

“Substantial Motion” and “New Creation” in Comparative Context

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One of the earliest definitions of motion in Islamic philosophy belongs to al-Kindī: “Motion is a change of the state of the essence” (*al-ḥaraka tabaddul ḥāl al-dhāt*).¹ This definition, however, provokes more questions than it answers. What exactly is ‘state’? Does the change of state necessitate the change of essence? If yes, in which way?

The problem of motion received a more substantial treatment in the works of Ibn Sīnā, who wrote in the *Najāt*: “[The word] ‘motion’ is employed to describe (1) a gradual change of a stable state in the body, in such a manner that through this change the body directs itself towards something and (2) the arrival through this change at this thing.”²

He adds that motion must manifest itself as leaving the previous state and that this state must be capable of decreasing and increasing, because that from which the body gradually emerges, as it directs itself toward something [different], remains, in such a way that its remaining does not contradict [the body’s] emergence from it—otherwise, this emergence would be an instantaneous affair, not a gradual one. Then, Ibn Sīnā continues, the state of such a body is either similar in every moment of this emergence, or not. But it cannot be similar, because, if it had been similar, then its emergence would not have occurred, since everything, the emergence of which occurs gradually, remains, without being similar in itself in respect of its state, during its emergence from this state. Such a thing, inevitably, allows increase and decrease.

Among the states that experience motion Ibn Sīnā names whiteness and blackness, heat and cold, length and shortness, nearness and

1 al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, part 1, 196, quoted from Roger Arnaldez, “Ḥaraka wa sukūn,” *EP*, 3:169b.

2 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt min al-gharq fī bahr al-ḍalālāt*, ed. M. T. Dāneshpazhūh (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1379Sh), 203.

distance, greatness and smallness in volume.³ Following Aristotle, he describes motion as act (*fi'l*) and the first perfection of the thing in potentiality, in that aspect in which it is in potentiality: “Motion is what is conceived from the state of the body, due to its gradual coming out of stable form (*hay'a*), and it is coming out of potentiality into actuality in a continuous manner, not instantaneously.”⁴

As is well known, Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā limited motion to four of ten categories—namely to place (or “where”) (*ḥayā*), position (*keisḥaḥ* / *wad'*), quality (*ḥayā* / *ḥayf*), and quantity (*ḥayā* / *kamm*).⁵ Regarding substance (*ḥayā* / *jawhar*), Ibn Sīnā's view was that it does not experience motion. Although engendering (*kawn*) and corruption (*fasād*) of substance outwardly resemble motion, in fact they cannot be regarded as such, because, according to Ibn Sīnā, they occur instantaneously, not gradually.⁶

In the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā, the (existence of) substantial motion is an undeniable and self-evident truth (the veracity of which Ṣadrā demonstrates in many ways). Perhaps only the principle of the analogical gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) can be regarded as more significant and entailing more important consequences than the principle of substantial motion (but, in fact, both are intertwined and inseparable from each other). In order to understand what Ṣadrā meant by “substantial motion” and why he was so firmly convinced of its existence, we need to examine his concept of motion first, finding out how it differs from that of Ibn Sīnā.

Ṣadrā describes motion as “a flowing state, whose existence is between pure potentiality and pure act and whose concomitant is a finite gradual continuous affair which has no existence that is described with presence and all-comprehensiveness (*jam'iyya*) elsewhere except in the estimative faculty (*wahm*).”⁷ This definition, in fact, represents a combination of two Avicennan definitions of motion, each of which deals with the latter in a different aspect. In the first definition, Ibn Sīnā describes motion as “a continuous intelligible

3 Ibid., 203–204.

4 Ibid., 208.

5 See Ibid., 204–208.

6 See Ibid., 205.

7 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *al-Hikma al-muta'aliyya fi l-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arbā'a*, 9 vols., ed. R. Luṭfi, I. Amīnī, and F. Ummīd (Beirūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1981), part 3, 59.

affair of the object, moving from the place of the beginning [of the movement] to the place of its end.”⁸ This definition deals with the continuous (*qaṭʿiyya*) movement, which exists only in our mind (*dhihn*) or estimative faculty (*wahm*), but is not found in the outside, “among the entities” (*fī l-aʿyān*). Notice that Ṣadrā treats it as the concomitant of the real motion that exists in the outer world.

