

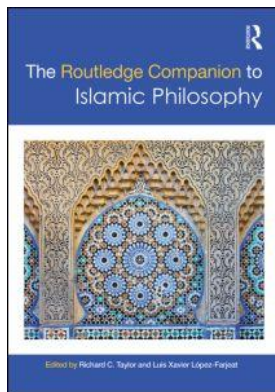
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REASONING IN THE QUR'ĀN

Rosalind Ward Gwynne

Introduction

Muslims consider the Qur'ān to be the revealed speech of God—sublime, inimitable and containing information that only God knows. It has been analyzed in every possible way—theologically, linguistically, legally, metaphorically—and some of these analyses have presented their results as the conclusions of reasoning in the Qur'ān itself, whether explicit or implicit. For example, nearly 500 years after the Prophet's death, the theologian and anti-Batini mystic al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) presented five types of Qur'ānic arguments as the “Just Balance” (*al-Qiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm*) by which the truth or falsehood of earthly [sc. human] reasoning on the same schemata could be ascertained. These forms of reasoning are the equivalents of the first, second and third figures of the Aristotelian categorical syllogism, and the Stoic conditional and disjunctive syllogisms. In all, I have identified ten broad categories, which, when counted along with their subcategories (not all of which appear in this article), produce some 30 identifiable forms of reasoning (Gwynne 2004). Here I treat eight major categories: commands, rules, legal arguments, comparison, contrast, categorical syllogisms, conditional syllogisms, and disjunctive syllogisms.

Commands

It is a matter of consensus in Islam that the first word of the Qur'ān to be revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad was a command: “*Iqra*” (“read” or “recite”) (Qur'ān 96:1). Commands, commandments and orders, especially from the strong to the weak, are often not considered to be reasoned arguments but threats, arguments *ad baculum*: “Do this or I will hit you with a stick!” However, when the reasons for the command are given, when the authority of the source of the command is made clear, when the one given the command benefits from it, its identity as an argument—a reasoned consequence—is much clearer. Usually these elements precede the command; indeed, some authorities maintain that the command is invalid if not so worded.

Explanations do not precede “*iqra*” but they follow it immediately. The command is issued in the name of the One God, Who created human beings, Who is the most Generous, Who taught human beings by the Pen what they did not know (Qur’ān 96:1-5).

Rules

The principles that are the bases for Qur’ānic commands can be called “rules,” and there is a branch of logic/rhetoric known as “rule-based reasoning.” This body of rules for appropriate and pious human action constitutes the Covenant (*‘ahd*; cf. Qur’ān 7:172; 2:27, 80; 3:81, 187). In the Qur’ān, God’s unswerving adherence to the Covenant and his various ways of doing that over millennia are called “the sunna of God” (*sunnat Allah*). Concerning the struggles with the Quraysh—the Prophet’s tribe—and regarding the authority of the *sunna*, the Qur’ān says, “Are they looking at anything other than the *sunna* of the ancients? You will not find any change to God’s *sunna* and you will not find that God’s *sunna* is ever turned aside” (Qur’ān 35:43).

But does the omnipotent Deity see all choices as equal? For example, two verses (Qur’ān 6:12, 54) state that God has written mercy [sc. as a condition binding] upon Himself. While these do not occur in the verses citing *sunnat Allah*, they show God limiting his actions in certain ways; and although they constituted an element in later theological arguments over predestination and the omnipotence of God, that does not detract from their role as rules in Qur’ānic rule-based reasoning.

Gidon Gottlieb’s indispensable *The Logic of Choice* explains that rule-based reasoning is neither deductive nor inductive: conclusions in legal or moral decisions are based on legal or moral rules, not on empirical evidence or probability. The original declaration of the rule must be restatable as follows: “In circumstances X, Y is required/permitted” (Gottlieb 1968: 40). This seemingly simple form includes: the circumstances in which the rule is applied; an indication of the necessary, possible, or impossible conclusion or decision; whether the inference used to extract the rule is permitted, required, or prohibited; and an indication that the statement is in fact meant to be a rule.

Imperative verbs in the Qur’ān are not in fact always commands, and those that are may cover very minor points of conduct. But its hierarchy of rules does not negate the fact that the Covenant is a single rule and is treated as such in the Qur’ān:

- 1 Circumstances: The Covenant governs relations between humans and God, with corresponding implications for humans’ relations with each other.
- 2 Conclusion: Humans shall observe the Covenant.
- 3 Type of inference: Adherence to the Covenant is mandatory, with some sub-rules for those who have never heard the Word (Qur’ān 9:11) or are temporarily unable to observe one or more of its conditions (Qur’ān 2:173). Ultimately, however, the Covenant will apply to all, as expressed in the key verse Qur’ān 2:172: “Am I not your Lord? (*a-lastu bi-rabbikum?*)”
- 4 Proof that it is a rule: Those who follow it will be rewarded; those who do not will not be.

