

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate in
Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Macquarie University**

Thesis Title:

**ALBERT CAMUS' MORAL PHILOSOPHY
AND THE ETHICS OF TRAGIC FREEDOM**

Submitted by:

Jerry Larson, BA (Political Science), MA (Literature)

Date of Submission

10/31/2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

| | |
|---|-----|
| ❑ Camus as Philosopher..... | 9. |
| ❑ Camus and Sartre: Two Modern <i>Philosophes</i> | 20. |
| ❑ Between Materialism and Christian Metaphysics..... | 23. |

II. CHAPTER ONE: CAMUS AND CHRISTIANITY: CHRISTIAN METAPHYSICS AND NEOPLATONISM

| | |
|--|-----|
| ❑ Early Christianity and the Greeks..... | 31. |
| ❑ Nature and Evil..... | 33. |
| ❑ Death and the Incarnation..... | 35. |
| ❑ Philosophy, Knowledge, and Faith..... | 38. |
| ❑ Saint Augustine..... | 41. |
| ❑ Augustine and Pelagius..... | 44. |
| ❑ The Trinity and the Incarnation..... | 47. |

III. CHAPTER TWO: CAMUS' PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND HUMAN HAPPINESS: *A HAPPY DEATH*

| | |
|--|-----|
| ❑ Between Augustine and Nietzsche..... | 55. |
| ❑ Free Will and the Experience of Poverty..... | 61. |
| ❑ Human Desire, Humanism, and the Will to Happiness..... | 64. |
| ❑ The Mind, The Senses, and The Body in Nature..... | 67. |
| ❑ Love and the Dark God of Sexuality..... | 74. |
| ❑ Death Without God..... | 76. |

IV. CHAPTER THREE: CAMUS' PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABSURD

| | |
|--|------|
| ❑ The Sacred in Nature..... | 84. |
| ❑ The Feuerbachian Precedent..... | 87. |
| ❑ The Concept of Unity, The Gap, and The Absurd..... | 91. |
| ❑ The Post-Kantian Predicament..... | 96. |
| ❑ Immortality and the Mirror of Humanity..... | 98. |
| ❑ Immortality and the Soul..... | 104. |
| ❑ The God/Man and the Man/God..... | 109. |

V. CHAPTER FOUR: CAMUS' PHILOSOPHY OF NIHILISM: CALIGULA AS MAN/GOD

| | |
|--|------|
| ❑ Caligula's Terror and the Transmutation of Values..... | 116. |
| ❑ Camus and the Marquis de Sade..... | 118. |
| ❑ Caligula as Sadean Figure..... | 132. |

**VI. CHAPTER FIVE: CAMUS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF
EXISTENTIALISM**

| | |
|--|------|
| ❑ Camus as Existentialist..... | 139. |
| ❑ Existential Themes in Camus..... | 145. |
| ❑ Camus and Christian Existentialists..... | 150. |
| ❑ Camus and German Philosophy..... | 154. |

**VII. CHAPTER SIX: CAMUS' POLITICAL ETHICS: LIBERAL VERSUS
REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM**

| | |
|---|------|
| ❑ Camus' First Involvement with Journalism | 171. |
| ❑ The Misery of Kabylie..... | 178. |
| ❑ The Tradition of Utopian Socialism..... | 187. |
| ❑ Social Justice, Individual Freedom, and Commitment..... | 193. |
| ❑ Beyond Socialism and Capitalism..... | 197. |
| ❑ A New Social Contract..... | 210. |

VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: CAMUS' ETHICS OF TRAGIC REVOLT

| | |
|---|------|
| ❑ The Promethean Tragic Myth..... | 215. |
| ❑ Metaphysical Rebellion as Literary Rebellion..... | 219. |
| ❑ Nietzsche Against Historicism..... | 226. |
| ❑ The Problem of History..... | 234. |
| ❑ Camus and Natural Law..... | 239. |

VIII. CONCLUSION.....248.

SUMMARY

This thesis aims to examine the key philosophical premises of Albert Camus' moral and political thinking by retracing as yet unacknowledged philosophical influences that form the core of his tragic vision of human freedom. The first part focuses on the fundamental influence of his encounter with Christian and ancient metaphysics discussed in his early dissertation on Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism, and then examines the similarities he shared with the materialist theories of Ludwig Feuerbach and the Marquis de Sade, which, I argue, impacted on Camus' own conception of the tragic paradigm of Nature, God, and Man, as well as his philosophy of the Absurd. This is followed by an analysis of his reaction to German philosophy, notably Hegel, the influence of Nietzsche on Camus' concept of the Will to Happiness, and how these determined his views on nihilism.

The latter chapters are devoted to Camus' relationship to the philosophy of existentialism, both Christian and Marxist, with the attempt to dispel the common designation of his belonging to either of these two schools of thought, and to highlight the originality of Camus' own position, despite the themes he shared with them. Chapter Six examines his early connection to communism and how the two traditions of liberal and revolutionary socialism influenced his political ethics, with particular attention paid to the subject of poverty, and the views he expressed in his journalistic articles in Algeria on the Misery of Kabylie and later in *Combat*. It also considers his views on Utopian thinking, teleological ideologies, and the consequences of historicism, based on both Christian and German philosophical traditions. The final chapter examines his philosophy of revolt in *The Rebel*, the concept of Nemesis, and how these relate to natural law theory as a major influence on his philosophical ideas of morality and ethics.

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any university or institution other than Macquarie University. I am the sole author of this thesis, and all references to the work of others and the sources used have been clearly cited.

Signed:

Date: October 31, 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have benefited from the help of several people in the preparation of this thesis, but no one more than my supervisor, Dr. Jean-Philippe Deranty, without whose valued assistance, advice, and great patience, I could never have completed the long process of writing, editing, and submitting this final Ph.D. dissertation. I was extremely fortunate to have had him as my supervisor, and I shall be forever grateful for his knowledge, friendship, and collaboration on this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Graeme Storer and Dr. Anne Conduit, who gave their support during the same process that I previously watched them undergo. A special thanks also goes to Nicolas Danilov for his kindness in sending me his correspondence with Camus. Finally, I would like to dedicate this to my brother who courageously waged a long battle with cancer, which he unfortunately has lost.

**ALBERT CAMUS' MORAL PHILOSOPHY
AND THE ETHICS OF TRAGIC FREEDOM**