



TEFTAZANI'S CRITICISM OF THE CONDITION OF EQUALITY REQUIRED FOR THE FORMULATION OF DEFINITION

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Abstract

Knowledge is principally examined through its classification into conception and assent in classical logic. In the process of this examination there are principles and objectives for both of these two parts. While the principles of conception are five universals with which the objective of conception, namely the definition, is accomplished; principles of belief are proposition and its states which lead us to the objective of assent, i.e. syllogism. Since a categorical proposition is consisted of three things, subject, predicate and nexus, it is a compound sentence which is susceptible to be claimed as either true or false and through this characterization other sentence types, such as imperative and question sentences, are excluded from the definition of proposition. In the process of acquisition of knowledge, definition stands at the very beginning due to the fact that without concepts it is not possible to formulate premises, let alone syllogism. Therefore it is necessary to take the conditions set for definition into account when formulating one. In this paper, our concern will be the condition asserting that there must be an equality in predication between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*. To examine this rule closely we will be focusing on Taftazani's (d. 1390) criticism of his teacher, Kutbuddin Razi (d. 1365), who has written the most well known commentary on Shamsiyya. Having agreed with his teacher on the condition of equality between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, Taftazani's real concern is about the way in which Kutbuddin Razi justifies this rule.

Keywords: Definition, Definiens, Definiendum, Taftazani, Kutbuddin Razi, Logic.

I. Introduction

When we try to appreciate the position of Taftazani in the post-Avicennan period, it can be realized that there is a great history behind him. Since he can be considered as being a follower of Fahreddin Razi (d. 1210), who was one of the pioneers of rational theology, he must have been affected by him in several ways. After Razi, most of the rational theologians, among them we can see Taftazani, accepted the mental existence in contrast with the early theologians (El-Rouayheb, 2012, 90).

One of the most important features of this period is the acceptance of logic by theologians, so that it is really hard to find a scholar who did not accept the necessity of the usage of logic after XIII. century (El-Rouayheb, 2015, 216). New tendencies in theology were also pointed out by a hard-line opponent, namely Ibn Teymiye (d. 1328). He strongly criticized theologians due to the fact that they made a room for logic which, according to him, was the actual root of philosophers' misled metaphysical

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theories. He also blamed Gazzali (d. 1111) and Razi, considering them as the real culprits of this flaw (Özerverli, 2017, 16, 52; Wael Hallaq, 1993, xi).

The criticism raised against the methodology in theology which began with Juwayni (d. 1085), were improved by Razi and it did not only lead to the acceptance of classical logic but also to the acceptance of some of the notions of philosophy (Türker, 2008, 21; Türker, 2018, 37-38). Therefore, rational theology adopted logic as a method and with the arrival of logic some notions of the Avicennan philosophy were also obtained. Due to the close relation established between rational theology and philosophy, almost every theologian came to be an expert of philosophical issues along with theological ones (Türker, 2016, 378).

The period in which Taftazani lived has another important feature which can make it distinguished by itself from any other era, namely the *tahqiq* method. It basically requires the scholars to examine any topic they are interested in, no matter whether they support it or not, after that they are supposed to go further with their examination to grasp and reveal its truth. Only then they can support or reject it depending upon their consistent justification. One particular and interesting example to this method is how Taftazani severely criticized the *sufism*. Although he strongly attacked on sufism through *tahqiq* method, his explanation and examination of the matter was going to be accepted and followed by those who actually support sufism in the XVII. century (El-Rouayheb, 2015, 314). Obviously what he did was actually far more than just attacking on it in the old way. But what he did was revealing its real nature and relations cultivated among its core premises. Therefore, even those who completely disagreed with him adopted the way he defined sufism.

One of the important figures that indirectly had an impact on Taftazani was Hunaji (d. 1248), who affected both his contemporaries and the logicians lived after him. As being among the prominent logicians of his time, Ebheri (d. 1265) accepted lots of novelties of Hunaji in logic, though he mostly followed Avicenna in his early works (El-Rouayheb, 2010, xxiv-xxv). Ebheri also thought two prominent logicians of his age, namely Tusi (d. 1274) and Katibi (d. 1277). Tusi was the founder of Maragha Observatory and he wrote a commentary on Ebheri's influential logic book. To the best of our knowledge these three important logicians of the XIII. century worked together in the Observatory for a while (Kuşlu, 2017, 15, 51).

As a continuance of such a strong tradition, Taftazani is among the pupils of Kutbuddin Razi, who is the owner of the most famous commentary on Katibi's Shamsiya. After the Mongol invasion of Baghdad, Taftazani and his rival contemporary Jurjani (d. 1413), who was also a pupil of Kutbuddin Razi, had an important role in rearranging the scientific tradition in Islamic lands. In addition to that, these two scholars affected Ottoman madrasa tradition quite deeply that their works were among the ones which were included in the curriculum for a long time.

In addition to their masterworks in theology, both of them wrote very influential books on logic which came to be widely studied in the Ottoman period. Jurjani's supercommentary on Kutbuddin Razi's commentary made the latter even more famous while Taftazani's own commentary on Shamsiya, which was completed in 1351, became the second most important commentary on this work (Schmidtke, 2013, 205). Since Taftazani was among those who used the *tahqiq* method, he consulted Kutbuddin Razi's work despite the fact that he generally challenged his ideas as writing his own commentary on the same work.

