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Critical Analysis of the Foundations of Absurdism in Camus' Philosophy from the Perspective of Mulla Sadra

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ABSTRACT

This research presents a comparative study of Albert Camus's absurdist philosophy in contrast to the intellectual system of Mulla Sadra. Within his existentialist framework, Camus posits a world devoid of intrinsic meaning, irrational, and indifferent to humanity—a view manifested in works such as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, and *The Plague*. From his perspective, concepts such as justice and morality are human constructs rather than objective characteristics of the world. In contrast, drawing on the principles of Transcendent Philosophy (*al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah*), Mulla Sadra emphasizes the primacy of existence (*aşālat al-wujūd*), the systematic gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), and substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*). He interprets existence as a purposeful and wise system in which every part is a manifestation of the divine names. The findings demonstrate that Camus's absurdism is predicated on a neglect of the relationship between God and the world, a reduction of ontology to sensory empiricism, and an extreme anthropocentrism. Conversely, Mulla Sadra's philosophical-religious system, by explicating the framework of divine causality, the wisdom behind evil, and the teleology of creation, provides a comprehensive response to the crisis of meaning in modern humanity.

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Introduction

In the realm of contemporary philosophy, the question of the meaning of life and the nature of existence has become one of the most challenging and controversial topics. Albert Camus, the prominent French philosopher and writer, in advancing his theory of absurdism, describes the world as a meaningless arena, devoid of any predetermined purpose and replete with absolute indifference to human destiny in his influential works, including *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, *Caligula*, and *The Plague*. From his perspective, the absurd is the result of the conflict between humanity's inherent search for meaning and the irrational silence and indifference of the world. Camus believes that man is adrift in a world that has neither God nor meaning, and the only way to confront this situation is to consciously accept the absurd and engage in an existentialist revolt against it through the creation of personal values and human solidarity (Camus, 2000, p. 55).

In contrast to this view, the philosophical system of Transcendent Wisdom (*al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah*) offers a profoundly different approach to existence and the meaning of life. By establishing the three principles of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*), the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), Mullā Ṣadrā depicts a coherent, purposeful, and meaningful picture of the world that stands in fundamental opposition to Camus's absurdist ontology. This system of thought considers the world in its entirety a sign of divine wisdom and providence, in which the presence and will of God are manifested in every particle. From his perspective, man is not a wandering being in an absurd world but a divine vicegerent (*khalīfat Allāh*) and a traveler on the path of perfection and return to the Absolute Perfection (lit., meeting with God, *liqā' Allāh*). This fundamental difference in the ontological, anthropological, and teleological foundations between these two systems of thought provides a rich ground for comparative research and deeper analysis.

The present study examines this profound philosophical confrontation

using an analytical-comparative method and by citing the main works of the aforementioned thinkers. First, the article provides a structured explanation of the ontological and anthropological foundations of Camus's absurdist philosophy and its consequences in various intellectual fields (such as ethics and the approach to suffering). Then, fundamental critiques of Camus's view from the perspective of Mullā Ṣadrā and the basic principles of Transcendent Wisdom are analyzed to elucidate a coherent and purposeful picture of the world from the viewpoint of Islamic philosophy.

This study not only contributes to a better and deeper understanding of both perspectives but also opens new horizons in comparative studies of Western and Islamic philosophy and advances intercultural dialogue concerning one of the most fundamental human issues—the meaning of life.

According to the author's review, previous studies on Albert Camus's ideas have not critically examined or compared them with the foundations of Islamic philosophy, particularly from the standpoint of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy. For instance, the article entitled "*A Comparative Study of Absurdity and Objectification in The Stranger by Albert Camus and The Blind Owl by Sadegh Hedayat*" (Sajadi, 2019, p. 88) focuses solely on analyzing and comparing the elements of absurdism in the works of these two authors, while overlooking any engagement with or confrontation against the principles of Islamic philosophical thought.

1. Camus's System of the Absurd: A Structured Analysis

1.1. Ontological Foundations

In his works, Albert Camus presents a coherent picture of a world that, at its most fundamental level, lacks any predetermined meaning. This philosophical view, reflected in numerous works such as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, *Caligula*, and *The Plague*, is based on three fundamental principles: the inherent meaninglessness of the world, the

irrationality of its structure, and its absolute indifference to human fate.

