

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

Substantial Motion and Perpetual Creation*

ALI ABIDI SHAHRUDI, QOM

1. Introduction

The discussion at hand involves the connected ideas of motion (*harakat*), origination (*huduth*), and perpetual creation (*khalq jadid*). These are subjects that hold a privileged place in the religious sciences and that have instigated human thinking to further inquiry from time immemorial.

The present discussion is an investigation into the theory of “perpetual creation” as found in philosophy and mysticism. Hence, the substance of this work in its overall structure and particulars is not tantamount to a statement of the personal opinions of the author. What does indeed pertain to this humble writer is: firstly, the methodology employed; secondly, the determination of the details and the points of convergence and divergence in the theory of perpetual creation from the two perspectives of philosophy and mysticism; thirdly, the exposition of some of the corollaries of the theory in question based on precepts that are in part and from a certain perspective to be attributed to this present author; and fourthly, some additional details and their consequences that can be called the “theory of the fifth dimension.”

Before the formal appearance of the theory of substantial motion, any material body was known to have extensions in three dimensions. Mulla Sadra added time as a fourth dimension to the existing three spatial dimensions; and now it seems quite logical that in accordance with subsequent philosophical research a fifth dimension should be added to these four known dimensions. The fifth dimension is supported by principles found in Islamic philosophy. By drawing on this material, the theory of substantial

* Originally published in Farsi as “*Goftar dar harakat jawhari va khalq-e jadid*,” in *Sayr-e ‘irfan va falsafeh dar jahan-e islam*, Mu’asseseh Mutali‘at va Tahqiqat Farhangi, Tehran, 1363/1984, 193-235. It was translated by Mirza Shuja with support from Daftar Tablighat in Qom, and condensed and edited by Muhammad Legenhäusen.

motion makes the existence of this infinite dimension all the more fruitful, for things in this fifth dimension are essentially independent of time, but nonetheless maintain a type of association with matter and on this account are concomitantly in harmony with the flow of time. Immaterial perfections that are acquired by way of movement have an essential precedence over the temporal forms that “precede” them, even though in accordance with the theory of the causal chain of events, they appear temporally later. Needless to say, this issue of the temporal posteriority of immaterial things is one of the most intricate issues of philosophy, and a brief article cannot deal with it in a fully adequate manner.

The discussion that follows is about a profound and paradigm-shifting theory, which in its present form is one of the distinctive features of Islamic philosophy. This theory is known by two names in traditional scholarship. The more popular name is *substantial motion* (*harakah jawhariyah*). The other name is *perpetual creation* (*khalq jadid*) or *new creation*.

Technically speaking, *substantial motion* is a philosophical term, while *perpetual creation* is more meaningful within the framework of Islamic mysticism where it has been discussed with more frequency. For centuries before the appearance of the theory of substantial motion, the term *perpetual creation* was used in Sufi writings and the basic tenets of the theory were openly discussed. Hence this latter term must be studied within the context of both philosophy and mysticism.

To begin with, it must be ascertained how substantial motion and perpetual creation are treated and explained in the fields of philosophy and mysticism respectively. From there the differences and divergent views of these two fields must be seen. Finally, it must be established whether the two terms in question are in reality talking about a single theory, or whether there exist two separate theories pertaining to two different fields of knowledge. In the latter case, the term *perpetual creation* will be ambiguous, since the term has not been used exclusively in the field of mysticism. Philosophers have also used this term, but with a meaning that is equivalent to *substantial motion*.

The author of this article feels that in reality we are dealing with two different theories. Though these theories have much in common, *substantial motion* is a concept quite distinct from that of *perpetual creation* as used by the Sufis. Hence it will be seen that the term *perpetual creation* lends itself to two different and discordant meanings which must be logically expounded.

2. The Theory of Motion in the Category of Substance

Before Mulla Sadra, philosophers imagined that motion was limited to four categories—place, position, quantity, and quality. Others, in fact, were of the opinion that it was limited to less than four. Nevertheless, the vast majority of philosophers believed that motion was not possible in the other categories, including the category of substance. It was Mulla Sadra who, for the first time, introduced the idea of motion in the category of substance in a scholarly fashion. Mulla Sadra himself insisted that some ancient philosophers were also supporters of this theory, and he cited phrases from their writings that bore a resemblance to the theory of substantial motion in order to support his claim.

3. Definitions of Motion

In different sciences and philosophical systems there are various definitions of motion, each one defining the term from its own particular vantage point. Here only the definition of motion that is used in Islamic philosophy will be used, ignoring all other definitions despite any relevance that they may have to the Islamic definition. Islamic philosophy, in its turn, has put forward a number of definitions for motion. The more important of these definitions are briefly outlined below.

(A) Motion is the first perfection for a thing that has potential, insofar as it has potential.

