



A Classical Methodology for Contemporary *Da'wah*: Taşköprüzade's *Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa al-Munāẓarah* in Dialogue with New Atheism

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Abstract

The rise of New Atheism in the early twenty-first century has posed a substantive intellectual challenge to religious communities, including Muslims engaged in the practice of da'wah. Characterised by its assertive rationalism, reductive scientism, and systematic critique of religion, New Atheist discourse demands from Muslim respondents not merely doctrinal counter-arguments but a disciplined methodology of engagement. This article argues that Tashkopruzade's classical treatise Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa al-Munāẓarah (The Etiquette of Inquiry and Formal Disputation) offers a rigorous, ethically grounded, and epistemologically coherent framework for such engagement. Employing a qualitative research design grounded in classical text analysis and descriptive-analytical inquiry, the study adopts purposive sampling in its selection of sources: Tashkopruzade's treatise serves as the primary source, whilst the principal works of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris are selected as representative texts of New Atheist discourse. Data is collected through systematic documentary analysis of the Arabic primary source alongside relevant secondary scholarship, and subsequently subjected to thematic and comparative analysis. The article examines the core components of Tashkopruzade's dialectical system including the functions of the questioner (sā'il) and the respondent (mu'allil), the tripartite mechanisms of objection (munāqadah, naqd, mu'āraḍah), and the normative etiquettes of disputation and maps these onto the argumentative strategies characteristic of New Atheist discourse. The findings suggest that Tashkopruzade's framework equips da'wah practitioners with a principled method for identifying logical fallacies, maintaining epistemic rigour, and sustaining productive intellectual exchange. This article contributes to the growing scholarship on classical Islamic intellectual resources for contemporary da'wah methodology.

Keywords: *Da'wah* methodology, New Atheism, Taşköprüzade, Islamic dialectics, dialogue

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Introduction

The early decades of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of a cultural and intellectual phenomenon widely designated as New Atheism. Spearheaded by scholars such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett, or often collectively referred to as the “Four Horsemen” of New Atheism. This movement is distinguished from its historical predecessors by its assertive, often polemical, program of public advocacy against religion in all its manifestations (Mohamad Razif et al., 2022). Dawkins's *The God Delusion* (2006), Hitchens's *God Is Not Great* (2007), Harris's *The End of Faith* (2004), and Dennett's *Breaking the Spell* (2006) collectively advanced a vision of religion as socially and morally harmful. Yet, what is genuinely novel about New Atheism is neither its philosophical content, its confrontational disposition, nor its appropriation of scientific methodology, but rather the unprecedented scale of its media exposure, as argued by Zenk (2015), a distinction that accounts, in large measure, for its remarkable cultural reach and influence.

For Muslim communities, and particularly for practitioners of *da'wah*, the rise of New Atheism presents a challenge of considerable intellectual depth. *Da'wah*, as defined by al-Bayānūnī (n.d.), encompasses three constitutive dimensions: the conveyance of Islam to people, its instruction, and its application in the reality of life. When the intended audience consists of thoroughgoing sceptics who reject the very intelligibility of religious discourse as such, the *da'wah* practitioner confronts a methodological crisis of a fundamental order: how does one engage productively with an interlocutor who disputes the epistemic legitimacy of one's foundational premises before the argument has even begun?

It is the central contention of this article that a compelling answer to this question lies in the systematic recovery and application of a classical Islamic intellectual discipline: the science of *ādab al-baḥṭh wa al-munāẓarah* (the etiquette of inquiry and formal disputation). This discipline, which reached its most systematic expression in the treatise of the Ottoman polymathic Muslim scholar Taşköprüzade (1495–1561), constitutes a comprehensive theory of structured intellectual exchange. It prescribes the roles, obligations, and ethical constraints of both parties in a disputation, delineates the permissible modes of objection and rebuttal, and specifies the conditions under which a disputation may be deemed concluded. This framework articulates principles of rational engagement that are strikingly consonant with contemporary standards of critical argumentation.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative research design grounded in the tradition of classical text analysis and descriptive-analytical inquiry, an approach deemed most appropriate given the study's dual concern with the historical explication of a classical Islamic intellectual framework and its contemporary application. The study adopts purposive sampling in its selection of sources: the primary source is Tashkopruzade's treatise *Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa al-Munāẓarah*,

