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Disputation is a Fighting Sport: *Munāẓarah* according to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah

In 835, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) was brought before the council of al-Mu'taṣim to debate the createdness of the Quran. Ibn Ḥanbal refused to dispute with his Mu'tazili adversaries. For, in his understanding, disputation was a concomitant of rational opinion, *kalām*, and innovation, the most vicious threats he stood against. Five centuries later, several biographers of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (d. 1350), the prominent Hanbali theologian and jurist, inform us that he was an outstanding debater.¹ With regard to disputation, Ibn al-Qayyim is far from being an exception in later Hanbalism. His master Ibn Taymīyah (d. 1328) also engaged in famous theological, juridical, and inter-religious debates. As such, the change in Hanbalism was not accidental, which raises the question: what happened to Hanbalism prior to the period of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries that explains this shift towards dialectics?

The most probable answer to this question is Ash'arization. In the eleventh century, an Ash'ari-Shafi'i connivance made *kalām* and juridical dialectics part of the madrasah curriculum and the intellectual life of Baghdad. The Ash'ari impact reached prominent Hanbalis such as al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lá (d. 1066) and Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 1119), both of whom left us with rich debate literature in law and theology. Furthermore, the influence of al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) on Hanbali legal theory is evident, as can be seen in the writings of Ibn Qudāmah (d. 1223).

However, disputation was not taken for granted in Hanbali circles, as scholars had to justify it through a scriptural legitimacy. Two major Hanbali authors attempted such an enterprise. First, Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1236) compiled and described the Quranic uses of various dialectical procedures in his *Kitāb Istikhrāj al-jidāl min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Later, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316), in his

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¹Several sources mention his skills in disputation. For example, see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āh fī ṭabaqāt al-lughawīyīn wa-al-nuḥāh*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut, 1979), 1:63. Fawziyah bint Fahd bint 'Alī al-Masnad attempted a reconstruction of Ibn al-Qayyim's disputation. Her study is normative, apologetic, and incomplete, with useless digressions; see: Fawziyah bint Fahd bint 'Alī al-Masnad, "Al-Munāẓarah 'inda Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah" (M.A. thesis, The Islamic University of Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd, 2005).



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‘Alam al-jadhal fi ‘ilm al-jadal, adopted the dialectics of Shafī‘i legal theorists, applying its procedures to the Quran, the Prophetic tradition, and Arabic literature.²

It seems that by the time Ibn Taymīyah started his studies, around 1270, rationalization was already unavoidable even within the Hanbali school. A major book in Muslim dialectics was ascribed to Ibn Taymīyah under the title of *Tanbīh al-rajul al-‘āqil ‘alā tamwīh al-jadal al-bāṭil*. This book is a refutation of Rukn al-Dīn al-‘Amīdī’s (d. 1218) juridical dialectics. The style and the content of the book suggest a different author, but within the Hanbali circle nonetheless.³

Hanbali attitudes towards disputation were typically normative; Hanbalis endorsed it with reserve as disputation became an unstoppable rationalist pandemic (to use a medical metaphor Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah cherishes).⁴ The challenge for Hanbalis was to respond to rationalization without compromising their traditionalist foundations. Philosophizing theology and juridical dialectics dominated the era and the old resistance of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal could not work anymore. The response of Ibn Taymīyah and Ibn al-Qayyim are better understood in a framework that can be defined as a traditionalism evolving toward a more rationalized form in order to survive the battle of rationalization.

Ibn Qayyim compared disputation to a fighting sport.⁵ In his *Al-Furūsiyah*, he states that *musābaqah* and *munāḍalah* (horse competition and archery) prepare competitors for *jihād*.⁶ Since each competitor would like to defeat his adversary, he is training hard to overcome him. Likewise, Ibn Qayyim asserts that this is exactly the same case for debaters. One would prepare himself for the debate through practice. He would make statements, objections, and counter argumentation until he masters the core of the issue at hand so that if a follower of falsehood, *mubṭil*, debates him, he would be ready for the challenge.

If disputation is similar to combat, what war of ideas was Ibn al-Qayyim thinking of? In his *Al-Ṣawā‘iq al-mursalah*, he unfolds for us the target of his campaign, and by the same token, the key motivation of his project and that of his teacher Ibn Taymīyah:

There was darkness in the orient and the light of prophethood and revelation vanished. People gave preference to their intellects,

²Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Ġadal bei at-Ṭūfi: Eine Interpretation seiner Beispielsammlung,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morganländischen Gesellschaft* Supplement iii, I (1975): 463–73.