The second definition describes motion as

an existential affair [that exists] in the outside and which consists in the body’s being in an intermediate position between the place of the beginning [of its movement] and the place of its end, so that, whichever point between these two is taken, its [the body’s] “before” and “after” is not in it [the supposed point]. This state lasts as long as the thing continues to be moving.⁹

This is the definition of the “instantaneous movement” (*al-ḥaraka al-tawassuṭiyya*), i.e., the movement as it is perceived by our sense faculties. Ṣadrā describes it as a “flowing state” (*ḥāla sayyāla*) between potentiality and actuality. Despite his criticisms of the above quoted Avicennan definitions¹⁰ (which result from Ṣadrā’s extreme existentialist position and his denying any reality to quiddity), one cannot fail to notice that he develops his teaching on movement on the basis of Ibn Sīnā’s doctrine. In other words, Ṣadrā treats an instantaneous movement, understood as a flowing affair, as a reality that exists in the outside, while he views the continuous one as a concomitant of the former, which exists only in the estimative faculty—i.e., he sees the continuous movement as a shadow of the instantaneous one.

However, if we consider movement as the mobility of a thing (*mutaḥarrikkiyyat al-shayʿ*), it is nothing but self-renewal (*tajaddud*) and passing (*inqidāʿ*). Its proximate cause (*al-ʿilla al-qarība*), by necessity, must also be an affair which is not stable in its essence—otherwise, the parts of movement would not become non-existent. Or perhaps it is more appropriate to say that motion is an essential concomitant of the existence of this affair, which is fixed in its

8 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifa: Jadal*, ed. F. El-Ahwānī (Cairo: GEBO, 1965), quoted from Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 31.

9 Ibid., 32.

10 Ibid., 32–37.

quiddity and self-renewing in its existence—and, if it is so, it is more suitable to focus our attention on the accompanied (*malzūm*), not on the accompanying (*lāzim*). The accompanied affair, whose concomitant is motion, is, of course, nature (*tabī'a*).

The proximate cause of every species of motion is nature, and it is the substance which constitutes the body and through which the body is actualized as a species, and it [and not motion] is the first perfection of the natural body in the aspect of its actual existence. Hence, it is established and verified that every body is an affair which is self-renewing in its existence and flowing in its ipseity (*huwiyya*), although it is fixed in its quiddity, and through this, it differs from motion, because the meaning of the latter is self-renewal and passing.¹¹

In other words, there is no such a thing as a stable body, as far as existence is considered. On the contrary, every body should be considered as a particular aspect of the flow of existence—an aspect whose apparent stability results from an error of our sense perception. Motion is not external to such a body and is not predicated to it from outside. Rather, this is a certain quiddity which is predicated on this or that aspect or level of existence.

The principles of Peripatetic philosophy require an unchanging substratum for every change. In Ṣadrian philosophy, in which the body is viewed as an existentially self-renewing and perpetually flowing affair, it apparently cannot serve as such substratum. Ṣadrā solves the arising difficulty by stating that the requirement for the stability of the substratum applies only to those motions which are not existential concomitants of nature (for example, passage from one place to another, transmutation, and growth). As Ṭabāṭabā'ī remarks in his gloss, this assertion, in fact, testifies that Ṣadrā believes that all categories move through the movement of the substance which is their substratum. Ṭabāṭabā'ī also notes that non-concomitant movements, which occur in the categories of place, position, quality, and quantity, do not rely on the nature of the moving substance as such, but, nevertheless, the furthest limits of these non-concomitant movements are the concomitant ones that directly depend on the nature of their substratum.¹²

