

Knowing the Unknown: The Paradox of “The Absolute Unknown” From Fakhr al-Din al-Razi to Tashkoprizada*

Harun Kuşlu**

*Translated by Feichal Abdou Moumouni****

Abstract: A paradox that originated from Plato’s Meno and that perpetuated throughout the classical period of the history of Islamic philosophy within the same structure seems to have been reconstructed by Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), and hence gained a new philosophical context. Upon this, both the statement of the paradox and the scholarly framework within which it came to be addressed were renewed. Rather than the issues surrounding the possibility of the acquisition of knowledge, the issue was centered in this framework on the structural relationship between the parts of knowledge (i.e., conception and assent), and the impact such a relationship had on how the topics of logic came to be discussed. In this context, providing an explanation on how conception and assent arose became necessary for a suppositional concept such as “the-absolute unknown (*al-majhūl mutlaqan*)”. This inquiry into finding an explanation, in turn, led to our usage of the expression “knowing the unknowable”. To overcome this problem, esteemed logicians after Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī proposed several effective solutions. One such endeavor had continued up until the Ottoman period. Henceforth, the Ottoman philosopher Tashkoprizāda (d. 968/1561) heavily critiqued these proposed solutions, and instead provided a much stronger alternative. For in the philosophical system that Tashkoprizāda used, the proposed solutions provided by early philosophers such as al-Khūnājī (d. 646/1248) and al-Urmawī (d. 682/1283), and those provided by Şadr al-Sharī’a (d. 747/1346) and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf Al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), were equally weak, even though these latter were closer to Tashkoprizāda in both time and methodology.

Keywords: Self-referential paradox, Absolute unknown, Suppositional concepts, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, Tashkoprizāda.

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* Dr., Istanbul Medeniyet University, Department of Philosophy.

** MA Student, Ibn Haldun University, Department of Islamic Studies.

I. Introduction

The philosophical debates over the possibility of acquiring knowledge and its processes can at least be traced back to the well-known Meno paradox.¹ Apart from being analyzed in Plato's Meno dialogue,² Aristotle discussed this issue thoroughly in his book *Posterior Analytics* examining the notion of certain knowledge and as a result suggesting that the process of acquiring knowledge by way of reasoning is ultimately based on pre-existing knowledge, for otherwise it leads to an infinite regression in the mind.³ Both al-Fārābī (d. 339/950),⁴ who was the first in the Islamic world to have systematically examined logic and topics related to methodology; and Avicenna (d. 428/1037),⁵ who acknowledged the value of al-Fārābī within his intellectual tradition, conferred a significant interest onto this debate in their work on *Kitāb al-Burhān*.⁶ However, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) had positioned this issue in a different context, and as a result Islamic philosophers began to address the issue from new angles.⁷ As will be seen below from the viewpoints of the post-Avicennan logicians, this issue had exceeded the limits of the debate surrounding "the possibility of acquiring knowledge;" furthermore, it had been examined in the context of a holistic problem such as the structural relations between the topics of logic and the ordering of these topics.

After Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, esteemed scholars such as al-Khūnājī (d. 646/1248), al-Abhari (d. 633/1264), al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), al-Kātībī (d. 675/1277), al-Urmawī

- 1 For further evaluations regarding the historical origin of the paradox discussed here and the previously written articles, see Joep Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani" al-hukm 'alayhi: An Exploratory Anthology of a False Paradox in Medieval Islamic Philosophy", *Oriens*, no 3-4 (2014): 399-402.
- 2 Platon, *Menon*, tr. Ahmet Cevizci (Istanbul: Sentez, 2007), 80 d4-81 a3.
- 3 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics*, tr. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 71a1, p. 503. This idea is expressed in the Arabic *Organon* as "every mental learning and teaching can only occur with a pre-existing knowledge"; see Aristū, "al-Burhān", *al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-Manṭiq Aristū*, ed. Farid Jabr, I (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnāni, 1999), 425.
- 4 al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, tr. Ömer Türker and Ömer Mahir Alper (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2008), 52 vd.
- 5 Ibn Sīnā, *II. Analitikler: Burhān*, tr. Ömer Türker (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2006), 8, 24 vd.
- 6 On how al-Fārābī and Avicenna discuss the Menon paradox, see Yaşar Aydın, "Fārābī ve İbn Sīnā'da Menon Paradoksu (Öğrenme Paradoksu)", *Uluslararası İbn Sīnā Sempozyumu: Bildiriler 22-24 Mayıs 2008* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları, 2009), 13-42.
- 7 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, Ahad Farāmarz Qarāmalakī and Ādina Asgharinazhād (Tehran: Dānīshgāh-i Imām Sādiq, 1381/2005), 7. For a separate study combining both the context of the paradox in the history of Islamic philosophy as in *II. Analitikler (Posterior Analytics)* and the context addressed in this article, see Ahād Farāmarz Qarāmalakī and Muḥsin Jahid, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa ḥall-i mu'ammā-yi majhūl-i mutlaq", *Falsafa-i Din* 1, no 3 (HŞ 1384): 46-33 quoted from Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani". 399.

(d. 682/1283), Shams al-Din al-Samarqandi (d. 702/1303), Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī (d. 702/1365), Şadr al-Sharī'a (d. 747/1346), and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) continued writing about this subject. When approaching this issue, the post-Avicennan scholars were primarily concerned with analyzing the relationship between the parts of knowledge (i.e., conception, and assent)⁸ and providing a rational basis for placing the topics of logic in order of importance. Given that conception naturally precedes assent, the rules providing conception also essentially had to be coined in the books before those rules providing assent; in other words, books on logic had to be arranged in a manner corresponding to the way knowledge occurs in the mind.⁹ However, as will be seen in detail below, this rule led to a paradox that would keep logicians busy for a long time.

Although Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī had at an early stage pointed out the paradox arising from the expression of this rule, the first attempts to provide a solution were later made by logicians such as al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī. Both al-Khūnajī in *Kashf al-asrār*¹⁰ and al-Urmawī in his *Maṭāli' al-anwār*¹¹ offered the same solution when addressing this paradox. Because these works were commented on respectively by al-Kātibī and Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, the commentators had scrutinized the offered solutions and subjected them to criticism. Gaining access to al-Jurjānī's assessments regarding al-Urmawī's and Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī's ideas is also possible thanks to his *ḥāshiya* [gloss] on the *Maṭāli'*. A remarkable and more precise solution for this paradox compared to earlier ones can be found in the treatise the 16th-century Ottoman-Turkish philosopher Tashkoprizāda (d. 968/1561) wrote on this subject in particular.¹² Tashkoprizāda, after emphasizing having read al-Jurjānī's

8 For the content of Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī's work, which elaborates on the relationship between *conception* and *assent* in the post Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī period, in addition to his views regarding assent, see Ömer Türker, "Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī on the Notion of Assent and Its Philosophical Implications", *Nazariyat* 5, 1-23.

9 Although during the pre-Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī period of Islamic philosophy the distinction between conception and assent was one of the tools by means of which the Meno paradox used to be surpassed, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī and later logicians dealt with the new form of the paradox, which in fact stems from this distinction itself. Regarding the usage of this distinction in the classical period, see Aydınlı, "Fārābī ve İbn Sīnā'da Menon Paradoksu", 130-42.

10 Afḍal al-Din al-Khūnajī, *Kashf al-asrār 'an ghawāmiḍ al-afkār*, ed. Khaled al-Rouayheb (Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Pazhūhash-i Hikma wa Falsafa-i Īrān, 1389/2010), 9-10.

11 For al-Urmawī and Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, see Quṭb al-Din al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, ed. Usāma al-Sā'idi, I (Qom: Manshūrāt-i Dhawī al-Qurbā, 1391), 77-85.

12 Tashkoprizāda Aḥmad Afandi, "Fath amr al-mughlaq fī mas'alat majhūl al-mutlaq", In *Mantik Risaleleri*, ed. and tr. Berra Kepekçi, Mehmet Özturan and Harun Kuşlu (Istanbul: İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2017), 107-63.

ḥāshiyā on the *Maṭāli'*,¹³ meticulously examined both al-Jurjānī's and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's arguments regarding this issue.

When referring to almost all the above logicians in the context of the strengths and weaknesses of the previously proposed solutions, Tashkoprizāda also revealed how these answers had been criticized by other philosophers in Islamic thought thereby presenting an alternative line to the historical development of the problem. Aside from Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Jurjānī, Tashkoprizāda can also be said to have attributed significant importance to the views of Ṣadr al-Sharī'a (one of the influential figures of the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition), and to have offered an alternative line to the historical progress presented in other works on the course of this subject in the history of Islamic logic.¹⁴ In addition, we also notice the tools he used to have provided a more adequate solution compared to those previously proposed. Therefore, we will first discuss how Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī coined the paradox and then discuss the proposed solutions of some important logicians from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to the Ottoman period, with reference to the tools involved in their solutions. Meanwhile, we will touch upon Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ṣadr al-Sharī'a, al-Jurjānī, and Tashkoprizāda's criticisms of the previous answers to the paradox. At the end of the paper, we will explain the distinctiveness of Tashkoprizāda's solution and uncover its dissimilarity to the previously proposed solutions. We will in this manner shed light on the missing and inadequate elements in the earlier logicians' answers that led Tashkoprizāda to new inquiries while focusing on the implications of the answers put forth, along with the historical and problematic aspects of the issue.

