The Role of Logic in Modern AI

Logic, at its core, is the study of valid reasoning. In artificial intelligence, it provides formal languages for representing knowledge and precise rules for inference. Although symbolic systems and knowledge-based agents are less common today, propositional logic remains fundamental: it once enabled expert systems to encode rules such as *"If it rains, the ground is wet"* and still underpins modern reasoning frameworks.

Why study logic in the age of machine learning? First, it is the foundation of symbolic reasoning and advanced structures such as first-order logic, description logics, and knowledge graphs that support search engines and medical AI. Second, logic trains rigorous thinking, teaching us to distinguish necessary truths from probable ones and to recognize computational complexity—skills that guide model design. Third, it is central to AI safety and verification: SAT/SMT solvers, temporal logic, and model checking are used to prove correctness in aviation software, banking systems, and autonomous driving. Finally, modern hybrid approaches rely on logic to complement statistical learning. Neural-symbolic AI integrates neural networks for perception with symbolic reasoning for structure, improving reliability and interpretability.

A concrete example illustrates this point. In autonomous driving, neural networks identify pedestrians, vehicles, and traffic lights. Yet perception alone is insufficient: the system must reason about what is safe and legal. Traffic rules—such as *"If the light is red, the vehicle must stop"*—can be encoded in planning languages like PDDL. The planner checks each action against logical constraints, ensuring safety even when perception is uncertain. Thus, logic acts as a safeguard, preventing dangerous behavior and guaranteeing interpretability in safety-critical environments.

Logic also supports the development of large language models (LLMs). While LLMs excel at fluency, they often lack consistency and reasoning over long chains. Logic helps address these gaps: knowledge graphs ground responses in verified facts, logical post-processing filters hallucinations, and neuro-symbolic pipelines enhance systematic generalization. By combining symbolic rules with statistical learning, logic ensures that LLMs are not only fluent but also trustworthy.

Are knowledge-based agents outdated? Not exactly—they have shifted roles. Classic expert systems of the 1980s were brittle, but logic now powers knowledge graphs, automated planning, verification tools, and explainable AI. It also encodes ethical principles and legal norms, ensuring accountability in automated decisions. Even natural language understanding often requires logical structure to transform a user's question into a formal query.

In conclusion, propositional logic in modern AI is like arithmetic in mathematics: rarely used in isolation, but essential for deeper understanding. Knowledge-based agents may have faded, but logical reasoning is more relevant than ever in safety-critical, knowledge-rich, and explanation-demanding domains. As *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* emphasizes, reasoning and learning are complementary. The future of AI will likely be hybrid, combining the rigor of logic with the adaptability of machine learning to achieve robust and trustworthy intelligence.

References:

[1] Stuart J. Russell and Peter Norvig, Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach, 4th Ed global Ed. Harlow, England : Pearson, 2022, pp. 226-268.

AI Tool Declaration:

We used GPT-5 to generate ideas, format paragraphs, improve expression, produce drafts, refine our assignment. We are responsible for the content and quality of the submitted work.

Group Name: AG 02.

Student Name (Student ID):

1. JIN YINAN (A0327317E)
2. LI JIARU (A0332008U)
3. SHI YANCHUN (A0328710J)
4. XIAO XIAO (A0332142W)

Group contributions:

XIAO XIAO has drafted the outlines of the essay. JIN YINAN has developed the essay from the outlines. LI JIARU and SHI YANCHUN have polished the details.