This definition of motion takes into consideration the actuality and potentiality of things, their perfection and imperfection, and the relation of moving things to their potential. Accordingly, motion is for the purpose of acquiring actuality and perfection that the moving thing lacks. The sought perfection that is presently non-existent in the mover is the final cause of all motion and is known as the “second perfection.” Motion itself is a state of a thing that lacks it (i.e., that is stationary) and hence is itself considered a type of perfection. Because the phenomenon of motion always and logically precedes the second and final perfection, it is called the “first perfection.” Moreover, because this first perfection is tantamount to the reason and means by which a thing in potentiality can achieve its desired and final perfection, it would be appropriate to label it an “instrumental perfection”, even though philosophers traditionally do not seem to have used such an expression. Another point that emerges from this definition is that motion is possible only for things in potentiality and that perfect existents in actu-

ality are free from the deficiency of motion and have no need of it. An existent in potentiality, once it achieves its second and final perfection, also becomes relatively needless of motion and only goes on to require motion with respect to other secondary perfections. So, considering the instrumental nature of motion, we can modify the initial definition to read as follows: *motion is the first and instrumental perfection of a thing in potentiality with regard to its potentiality.*

(B) Motion is the gradual departure of a thing from potentiality to actuality.

This definition also brings the issue of potentiality and actuality to bear upon the fundamental basis of all motion, but in this definition the form of motion is a type of gradual displacement as opposed to a sudden or instantaneous translocation. Gradualness brings with it certain features such as: succession, order, and continuity. Hence motion is a state that is continuous, contiguous, and successive. And because it always starts from potentiality and terminates in actuality, it has an origin and an end. Moreover, because it is measurable, it must be counted as being among the quantitative realities. In consideration of the points mentioned above it can be said that *motion is a quantity that is contiguous, non-static, gradual, and directional.*

(C) Motion is the acquisition of the potential limits of a category in a continuous way.

This is Mulla Sadra's definition, and according to him it is more inclusive than the other definitions. The features of this definition are as follows.

(a) A category is something that is contiguous but nonetheless capable of division into parts and limits. The category relating to motion is but the indication of the extension related to the motion. Hence the attributes of this category are the same as the attributes of the extension.

(b) Distance and extension potentially include parts and limits.

(c) Motion is a gradual phenomenon that eventually covers all the limits of the extension.

(d) Motion is a state that accepts prolongation and incrementally stretches to cover its associated extension.

(e) Motion is a prolongation that conforms to its extension.

(f) Motion has parts and limits in potentiality that exactly correspond to the parts and limits of the extension.

(g) Motion and extension are both a type of continuous quantity but with this difference that motion is a fluid quantity, in flux and ever-changing,

whereas extension, in so far as it is to be distinguished from motion, is in a state of quietude and is unchanging. Here it is necessary to mention that motion is not an essential instance of the category of quantity. In fact the essential instances of quantity are amount and number. Motion, by contrast, just like the natural body, is capable of quantification, and because of its existential concurrence with quantity in the concrete world, can be counted as one of its instances. Similarly, there is an existential concurrence and unity between motion and time. These two are seen to be distinct upon analysis but are united with respect to the extension that they refer to.

4. Basic Types of Motion

According to Ibn Sina, *motion* is a name that is used to denote two concepts. First, it is a reality that is continuous but does not exist as a complete whole in the external world. This is because so long as the moving body is between the origin and end, not all of its parts have been realized; and when the moving agent reaches the end, motion comes to a stop. Hence motion as a fluid and contiguous reality does not have any concrete external existence. This concept is known as “traversing motion” (literally “cutting motion,” *harakah al-qat‘iyyah*).

Second, it is the mediating state of the moving agent between the origin and the end; in the sense that when the moving thing is supposed to be at any given limit along the extent of the distance to be traversed, it is seen not to be at that limit before or after the given “static” moment. Ibn Sina held the reality of motion to correspond to this second conceptualization. This concept is known as “mediating motion” (*harakah al-tawassutiyyah*).

After the time of Ibn Sina, many long and extended debates on the nature of traversing motion and mediating motion took place. For their parts, Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra held Ibn Sina’s opinion to be invalid and said that it is mediating motion, not traversing motion, that has no concrete reality. Moreover, the existence of traversing motion, conceived of as a contiguous flux and a series of continuous changes that are measurable, can be demonstrated. Criticisms that have been raised against motion can be shown to pertain to a concept of motion other than that of traversing motion.

5. Towards a Characterization of Motion

In the gradually flowing continuum of motion, every hypothetical part is *potential* with respect to the parts that come before it, and was *actual* with respect to the parts that come after it. In other words, every point of the points of this continuum is the “non-existence” and “fading away” of past points.

The passing-away of any part is concomitant with the emergence of another part, just as the ascendance of a part accompanies the descent of another in the cyclic continuum of motion. In addition, it is known that existence and being are identified with light [in Mulla Sadra’s view of Illuminationist philosophy], and nonexistence and nonbeing are equivalent to darkness. Hence, motion is a continuum of light and darkness—continuously and successively giving light and becoming dark.

Another corollary of this definition of motion is the fact that motion, whether with or without an end, is an originated phenomenon that is always “emerging anew” and does not have pre-existence. This is because the essence of motion is founded upon origination and this very act of “emerging anew”, and because every part or event of motion is preceded by non-existence. It can hence be concluded that the entire essence of motion is that of being preceded by non-existence. Based upon what has been presented up until now, we can briefly list some of the characteristics of motion.