At the core of Camus's thought is the belief that the world in itself is neither good nor bad, but simply exists. This view is clearly expressed in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "The world is neither beautiful nor ugly, it simply is" (Camus, 2000, p. 42). Such a view necessitates that concepts such as justice, goodness, or beauty be considered not as objective properties of the world, but as mental constructs of man. Camus takes this idea to its extreme in the play *Caligula*, where the mad emperor, after realizing that "men die; and they are not happy" (Camus, 1960, p. 8), descends into a destructive madness.

The irrationality of the world is manifested in various ways throughout Camus's works. In *The Stranger*, the scorching nature of Algeria and the seemingly rational but fundamentally irrational judicial system present a picture of a world in which events occur not based on any understandable logic, but seemingly at random. This view is extended to the societal level in *The Plague*, where an epidemic that "loves nothing so much as a human being" (Camus, 2005, p. 137) takes victims without any distinction between individuals, transforming meaninglessness into a collective experience.

In these novels, Camus uses "nature" and "disease" not as symbols of evil, but as neutral and amoral symbols of meaninglessness. The sun in *The Stranger*, which provokes the murder (Camus, 1989, p. 59), and the plague in *The Plague*, which is merely a biological fact, demonstrate that the external world is completely deaf and mute to human values and emotions. In other words, from Camus's perspective, the irrationality of the world is rooted in the absolute indifference of the cosmos, not in an active hostility. It is the human reaction to this indifference that forms the core of Camus's existentialist tragedy.

The indifference of the world, as a fundamental feature of Camus's worldview, is a key concept reflected in various forms throughout his works. This indifference does not merely signify a lack of attention but rather represents an active stance on the part of the world against

humanity's search for meaning. Camus illustrates this concept on three distinct but related levels:

In a key scene in *The Stranger*, Meursault under the scorching Algerian sun feels as if "the sky has opened up" over him (Camus, 1989, p. 59). This image aptly illustrates the indifference of nature—the sun shines without regard for Meursault's suffering, and the sea waves without heed to his anxiety. Here, Camus portrays nature as neither man's enemy nor his friend, but as a wholly independent and unconcerned entity.

The play *Caligula* is a prime example of this level of indifference. The political system that Caligula represents functions like a soulless machine. Laws, trials, and even punishments are conducted not based on justice, but on mechanical and artificial criteria. Camus notes in his writings that "Caligula depicts a system in which human beings are reduced to numbers" (Camus, 1960, p. viii). This perspective on social institutions reveals Camus's profound distrust of any predetermined system.

The novel *The Plague* is the best example of this level of analysis. In this novel, the disease is portrayed not as a divine scourge but as a completely random and meaningless event. Camus explicitly states that "the plague makes no distinction between the rich and the poor, good and bad" (Camus, 2005, p. 137). This view rejects any metaphysical interpretation of history and destiny. In Camus's worldview, historical events follow neither a determinate pattern nor serve a ultimate purpose.

A deeper point is that Camus accepts this indifference not as a weakness of the world, but as its inherent characteristic. He emphasizes in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that "accepting this indifference is a necessary condition for human freedom" (Camus, 2000, p. 55). In other words, genuine freedom can only be achieved when we abandon the illusion of a "benevolent world" or a "meaningful world."

This radical view distinguishes Camus from many of his contemporary philosophers. While some seek to find or construct meaning in the world, Camus, with unyielding audacity, insists on the world's indifference and

establishes it as the foundation for a new ethics—an ethics based not on divine commandments or metaphysical laws, but on human solidarity in the face of this indifference.

1.2. Anthropological Foundations

In Albert Camus's system of thought, man is defined as a being caught in a fundamental tension: on the one hand, he seeks meaning, and on the other, he lives in a world that is inherently devoid of any predetermined meaning. This opposition forms the core of Camus's **absurdist anthropology**, which can be analyzed at two levels: the individual and the social.

The individual level of encountering **the absurd** is deeply tragic and yet liberating. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus shows with philosophical clarity that man, due to his conscious nature, is always seeking to unify scattered experiences and find a comprehensive meaning. This search in itself reflects man's need to create coherent narratives of life. But from Camus's perspective, the world, with its heavy silence and failure to provide any clear answer to this search, stands in fundamental opposition to man. This confrontation is the experience of the absurd, which Camus considers "the only truly serious philosophical problem" (Camus, 2000, p. 3).