Legal Arguments

Rules are not laws, but the elements of rules as laid out above shape arguments that are the basis of legal thinking. Thus we shall examine legal arguments based upon the principles that form them (e.g. reciprocity or recompense), not the legal questions they address, such as property ownership, inheritance, or criminal acts. We shall also look at Aristotle's "non-artistic proofs" (e.g. contracts and oaths), and the very interesting class known as "performative utterances"—words that are themselves deeds.

The Covenant is based upon reciprocity, the relation between one agent (divine or human) and another: "O Children of Israel! Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you, and keep My Covenant as I keep yours. And fear Me" (Qur'ān 2:40). The same words are used for each party despite the fact that the actions and words described are far from identical: "We have granted you abundance. Therefore worship God and sacrifice" (Qur'ān 108:1–2). Charity, one of the pillars of the faith, is also based upon recompense, but it is a three-sided relationship: the first person provides help for God's sake, the second person who is in need receives the help, and God rewards the helper (e.g. Qur'ān 2:272, 8:60). In this way, God protected the orphaned Prophet, and humans must do the same for orphans and the poor (Qur'ān 93:6–11).

Recompense refers to the relation between an action and its result: reward or punishment. "Whatever you spend in the cause of God will be repaid, and you will not be wronged" (Qur'ān 8:60). "Whoever performs a good deed will have ten like it; whoever performs an evil deed will be punished only with its equivalent; and they shall not be wronged" (Qur'ān 6:160, cf. Qur'ān 27:89–90, 28:84).

The rhetorical devices of comparison and contrast (to be discussed below) also appear as forms of legal arguments that prescribe priority, equivalence, and limitation. God is to be feared more than humans (Qur'ān 9:13); God and His Apostle are to be preferred even above one's family, if they are not believers (Qur'ān 9:23–4). "The Prophet is closer to the believers than they are to each other (or 'to their own souls'), and his wives are their mothers" (Qur'ān 33:6). Family over friends (Qur'ān 8:75, 33:6), Muslims over non-Muslims as friends and allies (Qur'ān 3:28), obedience over fear when fighting is necessary (Qur'ān 47:20–1)—the examples are endless but often nuanced (cf. Qur'ān 33:6) and not always easy to observe. Even the Prophet is chided for fearing the people more than God (Qur'ān 33:37) and preferring the rich to the poor (Qur'ān 80:1–10).

A necessary counterpart to priority is equivalence, particularly when one is physically, financially or otherwise unable to fulfill an obligation. "Whoever obeys the Apostle has obeyed God" (Qur'ān 4:80) contains perhaps the most common equivalence, one that is made 26 times. Equivalences that compensate for inabilities include such acts as: compensatory fasting if the Muslim is traveling or ill during Ramadan; feeding the poor, though fasting is preferable (Qur'ān 2:184–185); and equal punishment for murder, though forgoing revenge in favor of charity atones for one's sins (Qur'ān 5:45). A woman's inheritance (Qur'ān 4:11) and contract testimony (Qur'ān 2:282) are *legal* equivalents to those of men despite being only half of the actual quantity. And civil legal matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance will always provide livings for lawyers.

God puts limits (*hudūd*) on such things as proper conduct during Ramadan (Qur'ān 2:187); marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Qur'ān 2:229–30); inheritance (Qur'ān 4:12–14); and He makes clear the differences between those who do not know God's limits (Qur'ān 9:97) and those who do (Qur'ān 9:112). Later the word became synonymous with severe punishments.

Further legal ramifications can be classed as distinctions and exceptions. A distinction differentiates between two apparently similar actions or entities on the basis of source, motive, or circumstance. “The good that reaches you is from God, while the evil that reaches you is from yourself” (Qur'ān 4:79). “Those who extort usury ... say ‘Selling is like usury’, whereas God has permitted selling and forbidden usury” (Qur'ān 2:275). An exception cites things of the same genus but bans one or more on the basis of some other rule. “Know that there is no deity except God” (Qur'ān 47:19; cf. Qur'ān 3:62 and the *shahāda* or Islamic creed). Clearly the legal ramifications of the exceptive construction are potentially enormous, such as exemption from divine punishment if forced to deny Islam publicly while keeping the faith in one's heart (e.g. Qur'ān 16:106), or learning to observe the ban on marriage with daughters, sisters, and nieces (among others) while accepting the legality of such unions if they existed prior to the revelation (Qur'ān 4:22–3).