In the post-Avicennan period, it can be seen that scholars did not just follow someone or some certain ideas, but rather they elaborated various opinions on



particular matters and then they made their own decisions independently. To set an example, although Taftazani was often criticising Kutbuddin Razi, he agreed with him on his novel idea that a categorical proposition has actually four parts rather than three (El-Rouayheb, 2016, 306). In fact, this claim could easily be considered as extraordinary, yet Taftazani examined and accepted it.

II. Definition and Its Types

In line with knowledge, logic has come to be studied regarding the twofold analysis consisting of conception and assent. Both of them has principles used to accomplish their final aims, namely the definition and the syllogism. In this respect, five universals, namely *genus*, *differentia*, *species*, *property* and *common accident*, constitute as the parts out of which definition can be made.

Having begun with explaining what definition means, definition sections generally continue with its conditions, types, and the things that should be abstained from when formulating a definition.

While Avicenna (d. 1037) defined the definition as “the phrase signifying the quiddity of the thing” (Avicenna, 1983, 70) we encounter with a different definition in the well-known logic text book Shamsiya. Here the definition is defined as follows: “the definiens of the thing is that of which conception necessitates the conception of the thing, or its distinction from everything else” (Katibi, 2016, 64).

From the definition above, it can be seen that there are basically two kinds of definition regarding their functions, those imply the conception of the thing and those make the definiendum differentiated from other things. Having said that, we can also categorize the types of definition according to their components. First of all, complete definition consists of all of the essential features of the definiendum, namely the near genus and the near differentia, while incomplete definition lacks the near genus. These two are made of the essential parts of the definiendum, although we have two more types that do not consist the Essentials completely. While the complete description consists of near genus and a property, imperfect description is formulated with the property alone or with the remote genus.

III. The Condition of Equality between the *Definiens* and the *Definiendum*

Having mentioned the definition and its types in his well known commentary on Shamsiya, Kutbuddin Razi begins explaining why the definiens and the definiendum must be equal to each other. When formulating a definition, we basically have two options to go along with: we can define something with itself, or with something other than the thing defined. We can not define something with itself because definiens leads to the conception of the definiendum, so that it must be known before the definiendum. Yet nothing can be known before itself. As conclusion definiens must be something other than the thing itself (Kutbuddin Razi, 2016, 210).

Once it is proven that the definiens must be something other than the definiendum, there are four possible things to define a thing. If definiens is more general than the definiendum it can not actually define the essence since it is not enough to cover it. If it is more peculiar than the definiendum, it can not define the essence either, due to the fact that existence of the more peculiar thing in the mind requires the existence of the more general thing, though more general can be found in the mind without the peculiar. For instance, when we have the conception of palm tree in our minds we already have the conception of *the* tree. In addition to this, the conditions for and the things that violate the more peculiar thing also outnumber the conditions for and the things that violate the more general thing and not *vice versa*.



Therefore, the more peculiar comes to be more vague. However, definition must be clear and definite. In conclusion, it is not possible to formulate a definition with the more peculiar than the definiendum itself. The third option with which we can set a definition is the *heterogeneous*. Yet, after it is seen that the more general and the more peculiar do not suit for being defined then neither is the heterogeneous. Because the more general and the more peculiar are actually closer to the essence to be defined than the heterogeneous itself. Then it leaves us with only one option which is the thing equal to the definiendum in predication. That is to say, we can define something with only its equal in predication (Kutbuddin Razi, 2016, 211).

IV. Taftazani's Assertions on the Condition of Equality

Having mentioned the same possible options for formulating a definition in his commentary on Shamsiya, Taftazani begins criticising the explanations of Kutbuddin Razi. In spite of the fact that he did agree with him on the condition that the definiendum and the definiens must be equal in predication, his concern is about the reasons behind rejecting other options, namely the more general, the more peculiar, and the heterogeneous. Beginning with the more general, he says that if something is defined with the more general after it is featured with an accidental characteristic, then the more general constitutes as its definiens and requires its conception in the mind. When it comes to the more peculiar, he argues that the conception of the more peculiar requires the conception of the more general only if the latter stands as the essential feature for the former. But, it does not necessarily happen all the time. In addition, he thinks that the justification made by Kutbuddin Razi for rejecting the third option, heterogeneous, is actually rhetorical. Therefore, it can also be used to define something when they have a kind of relation (Taftazani, 2016, 197-198).

V. Conclusion

The first part of logic aims to obtain new concepts through the *evident* conceptions. The tool which allows us to acquire new conceptions is the definition. With regard to its components there can be found four different types, complete definition, incomplete definition, complete description and incomplete description. While first two of them consists of the essential parts of the essence, last two contain accidental ones.

When we think about the ways in which can formulate a definition in general, we basically have two options: with the thing itself or with something other than the definiendum. Nothing can be defined by itself for the definiens is the cause of conception of the definiendum in the mind and the cause must be known before definiendum. Then it must be defined by something other than itself. Here we have four ways. Kutbuddin Razi explains the deficiencies of three of them, the more general, the more peculiar and the heterogeneous. Although Taftazani agrees on that there must be the equality in predication between the definiens and the definiendum, he shows the weakness of Kutbuddin Razi's arguments against them.

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