II. Reconstructing the Paradox: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, when evaluating the relationship between conception and assent in his book *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, remarks that according to al-Fārābī's division of knowledge that Islamic logicians had inherited, assent consists of three conceptions: the subject of judgment, the means by which judgment is made, and the judgment

13 Tashkoprizāda, *al-Shaqāiq al-Nu'māniyya fī 'ulamā' al-dawla al-'Uthmāniyya*, ed. Ahmed Subhi Furat (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1985), 554.

14 The work of Lameer illustrates how this discussion was conducted by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and later logicians through a relatively different line. In this regard, it is worth noting that Tashkoprizāda offers both an alternative line and lays the ground, with his criticism of the previous solution, for a philosophical analysis of the content.

itself.¹⁵ Here, al-Rāzī implies that making a judgment about something necessitates the conception of these three things; in other words, assenting something is not possible unless its conception is first available. Therefore, this idea was construed in the form of a rule where "The subject of judgment must be known in [at least] one aspect." However, because both assent and conception represent parts of knowledge; the fact that assent is clarified by its counterpart (conception) leaves room for objections.¹⁶ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī discusses the objections and implications regarding this view in the corresponding section of his book. In this sense, he acknowledged the effort some objectors had made to override this rule based on the *equivalence relationship* between propositions. When the converted form of the original proposition is invalidated by means of the equivalence relationship, the original form is also known to become invalidated. When one converts the proposition that incorporates the rule of "the subject of judgment is known in at least one aspect" the following proposition is obtained: "The unknown cannot be subjected to judgment (غير المعلوم يمتنع الحكم عليه)." Using the expression "The unknown cannot be subjected to judgment," Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had thus revealed the paradoxical proposition. In fact, when invalidating this converted form of the proposition, its original form also becomes invalidated. Therefore beginning by invalidating the converted proposition is only logical.

Probable objectors demonstrated the invalidity of the converted proposition either by showing how it contradicts its original form or how it invalidates itself by leading to a *self-referential* paradox. According to these objectors, this proposition both contradicts the original one and is an invalid proposition in and of itself, the reason being that the subject-term of the proposition "The unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" (i.e., the unknown) is considered either as something that is indeed "unknown" or something that is "known." If the subject-term is something "unknown," then this proposition is in contradiction with the original (i.e., the subject of judgment is known in at least one aspect) because the subject-term of this proposition is quite "unknown" while the subject of judgment is stated to be something known. However, two propositions with an equivalent relationship must not be contradictory. In the second possible case, if the subject-term of the proposition is to be taken as "something known to be unknown," the term "unknown" being known in terms of that characteristic is indicated if

15 Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 7.

16 Regarding this topic additionally, see Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani'", 397.

it follows that the proposition is contradicted in the context of its own term, as what is referred to as “unknown” turns into “something known that is subjected to knowledge.” Therefore, the proposition negates, or even further invalidates its own subject-term. Consequently, it is an invalid proposition.

Given the current depiction of the problem, whether or not the subject-term is considered known, the proposition is invalid either way. Hence, whoever aspires to answer this question must either take the subject-term to be an unknown (hereby closing the self-referential paradox) and thereby commit to solving the resulting contradiction, or take it to be a known (thereby becoming free of the contradiction that results from the original proposition) and commit to solving the self-referential paradox. As such, the problem in question is neither a Meno nor a self-referential paradox alone. On the contrary, it is a combined paradox. To make this explanation more explicit, we may show the propositions as follows:

[1] “The unknown” cannot be subjected to judgment.

[2a] If Proposition 1 is true, then its subject-term is considered “*unknown*”

[3] “The unknown” has been subjected to judgment.

However “the unknown” may not be subjected to judgment (Proposition1)

Conclusion: Propositions 1 and 3 are in contradiction

(because the proposition transforms into “The unknown may not be subjected to judgment, yet it is being subjected to judgment”)

[2b] If Proposition 1 is true when the subject-term is “*known*,” then Proposition 1 is rendered invalid.

This is because the proposition implies the unknown to be known and therefore is self-negated. In addition, the rule regarding the “impossibility of the known being subjected to judgment” becomes invalid.

Even though Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī did not deal with the issue in clear and precise terms as later logicians, he did put forward the fundamental propositions upon which they would later discuss it. Also, because Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī considers the rule “Assent requires conception” to be axiomatic, he offers no solution overcoming the paradox, the reason in his opinion being that “necessary rules are not subjected to criticism/paradox (*al-tashkik fī-l-ḍarūriyyāt lā yuqdaḥ fihā*).”¹⁷

17 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 8. al-Kātibi too states in the commentary of this work that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was contented with these statements and therefore did not attempt to provide an answer; see al-Kātibi, *al-Munaṣṣaṣ fī sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehid Ali Paşa Or. 1680, fos. 3a; Also, see Lameer, “Ghayr al-ma’lūm yamtani”, 405-8.

II. Discussing the Paradox in the Post-Rāzīan Period: Solutions and Criticisms

As stated above, important figures from the post-Rāzīan tradition presented several answers in their works on logic in an attempt to solve this paradox. From al-Rāzī up to Tashkoprizāda, the tools used for solving the paradox were for the most part based on the following elements (Tashkoprizāda also includes even more unusual tools in the solution):

1. Essentialist and externalist readings of the propositions
2. Substantial-descriptive readings
3. Distinguishing between suppositional existence (*al-farḍ fi-l-dhihn*) and external existence
4. Distinguishing between substance and a mental supposition
5. Distinguishing between the predicate and predication
6. *Hāl al-ḥukm* [the state of judgment] and *hāl i'tibār al-ḥukm* [the state by considering the judgment]

Philosophers mainly attempted to solve the problem using these distinctions. They proceeded by sometimes considering the original proposition and its converted form, sometimes only the converted form as a descriptive proposition or other times as the converted form that cannot be taken as an external but only as an essential proposition, and sometimes by taking the subject-term of one of the propositions as a mental supposition. Let us now explain what these solution tools meant, how they were used by logicians to resolve the paradox, and then how these solutions were criticized in later periods.

In the introductory sections from *Kashf al-asrār*, al-Khūnājī expresses this rule and the paradox that it engenders in a more articulated manner than Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in an attempt to provide a grounding reason for why the topics in logic are ordered from conception to assent. First the following should be stated:

Just as conception naturally precede assent, definition (*al-qawl al-shāriḥ*) also deserves to precede demonstration (*ḥujja*) when being coined. Because given the impossibility of attributing two things to each other without knowing either of them or the connection that exists between them, three conceptions must inevitably occur before every assent.¹⁸

In this case, "Making a judgment about something necessitates that the thing in question is known in one aspect." Therefore, departing from the equivalence

18 al-Khūnājī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 9-10.

relationship that exists between the proposition expressing this rule and its converted form, one can examine them both as elements of one conditional proposition: “If making a judgment about something necessitates that the thing in question is known in one aspect,” then “the absolute unknown (*al-majhūl mutlaqan*) cannot be subjected to judgment.” However, the consequent of this conditional proposition entails a paradox and thus appears invalid. Based on the falseness of the consequent, the antecedent is also assumed to be false as a true proposition would not entail a false proposition.¹⁹ This construction from al-Khūnājī and al-Urmawī might be better explained by making use of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s expressions²⁰ as follows:

[1] If in order to make a judgment about something, knowing one aspect of the thing in question is necessitated (i.e., The subject of judgment is known in one aspect, which is also the antecedent)

THE CONVERSE FORM IS THEN TAKEN, where:

[2] The absolute unknown’s inability to be subjected to judgment must be true (This is the consequent)

BASED ON THE IMPLICATION OF EQUIVALENCE RULE

If the consequent is false, the antecedent is also false.

[3a] If Proposition 2 is true when the subject-term is “the absolutely unknown,”

[4] Then some unknowns can be subjected to judgment.

Meanwhile, the case is that “The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment” (Proposition 2)

CONCLUSION: CONTRADICTION

[3b] If Proposition 2 is true when its subject-term is considered “known”

[5] Then this proposition negates itself and therefore becomes invalid.

CONCLUSION: IT IS INVALID DUE TO THE SELF-REFERENTIAL PARADOX

19 This rule is clearly expressed in al-Kātibī’s *al-Shamsiyya* as follows: “since it is impossible for the wrong to implicate the truth... (لا ممتنع استلزام الصادق الكاذب)”, al-Kātibī, *al-Shamsiyya fī al-qawā’id al-mantiqiyya*, ed. Maḥdī Faḍlullah (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfi al-‘Arabi, 1998), 217.

20 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭālī’*, I, 90 vd. As Lameer has observed, although al-Urmawī uses the concepts showing the relationship between the components of the conditional proposition when answering the paradox, he did not establish the implicational relationship between the propositions, but he rather established the implicational relationship between the terms of the subject (“making judgment about something”) and predication (knowing that thing) of the paradoxical proposition, see Lameer, “Ghayr al-ma’lūm yamtani”, 416. Nevertheless, components of the conditional proposition shown in this article were manifested through Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s interpretation.

