

Clémence-Auguste Royer and the Rise of Aryan Ideology¹

IVO BUDIL

Department of Historical Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

Tylova 18, 301 24, Plzeň, Czech Republic

budil@khv.zcu.cz

The relationships between social Darwinism, eugenics movement and Nazi ideology presents a highly discussed and controversial issue. Many representatives of social Darwinism, especially in Germany, France and United Kingdom, have been mentioned in this regard and their alleged contribution to the radicalization of the Western political culture have been critically analyzed. Surprisingly, the role of French writer Clémence-Auguste Royer² to this process of transformation of scientific idiom into ideological discourse has been so far relatively neglected.³ Mike Hawkins in his comprehensive survey of the rise and development of the social Darwinism appreciated and highlighted Clémence-Auguste Royer as a creative and influential participant in the emergence of the above mentioned intellectual movement inspired by ideas of Charles Darwin, Arthur Russel Wallace, Herbert Spencer and Thomas Robert Malthus.⁴ In my own approach and critical analysis I would like to

¹ The article constitutes a part of solution of the project SGS 2014-006 of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

² L. CLARK, *Social Darwinism in France*, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1981, pp. 25–43; G. FRAISSE, *Clémence Royer: philosophe et femme de science*, Paris 1985; J. HARVEY, *Almost a Man of Genius: Clémence Royer, Feminism and Nineteenth-century Science*, New Brunswick 1997; J. HARVEY, *A Focal Point for Feminism, Politics, and Science in France: The Clémence Royer Centennial Celebration of 1930*, in: *Osiris*, Vol. 14, 1999, pp. 86–101; M. HAWKINS, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought 1860–1945. Nature as Model and Nature as Threat*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 124–132.

³ Royer's contemporaries did not seem to appreciate her contribution to the formation of social Darwinism. Clémence-Auguste Royer was not even mentioned in the comprehensive critical survey of social Darwinism published in 1910 by Jacques Novicow (J. NOVICOW, *La Critique du Darwinisme Social*, Paris 1910).

⁴ HAWKINS, pp. 80–81.

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evaluate the pioneering contribution of Clémence-Auguste Royer to the Darwinian interpretation of the Aryan ideology which subsequently played an important role in the radicalization of the Western political culture.

Charles Darwin sought for obvious reasons of prestige a possibility to translate his major work the *Origin of Species* published in 1859 into French. He turned to an Irish writer and translator Louise Belloc, born Swanton (1796–1881), who married a French painter Jean-Hilaire Belloc (1786–1866) and lived with him in France. Her grandson became a famous writer Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953). However, Louise Belloc rejected the Darwin's offer. Finally, in September 1861, Charles Darwin asked his publisher John Murray to send the book the *Origin of Species* to Clémence-Auguste Royer in Lausanne. René Édouard Claparède, a natural scientist and a lecturer at the University of Geneva, should have acted as a professional advisor.

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Clémence-Auguste Royer was born on 21 April 1830 in Nantes, Brittany, in a profoundly religious and royalist family. Her father, Augustin-René Royer, was a legitimist army captain from Le Mans. Royer's grandfather fought with a distinction in the Napoleonic wars as a naval captain.⁵ Augustin-René Royer participated in an unsuccessful attempt to restore the Bourbons to the French throne in 1832. Therefore, the family had to flee to Switzerland, where it spent four years. After returning to France Royer was raised in the Convent of Sacré Coeur in Le Mans, probably to have been destined for a religious life. Since thirteen years she lived with her parents in Paris. The father left the family and went back to Brittany (where he died in 1849). Clémence-Auguste Royer was highly affected by revolutionary events of 1848; she left the monarchical ideas of her parents and became a zealous republican. Royer was trained as a secondary school teacher and received certificates in French, music, and arithmetic. In 1853–1854, she spent a year as a teacher of French and mathematics at a private girls' school in Haverfordwest in Wales, where she learned English and made herself acquainted with English literature.

⁵ HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, p. 88.