A concrete example of this confrontation can be clearly seen in the development of Meursault, the main character of *The Stranger*. Throughout the novel, Meursault gradually moves from a pre-reflective and almost unconscious state to a deep understanding of the human condition. The culmination of this development occurs when he confronts the truth in his prison cell that death is the inevitable fate of all human beings and that this fate encompasses everyone equally, regardless of social status, beliefs, or actions. This understanding transforms Meursault into an ideal example of the Camusian man: a man who has not only faced the absurd but has fully accepted it (Camus, 1989, p. 120).

Camus believes that before truly confronting the absurd, man is

trapped in a web of illusions and social conventions. These illusions include belief in pre-constructed meanings, metaphysical ethical systems, and ideological promises. Accepting the meaninglessness of the world cuts these false bonds like a surgical blade. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus calls this process the “**absurd revolution**”—the moment when one awakens from the sleep of dogmatism (Camus, 2000, p. 51).

After the collapse of these illusions, man is faced with what Camus calls “**metaphysical homelessness**.” But this homelessness is, paradoxically, the beginning of true freedom. Inspired by Nietzsche, Camus shows that man can now be the creator of his own values without relying on any external system. This idea is embodied in the character of Meursault in *The Stranger*, where he realizes in his prison cell that “nothing had any importance” (Camus, 1989, p. 122), and this awareness brings him a strange peace.

On the social level, the play *Caligula* examines the devastating and liberating consequences of the awareness of the absurd in the context of human relationships. Camus emphasizes in his notes that “Caligula is the embodiment of a man who has realized the depth of the meaninglessness of existence and is determined to impose this bitter truth on all those around him” (Camus, 1960, p. viii). The play functions as a philosophical laboratory in which possible responses to the absurd are examined on a social scale.

The character of Caligula himself symbolizes the destructive response to the absurd. After the death of his sister Drusilla, he is suddenly confronted with the fact that “men die and are not happy” (Camus, 1960, p. 8). This awareness transforms him into a despotic ruler who seeks to rub everyone’s nose in the meaninglessness of existence by creating planned chaos. Caligula’s cruel behaviors, including pointless executions and playing with people’s lives, stem not from inherent wickedness but from his deep awareness of the absurd. In analyzing this character, Camus shows how an improper encounter with the absurd can lead to madness and destruction.

In contrast, the character of **Cherea** represents a healthier response to the absurd. He, like Caligula, is aware of the world's meaninglessness yet remains committed to preserving human values rather than embracing destruction. In a key dialogue with Caligula, Cherea declares: "I believe in humanity, even if the world does not believe in it" (Camus, 1960, p. 72). This contrast between the two characters, in fact, outlines two possible paths in the social encounter with the absurd: the denial of all values on the one hand, and adherence to human ethics despite the meaninglessness of the world on the other.

Through this play, Camus explores how awareness of the absurd can affect social structures. On the one hand, this awareness can lead to the collapse of all social norms and values (as seen in Caligula's actions). On the other hand, it can become the basis for a new ethics based not on metaphysical promises but on human solidarity (as manifested in Cherea's stance).

Mulla Sadra's Intellectual Foundations in Contrast with Camus's Absurdism

1. Ontological System

Mulla Sadra's philosophical system in Transcendent Wisdom (al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliyah), by establishing the three fundamental principles of the **primacy of existence** (aṣālat al-wujūd), the **unity of existence** (waḥdat al-wujūd), and the **gradation of existence** (tashkīk al-wujūd), presents a coherent and purposeful picture of the world that stands in fundamental opposition to Albert Camus's absurdist ontology. This opposition can be carefully examined at various philosophical levels.

In his work *The Four Journeys* (al-Asfār al-arba'ah), Mulla Sadra, through precise philosophical arguments, outlines a system of existence in which existence is considered a single and graded reality. From his perspective, all levels of being emanate from this single truth, and every entity is a manifestation of that absolute truth proportionate to its existential capacity. This view, which interprets the world as a

harmonious system of divine manifestations, stands in direct opposition to Camus's description of existence as a disparate collection lacking inherent unity. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* and other works, Camus portrays the world as a realm of unrelated and random phenomena that share no intrinsic connection.

