

Art in the Face of the Absurd

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Abstract of the Journal Article

Many instances of art are valuable. Where is this value located? And how is it to be justified? In this paper I reconstruct and critically assess Albert Camus' answers to these questions. Camus' theory of the value of art is based on his "logic of the absurd", i.e., the idea that the human condition is absurd and that we therefore ought to adopt an attitude of revolt. This idea entails that art lacks any intrinsic value. Rather, Camus argues, art is valuable only insofar as it promotes creators' or recipients' awareness of the absurd and their attitude of revolt. The main problem with this theory is that it exaggerates the significance of the logic of the absurd for art. Even if the human condition is absurd and we ought to revolt, artistic value cannot plausibly be reduced to these facts.