³George Makdisi, “The *Tanbīh* of Ibn Taymīyah on Dialectic: The Pseudo-‘Aqilian *Kitāb al-Farq*,” in *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honor of Aziz Suryal Atiya*, ed. Sami A. Hanna (Leiden, 1972), 285–94.

⁴I also refer to the Avicennian pandemic in the sense Yahya Michot used it; see “La pandémie avicennienne au VIe/XIIe siècle,” *Arabica* 40 (1993): 287–344.

⁵In a similar manner to P. Bourdieu’s formula “la sociologie est un sport de combat.”

⁶Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Furūsiyah*, ed. Samīr Ḥusayn Ḥalabī (Ṭanṭā, 1991), 39.



opinions, and politics over revelation. As a result, philosophy and logic took primacy. In this time, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī [d. 1274] was the leader of these people. He replaced the Quran with the *Ishārāt* of Avicenna. Al-Ṭūsī claimed that the latter were demonstrative statements while the Quran was rhetorical transmissions. He persecuted the traditional scholars of Islam.⁷

Ibn al-Qayyim considered al-Ṭūsī to be Satan's follower because both contested divine commands, instead preferring their own reason. For Ibn al-Qayyim, as a consequence of al-Ṭūsī's work, three evils appeared: the dialectics of al-ʿAmīdī, the monism of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), and the theological skepticism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209).⁸ All three figures preceded al-Ṭūsī and if one must assign influence, it should be the other way around, especially al-Rāzī's influence on al-Ṭūsī. Be that as it may, Ibn al-Qayyim perceived the rationalization of juridical dialectics, Sufism, and *kalām* as a major threat to traditional knowledge. But he asserted that "God made Ibn Taymīyah to preserve his religion"⁹—i.e., to refute the three axes of evil. Ibn al-Qayyim used a martial metaphor to describe Ibn Taymīyah's campaign and that of his own: God established his soldiers to invade these kingdoms (of evil), some of them with the sword and others with proof and argumentation.¹⁰

Recently, Tzvi Langermann argued that Ibn al-Qayyim's treatment of rational knowledge should be considered as a process of naturalization of science.¹¹ I disagree with this claim. Ibn al-Qayyim rejects logic and dialectics as inauthentic and false forms of knowledge. In his view, traditions bear the perfect example of validity and truth as opposed to that of the philosophers and the theologians. Ibn al-Qayyim's traditionalism is different from that of Ibn Ḥanbal, but it is not his invention. Traditionalism evolved slowly through centuries accepting, in the course of history, certain forms of Sufism, dialectics, and theology that strengthened traditionalism. In particular, through the disciplines of legal theory, early Sunni *kalām*, and Quranic exegesis, which reached him as traditionalized knowledge, Ibn al-Qayyim accepted some Ashʿari-Shafiʿi views on disputation and dealt with them as part of traditionalism. Based on the evidence of Ibn al-Qayyim's theory and practice of disputation, I believe that he sustains a minimal selection

⁷Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalāh*, ed. ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Dakhīl Allāh (Riyadh, 1991), 1077.

⁸Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalāh*, 1078–79.

⁹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursalāh*, 1079.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Tzvi Langermann, "The Naturalization of Science in Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah's *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*," in *A Scholar in the Shadow: Essays in the Legal and Theological Thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah*, ed. Caterina Bori and Livnat Holtzman (Rome, 2010), 211–28.



of traditionalized elements with apologetic purposes, allowing him to condemn Ash'ari-Shaff'i rationalization. Ibn al-Qayyim's disputation illustrates his battle against rationalization as incarnated by later Ash'ari theologians. In several fields of science such as astronomy, logic, and medicine, scientific activity grew exponentially in the Mamluk period, becoming widely accepted by Ash'ari theologians and jurists.¹² Thus, Ibn al-Qayyim's chief concern was a de-rationalization and re-traditionalization of Sunnism.¹³

1. Theory

Ibn al-Qayyim's starting point is a dismissal of dialectics as practiced by later theologians and philosophers. He criticizes *jadāl* for its structure, its function, and its implications. First, he rejects it for using logic in argumentation. At this point, he denies naturalization to logic. The very non-Islamic nature of logic and its claim to universal truth through demonstration should suffice as reasons for this refusal. Further, he disapproves of *jadāl*'s claim to be a dialectical law, *sharī'ah jadalīyah*, as established by the theologians.¹⁴ What particularly bothers Ibn al-Qayyim is the possibility that a law (other than the Islamic one) could govern the speech and the behavior of individuals and lead to a different conclusion than that of truth (established by Islamic law). Procedures of disputation, if they were to be accepted, should instead lead to scriptural truth. He admits, however, that the dialectical law contains both falsehood and truth, *fihā ḥaqq wa-bāṭil*.¹⁵ Finally, he dismisses it for its implications such as the negation of attributes, doubt, and confusion of people's faith. Thus, he clearly targets here the theological dialectics of later Ash'ari *mutakallimūn* who used *jadāl* to exclude scriptural proofs (i.e., the ones used by traditionists).