11 Ibid., 62.

12 See Ibid., 62n2.

Another difficulty concerning the substratum of movement lies in the fact that, according to Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, it consists of something potential and something actual. Ṣadrā's answer to them is that the postulate of the existence of two different affairs, one of which is potential and another actual, is a product of mental analysis (*tahlīl ʿaqlī*), while in reality the potential and the actual is one and the same thing and belongs to one existential direction. The fixity (*thubūt*) of movement manifests itself as its self-renewal, and, likewise, the fixity of that through which movement occurs, that is, nature which is engendered in the bodies, manifests itself as its essential self-renewal. But what is the mechanism of this fixity and self-renewal? According to Ṣadrā, it is based on the possibility of preparedness (*imkān istiḍādī*), and the self-renewal of nature manifests itself as "dressing after dressing" (*al-labs ba'd al-labs*). As Fazlur Rahman justly remarks, the self-renewal is perceived by Ṣadrā as an "essentially evolutionary and unidirectional individual process-entity."¹³

To understand this properly, we must keep in mind that the reality of prime matter is nothing other than potentiality and preparedness, while the reality of form is nature with its self-renewing temporal origination. Through its evolving preparedness, the prime matter receives a new form in every instant, each form having a different matter, which accompanies it by necessity. In turn, this matter is prepared to receive another form, different from that which necessitated it (matter) through preparedness. Thus we find that form is prior to matter in essence, but its (the form's) individual ipseity is posterior to matter in time. Hence, both form and matter possess self-renewal and perpetuity through the other. The popular belief that the form of a non-compound body remains forever the same and does not undergo any change arises from the similarity of the changing forms. In actual fact, however, these forms are one by their philosophical definition (*ḥadd*) and meaning, but they are not one in number, because they are renewed and replaced with each other in every instant, in a continuous manner.¹⁴ This made Ṭabāṭabā'ī conclude that Ṣadrā saw existence as a single continuous flowing affair, from which hypothetical limitations (i.e., the

13 Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 100.

14 See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 63–64.

intelligible quiddities—e.g., those of man, animal, plant, etc.) are abstracted by the mind.¹⁵

There is a single continuous (or: uninterrupted) individual existence, which has infinite limitations in potential in respect to instants, hypothesized in its time, and [therefore,] in it exist an infinite number of species—in *potentia* and in meaning, not *in actu* and in [actual] existence.¹⁶

The difficulty with the apparent lack of an unchanging and persisting substratum (*mawḍūʿ*) in substantial motion to which Ibn Sīnā pointed, is easily resolved if we agree to treat substance not as a static affair, but as a dynamic one and as an individual process.¹⁷

Although it is necessary that the substratum of every movement subsist through its existence and individuation, in the individuation of a corporeal substratum, it is sufficient that there is matter which is individuated through the existence of some [sort of] form, quality, and quantity, and it [matter] can change in respect to the particularities of each of them [i.e., form, quiddity, and quantity].¹⁸

In other words, the subsistence of the substratum is achieved through the existence of matter and some indeterminate form, quality, and quantity. As Fazlur Rahman observes, this indeterminate form, quality, and quantity behave vis-à-vis the progressively emerging infinity of determinate forms, qualities, and quantities “as a genus does vis-à-vis concrete species.”¹⁹ Hence, the persisting substratum is an unbound/non-delimited body (*jism muṭlaq*), i.e., a body-in-general, not a particular body, while the unity of the moving substance is one of the process-entity or the event-structure.²⁰

On the other hand, as Ṭabāṭabāʿī remarks, if the movement lacks the unity of continuity, the subsistence of substratum alone does not provide the unity of movement. Moreover, according to Ṭabāṭabāʿī, while the subsistence of substratum is a necessary precondition of the accidental movements (such as the movements in quality, quantity, position, and place), because they are accidents, whose existence is only possible in substratum and whose individuation takes place

15 See *Ibid.*, 64n2.

16 *Ibid.*, 86.