After returning to France, Clémence-Auguste Royer worked in Touraine and Beauvais. However, she lost her Catholic faith and decided to move to Switzerland to start a new life. She acquired a small fortune from her father, but she devoted nearly the whole of her patrimony to the victims of the inundations of the Rhone in Lyon. She arrived to Lausanne without means in 1856; she worked as a needlewoman and settled down in an isolated farm inhabited by an old couple in the Tour de Gourze at the coast of Lake Geneva. She spent twenty-two months in seclusion to educating herself in science and philosophy in the public library at Lausanne. In 1860, when Clémence-Auguste Royer finally moved to Lausanne, she began to give courses on logic and philosophy for female audience and propagated the theory of evolution of Lamarck.⁶ She wrote several articles to the *Nouvel Economiste*, founded a edited by Pascal Duprat (1815–1885), a former French Republican deputy who fled (as many others did) to Switzerland during the regime of Napoleon III. She became intimately united with him and Duprat was the father of her only son. Duprat helped her to publish the first texts and supported her in literary activity.

In 1860, the government of the Canton de Vaud invited the economists to compete for a prize on a rational and equitable system of taxation. Clémence-Auguste Royer entered the competition with a book *Théorie de l'impôt ou la dîme social* (published in 1862, 750 closely-printed pages), and the prize was awarded to her jointly with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.⁷ In the early sixties, during her visit to Paris, she became a friend of Marie Catherine Sophie, Comtesse d'Agoult (1805–1876), a writer (who lived from 1835 to 1839 with the composer Franz Liszt), known also under her pen name Daniel Stern.

The translation of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in Paris in 1862, three years after the original publication under the title *De l'Origine des*

⁶ Clémence-Auguste Royer published a study on the theory of evolution of Jean Baptiste Lamarck in *Revue positive* (November – December, 1858; January – February, 1869): *Lamarck, sa vie, ses travaux et ses doctrines*.

⁷ CLARK, p. 28. “*J’ai voulu écrire dans ce livre le système fiscal de la liberté: c’est pourquoi je le dédie aux hommes libres. Mais cet instrument d’émancipation, de justice et de progrès ne serait entre les mains d’un despote, maître héréditaire d’un peuple servile, qu’un instrument d’oppression, d’iniquité et de décadence.*” C. A. ROYER, *Théorie de l’impôt ou la dîme social*, Paris 1862, p. v.

*Espèces par Sélection Naturelle ou des Lois de Transformation des Être Organisés.*⁸

The French educated public made first acquaintance with Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection through this volume. Clémence-Auguste Royer who written her own extensive footnotes to Darwin's book introduced her translation in an extensive and intellectually highly eclectic preface. Royer had exploited the opportunity to outline her liberal philosophy of history and to express her admiration for the personality of Jesus Christ, but hostility to Christianity and Church.⁹ The liberation of human reason came with Bacon, Descartes, Newton, or Leibniz. Clémence-Auguste Royer mentioned the controversies surrounding the book in the Great Britain after its publication.¹⁰ She attempted to glorify and glamorize the alleged struggle of Charles Darwin and his followers against the "darkness" of the combined forces of Church and obscure continental philosophy and thus she participated at the creation of Darwinian mythology. She realized that Charles Darwin was a "lucky amateur", a man whose erudition could not equal with that of Georges Cuvier and in the philosophical insight he could not be comparable with Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.¹¹ Clémence-Auguste Royer even argued that she herself had independently arrived at the same idea of natural selection as Charles Darwin.¹²

⁸ C. DARWIN, *De l'Origine des Espèces par Sélection Naturelle ou des Lois de Transformation des Être Organisés*, Paris 1862.

⁹ "La doctrine de Jesus était un signe des temps. C'était un présage de mort pour les peuples au milieu desquels elle naissait et dont elle ne pouvait que précipiter la chute. Le mysticisme en général est pour les races humaines une sorte de maladie d'épuisement et de langueur [...] Aussi, quand le monde barbare s'installa sur les ruines de l'empire déchiré par lambeaux, ce ne fut pas la doctrine de Jésus, mais une tout autre religion, qui, sous le même nom, s'empara du monde pour le dominer et le gouverner; et au point de vue social cette religion valait mieux que le christianisme évangélique: le catholicisme est mauvais, mais le véritable évangélique serait pire." DARWIN, pp. xxix–xxx.