Mulla Sadra's theory of **substantial motion** (al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah), according to which all beings undergo an evolutionary and purposeful flux toward absolute perfection, presents a dynamic and teleological picture of the world. Accordingly, movement and change in the restless nature of the universe reflect a purposeful dynamism whose aim is ultimate perfection based on existential potential—a process that is perpetual and unending (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2003, vol. 3, p. 78). This dynamic perspective stands in clear contrast to Camus's static and arbitrary view of worldly events.

Furthermore, Mulla Sadra, by appealing to the perfect order governing the cosmos and the astonishing harmony among beings in nature, argues that this precise and intricate order cannot be the product of chance or accident. In his analysis, he demonstrates how everything from the smallest particles to the largest galaxies are interconnected within a meticulously designed system (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2003, vol. 6, p. 234). These philosophical arguments directly challenge the foundations of Camus's absurdism, which depicts the world in his works as a domain of disorder and indifference.

At a deeper ontological level, Mulla Sadra, through the **argument of existential poverty** (burhān al-faqr al-wujūdī), provides a metaphysical basis for the inherent dependence of all contingent beings (mumkināt) on the infinite divine existence. From his viewpoint, contingent beings not only lack self-subsistence but are inherently reliant on a being that is rich-in-itself (ghaniyyun bi-dhātih). This existential dependence is such that the continued existence of every being relies on the uninterrupted effusion of existential grace (fayḍ wujūdī) from the divine source. In other words, the world never operates as an independent or self-sufficient entity;

rather, it perpetually requires the manifestation of existence from a transcendent source (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2013, p. 154).

This ontological stance creates a fundamental divergence from Camus's absurdist worldview. Whereas Camus portrays the world as an indifferent arena devoid of transcendent meaning, Mulla Sadra regards it as a manifestation of divine wisdom and providence, deriving meaning through the eternal grace of God. In this paradigm, no phenomenon is accidental or meaningless; each being, in its particular station within the existential hierarchy, represents a specific manifestation of divine names and attributes (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2002, p. 87).

In elaborating this existential relationship, Mulla Sadra emphasizes that just as a ray of light depends on the sun, the existence of all contingents relies entirely on the infinite existence of God. This dependence signifies not merely the fragility of contingents but also the perfection attained through connection to the source of existence.

In addressing the problem of evil, Mulla Sadra offers profound ontological analyses, rejecting the notion that evils are random occurrences. From his perspective, evil is a type of non-being (‘adamī) and denotes a privation of existential perfection rather than an independent reality. In his work *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb* (Keys to the Unseen), he insightfully explains how partial evils serve universal goods (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 2001, p. 234). In other words, the divine system of goodness necessitates that universal goods—which are the primary object of God’s will—require the existence of partial evils.

Additionally, in *Asrār al-āyāt* (Secrets of the Verses), employing the principle of **divine grace** (qā’idat al-luṭf), he demonstrates that even apparent calamities and disasters are, in truth, hidden graces that awaken the soul from negligence and propel it toward perfection (Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1984, p. 157). Therefore, pain and suffering—which Camus views as symbols of the world’s indifference—are not only meaningful in Mulla Sadra’s framework but also play an existentially guiding role that may elude limited human intellect.

This comprehensive and wisdom-oriented perspective stands in fundamental structural opposition to Camus's absurdist worldview. While Camus, in *The Plague*, interprets the epidemic as a symbol of the world's blind and inhuman indifference, Mulla Sadra characterizes the same phenomenon as a manifestation of divine wisdom and providence, revealing—behind the apparent veil of suffering—the educative and guiding hand of God.

From the vantage point of Transcendent Wisdom, no event in the universe—no matter how bitter or painful—lies beyond the scope of divine wisdom and expediency. Every occurrence, regardless of its initial appearance as misfortune or cruelty, holds a specific place and meaning within the overarching divine plan and humanity's journey toward absolute perfection. This is the outlook that regards pain as a remedy for awakening and suffering as a pathway for the soul's ascent toward transcendence.

In analyzing the phenomenon of social injustice as one of the apparent documents of nihilism, it is possible to remove responsibility for these corruptions from the divinely perfect system through philosophical-theological reasoning, by distinguishing between the "system of creation" (the laws governing creation) and the "system of legislation" (religious and moral laws). Accordingly, the origin of tyranny and oppression must be sought in "misused human free will" rather than in any deficiency within the divine creative order.