selected on account of its foundational status within the science of Islamic disputation, whilst the principal texts of New Atheism namely the works of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett are selected as secondary sources by virtue of their acknowledged centrality and wide scholarly reception within the field. Data collection proceeds through systematic documentary analysis of the Arabic primary source, classical commentaries, and relevant secondary scholarship in English, Arabic, and Malay, supplemented by a review of contemporary academic literature on New Atheism, *da'wah* methodology, and the history of Islamic dialectical sciences. The collected data is subsequently subjected to thematic and comparative analysis, wherein the argumentative strategies characteristic of New Atheist discourse are systematically categorised and evaluated against the typological framework established by Tashkopruzade, with a view to demonstrating both the internal coherence of the classical framework and its practical applicability as a methodology for contemporary *da'wah* engagement.

Background and Literature Review

The scholarly literature on New Atheism has grown substantially since the mid-2000s. Commentators across disciplines have noted that what distinguishes the New Atheists from the Classical Atheists, for instance, is less the novelty of their philosophical arguments than the tone, reach, and cultural ambition of their program (Stenger, 2007; Eagleton, 2009). Dawkins's appeal to evolutionary biology, Harris's invocation of neuroscience, Hitchens's literary polemicism, and Dennett's philosophy of mind together constitute a multi-disciplinary assault on the rationality of religious belief.

Several features of New Atheist argumentation are particularly germane to the present discussion. First, the New Atheists characteristically employ what may be termed "epistemic disqualification": the attempt to render religious claims *a priori* inadmissible by confining legitimate knowledge to the empirically verifiable. Dawkins (2006), for example, advances the argument that the hypothesis of God's existence is a scientific hypothesis subject to empirical testing, and that the burden of proof rests entirely with the theist. Second, the New Atheists deploy extensive "*counter-instance arguments*": they marshal historical evidence of religious violence, intolerance, and irrationality as grounds for a wholesale rejection of religion's social utility (Hitchens, 2007). Third, their discourse is frequently characterized by a rhetorical assertiveness that blurs the boundary between argument and polemic, making systematic philosophical engagement difficult for interlocutors unprepared for its pace and register.

Within the growing body of Islamic scholarship responding to New Atheism, several approaches are discernible. An earlier cluster of works features dialogue-driven apologetics and classical-style refutation (Mughniyyah, 1986), followed by projects that broaden the framing through encyclopedic ideological critique (Ḥabannakah, 1991) and historiographical reconstruction (Badawī, 1993). A later, denser cluster from 2014 onward is dominated by evidentialist contestation and critique, frequently calibrated toward New Atheism, scientism, and public rationalist argumentation (al-'Ujayrī, 2014; 'Āmiri, 2018; Fūdah, 2016). What remains underdeveloped, however, is a methodological framework that equips Muslim respondents with the procedural and logical tools to conduct such engagements in a structured, principled, and ethically disciplined manner. It is this lacuna that the present article seeks to address.

The Science of Munāzarah in the Islamic Tradition

By the 12th century, the broader discipline of dialectics (*jadal*) had crystallized into at least three distinct systematic approaches: juridical dialectics (*jadal fiqhī*), theological dialectics