¹⁰ "Il s'est fait, on le conçoit, grand bruit d'injures et grand fracas de ricanements autour de ce livre, lorsqu'il parut en Angleterre, il y a deux années." Ibidem, p. xxxviii.

¹¹ "M. Charles Darwin n'est point un beau diseur, un disputeur d'école: c'est un amateur de la nature." Ibidem, p. xlviii.

¹² "Je crois d'ailleurs pouvoir réclamer une sorte de solidarité dans les doctrines de M. Darwin; car le même hiver où son ouvrage était publié à Londres, j'émettais de mon côté, bien que moins savamment et moins complètement, les mêmes idées sur la succession et l'évolution progressive des êtres vivants, dans un *Cours de Philosophie de la nature et de l'histoire, que je faisais à Lausanne et que j'ai répété partiellement en d'autres villes.*" Ibidem, p. l.

Royer reproached her contemporaries, that they did not fully appreciate the enormous significance of Darwin's discovery,¹³ which would have affected all spheres of human intellectual and moral activity. She stressed a radical un-Christian and heretic nature of Darwin's teaching,¹⁴ despite his own proclamation of the contrary.¹⁵ She identified herself with the remark of René Édouard Claparède that she would prefer to be an "advanced ape" ("*un singe perfectionné*") than "degenerate Adam" ("*Adam dégénéré*").¹⁶ Anti-clericalism and atheism directed against both catholic Rome and "Calvinist Rome" (Geneva) presented for Royer the main intellectual message and historical purpose of Darwinism. Charles Darwin accomplished the final liberation of human reason and personal freedom and his theory of natural selection presented the most important challenge to the established religious and moral authorities. Clémence-Auguste Royer was well aware of the intellectual debt of Charles Darwin to Thomas Robert Malthus.¹⁷ However, she regretted that the responsible politicians and educated classes are not willing to apply the Malthusian and Darwinian law for the benefit of the human civilization. She asked, whether the

¹³ "*Il y a donc des époques tout entières qu'on pourrait appeler révélatrices; telles furent peut-être les époques de Zoroastre, de Manou et de Moïse dans l'antique Asie, d'Orphée et d'Hermès, de Minos et de Numa chez les premiers peuples policés du bassin méditerranéen.*" Ibidem, p. xxviii. "*C'est donc surtout dans ses conséquences morales et humanitaires que la théorie de M. Darwin est féconde.*" Ibidem, p.lxx.

¹⁴ René Édouard Claparède wrote: "*La théorie de la permanence des espèces et des créations successives a, dit il, le désavantage d'invoquer une action mystérieuse; mais, en revanche, elle a le bonheur de ne point se trouver en contradiction évidente avec la cosmogonie hébraïque, aujourd'hui généralement révérée dans le monde civilisé. La théorie de la transformation des espèces a, au contraire, l'avantage d'être plus en harmonie que sa rivale avec les procédés habituels de la nature; elle ne renferme pas, comme l'autre, l'élément que notre esprit se sent disposé à qualifier de prime abord de surnaturel. En revanche, elle est peu canonique.*" Ibidem, p. liii.

¹⁵ "*C'est donc en vain que M. Darwin, étonné de ces agressions, proteste que son système n'est en aucune façon contraire à l'idée divine [...] Or, il serait complètement inutile de dissimuler ici que la théorie de M. Darwin, bien que pouvant être très-religieuse, est néanmoins foncièrement et irremédiablement hérétique.*" Ibidem, p. xxxix.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. lii; René Édouard Claparède, see Sur l'origine des espèces, *Revue Germanique*, October 1863.

¹⁷ "*Cette loi, que M. Darwin a nommée la selection naturelle, n'est autre que la loi de Malthus, étendue au règne organique tout entier.*" DARWIN, p. lxiv.