I Motion is the first perfection for that which is in potential.

II Motion is an instrumental perfection.

III Motion is in its origin always in potential, and at its end in the state of actuality.

IV Motion is directional.

V Motion is continuous and contiguous.

VI Motion is gradual, in-flux, passing, and in a state of instability.

VII Motion is capable of being partitioned and measured, like all other continuous quantities.

VIII Motion is infinitely divisible.

IX Motion is essentially temporal.

X Motion is concomitant with being and non-being—a matrix of existence and non-existence.

XI Motion is originated, or emerging anew from nothing.

XII Motion is absolute. That is, motion is a concretely existing reality (in terms of philosophy) and hence has in itself a number of essential attrib-

utes. This is in contrast to the way that pure mathematics would approach the issue. For mathematicians, motion is a relative reality that takes on meaning only after an [external] framework is designated for it. Without regard to any particular framework, motion is characterized by its necessary properties—such as are discerned by referring to a number of arbitrarily or conventionally established principles.

XIII Motion is analytically composed of potentiality and actuality, as per the order among its parts.

XIV Motion is a form of mediation between pure potentiality and actuality, or an admixture of the two. This characteristic is different from the one above from a certain perspective, and from another perspective it is identical to it.

XV Motion is non-instantaneous because it is impossible for it to at once in a moment, (unless it is considered with respect to eternity (*dahr*)).

XVI Motion is a prolongation and extension in a direction other than the three spatial dimensions.

XVII Motion is coordinate with time.

XVIII Motion is coordinate with extension.

XIX Motion is not composed of indivisible parts.

XX Motion is not intermittent or discontinuous, with gaps.

XXI Motion is subsistent while at the same time being originated and “emerging anew.” The subsistence of motion coincides with its being originated.

XXII Motion is compatible with the possibility of intensification, even though the latter is not a necessary concomitant of motion, unless, of course, we expand the scope of the concept of intensification to include the acquisition of any type of actuality whatsoever—regardless of whether this actuality is situated on the horizontal chain of interrelated phenomena or on the vertical chain of being and becoming. In this case, all instances of motion, even simple changes of physical state and position, become perfective and intensional motions. From a terminological and linguistic point of view such an expansion in the scope of a notion is not problematic, but from a scholarly and philosophical point of view it does not seem right. This is because the ontological reality of intensification is not affected by a change in the designation of a given term. Philosophically, the concept of intensification entails a stronger or more intense perfection than the perfection that came before. Such a concept can be envisioned to hold true in the case of a vertical and existential intensification. But on the horizontal level, intensification is not possible. In a similar fashion it is argued that it is cor-

rect to speak of a horizontal “gradation” of existents as the principles of ontology lead to such an idea. But it must be remembered that the basis of gradation on the horizontal level is gradation on the vertical level. To attempt to prove the existence of a horizontal gradation without reference to the vertical, is to attempt to establish the existence of a difference without the existence of differing aspects. Hence, one cannot correctly conceive of intensification on the same level or within one level. But motion on one level or in a horizontal sense can be conceived and correctly so, (being known as local motion, or locomotion). From this we can conclude that motion is not concomitant with intensification. Finally it can be noted that a number of valuable corollaries follow from the relative independence of motion and intensification, the theory of the fifth dimension being one of them.

XXIII Motion is indicative of the coincidence of existence and change. This is because the existence of motion is based on there being a continuous change occurring. In other words, existence can be divided into two types: subsistent existence and changing existence. The existence of motion is a changing existence that is a constant state of flux. Its very existence is in that it continuously flows and is in a state of passing. If even for an instant its fluidity or fluxion were to be negated, motion itself would be negated and would cease to exist. If there is no change, there is not motion. Motion subsists only when there is some change. This particular characteristic important in discussing the persistence or identity of the subject, i.e., the object of motion or the moving subject.

Motions, due to their innate inconstancy, are dependant upon six things:

- a) Mover or agent and source of motion.
- b) Receiver or accepting subject of motion.
- c) Category or extension in which the motion takes place.
- d) Origin or point from which the motion initiates.
- e) End or point towards which the motion approaches.
- f) Time, which is an essential attribute of motion.

What is meant by the “subject” is the entity that has “moving” as a real attribute and that can be described by the adjective “moved.” The moving subject is a composite mixture of potentiality and actuality, and such a situation cannot arise except in the case of material bodies. It can be concluded that motion is a material phenomenon that is particular to material bodies and that outside the realm of the material, motion is inconceivable.

Substantial subjects move within the categories in which motion is possible in such a way as to gradually and in a continuous fashion traverse the

limits and parts of their extensions that constitute the category. During this passage, the moving substance goes through a new limit of its extension at every moment. These limits are sometimes the different individuals or subclasses of a single species, and at other times they are the different species of a single genus. This conception of motion in a category has a number of implications, one of which is that every category that allows for motion, in addition to having an individual at rest before moving, also has an individual that is in flux during the motion.

