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Title: Depths of Existential Shallowness: Tadeusz Różewicz and the Meaningless

Abstract:

This paper explores the epistemological dimension of the works of Tadeusz Różewicz. Generally speaking, scholarship on Różewicz's "epistemology" is divided into two ways of reading his texts: one arguing that Różewicz's works are permeated by metaphysical thinking and by attempts to unveil the essential aspects of reality, and one focusing on Różewicz's critique of postwar culture and arguing that his works present a vision of a meaningless world which is devoid of any foundations and cannot function as a stable point of reference. This paper offers a new understanding of Różewicz's "epistemology." Looking at Różewicz's critique of contemporary culture from the perspective of his fascination with the phenomenon of garbage and through the lens of his preoccupation with the category of the bodily, my paper argues that Różewicz's works express an epistemological model that links human cognitive practices and an objective reality. This model allows for human cognition to be understood beyond the confines of essentialist representationalism on one hand, and beyond the confines of antirealist constructivism on the other, and it undermines the traditional philosophical dichotomy between the search for the world as it is in itself and the acceptance of the world as it appears to us. I argue that, as such, Różewicz's model of human cognition is based neither on a dualistic metaphysical theory nor on a postmodernist skepticism, but rather presents a unique and original form of a non-essentialist understanding of the world.