(*jadal kalāmī*), and philosophical dialectics (*jadal falsafī*). Despite attempts to synthesize the juridical and theological branches, most notably by al-Baghdādī (2019), who sought to develop a unified theory applicable to both, all three approaches continued to flourish as independent traditions. Al-Baghdādī's comparative analysis identified a shared structural feature: both juridical and theological dialectics seek the underlying causes (*'ilal*) of positions and are grounded in foundational sources (*uṣūl*). For juridical dialectics, these sources are the Qur'an, the prophetic traditions, and accumulated scholarly consensus; for theological dialectics, they comprise sensory perception, analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) (Rahman et al., 2020; Iqbāl, 2022), and reliably transmitted reports. The critical difference between the two, however, lies in the quality of their respective conclusions: theological dialectics yields necessary (*qaṭ'ī*) knowledge, since its causal connections are divinely established, as in the case of intoxication grounding the prohibition of alcohol. Whereas juridical dialectics can attain only a high degree of probability (*ẓannī*).

The social and epistemological function of *jadal* within Muslim intellectual culture has generated considerable scholarly debate. Hallaq (1987) and Wididgo (2016) contend that both juridical and theological disputation served primarily to establish doctrinal orthodoxy, whilst Soufi (2017) argues more persuasively that the principal aim was the clarification of differences rather than the achievement of consensus. This tension has given rise to two distinct scholarly positions regarding the status of probable arguments: one school holds that multiple divergent positions may simultaneously be correct, whilst the other maintains that only a single truth exists in the sight of God, even if that truth remains inaccessible to human reason. The latter school does, however, affirm that both those who arrive at the correct position and those who do not are rewarded for the sincerity of their intellectual striving (*ijtihād*) (Telkenaroğlu, 2009).

While philosophical dialectics is rooted in the Aristotelian legacy as received and developed by Muslim thinkers, who conceptualized the *Organon* as comprising five constituent divisions: analytics (*burhān*), dialectics (*jadal*), rhetoric (*khaṭābah*), sophistry (*mughālaṭah*), and poetry (*shi'r*) (Black, 1990; Coşkun, 2011). Collectively, these divisions constitute the science of logic (*manṭiq*) (Ibn Sīnā, 1984). Over time, analytics came to exert a dominant influence over the other syllogistic disciplines, despite Ibn Khaldūn's (1958) critique of its tendency toward abstraction and its questionable metaphysical assumptions regarding the non-material existence of propositions as abstract objects. The eventual hegemony of analytics was far-reaching: even indigenous Islamic disciplines such as legal methodology and juridical *jadal* began to incorporate its framework and methods (al-Ghazālī, 2018; Aktaş, 2020).

It is against this rich and complex intellectual background that the discipline of *ādāb al-baḥth wa al-munāẓarah* is to be understood. Belonging to a broader family of Islamic intellectual sciences that arose at the intersection of the Greek logical heritage and the native Arabic-Islamic scholarly tradition, the discipline synthesized and transcended the earlier traditions of logic and dialectic. Linguistically, the term *al-munāẓarah* denotes a structured exchange of views between two parties on a given matter (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994), and is derived from the Arabic root *al-naẓar*, which carries three principal semantic dimensions: *deliberation* (*tafkīr*), signifying that disputation is inherently a cognitive act requiring sustained and disciplined thinking from both parties; *attentiveness* (*al-intizār*), denoting the obligation of the objecting party to listen and arrive at a genuine understanding of the proponent's position before responding, so that the exchange proceeds on the basis of accurate comprehension rather than misrepresentation (Ṭai'ī & Oruç, 2021); and *equivalence* (*al-naẓīr*), reflecting the principle that fair and legitimate disputation can obtain only between parties of comparable intellectual standing, since without a reasonable parity of knowledge and competence the conditions for genuine rational exchange cannot be met (Muṣṭafā, 2021). In its technical sense, *munāẓarah* refers to the formalized practice of structured intellectual exchange between a proponent

(*mu'allil*), who advances a thesis together with its supporting argument, and an interlocutor (*sā'il*), who subjects it to critical scrutiny (Miller, 1984).

