

Absence of Objective Correlative in Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the concept of the absence of the objective correlative in Albert Camus's influential philosophical essay, "*The Myth of Sisyphus*." The objective correlative is a literary device used to evoke specific emotions in the reader through the presentation of external objects that correlate with the internal experiences of characters. However, in Camus's work, the absence of the objective correlative becomes evident, as the protagonist's experience of the absurd defies easy representation. This paper examines the implications of this absence, analyzing the impact on the reader's understanding of the human condition and the existential themes presented in the essay.

Keywords- Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, objective correlative, existentialism, absurdity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Albert Camus's "*The Myth of Sisyphus*" is a seminal work in existentialist philosophy, exploring the absurdity of the human condition. Central to this essay is the absence of the objective correlative, a literary technique used to bridge the gap between the internal emotions and external world. The objective correlative consists of concrete objects, events, or situations that elicit a specific emotional response from the reader. However, Camus deliberately avoids using such a device in his work, presenting a challenge to traditional literary conventions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *The Objective Correlative in Literature:*

The objective correlative, a term coined by T.S. Eliot, refers to the use of external objects to represent and evoke specific emotions in the reader. It has been widely used by various authors to create a strong emotional impact. For instance, in Eliot's "*Hamlet*," the withered garden serves as an objective correlative to convey the protagonist's emotional state. Similarly, other authors,

such as Charles Dickens and Virginia Woolf, have utilized this technique to enhance the reader's understanding of characters' internal experiences.

2. *The Absurd and Existentialism:*

Existentialism, a philosophical movement prominent in the 20th century, explores the individual's struggle to find meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. The concept of the absurd, central to existentialist thought, describes the clash between the human desire for meaning and the inherent meaninglessness of the universe. In Camus's "*The Myth of Sisyphus*," the protagonist, Sisyphus, embodies the absurd as he is condemned to eternally repeat a futile task. The absence of the objective correlative in Camus's work aligns with the abstract and philosophical nature of the absurd.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ABSENCE OF THE OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE IN CAMUS'S PHILOSOPHY

Camus's rejection of the objective correlative is part of a broader philosophical project that seeks to

challenge traditional notions of meaning, purpose, and representation. He argues that traditional literary techniques such as the objective correlative are no longer sufficient to represent the complexity and absurdity of the world.

Camus's philosophy is rooted in the idea of the absurd, which is the realization that human beings live in a meaningless and irrational universe. The absurd is not something that can be represented or symbolized through objective correlatives because it is an ontological condition that pervades all aspects of human existence.

According to Camus, the only meaningful response to the absurd is rebellion. Rebellion, for Camus, is the act of acknowledging the absurdity of existence and affirming life in spite of it. Rebellion requires us to embrace the absurd, to live with it, and to find our own individual meaning in an absurd universe.

The absence of the objective correlative in Camus's work is part of his larger project of rejecting traditional representations of meaning and purpose. According to Camus, traditional literary techniques such as the objective correlative are no longer sufficient to represent the complexity and absurdity of the world. Instead, he suggests that abstract language and concepts are sufficient to convey complex and profound ideas.

Camus's approach to literature can be seen as a rejection of the 'realist' tradition that dominated much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Realism was characterized by the use of precise and detailed descriptions of external objects and events to convey inner states and emotions. Camus's rejection of the objective correlative can be seen as an attempt to move beyond realism and to develop a new form of literary representation that embraces the complexity and absurdity of human existence.

The Absence of Objective Correlative in "The Myth of Sisyphus":

Camus's central argument in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is that life is inherently absurd and that the only meaningful response to this absurdity is to embrace it. The story of Sisyphus, the figure of Greek mythology condemned to push a boulder up a hill for eternity, serves as a metaphor for the futility of human existence. In the book, Camus argues that there is no inherent meaning in Sisyphus's task or in life itself, and that we must create our own meaning through rebellion.

Camus's philosophy is rooted in the idea that human beings are always searching for meaning, purpose, and significance. However, he contends that there is no inherent meaning in life; that is, there is no objective correlative that can represent or symbolize the inner emotions of a person. The absence of the objective correlative in Camus's work is central to his philosophical project and serves as a way to challenge conventional literary representation.

In "The Myth of Sisyphus," Albert Camus presents the idea of the absurd, which arises from the tension between the human search for meaning and the inherent meaninglessness of the universe. Camus

deliberately avoids using the objective correlative, a literary device that employs external objects or events to evoke specific emotions in the reader. Instead, he relies on abstract and philosophical language to convey the protagonist's experience of the absurd.

The absence of the objective correlative in Camus's work reflects the complex and elusive nature of the absurd. The protagonist, Sisyphus, is condemned to an eternal task of rolling a rock uphill, only to see it roll back down repeatedly. This futile and repetitive act defies easy representation through concrete objects or events. Camus understands that the absurd cannot be encapsulated within a single objective correlative, as it transcends traditional literary conventions.