Accordingly, the origin of oppression and tyranny must be sought in man's "misuse of free will" and the improper use of the freedom he has been given, not in a defect or injustice in the structure of the world of creation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1391 AH, Vol. 16, p. 287).

By granting rational faculty and free will, God has provided man with the possibility of choosing between good and evil. Since the world is based on a cause-and-effect system, human oppression of his fellow man is the necessary and causal result of this misused free will and not a reflection of a metaphysical injustice or defect in the teleology of

creation. Therefore, divine justice—which itself is one of the main purposes of the perfect system—requires the existence of this freedom of choice for man so that he can be held accountable for the evolutionary course of his actions in the court of justice on the Day of Judgment.

The distinction between the two worldviews of Camus and Mulla Sadra in different philosophical fields leads to completely different and sometimes contradictory results. In the realm of epistemology, Mulla Sadra, by presenting a model combining reason, intuition, and revelation, offers a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to knowing truth. This integrated view can overcome the inherent limitations of each of these methods alone (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2003, p. 56). In contrast, Camus's philosophy, by confining cognition within the confines of sensory experience and instrumental rationality, considers any possibility of achieving metaphysical knowledge impossible (Camus, 2000, p. 21; Sprintzen, 1988, p. 145).

Also, by utilizing the foundations of Islamic philosophy, it can be claimed that Camus's claim about the "inherent meaninglessness of the world" is subject to a self-defeating fallacy. In other words, this proposition is logically self-refuting. If the world is truly devoid of any meaning, purpose, or truth, then the proposition that "the world is meaningless" itself cannot claim to be true or valid; because in an absurd world, there is no rational basis for proving any proposition, including the proposition of absurdism (Moreland & Craig, 2017, p. 135).

This logical critique targets the core of absurdism because absurdism attempts to present itself as a "truth" about the world, while its foundations deny any possibility of attaining truth. In simpler terms, absurdism is a branch that saws itself off.

In the vision based on Islamic wisdom, it is only in the light of faith in God as the wise and omniscient Creator that the world finds its true meaning. In this wise system, human reason can discover the laws and ends of existence and give logical and metaphysical validity to its propositions. Therefore, citing the verses of the Quran, existence is a

system "established in truth" (qā'imun bil-ḥaqq), every part of which is a sign of divine knowledge and wisdom, and turning away from this system means falling into the abyss of absurdity and irrationality. Therefore, rationality and meaningfulness are not separate concepts but are dependent on the existence of God, who created both human reason and an intelligible world (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 45).

This epistemological gap reaches its peak in the field of teleology. By proposing the theory of substantial motion, Mulla Sadra depicts existence on a continuous evolutionary path towards absolute perfection and divine encounter (liqā' Allāh) (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981, p. 103). In clear contrast to this view, Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, denies any ultimate goal or purpose for existence and calls the world an aimless arena lacking any transcendent direction (Camus, 2005, p. 119; Foley, 2008, p. 67).

This profound philosophical confrontation shows how two ontological systems with different foundations arrive at completely opposite interpretations of the world of existence. Mulla Sadra's ontology, with its systematic presentation based on precise philosophical arguments, provides a comprehensive response to the challenges of absurdism.

At a deeper level, three basic criticisms can be leveled against Camus's view: first, the expectation that nature will conform to individual desires stems from an anthropocentric and selfish attitude. Second, judging nature based on limited parts of the system of existence (without considering its wise totality) is an epistemological error. Third, judging based on the momentary effects of phenomena, without considering their long-term role in the system of creation, is an incomplete and selective view of reality.

In conclusion, it can be said that Camus's image of an indifferent nature is the product of man's severed relationship with the Creator of existence. Whereas the system of divine providence, by explaining the wise relationships between all parts of existence, provides a comprehensive answer to absurdist doubts. From this perspective, nature is not an indifferent entity but a school for educating man and a ground

for his evolution. This comprehensive analysis responds to both man's rational need and his innate desire for a meaningful life.

While Camus sees the world as a scene of blind and aimless coincidences, Mulla Sadra interprets it as an interconnected and systematic network of divine signs, in constant and purposeful movement towards perfection. By citing Quranic verses and the hadiths of the Infallibles (as), Mulla Sadra shows how harmony can be created between reason and revelation and a philosophical system established based on both sources of knowledge. This is while Camus, by denying any transcendent truth, fundamentally negates the possibility of any philosophy based on revelation or intuition.