As an alternative to dialectics, Ibn al-Qayyim suggests the *salaf* way of disputation, *ṭarīqat al-salaf fī al-munāzarah*. In his view, the *salaf* model of disputation was unique because it combines scriptural and rational proofs. He wrote a long chapter in his *Badā'i' al-fawā'id* which he entitled *fuṣūl 'aẓīmat al-naḥ' jiddan*, to

¹²Nahyan A. G. Fancy developed this aspect in *Science and religion in Mamluk Egypt: Ibn al-Nafis, pulmonary transit and bodily resurrection* (London, 2013).

¹³Three recent scholarly works considerably upgraded our knowledge and understanding of Ibn al-Qayyim's work: *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin, 2013); *A Scholar in the Shadow*, ed. Bori and Holtzman; and Birgit Krawietz, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah: His Life and Works," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 10 (2006): 19–64.

¹⁴Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badā'i' al-fawā'id*, ed. 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-'Umrān (Mecca, 2003), 1533.

¹⁵Ibid.



elaborate on this model.¹⁶ The premise of Ibn al-Qayyim is that the Quran and Sunnah should guide us to the sound way of disputation: the explanation of legal causes, *bayān al-ʿilal*, the distinctions, *furūq*, and the invalidation of the argument by circle, *dawr*, or by infinite regress, *tasalsul*.¹⁷ Moreover, Ibn al-Qayyim states that the Prophet Muḥammad was the first to formulate answers to objections.¹⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim refers here to a terminology and argumentation techniques that he learned from juridical dialectics and later *kalām*. In the first step of his reasoning, Ibn al-Qayyim reconstructs a straw-man argument in which he depicted a general and incomplete model of disputation.¹⁹ In Ibn al-Qayyim's understanding, this legacy was not to be sanctioned, which would be the case if he admitted coexistence between the *jadāl* model and scriptural disputation. For him, however, these are two competing and exclusive ways of disputation. The reason he uses this terminology and these argumentation techniques is to prove that the scriptures contain them in the most perfect way. Hence the second part of his argument, which stated that Muslims must not have recourse to the *jadāl* model.²⁰ By defending the scriptural way of disputation, he aims to restore trust in the scriptures and discard the need to use the way of the theologians, let alone that of the philosophers. Thus, his method is clearly a process of re-traditionalization.

Ibn al-Qayyim re-traditionalized *munāẓarah* by recalling early theologians and jurists, especially Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935). A human being, he asserted, is either an inquirer, *nāẓir*, or a debater, *munāẓir*, and disputation is either praiseworthy or blameworthy. The praiseworthy disputation is the one where a debater explains to other participants the guiding proof in case they look for truth; he silences them, or invalidates their objections. The other purpose is to incite the opponent to investigate the proofs of truth. If the debater neither knows the truth nor seeks it, it is the case of a blameworthy debate.²¹ Thus, Ibn al-Qayyim traditionalizes al-Ashʿarī and al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) to allow himself a better position in front of later philosophizing Ashʿari theologians. He assigns a normative function to disputation with two purposes. On the one hand, similar to a fighting sport, disputation should serve the orthodox faith. On the other, praiseworthy disputation excludes dialecticians because they neither defend scriptural truth nor seek it.

¹⁶Ibid., 1533–1610.

¹⁷Ibid., 1533.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Alina Kokoschka and Birgit Krawietz call this process appropriation; see “Appropriation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: Challenging Expectations of Ingenuity,” in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, ed. Krawietz and Tamer, 1–33.

²⁰Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badāʾiʿ al-fawāʾid*, 1533.

²¹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Ṣawāʾiq al-mursalāh*, 1274–75.