A useful supplement to our list can be found in Book One of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which lists what he calls “non-artistic proofs”: laws, witnesses, contracts, evidence taken under torture (of slaves), and oaths (Aristotle 1991: 109, n. 247). In the Qur'ān, the only real law is, of course, the Law of God (e.g. Qur'ān 7:185, 45:6, 77:50). Human laws are usually referred to as “opinion” (*ẓann* e.g. Qur'ān 6:116) or “desires” (*ahwa'* e.g. Qur'ān 5:49–50). Aristotle places actual human witnesses in third place after literary wisdom (e.g. poetry and proverbs) and the opinions of persons who are “well-known.” The Qur'ānic concept of “witness” is more complex (Mir 1987), in that it includes components of both the Covenant, to which God is a witness (e.g. Qur'ān 6:19), and law among human beings, in which a witness may know the facts first-hand (e.g. Qur'ān 12:26), or the character of the accused (Qur'ān 5:107), or fill any of a number of other slots.

As for contracts, one of the longest verses in the Qur'ān (2:282) is a virtual tutorial for believers in the matters of debts, record-keeping, and contracts. “O you who believe, when you contract a debt for a designated period of time, write it down. Let a scribe write it fairly.” The verse includes the concepts of sale, debt, record, witness, legal competency, guardianship and immunity, and it clearly forms a framework for the vast complexity of Islamic law, commerce, and social cohesion.

Oaths are important in the Qur'ān and their terms, in places, are quite nuanced. First, they are part of the Covenant. God commands people to keep their oaths but allows for certain compensations (e.g. feeding the poor, freeing a slave, fasting) if the oaths were made in good faith but cannot be kept (Qur'ān 5:89). Those who swear falsely to the Prophet or break their oaths are to be fought (Qur'ān 9:95–6; 58:14–18), but rash or inadvertent oaths will not bring punishment (Qur'ān 2:225, 5:89).

And contrary to Aristotle's inclusion of torture as a method of extracting truth, the Qur'ān does not validate or even mention torture.

Speech acts, “performative utterances,” are not themselves forms of reasoning, but they may well serve to end arguments or totally transform the circumstances.

Such utterances are not descriptions of acts but are themselves acts with legal, moral, and/or religious consequences. “You’re under arrest!” “I accept your offer.” “I do.” “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” The Qur’anic distinction between *muslimun* (i.e. “submitters”) and *mu’minun* (“believers”) dramatizes the difference between the two groups. The former are those whose visible acts appear to other humans to be Islamically acceptable but whose inner motives may or may not be. The latter are those whose hearts are also true, something known only to God. The clearest distinction between the two comes in Qur’ān 49:14–15; there are, however, passages that seem to equate them (e.g. Qur’ān 5:111, 27:81, 33:35). Most significantly, the word *mu’minun* is used over six times more often than *muslimun*.

Comparison

Comparison and contrast will clearly be important figures in any speech that deals with God and humanity, with good and evil, with this world and the next. Both appear in numerous distinguishable forms. Comparison includes similarity (Corbett 1971: 116), analogy, parable, and degree. Contrast covers difference, inequality, opposition, opposites and contraries, contradictions, reversal, and antithesis (Corbett 1971: 129). Many of these can be subdivided as well. Thus “similarity” in “comparison” includes similarity of genus (e.g. rewards earthly and divine, cf. Qur’ān 8:28 and Qur’ān 29:10); similarity of action (e.g. the same word *i’tadā* used for aggression by the enemy and just retaliation against it, cf. Qur’ān 2:194); and similarity of consequence (e.g. unbelievers who continue as such whether warned of the consequences or not, cf. Qur’ān 36:10, 7:193).