A possible criticism of Camus's position is that Mulla Sadra's system is based on a metaphysical presupposition (the existence of God) that Camus himself considers impossible or irrelevant. However, it should be emphasized that Mulla Sadra does not present this premise simply as a proposition of faith. Rather, by advancing purely rational arguments such as the "**Argument of the Truthful**" (*burhān al-ṣiddīqīn*), which proves God's existence without the mediation of contingents and solely through analysis of the truth of existence, and the "**Argument of Existential Poverty**" (*burhān al-faqr al-wujūdī*), which demonstrates the inherent dependence of all contingents on infinite Being, he establishes his claim on a philosophical and rational level. Therefore, the present opposition is not merely one of "faith" versus "unbelief," but rather of two rational systems: one capable of explaining existence by relying on a final cause, and the other, by denying this cause, forced to stop at the level of mechanical causal agents and an "absurd" description of the world.

2. Anthropological System

Mulla Sadra's anthropology, within the framework of Transcendent Wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliyah*), presents a rich and multidimensional picture of human nature that conflicts with Albert Camus's absurdist view in all aspects. Some of these are mentioned below.

In his works, especially *The Four Journeys (al-Asfār al-arba'ah)*, Mulla Sadra considers man a unique being possessing distinctive characteristics. According to his view, man is the “noblest of creatures” (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*) and the “vicegerent of God” (*khalīfat Allāh*), and this special position stems from the combination of his existential properties. Mulla Sadra emphasizes in his book *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*: “Man is a microcosm (*'ālam ṣaghīr*), and the world is a macrocosm (*insān kabīr*)” (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987, vol. 5, p. 367). Accordingly, the essence of the universe is encapsulated within man, and everything observable in the greater cosmos has its counterpart in him. Based on the three realms of existence and the division into the corporeal (*al-mulk*), the imaginal (*al-malakūt*), and the intellectual (*al-jabarūt*) worlds, man also possesses corporeal, imaginal, and intellectual dimensions. The material world corresponds to man's material dimension and elemental body, the world of detached imaginal forms (*al-mithāl al-munfaṣil*) corresponds to the level of attached imaginability (*al-mithāl al-muttaṣil*), and the world of intellect can be divided into the detached intellect external to man and the intellect conjoined within him.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, the theory of **substantial motion** (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah*), as one of the most fundamental innovations of Transcendent Wisdom, explains the process of human existential evolution through the framework of the four philosophical-mystical journeys. This evolutionary process, referred to as the “**Four Mystical Journeys**” (*al-asfār al-arba'ah al-'irfāniyyah*), not only expresses the substantial transformation of the human soul but also demonstrates the teleology of the system of existence on the path of transcendence (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2003, vol. 1, p. 423).

The first stage is “**the journey from Creation to the Truth**” (*al-sayr min al-khalq ilā al-Ḥaqq*), which represents the transition from material veils and attachment to the transcendental source of existence. In this stage, the wayfarer prepares himself to receive divine lights by overcoming worldly attachments. The second stage is “**the journey in the**

Truth with the Truth” (*al-sayr bi'l-Ḥaqq fī'l-Ḥaqq*), which entails the pinnacle of mystical witnessing and annihilation in God (*fanā' fī Allāh*).

Then comes “**the journey from the Truth to Creation**” (*al-sayr min al-Ḥaqq ilā al-khalq*), which is the stage of returning to the material world with a new vision and for the purpose of guiding creation. Finally, “**the journey in Creation with the Truth**” (*al-sayr bi'l-Ḥaqq fī'l-khalq*) is the realization of the good life (*al-ḥayāt al-ṭayyibah*) in the material world while maintaining a continuous connection with the transcendental truth. These four journeys are not only stages of mystical wayfaring but also express the ranks of human existential perfection within the divine best system (*al-niẓām al-aṣlah*).

In contrast to this view, Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* considers man a being abandoned in a meaningless and irrational world. Camus believes man inherently searches for meaning, but the world in which he lives provides no answer to this search (Camus, 2000, p. 21). This tragic confrontation forms the basis of his **absurdist anthropology**. While Mulla Sadra speaks of the divine encounter (*liqā' Allāh*) as the ultimate goal of man (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2003, p. 324), Camus believes life lacks any ultimate goal and death is the meaningless end of this existence (Camus, 2000, p. 55).