The technical designation *ādāb al-baḥṭh wa al-munāẓarah* is generally attributed to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ashraf al-Ḥusaynī al-Samarqandī, who employed it as the title of what is widely regarded as the field's founding treatise (Karabela, 2010; Belhaj, 2016). This attribution is, however, complicated by Ḥājī Khalīfah's (1941) assertion that the science was first introduced by Rukn al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Āmidī al-Ḥanafī through his work *al-Irshād fī al-Khilāf wa al-Jadal*, thus predating al-Samarqandī by several generations. The intellectual origins of the discipline can be traced from the Greek tradition of dialectical reasoning, through the Islamic reception of Aristotle's *Topics*, and into the formation of indigenous Arabic logical sciences during the ninth and tenth centuries (Hallaq, 1993). By the high medieval period, it had developed its own dedicated body of literature, distinct from formal logic (*ilm al-manṭiq*), juristic disputation (*jadal fiqhī*), and theological debate. What most distinguished the discipline, however, was its overriding concern with the proper *conduct* of intellectual exchange, a concern reflected in the centrality of *adab* (etiquette, propriety, and intellectual discipline) in its very designation.

The discipline developed organically from two converging currents: formal logic (*manṭiq*) and dialectic (*jadal*), both of which had been incorporated into Islamic theology (*kalām*) and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) as tools for analyzing and evaluating arguments. By the 4th / 10th century, Muslim philosophers (*falāsifah*) had substantially advanced the science of dialectic through sustained engagement with the Aristotelian corpus, whilst early Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*) independently cultivated a parallel tradition of structured scholarly disagreement known as the science of *khilāf*. *Khilāf* is a term denoting opposition and divergence of opinion which bears a notable resemblance to the scholastic *sic et non* method of juxtaposing apparently contradictory positions before seeking their resolution (Syamsuddin, 2020). Works within this tradition survive from as early as the 2nd / 8th century (Brockelmann, 1943-1949; Sezgin, 1967), and a flourishing literature on theological and legal dialectic had taken shape by the early 5th / 10th century, as evidenced by such works as Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī's *al-Ma'ūnah fī al-Jadal* (1987) and *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-Jadal*, Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī's *al-Kāfiyah fī al-Jadal*, and Abū al-Wafā' ibn 'Aqīl's *Kitāb al-Jadal 'alā Ṭarīqah al-Fuqahā'*. Formal disputation had likewise become a distinct and recognized mode of scholarly instruction by at least the fourth/tenth century; as Makdisi (1974) has observed, it was through disputation that a scholar's pre-eminence within a given field was publicly established and affirmed.

Notwithstanding these earlier developments, *ādāb al-baḥṭh wa al-munāẓarah* did not attain recognition as an independent scholarly discipline, neither reducible to formal logic nor coextensive with juristic dialectic until the 7th / 13th century. Al-Samarqandī's foundational treatise inaugurated the new field and established the template upon which subsequent works, commentaries, and marginal glosses were modeled for generations. A further impetus came from the Ash'arite theologian 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), whose concise treatise became a central point of reference for later scholars (Syamsuddin, 2020). Miller's (1984) assessment, however, is that none of the works produced in the wake of al-Samarqandī's contribution advanced substantially beyond the foundational rules he had established in his *Risālah* and *Qusṭās*. Al-Samarqandī's enduring influence is nonetheless evident in the long succession of Ottoman scholars who engaged with and built upon his legacy, among them Hüseyin Şāh Çelebī Amāsī, Kemālpāşazāde, Fahreddin al-Ḥusaynī, Birgivi Meḥmed Efendi, 'Abdülkerīm Çelebī Akhişārī, Ḥasan Tīrevī, Nişārī Meḥmed Kayserī, Çilli 'Ömer, Anṭākī, Mūsā Efendi 'Abdullāh Toḡadī, Jārullāh Veliyyüddīn Efendi, Muṣṭafā Ḥādīmī, Akkirmānī Muḥammad Kefevī, Ismā'īl Gelenbevī, Aḥmed Şevkī, and Aḥmed Cevdet Pasha (Rudolph, 1977).

