveals new ways of thinking, such as positivism and materialism, which appeared in new forms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this way, the existence of religion started to be a problem standing in the way of such thought as secularism, atheism and positivism. With these problems, the search for new logic based on scientific reasoning was

unsuccessful; it came to be understood that religion could not scientifically exploit systematized logic. Post-modern reasoning, which emerged due to improved conditions, helped new instruction in religious education; "pluralistic logic" was now more common than "universal logic". On the other hand, there was another problem which could be important for the existence of religion; this is the emergence of "arbitrariness and over-relativity" with post-modern reasoning. While religion claimed it was not possible to have "arbitrary truths" and problems could only be solved by *nass* and *ictihad*, the question of how to keep *ictihad* free from arbitrariness or relativity.

The efforts to create "an objective field" for religion are related to the belief that universal truth has been given to us by Allah. The idea that the holy text was given by Allah as a revelation forms a writer-centered mode of thinking. Obviously, the author is Allah. Religion practices the analytical and theological legitimization of laws that have been established by Allah and His order is to be realized. In other words, religion in history represents the universal truth. However, today, due to the fact that there is no difference of the individual in classical logic, the notion of individualism has become valid. As mentioned above, while the computer era makes the individual stronger in terms of lifestyle, democracy in politics makes each individual similar by accepting them as "an average person". However, the logic produced today enables an open space which allows every individual to have differences. A way of thinking that is open to individual differences and comments is common. Its equivalence in the field of religion is to seek a reality which each individual can experience, even though the truths of religion are universal. Logic is necessary so that the individual, (i.e., "the reader") accepts the reality of the individual. Today, individuality and universality possess the same reality at the same time. So, courses in logic which undertake the function of a vehicle for instruction in religion are necessary in order to interpret this reality. An extreme example can be given. While in history, homosexuality was forbidden with citations from religious texts, today some people work on its legality by turning to the Qur'an. When thought on this matter is examined, the commands and prohibitions were accepted as established; now it is expected that religion still exists, but the reality of the individual must also be taken into consideration, and this reality should be legitimized in the religion with the application of logic.

According to all these questions and quests for solutions, it is possible to say that other subjects are necessary when determining the acquisitions of courses in logic in faculties of theology; these should be mentioned after the questions "*which truth*" and "*which way of thinking*" have been answered. After answering these basic questions, to what extent a system which aims to raise a complete human being within the boundaries of classical thinking and understanding can penetrate into the student's world of thinking, understanding and cognition becomes an important problem. It seems impossible that the complete human being who has internalized only the information that has been transferred and who has raised himself accordingly can mediate with other complete human

beings. In the global world, raising a theologian who can face many problems that stem from various models of thinking and understanding from different epistemic bases and combine these in a single model of thinking and understanding means that this theologian is left helpless against these problems.

On the other hand, the only way for classical religious texts to be understood by students is to teach classical logic. However, if we remain limited to these texts and their way of thinking, we will be unaware of faith problems in global world, and this will transform theologians into people who are disconnected from the world in which they live and who are unable to think or use the language coherently. This problem, which can be seen as a paradoxical situation, can be solved by forming an association, without ignoring the classics or turning a blind eye to the modern. In this manner, we need courses in logic that will explain both classical thought, which enables us to comprehend our own texts, and methods of thinking, understanding, proof and reasoning that are compatible with the problems of the era. The students should first be taught the way of thought that will enable them to acquire their own texts via classical logic lecture and then the thinking model that will help them solve the problems of their age. In short, religious thought aims to speak accurately with a powerful mind and defend those principles which are accepted as being true. In order to do this, it is essential that the conditions of the age be considered if one is to create coherence between the perception of the being that provides a metaphysical basis for religious information and information understanding. Therefore, we can say that courses in logic at faculties of theology should be structured as a vehicle to solve problems of each era.

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