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humanity is endangered by the process of degeneration?¹⁸ Darwinism (which is in fact Malthusianism exploited for the purpose of explanation of organic diversity) is opposite to all political utopias (“*utopies politiques*”) striving to achieve social equality which is against nature (“*une égalité impossible, nuisible et contre nature entre tous les hommes*”).¹⁹ Nothing is more certain than a hierarchy of human races.²⁰ The racial struggle, the elimination and replacement of the inferior races by the superior races, present a fundamental natural law. It is highly impossible to conceive an egalitarian society based on political and civil equality and composed from Indo-Germanic, Mongolian and black races.²¹ The legislators should not ignore the natural inequality among different races. However, the political system based on an absolute individual freedom should lead to the spontaneous application of the law of natural selection. The superior intellectual and physical dispositions should under such circumstances prevail.²² Therefore, for Clémence-Auguste Royer the polemics between Darwinism and its enemies personified the real spiritual struggle between the old religion of the “fall” and the new religion of the progress.²³

It is not surprising that Charles Darwin, at that time in his fifties, was both amused and embarrassed by Royer’s translation and especially by her preface which he considered to be a blasphemy. He wrote to Asa Gray that Clémence-Auguste Royer had to be one of the smartest and strangest women in Europe. Later, Charles Darwin became even more critical and wrote to French anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages that the translator should have been more familiar with natural history. He complained to Joseph Hooker about the quality of footnotes. In 1870, after Royer did not take into account some changes which Charles Darwin made in his book and she

¹⁸ “*L’humanité dégénère-t-elle physiquement?*” Ibidem, p. lxvi.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. lxix.

²⁰ “*Rien n’est plus évident que les inégalités des diverses races humaines.*” Ibidem.

²¹ “*Il faudrait y réfléchir à deux fois avant de proclamer l’égalité politique et civile chez un peuple composé d’une minorité d’Indo-Germains et d’une majorité de Mongols ou de Nègres.*” Ibidem.

²² Ibidem, p. lxx.

²³ “*La doctrine de M. Darwin, c’est la révélation rationnelle du progrès, se posant dans son antagonisme logique avec la révélation irrationnelle de la chute.*” Ibidem, p. lxxi.

criticized openly his theory of pangenesis, Darwin stopped the mutual cooperation.²⁴ A new French translation appeared three years later.²⁵ The first French edition of the *Origin of Species* was received ambiguously. The imperial regime of Napoleon III cultivated good official relationships with the Catholic Church. Strongly anticlerical passages in Royer's Preface were seen as an open provocation. The economic policy of the French state was statist in its nature which was not in accordance with the individualistic liberalism of *laissez-faire* openly propagated by Clémence-Auguste Royer. The French philosophical mainstream was strongly influenced by Victor Cousin whose idealism was distanced from the materialistic approach formulated by Royer in her interpretation of Darwinism. For instance, the widely read literary journal *La Revue des Deux Mondes* warned against a dangerous wave of modern materialism and liberalism (therefore, Clémence-Auguste Royer contributed to a radical republican magazine *La Pensée Nouvelle*).²⁶ Most of contemporary French scientists preferred the teachings of Georges Cuvier to Jean Baptiste Lamarck, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, or Charles Darwin. The evolutionist theory of natural selection was relatively marginalized and French scholars reacted to the intellectual challenges of Darwinism with a prudence and suspicion.

In winter 1862–1863, because of her translation of the *Origin of Species*, Clémence-Auguste Royer was invited to lecture in Belgium and the Netherlands. In 1864, she published (to no great success) in Brussels by Victor Hugo's publishers a philosophical romans *Les Jumeaux d'Hellas* (*The Twins of Hellas*), which was prohibited in France²⁷ (in the same year she wrote an Italian essay entitled *The Future of Turin*). In the following year, Royer moved to Paris (where she shared secretly her

²⁴ HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, p. 89; CLARK, pp. 25–43. At the end of her life Clémence-Auguste Royer regretted Darwin's "weakness" and conciliatory attitude to Christian orthodoxy: "Darwin lui-même [...] a pu cependant continuer à se dire croyant en Dieu et même chrétien, et, sans scandaliser l'Église anglicane, être solennellement enterré à Westminster Abbey dans le Panthéon anglais." C. A. ROYER, *Constitution du monde: Dynamique des atomes, nouveaux principes de philosophie naturelle*, Paris 1900, pp. xi–xii.

²⁵ HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, p. 89.

²⁶ CLARK, p. 28.

²⁷ Because of its anticlerical inclination the book was included among the prohibited book Index of the Catholic Church. HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, 89.