The discipline reached its most substantial period of growth and systematization during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sustained by the remarkable intellectual productivity of Ottoman scholarly circles. The Ottoman scholar Saçaklızāde Meḥmed Efendi offered a telling measure of the discipline's perceived importance, remarking that a scholar without grounding in this science would scarcely be able to follow advanced discussions in logic, theology, or jurisprudence. This period saw the production of commentaries and extended glosses on al-Ījī's treatise by a succession of distinguished scholars, among them Mullā Ḥanafī Tabrīzī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Āmidī, Aḥmed Ḥācī-Ömerzādeh, Es'ad Yānyavī, Meḥmed Kefevī, and Ismā'īl Gelenbevī (Karabela, 2010). The period also yielded three significant original textbooks: Ṭāshköprüzāde's *Risālah fī Ādāb al-Baḥth wa al-Munāẓarah*, Ḥuseyn Adanavī's *al-Ḥusayniyyah*, and Saçaklızāde's *Taqrīr al-Qawānīn al-Mutadāwilah fī 'Ilm al-Munāẓarah*. Saçaklızāde further composed a shorter companion work widely known as *al-Waladiyyah*, which subsequently attracted numerous commentaries from later scholars, a testament to the tradition's enduring vitality (El-Rouayheb, 2015). Despite this rich intellectual heritage, the contribution of *ādāb al-baḥth wa al-munāẓarah* to contemporary applied scholarship, and to *da'wah* methodology in particular, remains a comparatively underexplored area of inquiry.

The Architecture of Munāẓarah: A Structural Overview

Taşköprüzade (2012) opens his treatise with a precise definition: “formal disputation is the examination, with discernment, by both parties, of the relationship between two things, with the aim of manifesting the truth (*al-munāẓarah hiya al-naẓar bi al-baṣīrah min al-jānibayni fī al-nisbah bayna al-shay'ayni iẓhāran li al-ṣawāb*). This definition is theoretically significant for several reasons.

- i. The emphasis on bilateral discernment (*al-naẓar bi al-baṣīrah min al-jānibayni*) establishes that *munāẓarah* is not a unilateral act of refutation but a collaborative endeavor. Both parties bear a cognitive and ethical obligation to seek the truth. This dimension is directly relevant to *da'wah* practice, where the temptation to prioritize rhetorical victory over genuine communication is ever-present.
- ii. The definition's focus on the relationship between two things (*al-nisbah bayna al-shay'ayni*) aligns *munāẓarah* with a propositional, thesis-driven model of intellectual exchange. This is precisely the structure of philosophical disputation with New Atheists, who characteristically advance specific propositions such as “religious belief is irrational,” “God is a failed scientific hypothesis,” or “religion is socially harmful,” which demand a structured response.
- iii. The telos of manifesting truth (*iẓhāran li al-ṣawāb*) frames the entire enterprise within an epistemological commitment that transcends mere victory in argument. For the *da'wah* practitioner, this aligns intellectual engagement with the broader goal of *da'wah* itself: not to humiliate the interlocutor but to open pathways toward truth.

The Tripartite Functions of the Questioner (Sā'il)

Taşköprüzade (2012) identifies three permissible modes of objection available to the questioner (*sā'il*): *al-munāqaḍah* (contradiction of premises), *al-naqd* (refutation by counter-instance), and *al-mu'āraḍah* (counter-argument). These modes correspond, respectively, to challenges directed at the premises of an argument, at the illustrative instances deployed in its support, and at the conclusion. Collectively, they constitute an exhaustive taxonomy of objection types within a propositional dispute to be implemented during dialogue with New Atheists.