Analogy and parable are often based on the messages of the earlier scriptures. Thus many jurists rejected the use of analogy because the first to use it was Satan, who refused to prostrate himself to Adam. “I am better than he: You created me from fire, and you created him from clay” (Qur’ān 7:12, 38:75–6) (Ibn Hazm 1960: 70). But “analogy” here is a technical term in logic, not the equivalent of *qiyās*, which is only a partial synonym. People of the Book who argue knowledgeably about some things argue about others of which only God has knowledge (Qur’ān 3:66, 45:24) and study the scriptures anachronistically (Qur’ān 3:65). Parables and shorter examples abound in the Qur’ān, from the tiniest creature, the gnat, (Qur’ān 2:26) to charity like a seed (Qur’ān 2:261), to truth and falsehood like metal and “the scum that rises from what they smelt to make jewelry and tools” (Qur’ān 13:17). The Qur’ān often points out to its audience that these *are* parables or analogies: the word *mathal* (likeness) and its plural *amthal* occur 88 times; but humans may not make up their own. “Do not coin *amthal* for God: God knows and you do not” (Qur’ān 16:74).

Some arguments based on degree—“good, better, best”—are types of comparison; others—“better” and “worse”—are contrasts and will appear in the next section, but there are constructions that fit both. While many of God’s attributes are positive and non-comparative, others use the relative (*af’al*) form to the same effect; that is, they suggest God’s action. “Whose word is truer than God’s?” (Qur’ān 4:122). “Who is better than God in judging a people whose faith is certain?” (Qur’ān 9:111).

Some of the Divine Names are in relative form: *arham al-rahimin* (Most Merciful of those who have mercy: Qur'ān 7:151, 12:64 et. al.). One appeared in the very first revelation: Most Generous (*al-akram*) (Qur'ān 96:3). Muslims must learn to rank other humans according to their beliefs, not worldly criteria: “Do not marry polytheist women until they believe: a believing slave woman is better than a [free] polytheist woman, even though she pleases you” (Qur'ān 2:221). One's own treatment of others must also be considered: extra charity (*sadaqat*) is better given secretly than openly (Qur'ān 2:271). One should not collect a debt until the debtor can repay it easily; better still, forgive it as charity (Qur'ān 2:180).

Comparisons between evils begin at the negative end of the scale. “God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, but He forgives whom He will for what is less than that” (Qur'ān 4:48). “Who is more evil than one who forges the lie against God even as he is being called to Islam? (.)” (Qur'ān 61:7; cf. 6:21, 6:157 et al.).

Contrast

Because it shows God to be the Unique, Incomparable Reality, the Qur'ān is in many ways a single, huge contrast. “There is nothing like Him” (Qur'ān 42:11). “No one is equal to Him” (Qur'ān 112:4). In the first of the aforementioned subcategories, the multiplicity and variety of Creation will be reduced to three broad categories of difference: genus, motive, and action. As to genus, a prophet, for example, is a mortal man with a divine connection, whereas his audiences think he should be an angel (Qur'ān 25:7) or an important person (Qur'ān 43:31). If not, he must be a madman, poet, soothsayer, or forger (Qur'ān 52:29–33), or a lying sorcerer (Qur'ān 38:4).

A well-known *ḥadīth*—the sayings of the Prophet—states that “Actions are judged [only] by motives.” Thus unbelievers who build mosques are not equal to Muslims who do the same (Qur'ān 9:17–19), as their motives damage and divide the believers (Qur'ān 9:107). But most hypocrites may not be known until the Day of Judgment, and therefore it is far easier to determine who they are by their public declarations and visible actions that are contrary to Islam. “We deny [the Message] with which you have been sent, and we are in serious doubt about that to which you call us (...)” (Qur'ān 14:9–10). Inequality is far more often a contrast and not a comparison. “Is the blind equal to the sighted, or is the darkness equal to the light?” (Qur'ān 13:16, cf. 6:50, 35:19). “Are they equal, those who know and those who do not?” (Qur'ān 39:9). And in the final irony, “Inhabitants of the Fire and inhabitants of the Garden are not equal. It is the inhabitants of the Garden who are triumphant” (Qur'ān 59:20).

Opposites, contraries, and contradictories are difficult to distinguish, not least because their forms in theology and in rhetoric/logic often differ. We shall confine ourselves to a few examples. God controls opposites: death and life, laughter and tears (Qur'ān 53:43–4), day and night (Qur'ān 17:12), heaven and earth (Qur'ān 2:164), land and sea (Qur'ān 6:59). Some of His names *are* opposites: “He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden” (Qur'ān 57:3). The damned and the saved are constantly compared. The former are on the left, the latter on the right (Qur'ān 90:18–19) and receive their Books

of Deeds in the corresponding hands (Qur'ān 69:19, 25). The faces of the saved will be bright, those of the damned covered with dust (Qur'ān 80:38–41).

