The book under review fits within the literature on the history of dialectics and the art of disputation in the Islamic civilization, as reflected by the title *Argumentation et dialectique en Islam*. As the author Abdessamad Belhaj affirms in his introduction, the scope of this work is to undertake a reconstruction of the development of the *ʿilm al-jadal* and the art of *munāzara* as argumentative processes in both *fiqh* and *kalām* traditions. Belhaj states that his project is to draw the historical development of *jadal* and *munāzara* by taking into account the gaps of the major secondary literature. Put differently, this filling-in-the-gaps project seeks to provide a tableau of the way the notions of *jadal* and *munāzara* have been used and developed in different milieus of the classical Islamic world.

The book is divided into four chapters preceded by an introduction and followed by a short conclusion and a glossary of key terms. The introduction provides a general overview of the secondary literature recently produced on the topics related to the literary genre of *jadal*, *munāzara*, and *ādāb al-baḥṭ*. The first chapter deals essentially with the definitions of *munāzara* as well as with the key terms that define the art of disputation in the Islamic civilization such as *jadal*, *mujādala*, *khilaf*, etc. Belhaj establishes the definitions of these key terms by analyzing different primary sources, starting from al-Jāḥiẓ (d. ca. 868) until Ismāʿīl al-Kalanbāwī (d. 1791) and by referring to their discussion by Muslim dialecticians. The second chapter is devoted to the actualization of the argumentative processes and its evolution in different contexts; Belhaj analyzes a series of primary sources in which the forms or patterns of disputation arise, such as the Qurʾān, the ḥadīth, the literary genres, the theological literature, and, finally, the juridical context. The third chapter is focused on determining the various origins of the discipline of the *ʿilm al-jadal*, the science of dialectic. Belhaj’s final chapter is devoted to an overview of the elements that characterize the mature science of disputation and argumentation, a literary genre called *adāb al-baḥṭ*. 
This short book attains the merit of gathering together a large amount of secondary sources. Belhaj plunges into the secondary literature that takes into account one or many perspectives of the concept of argumentation and disputation in the Islamic thought. He brings to this body of work an *état des lieux* and a valid critique to complement his project of reconstructing the evolution of the art of *munāẓara* and *jadal*. The great effort the author makes in accounting for the evolution of both *jadal* and *munāẓara*’s statuses throughout the eras is reflected in the breadth of primary sources he collects for the project.

Nevertheless, Belhaj’s choice of primary sources does not provide an accurate sense of the evolution of *jadal* within the *kalām* tradition. He prides himself on taking al-Jāḥiẓ’s *al-Masā’il wa-l-jawābāt fī l-ma‘rifā*, drawing heavily upon the authority of H. Daiber, as an example of the usage of dialectic tools in the *kalām* literature. Of note is Belhaj’s lack of attention to the *al-Masā’il fī l-khilaf bayna l-Baṣrīyyīn wa-l-Bağdādīyyīn* by the Bahshamite Abū Rashād al-Nisābūrī (d. after 1024), a masterpiece of Muʿtazilī dialectics which reveals the authentic dialectical sequences of the tradition. An analysis of this work, for example, would provide an otherwise absent authoritative supplement to the scope of his project. Belhaj’s discussions of the case studies within the *fiqh* tradition are subject to the same textual limitations. He rightly points out the importance of the notion of *ikhtilāf* and draws necessary attention to the figure of al-Shāfiʿī; however in so doing he relies heavily upon secondary sources rather than acquainting the reader with al-Shāfiʿī’s own writings. This decision is particularly detrimental to his purpose of accounting for the development of the dialectical traditions when considering the presence of more indispensable works of al-Shāfiʿī, the most significant of which remain the *Kitāb al-umm* and in particular the treatise contained in it under the title of *Ikhtilāfāt al-‘Irāqiyyīn*. Belhaj thus sacrifices an account of the proto-model usage of *jadal* in the *fiqh* tradition in favor of an extensive criticism of the shortcomings of Makdisi’s thesis on al-Shāfiʿī, thus calling into question the extent to which his work fills the gaps within the literature rather than merely reaffirming them.

Perhaps due to the sheer historical breadth of sources Belhaj admirably attempts to account for, “Argumentation et Dialectique en Islam” sacrifices considerable depth in addressing the content and
implications of these works. Admittedly those with a previous knowledge of the secondary sources presented in the Introduction may find Belhaj accurately presents the development of the ‘ilm al-jadal and the art of munāzara throughout the centuries they account for. However a closer reading reveals that a crucial attention to primary sources is not provided. As a result both those looking to build upon, as well as to expand their understanding of the field are left with a fragmented sense of the development of the flourishing ars disputandi in Islamic thought.


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