- i. *Munāqaḍah* (Premise Challenge): New Atheists frequently mount what are, in Taşköprüzade's terms, premise challenges. Dawkins's (2006) “Ultimate Boeing 747”

- argument challenges the theist's premise that a complex universe requires a designer by arguing that a designer would itself require explanation, thus generating an infinite regress (*tasalsul*). In Taşköprüzade's framework, such a challenge constitutes a *munāqaḍah* directed at the causal premise of the cosmological argument. The framework specifies that the respondent (the *da'wah* practitioner) must either establish the denied premise with independent proof or indication (*dalīl* or *tanbīh*), or demonstrate that the questioner's supporting reason (*sanad*) is equivalent in status to the premise it challenges, and therefore of no argumentative gain.
- ii. *Naqḍ* (Counter-instance): The counter-instance objection (*naqḍ*) finds clear expression in Hitchens's (2007) method of adducing historical counter-examples to undermine general theological claims. When a *da'wah* practitioner argues, for instance, that Islam promotes human dignity, Hitchens marshals instances of religiously sanctioned violence as counter-instances (*shawāhid*). Taşköprüzade's framework is precise in its guidance here: the respondent must either negate the validity of the counter-instance itself (by contesting its accuracy, relevance, or interpretation) or establish the original claim through a different proof that the counter-instance does not undermine. The framework further stipulates that to deny the counter-instance without any supporting justification constitutes *mukābarah* (obstinacy), which is inadmissible. The *da'wah* practitioner is thereby ethically prohibited from dismissing historical evidence without engaging with it.
 - iii. *Mu'āraḍah* (Counter-argument): The counter-argument mode corresponds most closely to the systematic alternative frameworks that New Atheists offer in place of religion: Dawkins's Darwinian naturalism, Harris's "science of morality," and Dennett's meme-based theory of religious evolution. In each case, the New Atheist does not merely negate the theist's conclusion but advances a competing explanatory account. Taşköprüzade's framework identifies this as *mu'āraḍah* and specifies that when such a counter-argument is advanced, the roles of questioner and respondent are effectively reversed: the *da'wah* practitioner now assumes the position of the questioner and may subject the counter-argument to the same tripartite modes of challenge. This inversion is strategically significant, as it prevents the conversation from being perpetually defined by the New Atheist's agenda.

The Functions of the Respondent (Mu'allil) and Their Da'wah Implications

As the proponent of a thesis, the *mu'allil* in Taşköprüzade's framework bears the burden of establishing and defending his claims. The framework delineates specific responsive obligations corresponding to each mode of objection.

When faced with a premise challenge (*munāqaḍah*), the respondent must establish the contested premise either by independent proof (*dalīl*) or by an indication (*tanbīh*) that directs the questioner's attention to the self-evidence or coherence of the premise. The prohibition on responding to a bare denial with another denial or what the framework terms "barren obstinacy" is particularly instructive for *da'wah* practitioners who may be tempted to reassert their positions without further argument. The framework demands intellectual accountability from the respondent as much as from the questioner.

When faced with a counter-instance (*naqḍ*), the respondent has two options: to negate the counter-instance by demonstrating its inapplicability or inaccuracy, or to establish the original claim by a different route that is immune to the counter-instance. This dual availability of responses reflects the framework's sophisticated understanding of the relationship between general claims and particular evidence disputes between Muslim *da'wah* practitioners and New Atheists.

The framework also addresses a case of direct relevance to *da'wah* practice: the *naqil*, the transmitter who presents an argument in a transmissive capacity (citing the Qur'an, Hadith, or scholarly opinion) rather than as an original proponent. Taşköprüzade specifies that such a transmitter cannot be held to objections of denial (*man*) directed at the transmitted content; one may only request authentication of the transmission. This is an important procedural safeguard in *da'wah* contexts, where *da'wah* practitioners frequently cite scriptural or scholarly authority and must distinguish between the validity of the transmission and the validity of the argument derived from it.