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apartment with Pascal Duprat, who was forbidden to cross the French border). Later, the two lovers resided together in Florence, where their son René was born in March 1866.

In 1869, while Pascal Duprat left as a correspondent to Spain, Clémence-Auguste Royer settled down permanently with her son in Paris. In the following year, Royer was as the first woman elected to the prestigious *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* (*Anthropological Society of Paris*), headed by Paul Broca.²⁸ She regularly attended the sessions of *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* (she was for many years the only female member) and published in the *Bulletin de la Société de Paris d'Anthropologie*. After the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Empire, the political situation and the ideological atmosphere in France changed significantly. Pascal Duprat returned officially from the exile, re-entered politics and was elected deputy to the National Assembly in 1871 (he entered the Chamber of Deputies in 1876). The new regime of the Third Republic supported the development of science and modern technology. One of its leaders Léon Gambetta declared that the Republic will either be scientific or will be not at all.²⁹ The integral part of “French modern” (the term coined by Paul Rabinow) was a more liberal approach to the Lamarckism and the Darwinism, whose proponents became the influential members of the academic establishment.

Clémence-Auguste Royer was no longer considered as a marginal or an eccentric figure of French intellectual life, but she was not able (or willing) to gain a prominent position in an academic life. In 1877, she published a study *Deux Hypothèses sur l'Hérédité*, in which she criticized the theory of pangenesis of Charles Darwin (proposed in his book *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, 1868).³⁰ Her emphasis on natural hierarchy, inequality, struggle for life and unlimited liberalism did not correspond to the official egalitarian republican ideology and rhetoric. She started to lose her audience.³¹ In France, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant became popular and spread through the authors such as Charles Renouvier.

²⁸ HAWKINS, p. 124; CLARK, pp. 25–43.

²⁹ CLARK, p. 29.

³⁰ “*C'est une hypothèse qui n'explique rien.*” C. A. ROYER, *Deux Hypothèses sur l'Hérédité*, Paris 1877, p. 4.

³¹ HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, p. 90.

Emile Littré attacked Darwinism for its alleged Malthusian social consequences.³² Clémence-Auguste Royer did not avoid controversy. In her book *Le bien et la loi morale: Éthique et Téléologie* (1881) she proposed a new moral system based on the spirit of Darwinism.³³ In 1883, she caused a certain sensation by her publication in *La Philosophie positive*, questioning the validity of Newton's laws.

Clémence-Auguste Royer joined Marguerite Durand, an actress, a journalist and a feminist, who founded newspaper *La Fronde* expressing strongly liberal and anticlerical opinions.³⁴ Royer presented a lecture at the International Congress on Women's Rights held in 1889 where she emphasized the need for secular education of women. Unfortunately, in 1885, Pascal Duprat, who became a diplomat in Chile, died during his return to France. Clémence-Auguste Royer and her son René, who studied École Polytechnique, lost his financial support and were endangered by poverty (Clémence-Auguste Royer and Pascal Duprat never married). Her health deteriorated (she suffered from severe asthma). Journalists Léopold and Mary Lacour helped her to find a place in a retirement home in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a suburb of Paris, where she lived until her death on 6 February 1902 (René Royer succumbed to liver disease six months later, during his military service in the Indochina). In 1900, Clémence-Auguste Royer published her most ambitious work *Constitution du monde: Dynamique des atomes, nouveaux principes de philosophie naturelle*. She tried to propose a vital alternative to the Newtonian mechanistic system of the universe and outlined a monistic Darwinian model of the cosmos, in which the principle of natural selection was brought down to the level of atoms. The scientific community largely ignored the study. However, her public esteem seemed to be high. Banquet, which was held in 1897 in her honor, was attended by two hundred and fifty prominent intellectuals and public officials, including Georges Clemenceau, Anatole France,

³² CLARK, p. 31.

³³ "Tandis que toutes les sciences physiques, et les procédés industriels qui en sont l'application, font des progrès rapides, nos sciences morales, au contraire, restent stationnaires [...] Une véritable science morale ne pouvait se constituer qu'après les sciences physique [...] Tout ce qui augmente dans le monde la quantité d'existence consciente est bien, tout ce qui la diminue est mal." C. A. ROYER, *Le bien et la loi morale: Éthique et Téléologie*, Paris 1881, pp. i, iv, xiii.