As mentioned in the introduction, motion is generally said to take place in four categories. Let's consider, first, motion in the categories of place, position, and quality. Motion in these categories can be explained as follows. Because a material body does not need its accidents for its very existence, it naturally also is not affected by changes in its non-essential attributes. Hence it is possible for such a body to give up the individuals and species of the mentioned categories and to take on other individuals and species of these categories. Thus it is not required to retain them and at any moment can accept a new individual or species, which it can abandon at either the very next moment or later. Hence, there is no problem in the idea of the motion of a substantial subject in the categories of place, position, and quality.

Consider next, motion in the category of quantity. The idea of motion in the category of quantity has been controversial. Ibn Sina admits to consternation when he attempts to defend the idea. Sohrawardi, the founder of the Illuminationist school of philosophy actually denied the possibility of motion in the category of quantity.

The main objection to quantitative motion hinges on the problem of the identity of the subject during its motion. There is no doubt that motion needs a subject. The concept of the motion of a body in an amount (i.e., an instance of quantity) entails that at every moment some part of the amount is obtained, and in the next moment, it is lost. The loss of some part or amount of the body necessitates the loss of the body itself, since the subject of change is a particular quantity of body. Since a corporeal quantity cannot exist without its particular amount remaining constant, we are forced to conclude that as soon as the motion begins, the moved object no longer exists. The negation of the moved is tantamount to the negation of the motion itself. Hence the assumption of motion is equivalent to the negation of motion—a contradiction. It is precisely because of this problem that some, like Ibn Sina, have sought in vain for identity in the subject of quantitative

motion. Others have denied outright the existence of motion in the category of quantity.

A reply to this objection can be given as follows. The subject of motion is the body, and it is clear that this body must maintain its identity and individuality throughout the act of motion. But the point to note is that the particulars of the amounts associated with the body during the motion have no bearing on this identity. Rather it is the existence of the very nature of amount that serves to give identity and individuation to the subject, and the constantly changing particularities of the amount do not harm this identity in the least. Hence a body is capable of motion in its parts and limits through motion in quantity.

The reply to the objection above can be put in another form. The subject of motion in the category of quantity is either the matter (prime matter) or the very nature of the amount that maintains its identity during the act of motion due to the fact that the changes in amount are continuous and contiguous.

Other replies to this objection, both from the school of Peripatetic philosophy and that of transcendental philosophy, have been given. One such reply is that the specific natural body, in so far as it is a subject for quantitative motion, maintains its identity during any and all changes because as a species it needs nothing other than a specific form and an indefinite body; changes in the instances of the body that pertain to genus or matter do not harm the identity of the specific body in the least. In addition, there is no reason to believe that the changes in amount during quantitative motion invalidate the identity of the subject. Where the change is gradual, there is no reason to doubt the identity of the subject during motion.

6. Causes of Motion

Philosophical discussions of motion have established that the immediate cause of motion in material bodies is an internal agent that is known in the field by the term “nature.” Causes or factors that act upon bodies from the outside are either coercive agents or auxiliary causes. Instances of volition or motion by “will” are seen to be forced or constrained by remote causes. Hence all of these different types of motion—coercive, volitional, and natural—are attributed to the specific form of the body. This specific form is the innate nature of all bodies.

It can be concluded that all of the material (and physical) faculties and forces are dominated by metaphysical ones. From another perspective, all

of the physical and metaphysical powers throughout existence are nothing but the Divine “armies”—none of them being outside His power and might. The divine origin, from the perspective of philosophy, is the cause of all causes and the first mover of all motions without there being in that origin itself any change or motion. This is because His setting something into motion is not by immediate contact so as to create an accidental change in the mover. The divine agency of motion is by force and vertical. It is executed by the immediate mediation of the motive natures of material bodies. Hence, the nature of every body is the mediating and proximate cause of physical motion. In these circumstances, motion is tantamount to being an essential property of matter. The soul and other immaterial realities are then to be seen as mediating and remote causes of motion. The divine origin is the principle cause, true origin, and the first mover for all motions.

The principle of causality has given rise to valuable laws of general application. One such law is that of the “Consonance of Cause and Effect vis-à-vis Stability and Change.” This law can be divided conceptually into two laws or two sub-laws:

1. A cause that is either stable or changing has an effect that is respectively stable or changing.
2. An effect that is either stable or changing has a cause that is respectively stable or changing.

It is this second law that is of use to us in the present discussion. It basically says that the cause of a stable thing is stable; and the cause of a changing thing is changing. This is because if the cause of a changing thing had stability, necessarily all of the parts and limits of the changing thing would all at once come into being—leaving no room for any further change. Such a scenario would entail that the effect is stable, something which is contrary to the original supposition.

Proving Substantial Motion

In the discussion above a number of necessary but not sufficient introductory ideas were presented in a very summary fashion. From among these, four are fundamental and have direct relevance to the subject of research at hand. These four are:

- I The nature of material bodies is the immediate cause of all motion.
- II The concept of motion in a category is that the substance passes through various potential parts and limits within the category. At every moment an individual or species of the category is created and in the next moment passes—only to be followed by another one newly originated.

III Motion in the four categories is possible and occurs in reality. In the two categories of place and position, this takes place without any controversy.