Mulla Sadra, in explaining man's position as the divine vicegerent, emphasizes his existential responsibilities. From his viewpoint, because man possesses intellect and free will, he has duties towards himself, society, and nature (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2003, vol. 7, p. 23). This duty-oriented perspective, rooted in Quranic verses and Islamic narrations, is elaborated in Mulla Sadra's works, particularly in his philosophical commentaries on the Holy Quran. From his perspective, man as God's vicegerent is equipped with intellect and will and is tasked with developing the world based on truth and righteousness (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1998, p. 156).

In contrast, Camus in *The Rebel* emphasizes the constructed nature of moral values in the face of a meaningless world and considers ethics not

an innate matter but a human reaction to the absurd (Camus, 1956, p. 15).

Another point in this intellectual confrontation is that Mulla Sadra considers true human freedom dependent on recognizing the truth of existence and moving toward perfection, while Camus seeks freedom in accepting the world's meaninglessness and liberating oneself from all metaphysical illusions. This difference in perspective signifies two entirely distinct worldviews: one shaped by divine wisdom and the other based on the experience of modern man in a world from which God has withdrawn.

Based on Islamic thought, the world is not meaningless but is entirely a sign of divine wisdom and providence. Citing the verse "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth" (Quran 15:85), it can be said that existence is a truth-based system (*qā'imun bil-ḥaqq*), every part of which—from the movement of electrons to the rotation of galaxies—is subject to the perfect divine order. Contrary to Camus's view, the limitations of human perception should not be construed as the world's meaninglessness, for much divine wisdom is beyond limited human understanding (Javādī Āmulī, 2009, p. 234).

In a more detailed analysis, an important distinction can be made between the "inherent meaning of the world" and "human perception of meaning." Accordingly, the world is like God's creative book, in which every phenomenon is a verse (āyah) of His signs. This view is traceable both at the macro level (the perfect system of creation) and at the micro level (the creation of every being with precise measure). For example, apparent differences in creation—such as diversity of languages or colors—which from Camus's perspective may seem accidental, are in the divine intellectual system a sign of God's power and wisdom for "mutual recognition" (ta'āruf) and the development of humanity (Javādī Āmulī, 2007, vol. 8, p. 294). Therefore, these variations are not futile; rather, they provide the ground for the realization of God's will for human social life and serve as a means for mutual acquaintance, as the Quran states: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made

you peoples and tribes that you may know one another” (Al-Hujurāt: 13).

In response to the doubts raised by Albert Camus (such as death, disease, and injustice), a systematic analysis based on Islamic ontology can demonstrate that these phenomena are not signs of absurdity and futility but essential and meaningful components of the divine “perfect order” (nizām al-aṣḥāḥ) and “wise providence” (tadbīr ḥakīm), the ultimate purpose of which is human existential perfection.

Accordingly, death is not a catastrophe or the absolute end of existence but a “transition from one realm to another” and a “second birth.” The world is a transient stage and a field for the hereafter, and death is a gateway to a higher and eternal life in which the consequences of human actions are fully manifested. This perspective transforms the tragedy of death into a meaningful transitional path.

Confronting natural diseases and suffering, one can adopt a wisdom-based approach to explain these calamities under Quranic concepts such as “test” (ibtilā’), “purification” (tamhīṣ), and “reminder” (tadhkīr). From this perspective, suffering provides a platform for the flourishing of moral virtues—such as patience, resilience, and self-sacrifice—and offers an opportunity for atonement and spiritual proximity to God. Thus, pain and suffering are interpreted not as signs of a meaningless world but as instruments for human spiritual and moral development and as trials to measure faith (Javādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 17, p. 421).

In other words, in analyzing the wisdom behind divine trials and calamities, three levels can be identified:

- At the individual level, illnesses and hardships pave the way for virtues such as patience and perseverance.
- At the social level, crises such as plagues awaken dormant consciences and strengthen social solidarity.
- At the cosmic level, many such events regulate ecological systems and maintain natural balance—a depth the limited human intellect may not grasp.

Additionally, some sufferings prevent greater evils, much like a

painful surgery that is necessary for overall health. These multi-layered responses, unlike Camus's helplessness in the face of the absurd, provide rational and hopeful solutions.