Contraries can exist in a single person or group: good and evil deeds (Qur'ān 46:16), good and evil people among People of the Book (Qur'ān 46:16), and among the *jinn* (Qur'ān 72:14–15); and there is a possibility of there being intermediate positions (Qur'ān 11:12, 3:167). Contradictories, on the other hand, do not contain intermediate positions and are most clearly seen in an affirmation and denial of the same word: “Any to whom God does not give light has no light” (Qur'ān 24:40). “Reversal” is complete transformation, whether of repentant sinners (Qur'ān 25:69–70), former enemies now friends (Qur'ān 41:34), or the earth and heavens on the Day of Judgment (Qur'ān 14:48, and *suras* 81, 82, and 84). “Antithesis,” as I use the term, is an extended contrast, such as occurs in Qur'ān 38:49–64: the righteous have gardens of Paradise, rest, fruit and drink on call, and attentive companions; the wrongdoers have an evil place in which they will fry, boiling and bitterly cold, stinking drinks, no greeting from the Lord, and no opportunity to see those at whom they used to laugh.

Categorical Syllogisms

As mentioned in the introduction, the inspiration for my study of reasoning in the Qur'ān was a logical treatise of al-Ghazālī, *al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm* (*The Just Balance*), which analyzes passages in the Qur'ān to produce categorical, conditional, and disjunctive syllogisms. Ghazālī wrote the book after his spiritual retreat, so it contains more Qur'ānic and fewer scholarly technical terms than his earlier works on logic. For example, it uses the Qur'ānic word *mīzan* instead of *qiyās* for “syllogism” and is presented in the form of a dialogue with a Batini. The title of the book is taken from Qur'ān 17:35: “Weigh by the Just Balance” and much of the clarification from Qur'ān 55:1–9: “Do not cause the scale to give short weight.”

The first figure of the Aristotelian categorical syllogism (“Barbara,” in which all propositions are universal affirmatives = A) comes from Qur'ān 2:258, where Abraham shows Nimrod that he is not a god by asking him to make the sun rise in the west. The usual form of such a proof is as follows:

[Whoever has power over the sunrise is God.]
My god is the one who has power over the sunrise.
Therefore, my god is God.

Ghazālī clarifies the reasoning by using some examples from daily life and from Islamic law:

All wine is intoxicating.
All intoxicants are forbidden.
Therefore, all wine is forbidden.

Other first-figure syllogisms can be constructed from, for example, Qur'ān 39:71–2, 50:3–5, 17:27, and 22:52. Other moods of the first figure can also be found: Darii in

Qur'án 4:162 and 5:83–5; Celarent in Qur'án 9:44–5 and 43:15–18; and Ferio in Qur'án 26:224–7.

In the second figure, one premise must be negative and the major premise must be universal. Ghazālī uses another example from the life of Abraham, when he mistook the moon, sun, and stars for God until he saw them set.

The moon sets.
 The Deity does not “set.”
 Therefore, the moon is not a deity.

Other modes of this figure are based upon Qur'án 6:76–9, 5:18, and 62:6–7.

Ghazālī takes the third figure of the categorical syllogism from Qur'án 6:91, when Moses' enemies deny that he or any other human received revelation.

[Moses was a human being].
 God sent a book to Moses.
 Therefore, God sends books to some humans.

Of the 19 modes of the categorical syllogism, Ghazālī uses only four. Conditional and disjunctive syllogisms as analyzed in Stoic logic are treated even less analytically, largely because the language of the Qur'án, and Arabic as a whole, contain so many gradations of condition, consequence, and distinction. What appears to be a conditional particle may not be serving as such in its particular context, whereas a conditional argument may be indicated only by syntax and grammar. “Keep your covenant and We will keep Ours” (Qur'án 2:40) is a conditional; “Do not fear them but fear Me, if (*in*) you are believers!” (Qur'án 3:175) is a categorical despite the presence of the word “if.” In addition, sound and fallacious forms of the arguments are easily confused, especially when parts of them are left unstated, to be grasped by the audience.

Conditional Syllogisms

There are two types of conditional syllogism. **Type 1** conditionals (“constructive mood”), in which the conclusion is reached by affirming the antecedent, are rather scarce in the Qur'án. “Say: Do you see that if [the Revelation] is from God and you reject it, who is in greater error than one who has split off far away?” (Qur'án 41:52, cf. 46:10). Supplying what is missing, we complete the argument as follows:

If the Revelation is from God and you reject it, [then you are in error (*dalal*)].
 [The Revelation is from God and you reject it].
 [Therefore, you are in error].

