

An African response to absurdism

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Abstract:

What might be an African response to Albert Camus' position that our lives are absurd, and would it be plausible? Camus' absurdism is the view that human existence is not only meaningless, but humanity's yearning for meaning in a world devoid of such meaning is absurd. This claim seems at odds with African worldviews, particularly in the light of African traditional religions. Thus, this article aims to present the first real critical analysis of Albert Camus' position that our lives are absurd through the lens of African traditional religion (ATR), in a bid to determine which position should be believed. I first explain what I mean by absurdism and differentiate it from related concepts, e.g. meaninglessness. I then discuss in detail Camus' conception of the absurd and identify key facets of ATR. I also provide a systematic account of the contrasting positions between absurdism and ATR with regard to the question of the meaning of existence, the assumptions made therein, and the implications each has for humanity. Finally, I argue that, in so far as we accept pragmatic reasons for belief as legitimate, ATR's response to absurdism is plausible.

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