The keyword in Ibn al-Qayyim's conception is truth, and this should be the law that rules over the debaters. It is not a rational and deliberated truth, but a scriptural one. Therefore, disputation is a category of calling to Islam, *da'wah*.²² He states that according to the status of the target, disputation is of three sorts: wisdom (*ḥikmah*), preaching (*maw'izah*), and disputation (*jidāl*). If the person called seeks truth sincerely he should be called by wisdom, *ḥikmah*, and there is no need to use preaching or disputation with him. If he went away one should preach to him using enticement and intimidation, *targhīb wa-tarhīb*. If he is stubborn and disputatious, then one has to use disputation with him. In the case that disputation does not work with him, then he has to be punished. If the weapon of the tongue does not persuade him, he should be persuaded by the sword. This is so because disputation with a proponent of falsehood, *mubṭil*, has two benefits. On the one side, it could turn him from his falsehood to truth. On the other, it should stop his evil and enmity so that people would see that he is false.²³

Ibn al-Qayyim plainly turns disputation into a fighting sport in the way of traditions. To delegitimize the competing model of disputation of later theologians and philosophers, he readjusts Sunni materials to include al-Ash'arī and traditional Ash'aris, such as Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 1083), who weigh heavy in the history of *jadāl*, as well as al-Ghazzālī, critical as he was of dialectics. A passage in Ibn al-Qayyim's *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh* illustrates well his reasoning. The *salaf* did not reject *kalām* for using a specific terminology or following certain techniques of argumentation. Actually, they argued, speculated, and disputed with others. They did so, however, with an aim to reach the divine and to understand His speech. They would observe the signs of God and extract rational proofs from them making reason and revelation coalesce.²⁴ Disputation of theologians and philosophers should not oppose revelation because it produces only objections, but not knowledge and guidance.²⁵ Inherent to this argument is a fideistic and spiritualist concept of knowledge, in the manner of al-Ghazzālī. Ultimately, *jadāl* does not produce certainty and that is sufficient to discard it.

2. Practice

Ibn al-Qayyim related ten debates in which he was involved. Sometimes he provides details such as the place, the identity of the adversary, and the outcome of the debate. On occasion, the debate serves as an alibi to long critical discussions of his opponents. Ibn al-Qayyim masters the literary *munāẓarah* in which

²²Ibid., 1276.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 1274.

²⁵Ibid., 1277.



imaginary objects contest with one another, such as the sky and the earth or the heart and the eye. Thus, he is quite familiar with this flourishing genre of Mamluk literature.²⁶ He is also aware of the didactic use of the virtual debate in order to explain issues on which there are different positions. In the following, I will only deal with actual debates of Ibn al-Qayyim or at least what he narrates as such.

PARTICIPANTS	ISSUE OF DISPUTATION	SUBJECT	SOURCES
IQ vs. a Jewish scholar	Muḥammad's prophethood	Theology	<i>Hidāyat al-ḥayārā</i> ²⁷
IQ vs. a Christian scholar	What prevents Christians from becoming Muslims?	Theology	<i>Hidāyat al-ḥayārā</i> ²⁸ <i>Al-Tibyān</i> ²⁹
IQ vs. a Christian scholar ³⁰	Muḥammad's prophethood	Theology	<i>Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh</i> ³¹
IQ vs. a prominent Samaritan	The Samaritan direction of prayer	Theology	<i>Badā'i' al-fawā'id</i> ³²
IQ vs. a later Ash'ari	The speech of God	Theology	<i>Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh</i> ³³

²⁶Thomas Bauer depicts concisely and accurately the literary environment of Mamluk literature in "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," *MSR* 9 (2005): 105–32. However, his article does not cover the genre of *munāẓarah* and its particular importance in Mamluk Arabic literature.

²⁷Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wa-al-naṣārā*, ed. 'Uthmān Jum'ah Ḍumayriyah (Mecca, 2008/2009), 200–2.

²⁸Ibid., 39 and 272.

²⁹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Tibyān fī aymān al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn Sālim al-Baṭāṭī (Mecca, 2008/2009), 270–74.

³⁰For aspects of Ibn al-Qayyim's apologetic against Christians and Jews, see Jon Hoover, "The Apologetic and Pastoral Intentions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Polemic against Jews and Christians," *The Muslim World* 100 (2010): 476–89.

³¹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh*, 327.

³²Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badā'i' al-fawā'id*, 1606–7.

³³Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalāh*, 1037.