17 See Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

18 Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 87–88.

19 Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

20 See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 92–93 and Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100–101.

through it, this is not the case with the material substance, which exists through itself and, in its individual unity, does not require anything else apart from its own existence, which is simultaneously its individuation.

The material substance, says Ṭabāṭabāʾī, insofar as it is considered the possessor of substantial motion, is both the movement and the moving one, because its selfhood, which is movement, is attributed to its selfhood which is substance. In sum, accidental movements in respect of their unity and individuality require a substantial substratum, a possessor of unity and individuality, as a root and basis of their flowing unity and individuality.²¹ While accidents need substance as their substratum and cannot exist without it, the substance in a substratum has no need for other than itself. Since Ṣadrā views every corporeal and psychic substance as an evolutionary and unidirectional process, its actual substratum is nothing other than the continuity of this process.²²

Does Ṣadrā's theory of substantial motion, as gradual and evolutionary unidirectional movement toward perfection, constitute a revolutionary new teaching in the context of Islamic philosophy? By no means—the idea, probably stemming from the Neoplatonic concepts of *processio* and *reditus*, found its expression in the well-known teaching of *scala naturae*, which was equally popular in medieval Europe and the medieval Muslim East.²³ The uninterrupted chain of being, which ascends from the lowest and simplest to the highest and most complex creatures, was viewed as the product of gradual emanation and natural growth of things in perfection. Among the first Muslim philosophers to discuss the issue in their treatises in detail were the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Brethren of Purity). Thus, they wrote:

Know, O brother, that the sublunary beings begin from the most imperfect and lowest states and then ascend towards the most perfect and eminent state. This occurs with the passage of time and with every instant, since their nature does not receive the emanation from the

21 See Ṣadrā, *Asfar*, part 3, 87n1.

22 See Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

23 On *scala naturae*, see A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

spherical forms at one single time, but gradually, one thing after another.²⁴

Ṣadrā's merit lies in discussing this Neoplatonic theory in terms of Peripatetic philosophy and in overcoming the resistance of the latter by interpreting material substance as a continuous flow and evolutionary process, instead of viewing it as a static and unchangeable entity. While the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' focused their attention on the universal chain of being, Ṣadrā's main concern was with a particular corporeal or psychic substance. It was not mineral becoming plant and plant developing into animal that concerned Ṣadrā, but body becoming soul and soul becoming intellect, this world growing into the other (the hereafter) and the transformation of the first (corporeal) configuration (*al-nash'ā al-ūlā*) into the other (spiritual) one (*al-nash'ā al-ukhra*). This is primarily an eschatological concern: this-worldly life, events, phenomena are regarded by Ṣadrā as (a) preparatory stage(s) and shadow(s) of the other-worldly one(s).

In the world of nature all substances are subject to substantial motion, because the existence of a material substance, regardless of the corruptibility (in the case of elemental bodies) or the incorruptibility (in the case of celestial bodies) of its matter, can only be envisaged as an unidirectional evolutionary process—or, more precisely, in respect to its existence, every material substance is an individualized unidirectional evolutionary process. During its development, this substance becomes subject to an infinite number of changes and alterations—“dressing after dressing,” which means that, in order to assume a new and higher form, it does not need to take off the previous lower one (e.g., in order to assume the form of the animal soul, the substance does not need to abandon and take off the form of the vegetative soul). Quite the opposite, in order to be able to receive a higher form, the substance must first receive the lower one (thus, in order to be able to receive the form of the animal soul, the respective substance must first receive that of the vegetative soul). Ṣadrā calls this rule (the principle of) “the lower

24 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1957), 2:183, quoted from D. De Smet, “The Sacredness of Nature in Shi'i Isma'ili Islam,” in *The Book of Nature in Antiquity and Middle Ages*, ed. K. van Berkel and A. Vanderjagt (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 87n8. Cf. also Y. Marquet's French translation, “La détermination astrale de l' evolution selon les Freres de la Purete,” *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 44 (1992), 129.