³⁴ HARVEY, *A Focal Point*, p. 87.

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Émile Zola, or Mercellin Berthèllet, mostly personalities who were actively involved in the ongoing Dreyfus Affair. She received the Order of the Legion of Honour from the hands of the Minister of Public Education on 12 November 1900.

The Aryan ideology emerged from the linguistic discoveries and speculations on the affinities between European and Indian languages in the last decades of the eighteenth century in the works of Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, William Jones, Alexander Hamilton, or Charles Wilkins. Franz Bopp and Friedrich Max Müller built up a new linguistic and historical science on these foundations. In the 1840s, the In the 1850s, Robert Knox outlined the history of humankind as a permanent racial war (1850), Arthur Gobineau introduced the Aryan race as a crucial historical force (1853–1855) and Ernest Renan depicted the manichean dualism of Aryan and Semitic races (1855). However, the transformation of the Aryan historical phantasy into the full-fledged political culture was enabled by the convergence between the Aryan racial concept and the social Darwinism. In this final step anticipating the racial totalitarianism and genocide on behalf of the Aryan racial purity Clémence-Auguste Royer played a crucial role.

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In her book *Origine de l'homme et des sociétés* (1870), published one year before Charles Darwin issued his own treatise *The Descent of Man* focused on the same subject,³⁵ Clémence-Auguste Royer appreciated Jean Jacques Rousseau who found that anthropology should be the foundation of all moral and social sciences and legislation.³⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau derived his teaching refusing all benefits of civilization, culture, progress and education from an older protestant tradition and the first generation of his pupils included Robespierre, Babeuf, Hébert and Chaumette;

³⁵ HAWKINS, pp. 125–126.

³⁶ “*Ce que Rousseau semble avoir senti [...] qu'en effet l'anthropologie, la science de l'homme, de sa nature, de ses origines et de ses développements, est le fondement de toutes nos sciences morales et sociales et que les lois que suit ou se fait l'humanité, dépendent toujours étroitement de l'opinion qu'elle a d'elle-même.*” ROYER, *Origine de l'homme et des sociétés*, Paris 1870, p. viii.

in the second generation Fourier, Saint-Simon, Pierre Leroux, Cabet and Proudhon came. Their endeavor to conquer the world was matched by the representatives by another intellectual movement involving Aristotle, Epicurus, Montaigne, Descartes, Voltaire, or Diderot.³⁷

In *Origine de l'homme et des sociétés* Clémence-Auguste Royer merged Darwinian interpretation of human evolution with the concept of racial hierarchy. She was convinced that certain races are not able to overcome a concrete stage of their development even through imitation of achievements of superior races. She did not believe that the Australian Aborigines, Indians, Arabs, or Chinese were able to overcome the developmental stage at which they are located.³⁸ Only the European branch of the Aryan family is capable to achieve the highest perfectibility. Aryans represent the pinnacle of human evolution and creators of the modern civilization.³⁹

Royer emphasized that instinct of war and conquest, which is a natural human equipment, is the necessary condition for the progress of humankind. Without it the racially superior Aryan herdsmen would not have been able to dominate the large portions of the world and establish the foundations of great civilizations.⁴⁰ The modern colonialism presented a logical continuation of the Aryan civilizing mission, although the Europeans should avoid a miscegenation with “inferior” races, which

³⁷ ROYER, *Origine de l'homme et des sociétés*, p. x.

³⁸ “Enfin, si ces races sont incapables de progresser par un développement spontané de leurs facultés, sont-elles au moins capables de se développer par imitation au contact des autres races supérieures? Mais le Nègre de l’Afrique, depuis si longtemps en rapport avec nos races civilisatrices, est toujours resté, enfermé dans sa barbarie; mais l’Indien américain. Le Nègre australien reculent devant notre civilisation au lieu de l’adopter.” Ibidem, p. 77.