IV Cause and effect are consonant with respect to stability and change.

The specific and substantial nature of bodies, as has been explained, is the immediate cause of various material motions. Motion is a single continuum, ever-changing and in flux. No part of this continuum has any stability—continuously a part is destroyed and a part is originated.

Nature, the cause of motion, is either stable or changing. If it is stable, it must have an effect that is also stable, just as the law of the consonance of cause and effect vis-à-vis stability and change was seen to imply. In this case, motion as an effect of a stable cause must itself be stable and static. That is, all of the parts of motion must come into existence together and at one time because their cause was the same and it is not possible for an effect to oppose its cause. But this would imply that motion is no longer motion, because the essence of motion is nothing other than change. Hence, either nature is not the cause of motion, or motion is not a changing continuum. Neither of these possibilities are logically acceptable, so it can be concluded that the first part of the proposition that was stated as, “nature... is either stable or changing,” is invalid. Hence, it can be concluded that the second part is necessarily correct, meaning that specific and corporeal nature is a reality that is essentially changing, moving, and in flux. Change must be taken to be an essential attribute of the substance of nature; the latter being in no way ontologically posterior to the existence of nature.

Essential attributes are not causal, other than in an accidental sense. Hence there cannot be any type of stability in a bodily substance. The substance of nature is a continuum in flux and essentially alterable. In reality, at every moment an individual or a species of substance leaves the scene inclining towards non-existence, and another individual or specie after non-being acquires being.

This demonstration implies that the cause of motion is itself in motion and changing. In explaining this it must be concluded that change and motion is essential to nature and, from another angle, they are identical to nature. Hence the existential reality of all nature is specific, corporeal, real, flowing and passing. Even bodies that are apparently static and still—not appearing to move in any one of the four categories mentioned—are nevertheless, according to the above proof and in line with their inner natures, in motion.

7. Objections to Substantial Motion

The main objections that have been raised against substantial motion are the following.

(A) Substantial nature is either potential or actual. There is no state between these two. The generation and corruption of substantial nature are instantaneous because substantial forms do not increase or diminish, precisely because there is no intensification in a form. So, the substance either remains in the middle as it is, or it actually ceases to exist. In the first case, no change actually took place in the substance; for if it did, then this would be in contradiction to the supposition that it remained what it is, because the substance would not be the very same substance that existed before. In the second case, intensification, for instance, would be reason for the destruction of the substance and the generation of a new one. But this is not intensification. The intensification of a substance would mean that the substance should become more intense and more perfect while enduring and maintaining its identity.

(B) If intensification causes the perishing of one substance and the appearance of a new substance, then there must necessarily exist between the former and the latter substance the possibility of the existence of an infinite number of substantial species in potentiality. But we saw from objection (A) that there is no middle state for a substance between pure potentiality and pure actuality.

(C) If intensification causes a substance to come-to-be and another one to pass-away, the result would be a succession of indivisible instants, something that is invalid according to the principles of philosophy. This is because either all or some of the substances that are created during the motion of intensification would linger for more than an instant, or on the other hand they would exist for just one instant and no more. In the first case, motion would change to stillness. In the second case, a succession of instantaneous substances would occur, leading to a succession of instants of time, which is known to be null and void.

(D) If intensification causes the passing-away and coming-to-be of substances, then there must necessarily exist an infinite number of actual substances between the perishing substance and the generated substance. This is because the continuum that intensification represents contains the possibility of an infinite number of substantial species in potentiality—on account of the fact that a substance is neither pure potentiality nor pure actuality and hence between the perishing substance and the created substance

there exist an infinite number of actual substances. But this is not possible as an infinite series in actuality cannot fit into a finite measure.

(E) Because prime matter or *hyle* is pure potentiality and capacity to become, it has no actuality in itself or by itself. Hence it cannot move within the category of substance. And if it attempts to move by the support and help of a substantial form, it is attempting the impossible. For in the case where we assume that it is in motion, the substantial form—according to the law of motion—does not maintain its identity. When the form goes, matter also passes-away. With nothing left, how can nothing be said to be in motion? But if it is said that the subject of motion is a substance in actuality, we would turn around to ask: in this substantial motion, does the moving substance endure until the origination of the new substance? If this is the case, then during this interval it has not moved and this is contrary to the assumption that the substance is constantly moving. If, on the other hand, it is said that it does not endure and that another substance comes about that is different from the one before it and the one after it, then in reality the original substance has ceased to be and what now exists is not what was before.

8. Replies to the Objections to Substantial Motion

We will refrain from answering each of the objections individually and will let one general answer suffice. All such objections result from not using the laws of motion in a comprehensive fashion. Motion, as a flowing continuum, maintains a single identity from start to finish throughout its extension. The origination of new parts and the elimination of the previous parts are not in the manner of discrete ruptures so as to cause a break in the identity and a fault in the individuation of the essence. The thing that continuously flows, and is always in a process of changing, persists. Its very endurance and persistence resides in the origination and emergence of new parts. Hence if the category of material substance is a changing and flowing category, no problems arise for persistence. This is because it can be said that the substance both endures during the motion and that it does not endure, if only for this reason that this is the very nature of all that is flowing. From two different perspectives their persistence can be affirmed and denied.