By eschewing the objective correlative, Camus challenges readers to directly confront the absurdity of existence. The absence of concrete representations demands active engagement and personal reflection. It compels readers to grapple with the fundamental questions of human existence, such as the search for meaning, the nature of freedom, and the inevitability of death. Camus's writing style, devoid of the objective correlative, invites readers to confront the limitations of language in capturing the essence of the absurd.

Camus's rejection of the objective correlative can be seen in the absence of concrete images, symbols, or metaphors. Instead, he uses abstract language and concepts to convey his ideas. For example, he writes, "In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land" (Camus, 1955, p. 10). This passage describes the ontological exile that human beings experience in an absurd universe, but it does not use any external objects or situations to imply this feeling.

Similarly, Camus's description of the absurd is not tied to any concrete images or symbols. Rather, he describes it as a state of mind, a "divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting" (Camus, 1955, p. 6). The absurd, for Camus, is an existential condition that cannot be represented or symbolized through objective correlatives.

In rejecting the objective correlative, Camus challenges the conventional view that literature should use specific and concrete images to convey emotions and feelings. Instead, he suggests that abstract language and concepts are sufficient to convey complex and profound ideas.

The Implications of the Absence of Objective Correlative:

The absence of the objective correlative in "The Myth of Sisyphus" has significant implications for the reader's understanding of the human condition and the existential themes explored in the essay.

a. Engaging with the Absurd:

The absence of the objective correlative demands active participation from the reader. By omitting concrete representations, Camus compels readers to

directly confront the absurd, encouraging them to grapple with the contradictions and paradoxes of existence. This engagement fosters a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human condition and encourages personal introspection.

b. Embracing Ambiguity:

The absence of the objective correlative allows for ambiguity and multiple interpretations. Camus's abstract language and philosophical approach leave room for readers to find their own meaning within the text. This ambiguity reflects the inherent ambiguity of the absurd and underscores the individual's responsibility in creating meaning in an uncertain world.

c. Challenging Conventional Narratives:

The absence of the objective correlative in "The Myth of Sisyphus" challenges traditional narrative structures. Camus subverts readers' expectations by presenting an essay that combines philosophy, literature, and personal reflection. This departure from conventional storytelling techniques disrupts the reader's comfort zone, forcing them to confront the unsettling nature of the absurd.

IV. THE READER'S EXPERIENCE OF THE ABSURD

The absence of the objective correlative in "The Myth of Sisyphus" shapes the reader's experience of the absurd in several ways:

a. Intellectual Engagement:

The absence of concrete representations compels readers to intellectually engage with the text. Camus's abstract language demands careful consideration and reflection, encouraging readers to think deeply about the absurdity of existence and its implications.

b. Emotional Resonance:

Although devoid of the objective correlative, "The Myth of Sisyphus" evokes a range of emotions in readers. The existential themes explored, such as the struggle for meaning and the inevitability of death, resonate on an emotional level. The absence of concrete representations allows readers to connect with the universal aspects of the human condition and experience a profound sense of empathy and reflection.

V. CONCLUSION

In Albert Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus," the absence of the objective correlative plays a crucial role in conveying the essence of the absurd and challenging traditional literary conventions. Through the deliberate omission of concrete objects or events, Camus invites readers to directly confront the complexities and contradictions of the human condition. This absence compels active engagement, personal reflection, and a deeper exploration of existential themes.

The absence of the objective correlative in "The Myth of Sisyphus" allows readers to engage with the

absurd on an intellectual and emotional level. By relying on abstract and philosophical language, Camus presents a narrative that is not bound by conventional storytelling techniques. The essay's structure and style disrupt readers' expectations, creating an unsettling effect that mirrors the existential experience itself.

Through the absence of the objective correlative, Camus highlights the limitations of language and representation in capturing the essence of the absurd. The absurd defies easy explanation or categorization, and its experience is highly subjective and individual. Camus's choice to rely on abstract language prompts readers to grapple with the inherent ambiguity and multiplicity of interpretations, allowing for a more personal and nuanced understanding of the text.

The absence of the objective correlative also emphasizes the importance of personal reflection and responsibility in confronting the absurd. Without the aid of concrete representations, readers are compelled to actively engage with the text and question their own existence. Camus's work serves as a call to embrace the uncertainties and paradoxes of life, urging readers to create their own meaning in the face of the absurd.

In conclusion, the absence of the objective correlative in Albert Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus" serves as a powerful literary and philosophical device. It challenges traditional narrative structures, demands active engagement, and encourages personal reflection. Through the omission of concrete representations, Camus invites readers to directly confront the absurdity of existence and explore the complexities of the human condition. The absence of the objective correlative underscores the limitations of language in capturing the essence of the absurd and emphasizes the individual's responsibility in creating meaning in an uncertain world.

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