In Camus's anthropology, man is a being who searches for meaning in a meaningless world, and this confrontation leads to the absurd. However, from the perspective of Islamic wisdom, this approach ignores the God-given nature (*fitrah*) of man. According to Islamic teachings, the human need for meaning is rooted in a nature that is inclined toward God (Quran 30:30). Therefore, the feeling of absurdity stems not from inherent meaninglessness but from neglect of humanity's existential connection to the divine source of being.

In works such as *Caligula* and *The Plague*, Camus attempts to show that humans can live ethically without metaphysics. Yet from the standpoint of Islamic theology, morality without a theocentric foundation is groundless. If the world were truly meaningless, what justification would there be for adhering to morality? This contradiction is evident in Camus's characterizations—such as the contrast between *Caligula* and *Cherea*: on one hand, an emphasis on the absurdity of all things, and on the other, a commitment to human values. In the Islamic view, however, ethics are rooted in divine wisdom and are rationally unjustifiable without belief in resurrection and ultimate accountability.

Camus ultimately does not accept the absurd as a finality but as the starting point of "rebellion." In his view, the rebel—by accepting the world's meaninglessness—simultaneously rises against this condition and, through human solidarity and ethics, creates a this-worldly, earthly meaning. This rebellion becomes the basis for values like justice and solidarity, without any need for metaphysical justification.

Although Camus's stance distances itself from passive surrender and represents an active posture, from the perspective of Transcendent Wisdom, this humanly "constructed meaning" lacks any firm ontological foundation and may collapse when confronted with life's severe challenges. Ethics and solidarity based on rebellion, however admirable,

remain a “desperate choice,” whereas in a monotheistic system, moral values are an objective reflection of a divine wisdom embedded in creation itself, thus enjoying stability and continuity beyond social conventions. In other words, Camus’s rebellion responds to the surface symptoms of the disease of absurdity, while Transcendent Wisdom addresses its root cause.

In conclusion, it can be said that Camus's anthropology depicts man as a wandering being in a purposeless world, who can only cope with absurdity through rebellion or surrender. However, from the perspective of Islamic wisdom, man is inherently God-oriented (*fiṭrat Allāh*), responsible before God, and on a path toward eternal life. Camus's absurdism not only fails to respond to humanity's deep spiritual needs but also lacks comprehensive philosophical justification due to internal contradictions (such as attempting to maintain morality in a meaningless world). In contrast, Islamic anthropology, relying on innate nature (*fiṭrah*), transcendent rationality, and eschatology, provides a coherent framework for endowing life with meaning.

Conclusion

This study, through a comparative examination of the views of Albert Camus and Mullā Ṣadrā, has revealed the fundamental opposition between their two systems of thought regarding the meaning of life. On one hand, Camus, with his existentialist approach, regards existence as devoid of any predetermined meaning and portrays humanity as abandoned in an indifferent and irrational world. From his perspective, concepts such as justice and morality are human constructs formed in response to the absurdity of existence. This view is clearly manifested in works such as *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

On the other hand, Mullā Ṣadrā, through the establishment of Transcendent Wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-muta‘āliyah*), presents a philosophical system in which the world is a manifestation of divine wisdom. His theories of the **primacy of existence** (*aṣālat al-wujūd*)

and **substantial motion** (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah*) demonstrate that every phenomenon is evolving toward absolute perfection. Quranic and mystical foundations complement this perspective, and with reference to verses such as, “We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth” (Quran 15:85), the world is understood as a purposeful system replete with divine signs.

A comparison of these two perspectives shows that Camus’s absurdism is based on several contentious assumptions: first, the reduction of ontology to mere sensory experience; second, neglect of the metaphysical dimensions of existence; and third, the denial of any teleology in the system of creation. In contrast, Mullā Ṣadrā’s intellectual system, by offering a multi-layered analysis of existence, addresses both humanity’s rational needs and innate desire for a meaningful life.

In conclusion, although Camus’s absurdism articulates the semantic crisis of modern humanity, Islamic wisdom provides a comprehensive solution to this crisis by explicating the relationship between God and the world. This research has demonstrated that the opposition between these two views is not merely theoretical but represents two distinct approaches to life, each with practical consequences in the realms of ethics, spirituality, and social action.

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