If the objection of Ibn Sina and others regarding the intensification of substance were admissible, then it would have been necessary to negate the existence of change and intensification in all categories without exception.

On this basis and given that a substantial form is by definition self-subsisting, rather than subsisting in another, to interpret substantial motion we can say that a substantial form is motion itself with regard to its renewal and fluidity, but with regard to its substantiality, the persistence of its universal quiddity and its existential identity, it is the subject of motion. Considered as that specified by the limits of its form, the substance is the category and extension in which motion occurs.

On this account there is no need to assume the existence of anything in motion other than the substantial form, despite the worry that matter in the moving substance is not actual, since matter, contrary to the opinion of Ibn Sina and his followers, is not destroyed during motion, but persists through its continuous connection with temporal forms. Hence, it may be correctly said that the subject that persists through substantial motion is prime matter or *hyle*, because this matter is always not bound to any particular substantial form. The dependence and subsistence of matter on a substantial nature is actual, and this nature continues to exist throughout all the changes and alterations of the substance.

In addition to this argument, it is possible to find a subsisting subject of substantial motion even according to Peripatetic principles. In short, according to the characteristics and laws of motion, there should be no difference between substance in flux and the other categories that are traditionally known to accept motion. These latter categories accept motion by remaining in a state between pure potentiality and pure actuality and by recourse to their essential characteristic of fluxion. The category of substance and the changes it undergoes is not an exception to this rule. Hence, between the old and the new substance there exist an infinite number of substances, albeit potentially in a gradual continuum.

So, there is no intelligible reason to object to motion in the category of material substance; and based on the demonstration presented above, the theory of substantial motion is perfectly logical and philosophically sound.

Consequences of Substantial Motion

Here we shall review the fruits of this theory, although in a very summary fashion.

I Substantial motion gives rise to a type of general and consequential motion in all categories without exception—there remains nothing that can be called stable or still.

This corollary does not contradict the arguments against motion in some particular categories, because these arguments are specific to essen-

tial motion originating in these categories, while what is asserted here is a kind of derivative motion that follows upon substantial motion.

II Material (or physical) substance is originated in time because every individual of it was non-existent, being preceded by the absence of time. This precept applies to every individual, and because it is a general precept that is unconditional, it also applies to the conglomeration of individuals taken as a whole. This implies that all material substances in all of their modalities are originated. And this in turn means that the entirety of the material universe is a single creation that has been originated in time. Moreover, in so far as all substantiality, in its essential gradual and in flux modality is preceded by non-existence, it needs this prior non-existence for its very subsistence; and with respect to future time, it is once again in all of its essence non-existent; it depends upon this posterior non-existence for its inner subsistence.

From this it can be concluded that the past of the material world is nothingness and that the future path for the world is once again towards dissolution and nothingness.

III There is a possibility of wayfaring from the physical realm to the metaphysical one.

IV The attributes of a genus can be applied to its species in relation to the differentia that come about during the motion of the prime matter in the category of substance.

V Common individuated, substantial quiddities may be distinguished due to their new and posterior differentia.

VI Body is extended in a fourth dimension that is perpendicular to the three spatial ones. This corollary says that in the same way that the mathematical body is perpendicular to the plane, the dimension of time is perpendicular to the entire body both in a mathematical and a philosophical sense. Hence the fourth dimension is not just a “calculated” reality based on mathematical theory, it is a concretely existing reality. Going further, there is another corollary to this one which induces the existence of another dimension from the perfective motion of things in an extension that is perpendicular to the known four dimensions. We will return to this later on in this article.

VII Motion in categories does not require the actual occurrence of intensification in them. It is not necessary that every part of motion should be more perfect and more actualized than the one that preceded it. What is concomitant with motion in categories is the possibility of the occurrence of intensification in them and not the occurrence itself.

VIII Creation is perpetual. The proof of this corollary lies in the exposition of the concept of substantial motion. If change in substance is viewed from the perspective of form and matter and their interrelation, then it is seen to be motion. But if the same change is viewed from the perspective of absolute being and a preceding non-existence, then it is “perpetual creation” or “new creation.” Finally from the perspective of the unity of motion with material substance, which is at every moment being created, it can be seen as a kind of divine initiative and setting into motion.

9. Analysis of Creation and Motion

Creation in its absolute sense is origination and bringing into being. It is synonymous with ontological causation. Essentially this latter term denotes bringing about the existence of a thing and accidentally it denotes bringing about the quiddity of the thing.

Substantial motion has a corollary known by the name of “perpetual creation,” which says that at every moment the Divinity creates a new substance along with its consequents. Every new created thing requires a new act of creation and the universe is continually in a state of becoming and origination—God is at every moment the Creator, the Originator. Now, when we consider the fact that perpetual creation is a corollary of substantial motion, we can conclude that perpetual creation in its philosophical meaning is specific to the material universe. In this way it can be said to have the same characteristics that were enumerated for motion earlier—for from a certain perspective, perpetual creation is really the same as the motion of universal substance.