As seen from the bracketing, only the antecedent is explicitly stated. It is up to the listener or the reader to complete the argument correctly by switching the consequent from the third person—“one who has split off”—back to the second—“you.”

The content of a longer verse, Qur'án 2:120, regarding the attitude of Jews and Christians to Islam, can be schematized as follows:

If you do not follow their religion, the Jews and Christians will never accept you.
You do not follow their religion.
Therefore, the Jews and Christians will never accept you.

The fallacious form of the type 1 conditional denies the antecedent. Ghazálí's simple illustration is:

If Zayd's prayer is valid, then he is ritually pure.
His prayer is not valid.
Therefore, he is not ritually pure. [Fallacious]
Prayers, of course, are invalidated by a number of conditions.

Type 2 conditionals (destructive mood) work by denial of the consequent. Ghazálí's everyday example of the unsound form is as follows, fallacious because it does *not* deny the consequent:

If Zayd's prayer is valid, then he is ritually pure.
Zayd is ritually pure.
Therefore, his prayer is valid. [Fallacious]

Ghazálí constructs two Qur'ánic examples from three verses: Qur'án 21:22, 17:42, and 21:99.

If there were two gods in the world, it would be ruined.
It has not been ruined.
Therefore there are not two gods.
If there were other gods than the Lord of the Throne, they would have sought a way to get to the Lord of the Throne.
It is known that they did not seek such a thing.
Therefore, there are no gods except the Lord of the Throne.

Many Qur'ánic conditionals of this type have the consequent in the form of a command, as in Qur'án 2:94–5, cf. 62:6–7. Schematized, it is as follows:

“If you (Jews) are assured of heaven, then wish for death!”
They will never wish for death.
Therefore, they are not assured of heaven.

Disjunctive Syllogisms

Just as contrast is the key rhetorical construction in the Qur'án, disjunction is the key distinction between true belief and error. There are three forms of

the disjunctive syllogism, which we schematize below. The numbering signals that they follow the two conditional syllogisms, according to the system of the Stoics.

Type 3—Not both A and B (or Either A or B ... or C or D)

This establishes that two things cannot co-exist but does not deny the possibility of intermediate positions. The Stoic example says:

Not both: it is day and it is night.

It is day.

Therefore, it is not night.

But this does not eliminate intermediate positions such as twilight.

A Qur'ānic example can be made from Qur'ān 2:91: "Why did you kill God's prophets in the past if you are believers?" When schematized:

Not both: you kill God's prophets and you believe in God.

You kill God's prophets.

Therefore you do not believe in God.

Countless verses in the Qur'ān are so concise that they can be expanded into both of the either-or disjunctions, the first affirmative, the second negative. Ghazālī calls this pair of disjunctions "the scale of mutual opposition" (*mīzān al-ta'ānud*). "Say: Do you know best or does God?" (Qur'ān 2:140).

Type 4—Either the first or the second. The first. Therefore, not the second.

Either you or God knows best.

[God knows best].

[Therefore you do not know best].

Type 5—Either the first or the second. Not the first. Therefore, the second.

Either you or God knows best.

[You do not know best].

[Therefore God knows best].

Clearly, type 5, which ends with the affirmation of God's knowledge, is rhetorically and theologically more effective than the anticlimactic type 4. The only Qur'ānic example Ghazālī uses is Qur'ān 34:24: "And surely we or you are rightly guided (*'alā hudā*) or in clear error (*fī ḍalāl mubīn*)."

Either we or you are in clear error.

[It is known that we are not in error].

[Therefore you are in error].

But often there are more than two alternatives, so one must detect when a disjunctive argument omits the only valid choice: They say: "Be Jews or Christians and you will be guided!" Say: "Rather the religion (*milla*) of Abraham—a monotheist (*hanīf*), not one of the polytheists!" (Qur'ān 2:135).

Conclusion

As can be seen from this brief treatment, reasoning is an integral part of the Qur'ān and has shaped the thoughts of Qur'ānic scholars. Muslims have remarked to me that the first appeal of the Qur'ān is to human reason and that an unbiased reading will bear that out. God has given most human beings the capacity to understand and fulfill the commands, recommendations, and abstentions contained therein. To those who cannot do so, through mental or physical incapacity, duress or imprisonment, God has given compensation, alternatives, and forgiveness. And charity may be material or spiritual, thus proceeding equally—though not identically—from the rich to the poor and from the poor to the rich.

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