After exposing this paradox, al-Khūnaji and al-Urmawī proposed a solution based on distinguishing the "essentialist and externalist readings of propositions,"²¹ which in fact dates back to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Distinguishing between the essentialist and externalist readings of propositions arises by referring the subject-term of a proposition to an essence (*haqiqi*) in the mind or to external (*khārijī*) existences. In *Kashf al-asrār* al-Khūnaji explains the *essentialist* and *externalist* ways of reading propositions and the differences that exist between them as follows:

The statement: "Every C [is B]" may be considered either in terms of the external existence or in terms of essence. In the first case, we mean that B is true for everything that C is true for in the external existence. This necessitates that both are true for the external existent. Thus, the rule has been limited to every external existent of C, either in the past or the present. In the second case, however, we do not mean everything that has a share of the external existence; on the contrary, we mean that "everything that if had existed, would have been C, were to exist would be B".

The second point of view is not dependent on the external existence of either element [subject and predicate]; on the contrary, even if these elements had been non-existent (*ma'dūm*), the proposition would still be valid. In addition, when it actually exists in the external world, the judgment in itself is not limited to existents in the external world only. Therefore, based on the second point of view, had nothing been existent in the external world other than the color black, "every white is a color" would still be true, whereas "all colors are black" remains false. When considering the first, however, the opposite would be valid.²²

Another logician who effectively applied this distinction during that period was al-Kātibi. The following phrases from *al-Shamsiyya* will facilitate understanding the difference regarding the essentialist and externalist readings of propositions:

The difference between the two considerations is clear: In a situation where there is no square in the external world, it is true to say, in terms of essential proposition, that "every square is a figure;" however, this is false in terms of being an external proposition. Yet when no figure in the external world exists other than squares, saying that "every figure is a square" is true in terms of the external proposition, but false in terms of the essential proposition.²³

21 Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, 141; regarding this topic, see Tony Street, "Arabic and Islamic Philosophy of Language and Logic: 2.3.2. Post-Avicennan Logicians", <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-language> (25.02.2020)

22 al-Khūnaji, *Kashf al-asrār* 84-5.

23 al-Kātibi, *al-Shamsiyya*, 212-3.

As can be seen, an analysis of a proposition based on the essentialist or externalist reading is extremely effective in determining a proposition's semantics and truth value. The first names that Tashkoprižāda mentioned centuries later in the context of resolving the problem were al-Khūnaji²⁴ and al-Urmawī²⁵. Both attempted to solve the paradox based on this distinction in particular. Accordingly, the subject-term of a proposition can be addressed either by reference to an existent in the external world or an essence in the mind. Also, when the subject-term of a proposition is being addressed in terms of its essence, the subject-term does not necessarily refer to an existent in the external world. If we consider as an unknown (Proposition. 3a) the term "absolute unknown," which in fact is the subject-term of the converted form of Proposition 2 "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment," we will be able to overcome the self-referential paradox because the proposition already speaks of the unknown. It is also valid because it does not negate itself. In addition, when we analyze this proposition in terms of the externalist reading, the proposition becomes invalid, for there is no existent in the external world such as "an absolute unknown." Indeed, everything that exists in the external world is known in one aspect. This proposition being invalid, the implicational relationship based on the existing equivalence relationship between itself and the original form is deemed null, and as a result, the falsity of the one fails to engender the falsity of the other. Therefore, no contradiction is found between Proposition 1 "That which is subject to judgment is known in one aspect" and the paradoxical Proposition 2 considered with respect to the external world. This is because given the disappearance of the equivalent relationship between Propositions 1 and 2, the invalidity of the converted proposition does not invalidate the original proposition.

Hence, if Proposition 2, taken with respect to essence by reference to mental existence, is subjected to the essentialist reading, the proposition remains valid and the contradiction is overruled.²⁶ For even though nothing in the external world can be shown as an absolute unknown, talking about a meaning (essence) of an absolute unknown is still possible in the mind. Therefore, when Proposition 2 states "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" the judgment is not on "the absolute unknown (*al-majhūl al-mutlaq*)" in the external world but on an essence/

24 al-Khūnaji, *Kashf al-asrār*, 10.

25 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿāli*, I, 90 vd. For al-Urmawī additionally, see Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani", 415-22.

26 al-Khūnaji, *Kashf al-asrār*, 10.

meaning in the mind that namely takes Proposition 2 with respect to essence. Thus, this proposition, by virtue of its subject-term, both refers to the essence of the "absolute unknown" in the mind and makes a judgment about it. On the other hand, because it continues to be considered an unknown and thereby an essential proposition, it provides a solution that surpasses the self-referential paradox.

In the commentary *Maṭāli'*, one sees Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's attitude towards this solution. As he also states that, given the condition/state of the subject-term, converting the original proposition into an external proposition is certainly impossible. Therefore, we need to analyze this proposition with respect to essence, in which case the proposition remains valid and the claim of the objectors regarding "the invalidity of the paradoxical proposition" becomes invalidated (*kidhb al-tāli mamnū*). However, al-Jurjānī points out the weakness of this solution due to the following reasons: Firstly, we do not have to accept al-Khūnājī and al-Urmawī's claims whereby "Everything that exists in the external world is known in one aspect." On the contrary, what is known can quite plausibly be only "that aspect" because "knowing something in one aspect" and "knowing only 'that aspect'" are different things. To put it more clearly, even if the aspect of being known is possible by the mere property of something being in the external world, this might not make knowing that thing in an aspect possible. Secondly, they used the invalidity of the paradoxical Proposition 2 as evidence to undermine the implicational relationship between it and the original Proposition 1. Due to the invalidity of Proposition 2 and the implausibility of a true proposition implicating falsity, both were deemed invalid. However, even if it is not logically possible for a true proposition to implicate a false one, it is still possible for two false propositions to implicate each other.²⁷ In other words, those objectors who put forward the paradox and opposed the rule could very well have claimed that *it is precisely because of the invalidity of the original proposition that the paradoxical proposition is invalid*. Therefore, their solution does not appear strong enough.

The solution above was also criticized from another angle. Accordingly, if Proposition 2 "The absolute unknown is not subjected to judgment" were to be taken not in the affirmative form but rather in the negative form thus rendered "*No unknown* is subjected to judgment," then the solution based on the external proposition fails for negative propositions do not mandate the actual existence of the subject-term in the external world. Therefore, this

27 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, I, 92.

proposition becomes valid without the unknown needing to be in the external world; thus the contradiction between itself and the original form reemerges once again. This nullifies al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī's solutions. Although Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī raised this criticism, Ṣadr al-Sharī'a referred us to Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Qisṭās* as the source of this criticism.²⁸ In fact, this idea has been able to be observed since al-Kātibī's commentary on *Kashf al-asrār*.²⁹ In addition to the criticisms above, al-Samarqandī indicated that, if based on the claim that "there is no unknown in the external world," the subject-term of the proposition is taken as a known thing; this choice will take us back to the paradox of contradiction with the original proposition. His reasoning is that taking the subject-term as a known might lead into the thought that the thing in question should also exist in the external world. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī remarks that, although sensible in itself, this counterclaim has no value in this discussion for it is a transgression of the rules of objection (*qānūn al-tawjīh*). Nevertheless, these initial attempts to overcome the paradox seem to have not convinced later philosophers.

Another important factor in determining the semantics of a proposition is the substantial-descriptive readings. These constitute one of the many tools logicians have used to solve this paradox. These readings derive from Avicennan logic and constitute one of the basic components of this system. Avicenna, when putting forth the readings of a necessary proposition in *al-Ishārāt*, expressed that a proposition can be addressed substantially or descriptively.

Necessity is either absolute or occurs on condition. The condition is also either the perpetuity (*dawām*) of the substance's existence or the perpetuity of the subject's being described with what it has been assigned (*dawām kaww al-mawḍū' bi-mā wuḍi'a ma'ah*).

This distinction thus indicates that the meaning of a proposition can be determined according to a substantial or a descriptive reading. The expression "A human is necessarily a rational body" is a substantial proposition; this expression implies that "As long as the *substance* (*dhāt*) continues to exist as a human, it is a rational body." The expression "All that moves changes" is an example of a descriptive proposition, for the judgment of changeability has been connected to the *description* of movement. The difference between this condition and the previous one is obvious: In the substantial proposition, the judgment is based upon the actual existence of the substance (i.e., the human). In the descriptive

28 Ṣadr al-Sharī'a, *Ta'dīl al-'ulūm*, Nuruosmaniye Or. 2657, fos. 16a-17a.

29 al-Kātibī, *Sharḥ Kashf al-asrār*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Laleli Or. 2664, fos. 6b; Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani", 410.

proposition, however, the description ascribed to the substance is taken into consideration rather than the substance itself. For, as specified by Avicenna, if the actor of the movement has a substance and an essence, the descriptions of moving or not moving may then be attached³⁰ to this essence, and thus alter the meaning of the proposition accordingly.