The Etiquettes of Munāẓarah as a Da'wah Ethics

Perhaps the most immediately applicable dimension of Taşköprüzade's framework for *da'wah* practice is its section on the etiquettes (*ādāb*) of disputation. These etiquettes function as a code of intellectual conduct governing the manner, not merely the content, of the engagement. Their applicability to dialogue with New Atheists is considerable. The framework enjoins the disputant to avoid excessive brevity (*ījāz*) and excessive prolixity (*īṭnāb*). In the context of engagement with New Atheism, this counsel points toward a measured, precise mode of expression that neither condenses complex arguments into slogans nor dilutes them through interminable elaboration. Dawkins and Hitchens, in particular, are skilled at exploiting vague or overextended responses; Taşköprüzade's injunction toward the mean serves as a methodological corrective.

The prohibition on obscure or unfamiliar terminology is equally pertinent. *Da'wah* directed at secular, atheist audiences demands that classical Islamic concepts be rendered intelligible without being emptied of their meaning. The framework's emphasis on clarity of expression aligns with contemporary communication theory's recognition that effective persuasion requires audience-centered language.

The injunction not to dispute with those unworthy of disputation save with due reverence and respect (*wa 'an al-munāẓarah maqām ahl al-maḥababah wa al-iḥtirām*) is of profound ethical significance. New Atheists are, almost without exception, serious scholars and intellectuals whose engagement with religion, however hostile, reflects genuine philosophical investment. The framework's insistence on respectful engagement, even with formidable opponents, guards against the kind of dismissive contempt that forecloses genuine dialogue and which would, in any case, constitute a failure of *da'wah* ethics.

Finally, the prohibition on holding one's opponent in contempt (*wa allā yaḥsibu al-khasm ḥaqīran*) articulates a commitment to the dignity of the interlocutor that resonates powerfully with Qur'anic principles of *da'wah*, including the command to "call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation and argue with them in the best manner" (al-Nahl, 16:125). Taşköprüzade's framework thus operates as an applied Islamic ethics of intellectual engagement.

The Conditions of Conclusion: Ifhām and Ilzām

Taşköprüzade's account of how a disputation concludes is particularly valuable for *da'wah* strategy. The framework specifies two terminal conditions: *al-ifhām* (the silencing of the respondent through exhaustion of his argumentative resources) and *al-ilzām* (the binding of the questioner by a logically inescapable conclusion). Crucially, the framework observes that a disputation ends when neither party can further fulfill their respective functions and not necessarily when either party concedes.

This observation carries important implications for the psychology and strategy of *da'wah*. Practitioners often measure the success of an intellectual engagement by whether the

interlocutor publicly concedes. Taşköprüzade's framework reframes success in terms of the logical binding (*ilzām*) of the opponent: if the *da'wah* practitioner can establish a proof that terminates in premises that are either self-evidently true or already conceded by the interlocutor, the intellectual exchange has achieved its epistemological objective, regardless of whether acknowledgment follows. This shifts the evaluative horizon of *da'wah* from rhetorical victory to epistemological integrity as defined by the Qur'an.

Taşköprüzade's Framework as a *Da'wah* Methodology

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that Taşköprüzade's *Ādab al-Baḥth wa al-Munāẓarah* functions simultaneously as a logical system, a procedural protocol, and an ethical code; three dimensions that are indispensable to effective *da'wah* in the contemporary context. The logical system equips the *da'wah* practitioner with an analytical vocabulary for identifying the type of objection being raised and the type of response it demands. The procedural protocol prevents the exchange from degenerating into an amorphous clash of assertions. The ethical code ensures that the engagement reflects the moral character of *da'wah* as an act of sincere invitation rather than aggressive polemic.

This three-dimensional character distinguishes Taşköprüzade's contribution from more recent approaches to Muslim engagement with New Atheism, which tend to emphasize either the theological (rebutting specific claims) or the communicative (adjusting tone and medium) but rarely the procedural. A *da'wah* methodology that lacks procedural rigor is vulnerable to the fast-paced, rhetorically polished style of New Atheist argumentation. The framework supplies precisely this procedural infrastructure.