Now that we have come to understand the concept of perpetual creation in philosophy, we will turn to its conceptualization in the realm of mysticism and will begin to examine the points of commonality and different that exist between the two notions.

10. Perpetual Creation in Mysticism

The term “perpetual creation” has been used in a much more extensive way in mysticism than it has in philosophy, and, as is apparent from the statements of mystics, it comprehends and includes the whole of contingent reality, and not only the material world.

Theoretical mysticism begins with the axiom that the only self-subsistent being is the Necessary Existent, which has no quiddity other

than its existence. Hence, there is no independent reality other than God. The entire universe and all it contains are consequences of the Necessary Existent, whether at the level of essence, effects or acts. The first essential creation from the Divine Origin is the general existence of the all-pervasive emanation or grace (*fayd al-munbasit*). This emanation is stable and unchanging and in itself contains no distinction or multiplicity. The recipients of this all-embracing emanation and grace are the quiddities and entities of the contingent order. These quiddities and entities are nothings and non-existent in the absence of the creative impulse. It is only through creation that they come into existence. The matter for the forms of the universe in all aspects is prime matter or *hyle*. It is the first subject, which in one regard is the same as the general existence that is produced by the Divine Origin; the forms of which are like accidents and particularizations of the said subject.

The multiplicity of manifestations is due to the multiplicity of recipients of grace, the objects of quiddity, and the impossibility of the repetition of any particular manifestation. Consequently, an infinite number of existential forms have appeared in the reaches of eternity and time, and an infinite number of divine signs—in both the horizons and in the souls of man—have disclosed themselves for the wise.

The root of time is eternity (*dahr*), which pervades the entire universe from its highest to its lowest realms. In the higher realms, the word “eternity” is used for it and in the lower ones the word “time.”

The self-disclosure of God or manifestation has two aspects. In one respect it is what brings about persistence (*baqa'*); and in another respect it is what brings about annihilation (*fana'*). Sometimes these are called two types of self-disclosure or manifestation: preserving manifestation and annihilating manifestation. The differences between them arise from different conceptualizations of the realm of fact (*nafs al-amr*) and the plurality of the intelligible aspects. Contingent entities have no capacity for persistence on their own; and, of course, they would never come into existence in the first place without divine manifestation.

Thus, there is a continual need for constant renewal, continual self-disclosure of reality. The attributes of being renewed and being a manifestation are applied to the recipients of divine grace, the contingent entities or objects. Manifestation itself as the work of God, on the other hand, is devoid of all multiplicity and repetition. According to the principles of theoretical mysticism, there is no opposition between stability and non-multiplicity of manifestation, creation, and emanation on one side, and

perpetual creation, infinite existents and multiplicity in the created order on the other.

Renewal, according to the Sufis, applies to all existents in creation that are subject to the divine command. This inclusiveness of renewal in mystical theory has met with numerous objections from philosophers. According to the Sufis, both the material and immaterial worlds have been temporally originated, where temporality is to be understood with respect either to eternity (*dahr*) or time. To have a temporal origin means to be preceded by nothingness in eternity or in time. Renewal also takes place in eternity or in time. A complete comparison between the views of the philosophers and the mystics on time and eternity warrants an independent study.

Identity among the momentary and renewed creations is maintained due to a fundamental and general element of stability. In the cognitive exposition of every motion and any process of change and renewal, there is the outstanding need for a persisting subject. It is for this reason that philosophers search for such a stable subject in the four or five categories which allow of motion. Not finding such a stable subject, some philosophers have been led to doubt and even deny the possibility of motion in some of these categories. It is for this reason that almost all of the philosophers who came before Mulla Sadra denied the possibility of motion in the category of substance. A similar problem is encountered in the theory of perpetual creation understood in its widest and mystical sense. In their search for this stable and constant element, researchers in the field of mysticism have posited different possibilities and depending on their conceptualizations, have come up with different names for it: (1) substance, (2) *hyle* or prime matter, (3) extended soul, (4) fixed entity, (5) essence, (6) creative will in actuality, (7) general existence, as the first divine act.

11. Perpetual Creation from Two Perspectives

In a highly complex manner and with great intellectual exactitude, metaphysics painstakingly posits the two world theory of lower and higher (physical and metaphysical), each of which has its own specific characteristics. The metaphysical world was created first by God and has characteristics such as: stability, immateriality, and actuality devoid of any potentiality. The physical world on the other hand was created after and has neither stability, immateriality, nor pure actuality. Throughout this lower order, from the regions of the natural substances to the plane of the accidents

and what follows from them, there is a single continuum in motion that is substantial, fundamental, and sequential.

Prime matter, which is absolute potentiality, moves in material substance, bit by bit discovers its horizons, and moves towards an infinity that it cannot reach. While this prime matter has an ontological need for substantial forms, it does not cease to exist once they lapse and return into nothingness, for the generation and corruption of substantial forms is not disparate and discontinuous, in such a manner that once a form leaves the matter, the matter is destroyed and there is no longer any subject of motion. Annihilation and origination occur in a continuous and connected manner so that the substantial form is maintained through the entirety of the extension of its motion, and, subsequently, the matter associated with these forms is maintained to ensure the possibility of motion. Along with the motion of the substantial form, the entire structure of the natural world, from its accidents to its matter, undergoes motion, renewal and change. All that accompanies substance is caught up in the tempestuous flood of annihilation and origination.