Logicians had treated the antecedent and the consequent (or both together) as descriptive propositions based on this reading, and made use of this feature in resolving the paradox. In these propositions, both the terms "subject of judgment" as the subject-term of the antecedent and the "absolute unknown" as the subject-term of the consequent can suitably be taken as descriptive because neither the substance of "the subject of judgment" needs to be known nor does the substance of "the absolute unknown" implicate an impossibility due to its being subject to judgment. On the contrary, these features arose due to the descriptive reading both propositions have been subjected to. Simply put, "The subject of judgment remains known as long as it carries the description of being judged upon" (Proposition 1 [descriptive]) and "Subjecting the absolute unknown to judgment also remains impossible, as long as it carries the description of being absolutely unknown" (Proposition 2 [descriptive]). This solution is mentioned in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's commentary on *Maṭāli'* and was subjected to criticism by al-Jurjānī. The ordering of the argument in this solution is as follows:

Proposition 1 [descriptive]: "The subject of judgment remains known in one aspect as long as it carries the description of being judged upon."

Proposition 2 [descriptive] "Subjecting the absolute unknown to judgment remains impossible as long as it carries the description of being absolutely unknown."

If the absolute unknown in Proposition 2 is considered unknown, the self-referential paradox will have been surpassed as the proposition is about the unknown.

Additionally, "subjecting the unknown to judgment" means that it is subjected to judgment independent of its description of being "unknown" (Proposition 2 [substantial]), for as long as it carries the description of being unknown it cannot under no circumstances be subjected to judgment (Proposition 2 [descriptive]).

Conclusion: the equivalence relationship has been eliminated and the contradiction removed.

30 İbn Sīnā, *İşāretler ve Tembihler*, ed. Ali Durusoy, Muhittin Macit and Ekrem Demirli (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2005), 31. For detailed information regarding the substantial-descriptive reading of propositions, see Tony Street, "Arapça Mantık", *İslam Mantık Tarihi*, ed. and tr. Harun Kuşlu (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2013), 54-6, 81-7.

The proposition that subjects the unknown to judgment while taking it as an unknown (Proposition 2 [substantial]) loses its descriptive character and thus transforms into a substantial proposition. Henceforth, as the original Proposition 1 is descriptive (*mashrūṭa*) and its converse form (Proposition 2) substantial (general absolute); the situation implicates a difference of modalities between the two and thus the relationship of contradiction between them dies out. Tashkoprizāda summarizes the situation as follows:

If the subject of judgment in the consequent is an unknown, then subjecting certain unknowns to judgment should not be impossible. In fact, the implicated proposition is a general absolute (the substantial proposition), and the implicating proposition (i.e., antecedent) is *mashrūṭa* [the descriptive proposition]; therefore, no contradiction exists between them.³¹

On the other hand, if the absolute unknown in Proposition 2 is taken as a known, namely when “The term absolute unknown is considered to be known in terms of carrying the description of being unknown” (Proposition 2b [descriptive]), then being subjected to judgment with this description does not constitute a contradiction because the original proposition states that known things can be subjected to judgment. In other words, when considering an unknown, the subject of the proposition transcends the self-referential paradox; thus based on its character of being unknown it gains the eligibility of becoming subject to judgment as a descriptive proposition. Al-Jurjānī in this second alternative states that, rather than being substantial, the proposition has become a new descriptive proposition (*al-ḥiniyya*)³², and in that sense the contradiction arises anew; therefore, the solution can only be a solution for the first option (Proposition 3a).³³ The reason for this is that this proposition became a possible proposition and its being read descriptively as “Subjecting the absolute unknown to judgment is possible as long as it carries the description of being absolutely unknown.” Thus, it becomes an expression with the same modality as its original proposition.

In al-Samarqandī, we see another solution that also uses the descriptive reading, but only this time it takes the converse paradoxical Proposition 2 to be descriptive rather than the original Proposition 1 that expresses the rule. After

31 Tashkoprizāda, “Fath al-amr al-mughlaq”, 114-5.

32 For proposition with this nature, see al-Kātibi, *al-Shamiyyah*, 220.

33 al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjānī, *al-Sayyid ‘alā Sharḥ al-Maṭāli’* (Istanbul: Hacı Muharrem Efendi Matbaası, 1303), 79.

specifying the flaws of the solution based on the essentialist-externalist distinction, al-Samarqandī in his work *Qisṭās al-afkār* advances his own argument as a tighter answer. Al-Samarqandī's method aims to restate the truth of the paradoxical Proposition 2 "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment," by invalidating its contradiction. When a contradiction is falsified, its truth becomes restated, hence necessitating the truth of the original Proposition 1. This is because a true proposition can only be implicated from a true proposition. The descriptive Proposition 2 "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" is a proposition that necessitates being descriptive, and its meaning is "As long as the absolute unknown remains an absolute unknown, subjecting it to judgment remains impossible." On the other hand, its contradiction becomes a possible proposition in descriptive reading (*al-ḥiniyya*) in the form of "As long as the absolute unknown remains an absolute unknown, subjecting it to judgment is impossible," which in fact entails that "As long as the absolute unknown remains an absolute unknown, subjecting it to judgment is possible". However, the case for the descriptive reading was that the absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment as long as it remains an absolute unknown. The result is a contradiction, and therefore the proposition is invalidated. In this case, given that the contradictory proposition ("As long as the absolute unknown remains an absolute unknown, subjecting it to judgment is not impossible") has been invalidated, the proposition "As long as the absolute unknown remains an absolute unknown, subjecting it to judgment is impossible" has to be true.³⁴ Therefore, the proposition "The subject of judgment must have one known aspect," which is the original form of the paradoxical proposition, must be true. Thus, because the subject of the proposition is taken as an unknown, it is deemed free from the self-referential problem as well as being validated because its contradiction has been invalidated through a descriptive reading.

Şadr al-Sharī'a does not accept this suggestion from al-Samarqandī. According to Şadr al-Sharī'a, this suggestion is not a solution but a counterargument (*mu'arafa*). Put in terms of the disputation technique, it reduces the validity of the claim but does not propose a new claim or a solution. According to Şadr al-Sharī'a, al-Samarqandī had weakened the assertion of this paradox yet did not present any new evidence:

34 Shams al-Din al-Samarqandī, *Qisṭās al-afkār: Düşüncenin Kıstası*, ed. Necmeddin Pehlivan (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2014), 82. Additionally, see Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lüm yamtani", 429-31.

The one who puts forward this paradox (*al-mughālit*) declared Proposition 2 (i.e., the consequent) false because it implicated a false proposition. The one responding to the paradox believed this proposition to be true by stating “If the proposition were false, its contradictory would be true, but the contradictory is not true.” This, however, only proves that the correctness of the claim of the one putting forward the paradox has been falsified through other evidence. Thus it is a *mu’araḍa*, but this does not invalidate the validity of the evidence of the one putting forward the paradox, let alone being a solution. On the other hand, the use of a *mu’araḍa* in a paradox is not something that is approved of.³⁵

This solution is not addressed in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s commentary on *Maṭāli’*, but Tashkoprizāda indicates that it came from al-Samarqandī, the author of the *Qisṭās*, and that it was subjected to criticism from Ṣadr al-Sharī’a, who he referred to as the author of *Ta’dīl al-mizān*. Moreover, he expresses his own criticisms. According to Tashkoprizāda, the latter and the former solutions are both insufficient. These answers ultimately reinforce the evidence of the paradox because the one who put forth the paradox advocates as already existent the invalidity of the relationship of equivalence between the antecedent (Proposition 1) and the consequent (Proposition 2).³⁶ These answers, which aim to invalidate the relationship between two propositions, perhaps achieve this, but based on this, they do not prove the truth of the first proposition.

Another answer is to take “the absolute unknown” into consideration from two different *respects*; firstly in terms of its “being only unknown” and secondly in terms of its “being subject to knowledge as an unknown,” because, as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī puts it, “being unknown” is a state that is subject to knowledge exactly like “being known.” According to this answer, the impossibility of judging the “absolute unknown” is based on the fact that it is absolutely unknown (option 1); the possibility of judgment, on the other hand, is based on the fact that its being absolutely unknown is a subject of judgment (option 2). Therefore, the propositions “The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment” and “Some unknowns may be subjected to judgment” can both exist; or to put it differently, there is no contradiction between these two situations where the subject-term is taken to be unknown or known, for the absolute unknown uttered in the second proposition is considered to be “A particular whose character is known to be unknowable.” In Proposition 1, the term “absolute unknown” as a universal is a concept upon which

35 Ṣadr al-Sharī’a, *Ta’dīl al-‘ulūm*, fos. 18a.

36 Tashkoprizāda, “Fath al-amr al-mughlaq”, 118-9.

making judgment is impossible. For this reason, the claim of contradiction between propositions due to the variation of subject-terms from one proposition to the other is rejected. Perhaps thinking of this situation based on a distinction of the term *absolute unknown* in terms of a concept and its referents (what it is referring to) would be easier. Although when considered in terms of its referents, the term "absolute unknown" is something that can never be subject to knowledge alongside all the individuals it contains; in this proposition, however, it can be subject to knowledge as a particular term, or in terms of its being a concept. In other words, it can be subject to the following judgment of "That which cannot be judged upon".

Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Tashkoprizāda provided no information about whom this answer had come from, yet one of the logicians who used it was al-Abharī. Al-Ṭūsī construes his answer by making a distinction between the referent of the term (*madlūl*) and its content/meaning (*ittiṣāf*). Accordingly, the predicate of impossibility regarding the absolute unknown is related to the concept/name, while the impossibility of predication is related to its referent.³⁷ Tashkoprizāda, on the other hand, confirmed this answer by using the distinction between predicate and predication. According to him, the impossibility of judging the absolute unknown presents itself in the predicate, while the possibility of judgment presents itself in the predication:

The result of this answer is that the modality of the impossibility of judgment is the modality of the predicate, and the modality of the [possibility] of judgment is the modality of the *predication*. Predication and predicate are different things and therefore have different modalities. In this situation, in the first aspect it differs from the subject-term of the proposition, but from itself in the second, and when considered from two aspects, no inconsistency arises between these two propositions.³⁸

Based on the concepts Tashkoprizāda used to confirm the answer, the above solution may be understood as follows: If the absolute unknown is taken as an unknown (Proposition 3a) while considering the impossibility of judging it, essentially this "impossibility of making a judgment," is the modality of the

37 For Athir al-Dīn al-Abharī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, see Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, "Ta'dil al-mi'yār fi naqd Tanzil al-afkār", *Manṭiq wa mabāḥis al-alfāz: Majmū'ā-i mutūn wa maqālāt-i taḥqīq*, ed. Mahdi Muḥaḥiq and Toshihiko Izutsu (Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Muṭāla'āt-i Islāmī-i Dānīshgāh-i McGill Shu'ba-i Tehran, 1353HŞ), 143. Lameer, after expressing that the way to overcome the self-referential paradox would be in terms of subjecting the paradox to different hierarchies of semantic readings, he specifies that the first Islamic philosopher who might have realized that was Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, but only that studies in that respect developed with the influence of al-Urmawī. See Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani", 399, 407, 413-4.

38 Tashkoprizāda, "Faṭḥ amr al-mughlaq", 120-1.

predicate of the proposition. In other words, the impossible thing in this situation is not knowing the absolute unknown, but the predicate of “the impossibility of making a judgment.” In the second option, making a judgment about the absolute unknown as something whose state of “being unknown is known” is not a modality of the predicate but is instead considered a modality of the predication. Therefore, as the state of the proposition changes based on the difference of the predicate and the predication, the implicational relationship between them also disappears. Even though Tashkoprizāda makes this correction, he does not refrain from evoking a possible objection regarding this answer. In this answer, making the judgment that “The absolute unknown is known in terms of being unknown” causes the reappearance of the self-referential paradox.

Another proposed solution that Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī considers in the *Lawāmi‘ al-asrār* focuses on the syntactic and semantic features of the proposition. According to this, Proposition 2, “The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment,” should be taken as meaning “Making a judgment about the absolute unknown is impossible.” In this proposition, the subject-term must also be emphasized to not be the term “absolute unknown” but a composition of terms (i.e., making a judgment about the absolute unknown). Thus, because Proposition 1 (“That which is subjected to judgment is known in one aspect”) and its terms differ, the alleged contradiction between them (i.e., between the word “known” in Proposition 1 and “making a judgment about the unknown” in Proposition 2) is overruled. Accordingly, the term “absolute unknown” ceases to be a subject-term and turns into a different concept by means of which the subject-term is substantiated. In terms of syntax, this proposition is identical to the proposition “Being God’s partner is impossible” because the “impossibility” that can be seen in this proposition comes not as a modality but as a predicate. Al-Jurjānī supports this solution with another example: “the coexistence of two contradictions is inconceivable.” In his own words:

In the propositions “Being God’s partner is impossible” and “The coexistence of two contradictions is inconceivable,” the judgments of *impossibility* and *inconceivability* are specifically about “partnership” and “coexistence”. These terms (partnership and coexistence) are also substantiated by reference to the terms “God” and “two contradictories”.³⁹

39 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli‘*, I, 96.

Therefore, if Proposition 2 ("The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment") is actually shaped in accordance with this syntax, it is reconstructed in the form of "Making a judgment about the absolute unknown is impossible." As Tashkoprizāda puts it, the subject of judgment in the consequent of Proposition 2 is no longer the term "absolute unknown," it becomes the judgment itself provided that it is associated with the absolute unknown. Thus, the criticism of the contradiction is overruled because the terms differ depending on the original or the converted forms of the proposition. This solution, which is based on syntactic moves, satisfies neither Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī⁴⁰ nor Tashkoprizāda, who for his part specifically perceived it as only a verbal solution. The reason being that in this answer, the judgment is stated to be about the predicate and not the subject-term, thus the modality was shifted from the subject-term to the predicate, whereas in the paradoxical Proposition 2 and, just as in the original Proposition 1, the modality of the judgment must belong to the subject-term, not to the predicate. Therefore, Tashkoprizāda interprets this "...not as a solution, but rather as a confession of the power and insolubility of the paradox."⁴¹

The last alternative that we can find in the commentary of the *Maṭāli'* is the solution that Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī describes as "the definitive answer in terms of the paradox's matter." Together with the solutions from al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī, this is the fifth answer enumerated by Quṭb al-Dīn and is based on taking the subject-term of the proposition according to the distinction between the substance and the suppositional. According to al-Jurjānī's interpretation, it was developed to demonstrate that the state of something as it is in itself (*nafs al-amr*) may differ from its state as a mental supposition. Stated differently, the distinction is between *substance* and *suppositional being*. This suggests that although the absolute unknown is a known thing in *nafs al-amr*, it is something that can be supposed as an unknown in the mind. Thus, the possibility and impossibility of making a judgment about the absolute unknown are only possible with respect to these two viewpoints.

Al-Jurjānī explains how the absolute unknown can be something known in itself or as a substance:

40 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli'*, I, 97. Lameer reports this solution from al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1326); however, since al-Ḥillī reports this opinion through the usage of an expression such as "some people might answer it this way", it cannot be said with certainty that the opinion was his own. See Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani", 425.

41 Tashkoprizāda, "Faṭḥ al-amr al-mughlaq", 122-3.

When we say “The absolute unknown is such and such a thing,” thanks to the content of this appellation (being unknown) the mind undoubtedly directs itself to the individuals of this content and, by grasping at this universally, contemplates the existing individuals available in this way; thus, they become known in the *nafs al-amr*. These individuals are the substances of the absolute unknown. In this case, the substance should be known “in terms of being characterized by the attribute of being unknown.” ... That whose substance is known in one aspect cannot be absolutely unknown in the *nafs al-amr*; on the contrary, when the mind directs itself at an object by means of its content, the object becomes unknown only in terms of the supposition of the mind. Therefore, a judgment about the substance in question takes place with respect to the fact that it is known; however, the negation of its judgment takes place with respect to the presupposition of its characteristic as an absolute unknown.⁴²

According to al-Jurjānī absolute unknowns as a term, are things known by the property of carrying that characteristic when considering the individuals that the term may be predicated on, but remains an unknown thing in terms of supposition because making a judgment about it based on the fact that it is known in *nafs al-amr* does not prevent one from supposing the impossibility of judgment. Al-Jurjānī made such an effort to explain the answer, but Tashkoprizāda rejected that statement of his, stating this answer to be refutable. According to Tashkoprizāda, if the absolute unknown being known in terms of substance means to be known by some feature in its substance or by something other than the characteristic of being unknown, then that is absolutely unacceptable. For that turns the absolute unknown into something known and therefore confines us to the self-referential paradox. If the implication is taken “that the absolute unknown is something known in *nafs al-amr* thanks to its characteristic of being unknown,” as al-Jurjānī had understood it, then that is also an unacceptable option according to Tashkoprizāda because the absolute unknown being known is possible if and only if “it is supposed in the *nafs al-amr* as being characterized with a known characteristic of being unknown.” This necessitates the unknown being suppositional not only in terms of its character but also in terms of its own self, for if the characterization as a implican (*malzūm*) is suppositional, the characterization as an implicate (*lāzim*) must also be suppositional.⁴³ In such a case, the absolute unknown can never be anything known in the *nafs al-amr*. This criticism, as will follow, is one of the foundational rules that Tashkoprizāda would take up as a starting point in his solution. He begins by first and foremost proving the absolute unknown as something that does not exist in *nafs al-amr*.

42 al-Jurjānī, *al-Sayyid ‘alā Sharḥ al-Maṭāli‘*, 81.

43 Tashkoprizāda, “Fath amr al-mughlaq”, 123.

Five of the six solutions we have covered so far – aside from al-Samarqandī's solution – can be found in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's commentary on *Maṭāli'*. Tashkoprizāda adds two more solutions to these, one being the solution that al-Jurjānī reported as the easiest solution (*jawāb aṣḥal*), and the other being Ṣadr al-Sharī'a's solution. Thus, Tashkoprizāda reports all eight solutions that had reached him together with their criticisms.

According to the solution explained by al-Jurjānī, "The fact that judgment necessitates the conception of the subject-term (known in one aspect)" (Proposition 1) actually means that "The presence of some kind of conception is necessitated regarding the subject-term in the *judge*." For this reason, the fact that no judgment can be made about "the absolute unknown" (Proposition 2) is based on the fact that no one could conceptualize it. In other words, anything that is unknown to an individual person cannot be subjected to any judgment by that person. Tashkoprizāda rejects this solution on the grounds that a universal concept is being particularized. As a matter of fact, concepts such as "the absolute unknown" or its opposite "being knowable in one aspect" are not conditional to any one person's conception but are instead universal concepts. Taking the subject of the paradoxical Proposition 2 to be confined to the mind of any individual is incorrect. So this solution is not appropriate.

