Avicennian Theory of Reasoning
(abstract)

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The paper will offer an analysis of the conception of reasoning held by Ibn Sīnā and his actual practice of reasoning in some scientific matters. Ibn Sīnā was very learned in logic, Aristotelian and Stoic, and combined the two forms in a unified well-integrated system of syllogistic and conditional deductions. This unification, in the line of thought of the Peripatetic reconstitutions, from Aphrodisias to al-Fārābī, reflects the Avicennian inventive style of thinking.

Ibn Sīnā was acquainted with all the rational sciences of his time, but he did not practice research in specific themes so as to understand how reasoning works in particular scientific fields. That is why he followed Aristotle in his attitude toward induction, analogy and reasoning by reduction to absurd. For Avicenna, as for Aristotle, these non-demonstrative mechanisms of inference are weak and do not bring relevant and trustworthy knowledge.

An important contribution by Ibn Sīnā is about the relation of logic to metaphysics. He thinks that logic can be learned and used in evaluating arguments without a need of being committed to the philosophical-linguistic categories forged by Aristotle. This is a clear, maybe indirect, response, to the debates between grammarians and logicians of the precedent generations. This separation between logic and metaphysics became the cornerstone of Kalam and legal thought after Ibn Sīnā.