In accordance with the law of natural succession, all of nature is in motion and constant regeneration. The subject of substantial motion, as well, cannot avoid this changing; and is only able to retain its identity by continuous association with a natural substantial form.

In the concept of motion, there is only a renewal of individuals flowing in a category. Progress or development in existence is beyond the borders of motion, and pertains to other features of the things in motion. Perfection takes place through an extension other than that through which motion occurs and the three dimensions through which material phenomena are extended. For this reason, we will call it the *fifth dimension*.

Entities moving in the matrix of the natural world progress in a direction that is perpendicular to all corporeality. At some point in the matrix, a perpendicular force sets movable substances in the direction of perfection through the extension of the vertical chain of being. Then the worldly era comes to an end for these moveable substances and they enter upon a divine era.

On this basis, substantial motion has two parts: (a) the part pertaining to motion in the horizontal realm, and (b) the part pertaining to motion in the vertical realm. Each of these realms has its own special sort of temporality, each of these with its own particular set of conditions and laws. Perpetual creation and renewal take place in both temporal dimensions, so that the entire world is recreated and originated at every moment, and it is through

this recreation that substantial motion can take place in which the universe is directed towards new perfections and actualities. At all times, in vertical directions and ways, the walls and barriers of materiality are broken and another step is taken beyond the physical.

This is how perpetual creation is seen from a philosophical perspective. From the perspective of theoretical mysticism, however, perpetual creation takes on another form altogether—mainly because in this way of seeing things it is not limited to the natural realm. The universe, in so far as it is a single totality, is always being originated. From the sacred intellects to the dominating lights that compose the supernal heavens, or from the lights of divine commands to the lights of the angelic realm, or from the celestial and elemental isthmus to the lowest levels of the *hyle*, all are in a state of alteration, change, and renewal. It is only the most perfect light of the the Almighty Lord, as the origin of every existent, that is static and unchanging. The divine self-disclosure and manifestation, in so far as it is associated with Him, is also stable, universal, and unitary.

Manifestation is from one aspect the universal act of God, and from another perspective it is the absolute and universal existent that emanates from the origin. Contingent quiddities and entities on the other hand, are eternally created at every moment. If there were only an initial act of creation without perpetual renewal, the world would immediately lapse into nothingness. Contingent entities are nothing but the determinations, connections, attachments, consequents, and effects of divine creation, manifestation, and emanation. Continual origination and renewal pertains to these associations (*ta'alluqat*) of manifestation, not to manifestation itself, (other than perhaps in an accidental way). Perpetual creation, then, refers to the origination of these associations of manifestation in relation to the contingent quiddities originated in the wake of these associations. If the associations stop existing, then things also become non-existent. It is in these recreations, in their context of differentiation, that the conditions for ontological progress appear and the perfective chain of being and becoming looms into full view. But if the context were not one of difference but rather one of similarity, then renewal and origination would exist without perfection. Even where what appears seems to be similar to what was before, there are differences, albeit hidden and suppressed. It is due to this fact that things are imagined to be static by some.

Both the Sufis and the philosophers agree that there is constant origination and renewal, that the lack of a capacity for essential self-preservation is equivalent to incapacity for essential existence, and that an essential ca-

capacity for annihilation is equivalent to pre-eternal essential nothingness. Both also agree that there is a kind of extension that corresponds in some ways to temporal extension in time. Both admit that change sometimes occurs without progress toward perfection, but that change in another context will be developmental or progressive. Although both hold that identity requires us to posit something that remains stable, the exposition of what this is differs among the mystics and the philosophers. Both hold that what is renewed is existence, and that renewal is continuous.

The mystics and the philosophers differ in that the Sufis hold that perpetual creation is universal, that every created thing is constantly recreated, while the philosophers hold that this renewal is specific to the material world. The foundational principles to which philosophers and mystics appeal also differ. Philosophers hold that identity is preserved through change by what is most base, i.e., prime matter; while the mystics posit a more sublime constant through change. Nevertheless, both agree that existence is also preserved and static, and that existence cannot be identified with matter. The subsistent in the philosophical explanation of substantial motion is situated in the changing substance itself, whereas in mysticism it is external to it. However, the mystics do not see constant creation as a form of motion, as the philosophers do. In philosophy, constant creation can be seen as a consequence of substantial motion.

In Islamic philosophy, motion is always explained in terms of mediation between the potential and the actual, and hence, in Mulla Sadra's system, substantial motion is always in the direction of perfection. In Islamic mysticism, on the other hand, there is an arc of descent and an arc of ascent with respect to which motion can be said to take place.

This then was a very summary account of the theory of perpetual creation in the fields of philosophy and mysticism. It was presented by listing the characteristics, commonalities, and differences of the theory in both fields. We would most gladly accept any and all criticisms and opinions relating to the article.