Finally, Ṣadr al-Sharī'a developed another proposed solution by modifying Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's response; Tashkoprizāda presented this as the eighth answer. As pointed out before, al-Samarqandī first stated al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī's mutual solution and then made three criticisms regarding it. He later developed an answer solely based on the descriptive reading of the paradoxical Proposition 2. In his work *Ta'dīl* [Modification] at the end of his criticism of al-Samarqandī's answer, Ṣadr al-Sharī'a strengthens al-Samarqandī's solution through the introduction of new concepts with an attitude appropriate to the title of his work.

Ṣadr al-Sharī'a begins to examine with his own concepts the "well-known paradox (*al-mughālaṭa al-mashhūra*)" that had occupied many philosophers. Even though he continued using the descriptive reading of propositions inherited from al-Samarqandī, his solution included both "the state by considering the judgment (*ḥāl i'tibār al-ḥukm*)" and "the state of judgment (*ḥāl al-ḥukm*),"⁴⁴ a different

44 We can see that the expression "state of judgment" was also used by al-Ḥilli; see Lameer, "Ghayr al-ma'lūm yamtani", 425.

terminology that we had not seen in the previous solutions. In the related parts of his work, the philosopher provides various explanations in order to make his concepts more understandable. In fact, the state by considering the judgment may sometimes be the same as the state of judgment. This is the case of the proposition in the example “Zayd is now a writer.” The judgment here is given at this moment, and the time considered with respect to the actualization of the judgment is *this present moment*. On the other hand, for a statement such as “Zayd will be a writer tomorrow,” two situations are being distinguished from each other: for in this proposition the state by considering the judgment is *tomorrow*, and the state of judgment is *the present moment*.

Tashkoprizāda, who had carefully read Şadr al-Sharī‘a, continued using these concepts. In his own words, the *state of judgment* is the state where the assent of the proposition is taken into account, and the *state by considering the judgment* is the state where the implications of the assent are taken into account; implications such as (i) the oneness of the subject-term and the predicate in the external world or the *nafs al-amr*, (ii) the coexistence of either of these with the other in the external world or the *nafs al-amr*, or (iii) the relatedness of the subject-term to the other. According to Tashkoprizāda, who continues to elucidate the proposition we observe in Şadr al-Sharī‘a, the state of judgment in the proposition “Zayd will be a writer tomorrow” is the moment of assent, namely the exact moment when the *judger* judges. The state by considering the judgment only occurs at the moment the description of writer will be connected to Zayd tomorrow. Tashkoprizāda’s following statement will help us understand how these concepts were used to solve this paradox:

The realization [*thubūt*] of one thing to another, particularly in the affirmation, necessitates the realization of the realized [*thābit*] thing in terms of the state of judgment and the state by considering the judgment, whereas in terms of the state by considering the judgment, realization of the realized thing in affirmation and negation is not necessitated.⁴⁵

In other words, making an affirmative or negative judgment about something in terms of the state by considering the judgment does not necessitate the existence of the subject of judgment. However, in terms of the state of judgment, it is unnecessary only if it is a negative judgment.

45 Tashkoprizāda, “Zihinsel Varlığa Dair Tartışmalarda Özün ve Hakikatin Tespiti,” In *Osmanlı Felsefesi: Seçme Metinler*, ed. Ömer Mahir Alper (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2015), 254-255.

According to this, although Proposition 2 "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" is descriptive, if the state by considering the judgment is intended, making a judgment about the subject-term should not necessitate the realization of the subject-term; therefore the subject-term may be taken as an unknown. Thus, making a judgment about the subject-term is impossible as long as it remains an unknown. Also, making this judgment about it does not necessitate the realization of the subject-term. In the event of its being known, the validity of the judgment would not contradict that. In the case where the state of judgment is taken into consideration, as in the second alternative, because its realization becomes a necessity, the subject-term will be known and thus making a judgment about it is only possible as long as the subject-term remains known. Thus, the judgment of the impossibility of it being judged is provided as long as it remains unknown.⁴⁶ So the subject-term is known when taken in terms of the state of judgment, but unknown when taken in terms of the state by considering the judgment. Therefore, we then judge in the current moment "the impossibility of judging the subject-term when it is unknown." In this way, we come to the conclusion that "making a judgment about the unknown is impossible as long as it remains an unknown," which is true. Thus, the self-referential paradox closes and resolves the contradiction because the state by considering the judgment provides "the unknown," and the contradiction closes and resolves the self-referential paradox because the state of judgment provides "the known."

Şadr al-Sharī'a wanted to make the descriptive reading option a stronger solution through his own concepts. In addition to his first solution, Şadr al-Sharī'a suggested a secondary one, but Tashkoprizāda criticizes all the solutions from the author of *Ta'dil* using the same character. His solution is based on considering the term of absolute unknown as a known, whereas this is not true because the absolute unknown becomes something known neither by the necessity of its substance nor from another perspective. It is only true in terms of its being absolutely unknown, which is not something that gets applied to it in the *nafs al-amr*. Even if the characteristic of being absolutely unknown were to be subjected to knowledge, it would have only been as a supposition. However, something becomes known by knowing a characteristic about it that can be stated in the *nafs al-amr* and not by being a supposition of the mind. However, no characteristic of that sort

46 Şadr al-Sharī'a, *Ta'dil al-'ulūm*, fos. 16a-17b.

can be said about the “absolute unknown” in the *nafs al-amr*.⁴⁷ Once again, we see that Tashkoprizāda has brought forth the criticism he had stated concerning the previous options. This is because in his solution he earnestly emphasizes that the absolute unknown can only be taken as a supposition through its characteristic of being unknown, and even that is nothing but a presupposition.

IV. Tashkoprizāda's Solution Tools and Suggestion

Because the Ottoman-Turkish philosopher Tashkoprizāda was a member of one of the leading families of the scholarly class and an extraordinary name in terms of his personal interests, the fact that he read the above-mentioned philosophers is no surprise. In *al-Shaqāiq*, he provides satisfactory information about the books he had read and under whose supervision they had been read, in addition to information about the commentaries and glosses he had also read. He specifies having read al-Urmawī's *Maṭāli'*, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's written commentary on it, and al-Jurjānī's ḥaṣhiya on the *Maṭāli'*, all of which are pertinent books with respect to the issue we are dealing with here.⁴⁸ Regarding the subject matters of sciences in his work *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, he names the works of al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī right after Avicenna's works on logic and acknowledges the ḥaṣhiya on *Maṭāli'* as a higher-level text. At the end of the section on logic, he states, “He who wants to reach the summit in this science must read the *Ta'dīl* from Ṣadr al-Sharī'a, [for] in this book, the author elucidates the issues that previous philosophers had been perplexed by.”⁴⁹

Aside from all the intensive readings, Tashkoprizāda wrote an independent treatise on the “well-known paradox,” which has been discussed in a few paragraphs from the introductory sections of these works. This approximately five-folio treatise, named *Fath al-amr al-mughlaq fi mas'alat al-majhūl al-mutlaq*, was written in such a manner that, although short in length, it depicts the historical development of the subject. The author organized this treatise, wherein he enumerates the names, books, and suggestions of philosophers who had provided solutions to this issue, into a preamble and two parts. While he limited the preamble to how the issue had been coined, he criticized the answers given by the previous philosophers in the first

47 Tashkoprizāda, “Fath amr al-mughlaq”, 128-9.

48 Tashkoprizāda, *al-Shaqāiq*, 554.

49 Tashkoprizāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda wa miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fi mawdu'āt al-'ulūm*, ed. Kāmil Bakrī and Abd al-Wahhāb Abū al-Nūr, I (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1968), 299-303.

part and put forth his own solutions in the second. When referring to the previous philosophers, he begins by addressing this issue with reference to al-Khūnajī and al-Urmawī without acknowledging Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, most probably because Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī did not respond to this paradox, at least not in *al-Mulakhkhas*.

We may see that the answer Tashkoprizāda developed for overcoming the paradox includes concepts that had not been included in the previously proposed solutions discussed in this article. The reason being that philosophers make their own solution more accurate compared to previous ones by constructing it on the concepts that their age's philosophical terminology gives importance to, such as "supposition based on abstraction (*al-farḍ al-intizā'i*)," "supposition based on fiction (*al-farḍ al-ikhtirā'i*)," "contracted coinage for the proposition (*'aqd al-waḍ'*)," and "contracted predicate (*'aqd al-ḥaml*)".

At the beginning of his endeavor, Tashkoprizāda firmly positions this notion that he had been insistently emphasizing as the basis of his solution when criticizing the previous suggestions; namely, "No mental or external existence of the absolute unknown exists in the *nafs al-amr*." The philosopher takes as a starting point the idea that the existence of the absolute unknown is found in none of these layers, which are actually expressive of the various ways of existence, for the things present in the *nafs al-amr* are there not by the characteristic of "being absolutely unknown" but rather by the characteristic of "being somehow known, which in fact contradicts the former. To understand Tashkoprizāda's solution and make it more understandable let us first comprehend the relationship between *nafs al-amr*, the *mind*, and the *external world*.