³⁹ “Au sommet de la série, et la dernière née sans nul doute, se dresse la race blanche, dite aryenne ou indoeuropéenne. C’est le bourgeon terminal de l’arbre généalogique de l’humanité et de l’organisation tout entière, son dernier épanouissement peut-être, au moins au point de vue purement physique. A cette race appartiennent, et c’est peut-être aux premières migrations de cette race souveraine que sont dus tous les rudiments de civilisation qui se sont développés chez quelques nos races secondaires, mais se sont bientôt arrêtés dans une inerte immobilité. C’est la seule race peut-être essentiellement et constamment progressive. Elle s’étend depuis les bords du Gange sur toute l’Asie occidentale et sur l’Europe. Elle a récemment débordé en Afrique, en Amérique, et semé ses colonies dans toutes les parties du monde connu.” Ibidem, pp. 99–100.

⁴⁰ “L’esprit de conquête, l’instinct guerrier, sous la loi fatale de concurrence universelle qui regit la vie sur notre globe, est une nécessité, une fatalité logique.” Ibidem, p. 533.

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Royer considered to be immoral.⁴¹ She doubted that a racially mixed populations would manage to create stable political institutions.⁴² Our policy and attitude to the “inferior” races should abandon any false sentimentality and humanism. They are trapped in a primitive and primordial timelessness, from which they could not escape. They represent human fossil relics without hope and future.⁴³

Clémence-Auguste Royer stressed the existence of a caste system of archaic Aryans, whose warrior caste had presented the most effective tool for expansion. The Roman Empire succumbed just because it got rid of this institution, while the barbarian Germans retained it.⁴⁴ If the French Revolution became a real historical milestone in the history of humankind, it was because of the abolition of feudal privileges on 4 August 1789. The wise political decision removed anachronistic and parasitic aristocracy who already did not fulfill its former Aryan role. The step should enable a rise of a new warrior caste of conquerors, a real aristocracy embodying the original and vital Aryan virtues. The political vision of Rousseau and Proudhon involving a homogeneous mass of equal citizens is a direct way to social anarchy and decline.⁴⁵

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In terms of moral anthropology Clémence-Auguste Royer exploited the Darwin’s theory of natural selection to challenge the ideological heritage of Jean Jacques Rousseau and his concept of modern egalitarian and civic society. Such open

⁴¹ “*Le mélange de sang entre les races supérieures et inférieures est immoral.*” Ibidem, p. 532.

⁴² Ibidem, pp. 498–499, 536–537.

⁴³ Ibidem, pp. 221–224.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, pp. 567–577.

⁴⁵ “*Si donc la Révolution française a réellement commencé une ère, si elle restera à jamais LA REVOLUTION entre toutes les révolutions réformatrices passées et futures, c’est que la nuit du 4 août, qui l’a commencée, a mis fin à ce vieux régime des castes privilégiées qui, après avoir créé en quelque sorte la race aryenne, l’avoir conservée pure, forte, inaltérée, progressive, à travers les premiers âges, et avoir été pour elle une condition d’existence, tant qu’elle resta comme noyée au milieu de races inférieures innombrables, était devenu pour elle un fléau, une cause d’arrêt et d’inévitable décadence.*” Ibidem, p. 576.

condemnation and explicit refusal of the humanistic tradition in the name of science and progress conceptualized in the idioms of social Darwinism represented an innovative step in the development of the modern racial thinking paving the way for the radicalization of the Western political culture and the rise of racial totalitarianism of Nazi movement. Clémence-Auguste Royer (followed by Georges Vacher de Lapouge) transformed through the idioms of natural selection and racial hierarchy the pessimistic historical Aryan vision of Arthur Gobineau into the radical political program of general revitalization and palingenesis. The world should be saved by the birth of a new Aryan aristocracy, whose weapons should be science and ideology of liberalism and progress. This idea formulated in 1870 had lasting and dramatic consequences for the modern history of the Western civilization.

Abstract

The contribution of Clémence-Auguste Royer, the first translator of the *Origin of Species* into French, to the emergence of social Darwinism is discussed and critically evaluated. Clémence-Auguste Royer used the theory of natural selection for challenging of modern liberal democracy and stressing the crucial role of “Aryan aristocracy” in the history of humankind. This aspect of her work has been largely neglected by historians of science.

Keywords

Clémence-Auguste Royer; Charles Darwin; Social Darwinism; Natural Selection; Human Races; Aryan Race; Racism