IQ vs. a determinist (likely to be a later Ash'ari) ³⁴	Determinism	Theology	<i>Shifā' al-'alīl</i> ³⁵
IQ vs. a proponent of free will (likely to be a Mu'tazili)	Free will	Theology	<i>Shifā' al-'alīl</i> ³⁶
IQ vs. a proponent of <i>taqlīd</i> (likely to be a Shafi'i-Ash'ari adversary)	Following the Prophet or the later scholars	Theology and law	<i>A'lām al-muwaqqi'in</i> ³⁷
IQ vs. a proponent of <i>taqlīd</i>	<i>Taqlīd</i>	Theology and law	<i>Madārij al-sālikīn</i> ³⁸
IQ vs. a proponent of the impurity of sperm	Whether the sperm is pure or not	Law	<i>Badā'i' al-fawā'id</i> ³⁹

2.1 External Evaluation

A first look at these debates shows the importance of theology (including interreligious debates) for Ibn al-Qayyim. The tone of these debates is harsh, categorical, and Manichaeist. If *munāzarah* is *da'wah*, then it should be primarily with non-Muslims or with heretics. Practice shows then that Ibn al-Qayyim seriously takes disputation as a fighting sport. Truth here is either with them or with his book (the Quran) and either with rationalism or traditionalism.

Ibn al-Qayyim seems to have some trouble with his memory. He narrates the same debate on Muhammad's prophethood in his *Zād al-ma'ād* (an earlier work) as if it were with a Christian Scholar, then in *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*, the opponent is a Jewish scholar. At the end of this debate, he promises his reader to write a book

³⁴Livnat Holtzman thoroughly analyzed this debate in "Debating the Doctrine of *jabr* (Compulsion): Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Reads Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law*, ed. Krawietz and Tamer, 61–93.

³⁵Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Shifā' al-'alīl fī masā'il al-qaḍā' wa-al-qadar wa-al-ḥikmah wa-al-ta'līl*, ed. al-Ḥassānī Ḥasan 'Abd Allāh (Cairo, 1975), 285–306.

³⁶Ibid., 307–57.

³⁷Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *A'lām al-muwaqqi'in 'an rabb al-'ālamīn*, ed. Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan 'Al Salmān (al-Dammām, 2002/2003), 3:470, 4:36.

³⁸Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-sālikīn bayna manāzil iyyāka na'budu wa-iyyāka nasta'in*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Beirut, 1973), 2:388.

³⁹Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badā'i' al-fawā'id*, 1040–52.



about the proofs of Muḥammad's prophecy (which is most probably his *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*).⁴⁰

Later Ash'arism caused more theological concerns for Ibn al-Qayyim. The Ash'ari-Hanbali rivalry is at work in Ibn al-Qayyim's disputation (as it was in Ibn Taymīyah's writings). By making the apology of traditionalist theology, he puts philosophizing Ash'aris in the axis of evil. Yet, the war he fought against Ash'arism was literary; it compensates for inferiority in front of the overwhelmingly dominant position that Ash'arism occupied in the Sunni world through long debates.

Taqlīd is an important issue represented by two debates. For this particular issue, Ibn al-Qayyim uses disputation as a literary device to refute his adversaries. The length of the debates and their comprehensiveness indicate the weight of the question in his time. Ibn al-Qayyim means by *taqlīd* imitation of later jurists, theologians, and Sufi masters instead of traditions. That is to say, Ibn al-Qayyim stands against opposing living authorities to the traditions of *salaf*. Ibn al-Qayyim's re-traditionalization, contrary to *taqlīd*, substitutes living authorities with past authorities who should be followed because religion was revealed to them. Therefore, they should be the perfect model of understanding and knowledge. Ibn al-Qayyim is at his best when it comes to *taqlīd*. He combines his outstanding mastery of hadith literature and *fiqh* to give the impression that he attempts to revive Islamic law (a misunderstanding of contemporary readings). His core thesis is that, if you are going to follow someone, you should follow "the banners of those who undersign on behalf of God" (hence the title of his book, *A'lām al-muwaqqi'īn 'an rabb al-'ālamīn*).

Here, law is insignificant. It might even be said that he considers the juridical dialectics of al-'Amīdī's an evil. If that is the case, it is surprising that juridical debates do not have a fair share in his practice. In fact, the reason behind his criticism of al-'Amīdī is that the latter rationalized juridical dialectics, transforming *jadāl* into an art of disputation with no room for traditions.

Ibn al-Qayyim does not mention any internal Hanbali debate, since if he wishes to mobilize forces for his war of ideas, there should be no discord inside the Hanbali school, which he perceived as the vanguard of traditionalism. Moreover, here, Ibn al-Qayyim seems to be almost completely forsaking Ibn Taymīyah's mantle, claiming pride and skill in argumentation. It is him against the others (although he still adheres to Ibn Taymīyah's project). At the thematic level, he also differs from Ibn Taymīyah who was keener on the theological issues of divine attributes.