Even though the concept of *nafs al-amr* had entered the vocabulary repertoire of philosophers earlier in the tradition of Islamic thought, the attitudes of scholars such as al-Jurjānī, who had a significant place in the scholarly line of Tashkoprizāda, seem to have made this concept one of the most important terms of the 15th and 16th centuries.⁵⁰ As a matter of fact, at the very beginning of Tashkoprizāda's treatise about mental being, he referred to al-Jurjānī's works to confirm his own thoughts while dealing with the relationship between the mind, the external world, and the *nafs al-amr*. According to al-Jurjānī, the *nafs al-amr* refers to the mental judgments that are not based on the consideration of the one considering them

50 İhsan Fazhoğlu, "Hakikat ile İtibar: Dış-dünya'nın Bilgisinin Doğası Üzerine – XV. Yüzyıl Doğa Felsefesi ve Matematik Açısından Bir İnceleme–", *Nazariyat: İslâm Felsefesi ve Bilim Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (October 2014): 21 vd.

or the supposition of the one supposing them. Tashkoprižāda emphasizes the accurateness of this view and adds that *nafs al-amr* means “something being as it is in itself (*nafs al-shay’ fi ḥadd dhātih*).”

This means that the existence of that thing is not related to the consideration of the one considering it or the supposition of the one supposing it. On the contrary, even if it were devoid of every consideration and supposition, it would still exist.⁵¹

Therefore, something whose existence is not suppositional exists in the *nafs al-amr*. These expressions would occur almost identically to the sentences that take place in Tahānawī’s *al-Kashshāf*. Nonetheless, he states that, at times, “Things whose existence are not based on fictional supposition (*al-farḍ al-ikhtirā’i*) may be said to be in the *nafs al-amr*.”⁵² In this case, things that are in the *nafs al-amr* are things that do not derive from a fictional supposition. As a matter of fact, Tashkoprižāda states that things that exist in the mind and derive from this type of fiction have no existence in the *nafs al-amr*.⁵³ Consequently, as the concept of “absolute unknown” had been derived from a fictional supposition, its existence evidently cannot be mentioned in the *nafs al-amr*.

Nafs al-amr refers to divine knowledge, human knowledge, and the external objects that are subjected to knowledge. As a matter of fact, the *amr* in the term *nafs al-amr* expresses the essences belonging to these three domains, and the *nafs* the conditions/states and implications of those essences. However, when the phrase “corresponding to the *nafs al-amr*” is employed, only human knowledge is implied, for we are not eligible to test the corollary to divine knowledge.⁵⁴ This term is therefore more general than mental being and external being and in fact encompasses both. It is more general in an absolute sense than external being, but only in one way from mental being. Hence, all external beings but only a part of mental beings are necessarily in the *nafs al-amr*. Yet, everything in the *nafs al-amr* cannot be said to exist in the external world. In addition, some mental objects are not part of the *nafs al-amr*. For this reason, a relative-general-and-specific relationship

51 Tashkoprižāda, “Zihinsel Varlığa Dair Tartışmalarla Özün ve Hakikatin Tespiti”, 242, 249. For more information regarding terms such as the external and mental *nafs al-amr* and their relationship, please refer to: İhsan Fazlıoğlu, “Sayyid Şerif’in *Nefsü’l-emr* Nazariyesi ve Matematik Bilimlere Uygulanması: Şerhu’l-Mevâkıf Örneği”, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Süreklilik ve Değişim: Seyyid Şerif Cürçânî Örneği*, ed. M. Cüneyt Kaya (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2015), 163-96; Fazlıoğlu, “Hakikat ile İtibar”, 1-33.

52 Muhammad al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf-işîlahāt al-funūn wa-l-‘ulūm*, ed. Rafiq al-‘Ajam, II (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1416/1995), 1720; Fazlıoğlu, “Hakikat ile İtibar”, 22-3.

53 Tashkoprižāda, “Zihinsel Varlığa Dair Tartışmalar”, 242.

54 Tashkoprižāda, “Zihinsel Varlığa Dair Tartışmalar”, 252.

exists between mental beings and beings from the *nafs al-amr*.⁵⁵ Tashkoprizāda also separates mental beings into *mentally essential* and *suppositional*. For example, "four is an even number" is essential whereas "five is an even number" is a mental supposition. In conclusion, the counterpart of the suppositional is the essential, but both are mental. The counterpart to mental being is external being; however, external being and only a part of mental being belong to the *nafs al-amr*. Therefore, essential beings are not suppositional, and suppositional beings are not in the *nafs al-amr*. However, beings in the external world and the non-fictional suppositions among mental beings are in the *nafs al-amr*.

After all this, Tashkoprizāda must be stated to have used these tools with such dexterity that it enabled him to construct a solution without making the mistake of the previous solutions, namely of making the unknown known in itself (*nafs al-amr*). According to this, the absolute unknown is first and foremost an unknown in terms of its essence. Talking about the existence of this concept in the *nafs al-amr* is impossible. As Tashkoprizāda mentioned in his treatise on universals, just as the mind is capable of obtaining universal concepts through an abstraction from the external world, it is also capable of obtaining them through its own faculties without relying on anything in the external world. These second kinds of concepts are suppositional universals (*al-kuliyāt al-faraḍiyya*); the mind may even make the supposition completely fictional (*faraḍiyyan ikhtirā'iyyan*). One example would be the capability of acquiring the concept of *impossible* from the concept of *necessary*.⁵⁶ Let us rely on Tahānawī's work in order to understand this distinction between supposition based on abstraction and supposition based on fiction that Tashkoprizāda had effectively applied in resolving the paradox. According to Tahānawī, philosophers had stated two types of suppositions to exist:

One is referred to as a supposition based on abstraction (*al-farḍ al-intizā'i*), which means transforming the potentiality something has into an actuality. The occurrence here corresponds to the supposition. Meanwhile, the other type is a supposition based on fictionality (*al-farḍ al-ikhtirā'i*); this means fictionalizing a potentiality that never was present in something in the first place and then subjecting it to processing. Here the occurrence is different from the supposition.⁵⁷

55 Tashkoprizāda, "Zihinsel Varlığa Dair Tartışmalar", 243.

56 Tashkoprizāda Aḥmad Afandi, "Qawā'id al-ḥamliyyāt fī taḥqīq mabāḥith al-kuliyāt," In *Felsefe Risaleleri*, ed. and tr. Kübra Şenel, Cahid Şenel ve M. Zahid Tiryaki (İstanbul: İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 122-3.

57 Tashkoprizāda, *Kashshāf*, II, 1268.

One example of a supposition based on abstraction would be to suppose a sphere moving around its axis to have two immobile points. For such a sphere, the two fixed points are supposed to correspond to those on the sphere and can be applied to it. This supposition was obtained through abstraction even without any basis in the external world. The concept of *the absolute unknown*, which is the subject of our study here, has been obtained through a fictional supposition based on the notion of “being known in one aspect,” as follows below. As will be shown later on, opposition (*mukhālafā*), not correspondence (*muṭābaqa*), is found in actuality between the notion of being “absolutely unknown” and of “being subject to knowledge in one aspect” in actuality. Therefore, the *nafs al-amr*, whether in the first sense (i.e., non-suppositional and non-assumed) or in the second and broader sense (i.e., a non-fictional supposition), shows no appearance of the concept of “the absolute unknown” with either of these meanings. Therefore, as

[As] the absolute unknown does not exist in the *nafs al-amr*, the concept of “absolute unknown” cannot be abstracted from an existing essence/substance in the *nafs al-amr*; on the contrary, this concept – just as the meaning of impossibility is abstracted from the meaning of the necessity – derives from – its own contradiction of “being known in one aspect (*al-ma'lūmiyya bi-i'tibārin mā*).”⁵⁸

In reality, this situation determines the contracted coinage (*'aqd al-waḍ'*) for the proposition “The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment.” According to logicians, contracted coinage is when the substance of the subject-term in the proposition is characterized by the qualification of its own appellation.⁵⁹ In other words, contracted coinage means characterizing something that is the referent of a concept using that concept. Because the concept “absolute unknown” is a suppositional concept, characterizing it by any appellation (notion) in the *nafs al-amr* is not possible; otherwise, rather than being unknown, it would be something known for admitting a notion. In other words, the absolute unknown cannot possibly exist as an absolute unknown in the *nafs al-amr*; in every case its existence as something known is impossible. It can only admit the characteristic of “being known for being absolutely unknown in the *nafs al-amr*,” which only qualifies as a mental supposition. This supposition is also a fictional supposition. In the fictional supposition, the mind supposes something alongside its characteristic, put differently, both the thing itself (the referent) and the characteristic (meaning)

58 Tashkoprizāda, “Fath̄ amr al-mughlaq”, 130-1.

59 al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, II, 1193.

that can be stated about that thing are suppositions. Hence, according to Tashkoprizāda, the contracted coinage for the proposition "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" occurs when a mental *supposition* admits another mentally *supposed* characteristic using supposition, namely when the subject-term admits the notion of that term itself.