It would be intellectually dishonest to present Taşköprüzade's framework as a complete and self-sufficient *da'wah* practitioner's methodology for engagement with New Atheism. Several important limitations must be acknowledged, which are:

- i. The framework was developed within a shared intellectual culture in which both parties accepted the basic norms of logical argumentation and the authority of classical sources. Engagement with New Atheists takes place within a quite different epistemological culture in which empirical falsifiability serves as the primary criterion of rational acceptability. The *da'wah* practitioner who deploys Taşköprüzade's framework must, therefore, supplement it with fluency in the philosophy of science and the epistemology of religious belief.
- ii. The framework's conception of the disputation as a bilateral, structured exchange with defined roles presupposes a degree of mutual willingness to observe the rules of reasoned discourse. New Atheist discourse, particularly in its popular and online manifestations, does not always model such willingness. The framework's prohibition on obstinacy (*mukābarah*), for instance, is binding only on a participant who accepts the norms of rational engagement. Its force is therefore conditional on the interlocutor's good faith.
- iii. *Munāẓarah* as classically conceived is primarily an oral, dialogic form. Its application to written, broadcast, or digital modes of New Atheist-Muslim engagement requires a degree of creative adaptation. Scholars of *da'wah* methodology have increasingly attended to the transformation of *da'wah* across media platforms (Hamid, 2016); the adaptation of *munāẓarah* principles to these contexts remains a productive avenue for further research.
- iv. Notwithstanding these limitations, the framework's complementarity with other resources in the Islamic intellectual tradition, including *ʿilm al-kalām*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and Qur'anic rhetoric, suggests that it is best understood as one indispensable component of a broader, integrated *da'wah* methodology rather than a standalone solution.

Implications for Da'wah Education and Training

The present findings have concrete implications for the training and education of *da'wah* practitioners. Islamic higher education institutions that prepare students for public engagement with secularism and atheism would benefit from incorporating a systematic study of *Ādāb al-Bāḥth wa al-Munāẓarah* into their curricula. Such study would develop in students' procedural competencies required to engage in structured intellectual exchange without losing composure, clarity, or ethical grounding.

Moreover, the revival of the *munāẓarah* tradition in educational settings could serve a broader pedagogical function: training students in the art of principled disagreement, a competency that is valuable not only for engagement with New Atheism but also for navigating internal Islamic scholarly disagreement and for interfaith dialogue more broadly. The etiquette of *munāẓarah*, as articulated by Taşköprüzade, constitutes a contribution to the education of the Muslim intellect in the full sense of the term.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Taşköprüzade's *Ādāb al-Bāḥth wa al-Munāẓarah* offers a rigorous and ethically grounded methodology for *da'wah* engagement with New Atheism. Through a systematic analysis of the framework's core components (the tripartite functions of the questioner, the corresponding obligations of the respondent, and the etiquettes governing the entire exchange), the article has demonstrated that the classical Islamic science of disputation possesses both the analytical precision and the ethical depth required for productive engagement with the assertive, multi-disciplinary discourse of New Atheism.

Mapping Taşköprüzade's typology onto New Atheist argumentative strategies reveals that the classical framework is genuinely applicable. It equips *da'wah* practitioners with a vocabulary for identifying the type of objection being advanced, a protocol for responding with appropriate rigor, and an ethical code that guards the integrity of the engagement. The framework's redefinition of the goal of the *da'wah* exchange is perhaps its most profound contribution.

This article contributes to a growing scholarly conversation about the recovery of classical Islamic intellectual resources for contemporary applied purposes. It suggests that the Islamic tradition contains within itself not only the theological content of its self-defense but also the methodological architecture of principled intellectual engagement. Further research might extend this framework to other contexts of *da'wah* in pluralistic societies, examine its application across digital media platforms, and explore its relationship with contemporary theories of argumentation and informal logic.

Declaration of AI-Generated Content

In preparing this manuscript, the author used Claude (Anthropic) to refine language, improving phrasing and enhancing stylistic clarity. All substantive intellectual content, scholarly argument, and academic judgment remain entirely the author's own. The author has reviewed, critically assessed, and edited all AI-assisted output, and assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the published work.

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