possibility” (*al-imbkân al-akhaṣṣ*) (which is to be understood as the necessity to previously actualize the lower possibility in order to allow the actualization of the higher one) and, in the ascending arc of being, places it opposite the well-known Peripatetic rule of “the higher possibility” (*al-imbkân al-ashraf*), according to which the actualization of the lower possibility is only possible through and after the actualization of the higher one in the descending arc. More importantly, the existence of the natural body is only possible and can only be conceived of as substantial motion and stability in flow. The particular evolutionary path taken by a certain aspect of the flow of material existence (thought of in terms of substantial motion) is determined by its particular principle, referred to as its “nature” (*tabīʿa*). This particular principle or nature of the body is, in fact, nothing but tenuity (*raqīqa*) that links the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or immaterial archetype of the thing with its material idols. Although nature is the proximate cause of substantial motion, the ultimate goal of the latter is to bring the substance out of the world of nature, and place it among the inhabitants of the world of command, that is, increase the intensity of its existence to a level sufficient to make it possible for it to exist as pure disengaged dominating light (*nūr mujarrad qāhir*), or Intellect.

Ṣadrā’s theory of substantial motion can now be compared with Ibn ʿArabī’s teaching on new creation (*khalq jadīd*). During the twentieth century it became almost commonplace for experts in Islamic philosophy to believe that Ṣadrā’s theory represents nothing other than a philosophical demonstration of Ibn ʿArabī’s teaching on new creation. (Ṣadrā himself was partially responsible for the spread and strengthening of the belief, since in his discourses on substantial motion he employed the expression *khalq jadīd* a number of times).²⁵ Here, I ask, is it really so? Or is Ṣadrā’s usage of the aforementioned Qur’ānic and Sufi term merely a rhetorical technique, designed to capture the attention of the audience and to intrigue them? Before I try to answer these questions, I first briefly examine the concept of new creation and its history.

As Ibn ʿArabī himself acknowledges, his idea of the perpetual renewal of creation was, at least partially, inspired by the Ashʿarī teaching on substances and accidents. As is well known, the Ashʿarī

25 See, for example, Ṣadrā, *Asrār*, 63, 86.

believed that the world consists of immutable substances and ever changing accidents. Their famous axiom was “accidents do not remain for two moments” (*al-a‘rāq lā tabqā zamānayn*). While the Ash‘arī viewed substance as the underlying substratum of accidents, they held that the substances of which the world consists have no independent existence in themselves, but wholly depend on God’s power, which continually recreates the world in every instant (needless to say, such an understanding of substance (*jawhar*) makes it practically synonymous with atoms (*al-jawhar al-fard*, literally—“an indivisible particle”).²⁶ In the twelfth chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which contains one of the most important discussions on *khalq jadīd*, Ibn ‘Arabī admits that two groups—the Ash‘arī and the Relativists (*ḥisbāniyya*)—in their reasoning approach an understanding of the mystery of perpetual creation, but, he states, both fail to penetrate its heart and core. As for the Ash‘arī, they have grasped the perpetual renewal of some of the existents, namely the accidents, but they have not realized that the world in its entirety represents nothing other than the totality (*majmū‘*) of accidents, for which reason it entirely changes in every moment. In turn, the Relativists apprehend that the world perpetually changes in its entirety, but fail to notice the oneness of the entity of the substance which receives the form of the world and which only exists through it (whereas the form also cannot be conceived other than through this substance).²⁷

Importantly, in this discussion Ibn ‘Arabī defines the new creation as the “self-renewal of the affair with every breath” (*tajdīd al-amr ma‘a al-anfās*),²⁸ which (self-renewal) is necessitated by the fact that “God manifests Himself [anew] in every breath”²⁹ and “a [particular] self-disclosure is never repeated.”³⁰ (However, Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentator Mu‘ayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī remarks that God’s essential self-disclosure is one and eternal, and, if considered without any relation, never changes in any way. The perpetual change and alteration of the self-disclosures of the Real witnessed by (certain

26 See S. van den Bergh, “Dhawhar,” *EP*, 2:493a.

27 See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 125.

28 *Ibid.*, 125.