Therefore, the result of the proposition's contracted coinage is to suppose that this characteristic, which is known as a supposition in the *nafs al-amr*, is valid in regard to the supposed substance that in fact does not exist in the *nafs al-amr*.⁶⁰

The fact that the concept of "being absolutely unknown" can be said about such a "suppositional absolute unknown" does not necessitate actually knowing that thing, for knowing something in one aspect actually requires the object's aspect to be validly expressed in the *nafs al-amr*. However, nothing valid can be said about the "absolute unknown" in the *nafs al-amr*. So how then is this concept a universal? The reason is that, although a universal is a universal because it corresponds to the many, this correspondence is not about actuality; on the contrary, as long as its correspondence to the many can be mentally supposed, it achieves universality. Thus, universals such as the absolute unknown or impossible concepts, whose individual aspects are both suppositional as well as suppositional with individual aspects that cannot be found in the *nafs al-amr*, are considered universals. However, universal suppositions cannot be made into a predicate like other objects, for becoming a predicate of something implicates bringing together two opposites in the *nafs al-amr*. For instance, if the term "*non-thing*" was true about something in the external world or present in the mind, it would necessitate the simultaneous trueness of that thing and the non-thing over the thing, which is a contradiction.⁶¹ Because universal suppositions implicate the coexistence of two opposites by virtue of their meaning/notion (i.e., not by virtue of their essence), they cannot be made into a predicate like any other meaning. Therefore, the point that must be taken into consideration first and foremost about the concept of "absolute unknown" is that the characterization of this concept by its own meaning is completely fictional.

In fact, these concepts constitute Tashkoprizāda's distinctive solution tools. Another term the philosopher considered alongside with contracted coinage while solving this issue is the contracted predicate (*ʿaqd al-ḥaml*). This refers to the way in

60 Tashkoprizāda, "Fath amr al-mughlaq", 130-1

61 Tashkoprizāda, "Qawā'id al-ḥamliyyāt", 123.

which the substance (*dhāt*) of the subject matter is characterized by the attribute of the predicate in a proposition. Contracted coinage and contracted predicate are the two objects to which are assigned the meaning of the proposition.⁶² According to Tashkoprižāda, the contracted predicate is realized either through unification (*bi-tariq al-ittihād*) or association (*bi-tariq al-tā'liq*). The predicate that is contracted through unification is realized by unifying the meaning/notion of the predicate with whatever it precisely validates in the *nafs al-amr*, while the predicate contracted through association is realized by substantiating the meaning of the predicate over anything that is assigned the validity of the appellation by using supposition. Tashkoprižāda explains the difference between the two as follows:

Regarding the first one, the subject-term's realization in the state of judgment is absolutely necessary–, be it an affirmative or a negative –; in the state by considering the judgment, however, realization is necessary, especially in the affirmative. Regarding the second one, realizing the subject is necessitated neither in the state of judgment nor in the state by consideration of judgment.

Regarding the second, realizing the subject-term is not necessitated in the state of judgment, for the judgment is being made over a supposed subject-term, nor is it necessitated in the state by considering the judgment, for if necessity were present, no unknown absolute unknown would exist. Tashkoprižāda uses the second one (i.e., the contracted predicate using association) as an important tool. As the absolute unknown has no existence of its own, the contracted predicate taking place when one makes a judgment about it is manifested through association; otherwise, it would turn into something known. He additionally states that although propositions such as “The absolute unknown cannot be subject to judgment” are affirmative in form, they should be taken as a negative. Therefore, the expression “cannot be subjected to judgment” must be taken as negative (i.e., “it is not possible to subject it to judgment”). In this respect, a difference also exists between the predicate contracted through unification and the predicate contracted through association: The first is used in predicated propositions both in terms of the form and meaning of the proposition while the second constitutes a conditional proposition in terms of its meaning although predicated in terms of its form. By referring to al-Jurjānī, Tashkoprižāda explains how the meaning of the predicate contracted through association is conditionally manifested in a proposition as

62 al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, II, 1193.

follows: "If this appellation is true about something, the meaning of the predicate is true about that thing." To express this in terms of our issue here, "If something can be said to be absolutely unknown, the absolute unknown is that about which no judgment can be made."

After establishing the proposition's contracted coinage and contracted predicate, the result of the proposition (i.e., its meaning) must be revealed. Tashkoprizada returns to the paradox "The absolute unknown cannot be subjected to judgment" and given the options regarding the subject of the proposition, namely whether it is to be taken as an unknown or a known, chooses the first option. Thus, he closes the self-referential paradox and takes on the contradiction. In this case, he must explain without falling into contradiction exactly in what way the judgment about the "absolute unknown" is impossible and also exactly from which aspect is it subjected to "The judgment of the impossibility of being judged." According to this, the impossibility in the proposition is to subject the absolute unknown to judgment through unification, for judgment through unification necessitates the subject to be known. However, the impossibility of judgment of being judged through unification in terms of this concept does not render impossible its being subjected to judgment through association.

We shall make the semantic result of this proposition as follows: If being absolutely unknown were stated or valid about something, any judgment about that thing would be negated through unification. Yet, this does not prevent one from making through association the judgment of "The impossibility of being subject to judgment" in regard to it. The reason for this is that, because making a judgment in this way does not necessitate its being known, we can make the judgment of the "Impossibility of making a judgment about it" through association. Thus, two semantic interpretations of the paradoxical proposition exist when taking the contracted predicate into consideration: One is through unification, and the other through association. In this sense, the paradox can be overcome by mere semantic distinctions without changing the subject or predicate of the proposition, its reading, or even its modality.

V. Conclusion

A problem examined as the Meno paradox throughout the history of pre-Islamic philosophy and the classical period of Islamic philosophy seems to have gained a new form with Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. The problem of self-reference is also included in

this new formulation of the paradox. Additionally, the question of “the possibility of knowledge” no longer remained the only philosophically debated issue; the question of how topics are organized in logic by the order in which conception and assent are discussed as parts of knowledge is also debated. In this respect, this paradox is suitable for discussing the structure of the discipline of Islamic logic, which examines the relationship between the forms of knowledge (i.e., conception and assent) and the rules that lead to these forms of knowledge. After all, this issue made it necessary to explain, without falling into a paradox, how the conception of suppositional/impossible concepts was achieved and how the assent of these concepts occurred.

Although Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī did not provide an answer to this subject because he deemed the rule of “the prioritization of conception over assent” to be necessary, he did provide the propositions that were determinant in the construction of the paradox. Together with the propositions derived from al-Rāzī’s text, al-Khūnājī and al-Urmawī’s solutions based on the essential-external distinction that they inherited from al-Rāzī were effective in developing the responses that gradually became stronger in the centuries that followed. This effect was largely developed using Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s commentary on the *Maṭāli’*. Although Tashkopizāda included names such as Ṣadr al-Sharī’a in this line, his focus on al-Urmawī’s answer that can be found in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s commentary, al-Jurjānī’s ḥāshiya, and Ṣadr al-Sharī’a’s criticism of al-Khūnājī’s answer while mainly modifying Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī’s answer are clear indications of this effect. In this sense, this first attempt was essential for the responses that had been put forward to solve the paradox, which is the subject of this article. Some of the later philosophers even contributed to overcoming the issue by improving this first answer, while others showed its invalidity and presented solutions of their own. Nevertheless, considerably precise responses were observed to have been developed in the period stretching from al-Khūnājī and al-Urmawī to Tashkopizāda when compared to the solutions that had been developed using the essentialist-externalist distinction. Among these, attempts such as the descriptive reading of the proposition, the idea of the “suppositional concept,” the name of the concept and its referents, and the rectification made over these are most remarkable. Unlike al-Khūnājī and al-Urmawī, al-Samarqandī and Ṣadr al-Sharī’a adopted the solution of descriptive reading. Al-Ṭūsī’s answer, which has a slightly different structure than these, is based on the distinction between referents and meaning.

Şadr al-Sharī'a's usage of terms such as *the state of judgment* and *the state by considering the judgment*, along with al-Jurjāni's usage of *nafs al-amr* and *suppositional* terms in order to strengthen their solutions, had set the ground for Tashkoprizāda's solution. These concepts that they had included in their solutions had a significant place in Tashkoprizāda's approach. We may, therefore, consider Tashkoprizāda's answers as having been derived from these two philosophers in terms of the tools that were used. Despite this, the approach of neither philosopher satisfied Tashkoprizāda, who therefore set out to find a tighter answer compared to theirs while using their solution tools. To achieve this, he turned to some highly refined concepts such as *contracted coinage*, *contracted predicate*, *fictional supposition*, and *contracted predicate realized through unification and association*. In fact, even though he had used a fundamental term such as *supposition* in the same way as al-Jurjāni, he achieved a much different result. For, according to his viewpoint, Şadr al-Sharī'a and al-Jurjāni were unable to assign a suppositional/impossible concept such as the *absolute unknown* outside of the set of suppositions that exist contrary to their nature. In fact, this was what Tashkoprizāda wanted to achieve with all the concepts he had refined, as mentioned above. Thanks to these concepts, the philosopher both achieved this without changing the reading of a proposition (essentialist-externalist, substantial-descriptive) or even assuming as the previous generation had that only the subject of the proposition is suppositional. In a way that left almost no mental omission, he explained how this concept occurs in the mind through the contracted coinage and the possibility/impossibility of making a judgment about the concept using the types of the contracted predicate. Thus he focused only on the semantic transmittance of the proposition. By doing so and using his own philosophical framework, Tashkoprizāda eliminated the absolute unknown from being used as a term of essentiality as his predecessors had; for being realized had not been enough to throw this term out of the *nafs al-amr*. He also was unsatisfied with the mere idea of a supposition as the generation closer to him had been, for despite the suppositional nature of this term it could not escape from being known in itself.

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