⁴⁰Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Zād al-ma'ād fi hady khayr al-'ibād*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnāūt and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnāūt (Beirut, 1998), 3:559–61.



2.2 Internal Evaluation

Unsurprisingly, Ibn al-Qayyim does not use logic to support his claims. His argument with non-Muslims is based on sophistry. A recurrent device is the argument from silence (*argumentum e silentio*)—where the final proof is the silence of the opponent, failing to counter argue, thus admitting defeat. Ibn al-Qayyim ends the debate saying that his opponent is unable to speak. In his debate with the Jewish scholar he uses retrospective determinism to maintain that Muḥammad’s prophethood was God’s destiny. Since the victory of Muḥammad indeed occurred, it must have been inevitable and wanted by God. Otherwise, God would not have allowed it. He therefore infers from something that happened that something is good. With his Christian counterpart, he uses an *argumentum ad populum*: namely that most people in the east are Muslims, therefore Islam is true and Christianity is false. Finally, against the Samaritans he uses a proof of alteration, *tahrīf*, since they changed the Jewish direction of prayer, *qiblah*, which was the original one.

As for his debates with Muslims, Ibn al-Qayyim frequently uses three procedures. First is a shotgun argumentation, in which he mobilizes dozens of “proofs” (which he calls *wujūh*) to support his position with the hope that the appeal to this quantity of arguments would destroy his opponent’s position or push him into silence. Also, he relies on transmitted proofs—arguments from authority—because appeal to traditions effectively persuades a Muslim audience. Besides, it confirms his belief in the superiority of scriptural argumentation. He fully exploits traditions and the Companions’ opinions to compete with his rationalist opponents, being able as he is to endlessly quote traditions, far beyond Ibn Taymīyah’s capacity. As a result, Ibn al-Qayyim’s argument often turns into a compilation of traditions, digressions, and redundancy. Third, Ibn al-Qayyim employs the art of contradiction making, *ilzām*, a classic of *kalām*, based on *argument ad absurdum*.⁴¹ For instance, in the issue of *taqlīd* he often argues that a *muqallid* should not engage in a debate because this undermines the very basis of his position, *taqlīd*. This is a contradiction which, in the final analysis, shows the absurdity of *taqlīd*.

Conclusion

The internal assessment of Ibn al-Qayyim’s disputation shows his reliance on theological dialectics, especially on rhetorical devices and contradiction-making. Classical theologians and jurists such as al-Ash‘arī and Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī practiced these techniques and compiled them. These are the weapons Ibn al-Qayyim

⁴¹On this procedure, see Richard M. Frank, “The *Kalām*, an Art of Contradiction-Making or Theological Science? Some Remarks on the Question,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 295–309.



uses against the syllogistics of later theologians such as al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī. Obviously, al-Ash‘arī and al-Shīrāzī do not belong to the *salaf*, but they are traditionalist or semi-traditionalist scholars. In Ibn al-Qayyim’s view, their method should be free of logic and philosophy and closer to the method of *salaf*.

The struggle Ibn al-Qayyim engages in against non-Muslims and later Ash‘aris is as valid as *jihād*. Ibn al-Qayyim’s disputation does not take part in the “humanist” characteristics of disputation that flourished in Abbasid literary councils such as empathy, cooperative ethics of inquiry, and belief in reason. He constantly reminds his reader that the tongue should strive as much as the sword against opponents. His disputation is martial and exclusivist. Armed with his enthusiasm and belief in traditionalism, he fought against the dialectics of the philosophizing theologians. In his disputation, Ibn al-Qayyim appears as a traditionalist who attacks on all fronts to restore the imagined community of early Muslims. He appeals to the past, which is supposed to represent a perfect model of reasoning and believing on the basis of transmitted traditions.

Thus, there is no case for claiming as Langermann did that Ibn al-Qayyim naturalizes science. Ibn al-Qayyim perceived logic as the enemy, and especially in the hands of later theologians, as it meant the end of traditionalism. In his view, the weapon itself, logic (or science in general), should be opposed with a traditionalist weapon (made by early or classical Sunni scholars). For this reason, it is appropriate to call his enterprise re-traditionalization and de-naturalization of science. It is an apology of traditionalism: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in the coat of al-Ash‘arī.