29 *Ibid.*, 126.

30 *Ibid.*

strata of) mystics are occasioned by the change of the preparedness of the receptacles).³¹

One notices that each a new creation is necessitated by and depends on a new breath. These breaths represent fragments or instances of the all-encompassing Breath of the Merciful (*nafas al-Rahmān*). It seems not unreasonable to assume that perpetual origination, in a way, results from the fragmentation of the Breath of the Merciful in respect to its particular receptacles, which, due to their limitations and difference in preparedness, cannot receive this all-encompassing breath in its entirety at one time, but are only able to do this gradually, dividing it in different directions and aspects according to the division that exists between God's names. Hence, in the same way as no human being, due to the narrowness of his breast, can partake of the Breath of the Merciful, except through a series of subsequent breaths, our mystical intuition cannot conceive of creation other than as an (infinite) chain of self-disclosures, every link of which simultaneously marks the appearance of a new form and the disappearance of the previous one. Thus, the teaching of new creation in Ibn ʿArabī's thought deals mainly with the relationship between the limited existence and the unlimited one.

Due to its confinement in time and space, the material universe is also confined in meaning—or probably the actual case is vice versa: its limitation in meaning manifests itself as spatial and temporal limitation(s). The narrowness of the receptacle, thus, makes the act of the Real actualized gradually, step by step, instant after instant (breath after breath), creation after creation. (Ṣadrā would certainly say that this narrowness and confinement results from the weakness/lowness of the intensity of the natural existence—or that at its lower degrees of intensity existence manifests itself as natural, i.e., as an existence that is confined in time and space and cannot simultaneously assume more than one particular form.)

A number of passages found in the *Futūḥāt* testify that the perpetual new creation of the world is necessitated by the narrowness of the receptacle. However, to Ibn ʿArabī, this receptacle is existence (=finding) itself:

31 See Muʿayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. S. J. Āshtiyānī (Qum: Būstān-i Kitāb 1381Sh), 494–495.

Within the Treasuries are found the individuals of genera. These individuals are infinite, and that which is infinite does not enter into existence, since everything confined by existence is finite.³²

The possible things are infinite, and there cannot be more than the infinite. But the infinite does not enter into existence at once (*daf'atan*); rather it enters little by little, without an end.³³

But, upon a more careful examination of the above quotations, one realizes that what the Greatest Shaykh understands here by existence is the external and natural existence.

Furthermore, one notices that, to Ibn 'Arabī, new creation is not a unidirectional and evolutionary process—i.e., the subsequent form is not necessarily more perfect in any aspect than the previous one. Also, in new creation, through assuming a new form, the (material) existence unclothes itself of the earlier one, whereby the process must be described as “dressing after undressing” (*al-labs ba'd al-khal'*), not as “dressing after dressing” (*al-labs ba'd al-labs*), as is the case with substantial motion. Ibn 'Arabī is overwhelmed by the vision of the perpetual renewal of the world, which can probably be characterized as the attempt of the finite to grasp the infinite and the attempt of the limited to grip the unlimited—a task that can never be completed. Ṣadrā, in turn, envisages the material world as a flowing substance which, in every part and every instant, moves one—albeit an immeasurably small—step closer toward spirituality and perfection.

The new creation, as it is understood by Ibn 'Arabī, i.e., the limited's attempt to express and manifest the unlimited, takes place in keeping with a certain regular pattern (likeness is normally replaced with likeness, not opposite with opposite) that is cyclically repeated and recreated. For this reason, it can be described as a cyclical event and presented graphically as circular motion.

In turn, substantial motion as envisaged by Ṣadrā, i.e., as a unidirectional evolutionary process and gradual spiritualization of

32 Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, n.d.), part 3, 361, quoted from William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 96.

33 Ibid.

material existence, occurs due to the increase of the latter's intensity, can be graphically presented as a half of the circle, i.e., as its ascending arc. What happens to the moving substance once it has reached the summit of the arc? According to Ṣadrā, it remains with the Godhead, becoming existentially one with its noetic archetype (the respective dominating light).

This difference in approaches results from a more principal difference between the visions of the two thinkers. For Ibn ʿArabī, existence is an accident of the entity, eternally fixed in the knowledge of the Real, the presence or absence of which does not in any way change the quiddity/whatness of the respective entity and its status in God's mind; to Ṣadrā, there is no such thing as an externally non-existent entity, eternally present in God's mind. Rather, the existence is the only thing which is/exists, whereas quiddities are nothing other than its potential limitations, which do not really exist, but are abstracted by the mind from the perpetual flow of (one and the same) existence and its different aspects.

The substantial motion, in brief, comes down to the increase of the intensity of the thing's (i.e., the essence's) existence. That is to say, an affair (e.g., the human soul), which begins to exist as an entirely corporeal thing, gradually comes to experience, first, imaginalization (*takhayyul*) and, subsequently, intellectualization (*taʿaqqul*). Although Ibn ʿArabī's teaching on the "new creation" (as numerous references to the latter, found in Ṣadrā's works, seem to suggest) is likely to have been one of the principal sources of Ṣadrā's inspiration for proposing the theory of substantial motion, he appears to have missed the focal point of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine. Ibn ʿArabī defines the "new creation" (or: "new measuring out") (*khalq jadīd*) as "the renewal of the affair with every breath" (*tajdīd al-amr maʿa l-anfās*)³⁴ or "the change of the world with every breath [occurring] in one entity."³⁵ This renewal or change results from the difference of the relations of *wujūd* in respect to each possible thing in every instant³⁶ and is based on the mystical intuition that perceives the world (cosmos, *ʿālam*) as the Real's imagination (*khayāl*). Though Ibn ʿArabī sometimes refers to the process of new

34 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, part 1, 125.

35 Ibid.

36 See ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥat al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. M. Hādizāde (Tehrān: Intishārāt-i Hikmat 1381Sh), 133.

creation (as perceived by a particular mystic) as *taraqqī* (‘advancing, developing’),³⁷ this advancing is not to be interpreted as advancing toward and achieving a certain final and ultimate perfection, e.g., a child becoming adult or a minor clerk’s becoming the director of a company. Rather, this is an imaginal advancing—the kind of advancing that we experience in dreams (and, therefore, it is called by Ibn ‘Arabī *taraqqī ba’d al-mawt*, ‘advancing after the death’),³⁸ and is not unlike the Real’s advancing from task to task.³⁹

Ṣadrā’s “substantial motion,” in turn, is a finite unidirectional evolutionary affair. Upon attaining the desired perfection (be it physical or psychic—as we know, according to Ṣadrā, there is no *ḥaraka jawhariyya* in the world of intellect, because intellect is a fully perfected soul), it ceases. Therefore, substantial motion (also referred to by Ṣadrā as the increase of the intensity (“strengthening”) of the thing’s existence (*tashdīd al-wujūd*) must be understood as the gradual return of the instance to its archetype (lord of species). The expressions *ḥaraka jawhariyya*, *tashdīd al-wujūd*, and *tajawhur* (‘substantialization’), thus, are all used by Ṣadrā to describe the process of the thing’s gradual return to its root and principle (*aṣl*).

Both concepts—“new creation” and “substantial motion”—are employed by their creators to describe certain journeys toward perfection. However, in each case, this journey appears to be of an entirely different character. While Ibn ‘Arabī has in mind an infinite journey in the realm of (the cosmic) imagination, Ṣadrā is concerned with the finite journey of a physical and psychic instance to its intelligible archetype.



37 e.g., Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, part 1, 124.

38 Ibid.

39 According to the Qur’ān, *every day He (i.e., God) is upon a [different] task* (55:29).