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# ON “SUBSTITUTE INTELLIGENCES” IN THE FORMATION OF ATHEISTIC IDEOLOGY

E. B. F. MIDGLEY

## I. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MODERN ATHEISM AND HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

**G**EORGE BERNANOS — in his novel *Le Curé de Campagne* — puts into the mouth of Monsieur le Curé the following: “Satan, in his unknowingness, goes against the course of life and exhausts himself in absurd terrifying attempts to remake in an opposite sense the whole plan of the creation.”

Now Aristotle tells us that man is the weakest of all intellectual beings. Thus it is not within the power of the human mind to imitate precisely the specific manner in which the evil angels vainly seek to resist and revolt against the eternal order. Nevertheless, in carrying the modernist quarrel with the eternal order to the point of a definitive denial of God’s existence, the modern atheistic revolt, when really understood and fully intended, would seem to approximate, about as closely as the mere human wayfarer can, to the revolt of the evil angels. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that, in modern atheism, the human mind aspires to revolt by the exercise of powers supposedly more than human.

Yet, if modern atheism has a quasi-demonic aspect, if it lusts after the emergence of the superman, it also has an aspect which is sufficiently banal. Aristotle tells us that human nature is in many ways enslaved. In revolting irrationally against the human condition, the modernist intellectual enterprise has taken as its point of departure a certain acquiescence in intellectual and moral mediocrity. It has taken for granted those average products — intellectual and moral — which are occasioned (not caused) by the misfortunes of the human condition. For example, we find Hume to be preoccupied not with wisdom but with mere experience; not with man’s highest activities but primarily with his ordinary, average, uncultivated, and even his primitive, savage and rude performances.<sup>1</sup> These debased performances presuppose

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1. E.B.F. MIDGLEY: *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations*, London/New York, 1975, Chapter 6. III (David Hume).

the disordered operation of the more obvious and mundane powers of human nature rather than the right operation of any higher principles of human nature. So human powers come to be viewed largely as if man were sub-human, as if human life itself, in any really recognisable sense, had to be largely produced by human invention and artifice. Hume's "artificial virtue" and his view of political authority as a human device are illustrations of this.

Accordingly, the modernist intellectual enterprise of recent centuries has failed to uphold the metaphysics of being, a true ontology or an intelligible philosophy of man. In losing the truth about human nature, it has put modern atheism in the position in which it cannot sustain a true humanism. Thus we shall see that modern atheism tends — consciously or not — to conclude to a pseudo-humanism which is eventually seen to have involved the non-existence of man. But even the eventual realization of the supposed disappearance of man is not the end of the story. The purported demolition of man, like the decapitation of the hydra, is succeeded by the emergence of two monstrosities which had for long sought to substitute themselves for every intelligence — human or otherwise — whose existence had previously been known.

One of these monstrosities is a disordered version of the "substitute intelligence of nature" which Aristotle rightly attributes to the operations of non-rational animals but which modern atheism misattributes to man himself.<sup>2</sup> The other of these monstrosities is a supposed substitute intelligence of the superman. This consists in a vain misguided attempt by the rebellious human intellect to act as if it were competent to attempt the usurpation of the intellectual powers not merely of angels but even of God Himself. Thus, although modern atheism assimilates man to sub-human nature and postulates that man is devoid of the human capacity to use right reason, it also aspires to the purported creation of a new man by the exercise of powers more than human. Indeed, the substitute intelligence of the superman purports to accomplish a contradictory transformation of man — an ontological transformation — which is logically impossible and which could not, therefore, be done even by Omnipotence.<sup>3</sup>

The search for a synthesis or an identification of the two "substitute intelligences" of modern atheism may be characterized as an opposing mirror-image of St. Augustine's somewhat ambiguous assimilation of the *civitas terrena* to the *civitas diaboli*. The *civitas terrena* embraces a disordered practice relating to earthly things whereby men pursue evil by acting in ways not truly human — as if man were somehow subhuman. The *civitas diaboli* envisages the communion of evil men and evil angels whereby men pursue evil in solidarity with intelligences more than human. In Augustine's perspective, the expression *civitas terrena* is used, not without ambiguity, to designate under one aspect the same solidarity in evil which is designated under another aspect as the *civitas diaboli*.

In so far as atheistic ideology employs a "substitute intelligence of nature", it acts in behalf of a disordered practice which pertains, in Augustine's perspective, to

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2. C.N.R. MCCOY: *The Structure of Political Thought*, New York, 1963.

3. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 25, art. 3.

the *civitas terrena*. In so far as atheistic ideology employs a “substitute intelligence of the superman”, it acts in behalf of a false and impossible merely human aspiration to pursue evil with an intelligence more than human, which pertains, in Augustine’s perspective, to the *civitas diaboli*. Augustine’s perspective reveals the depths of those evils, intellectual and moral, concealed in modern atheistic ideologies which are, in effect, grotesque transvaluations of his positions.

Nevertheless, if we are to evaluate the evils of atheistic ideologies with greater precision, we must employ a critical perspective which corrects the element of ambiguity in Augustine’s discussion of the *civitas terrena* by upholding a more coherent philosophy of human nature. This was the historic task to which St. Thomas Aquinas set his hand. Let us therefore advert to the Thomist account of the fundamental truth about reality — a reality upon which the modern world and atheistic man depend for their very existence but against the fundamental truth of which modern atheism — knowingly or unknowingly — revolts. First, it is to be held that neither man nor the universe is a human invention and that neither is without an extrinsic cause. The human creature, like all other created beings, belongs to a universe which is envisaged from eternity and created *cum tempore* by God. Man is envisaged with a basically stable human nature governed by a basically stable natural law. This means that there is a harmony (or “economy” as it is called) of the natural law in its various applications and homogeneous developments in all the states and conditions of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

The truth is also that man is by nature a religious animal and, since no truly natural desire is in vain, there must be a true religion. Yet the true religion is found to be not simply natural but revealed and supernatural. And there is a harmony (or “economy” as it is called) of divine revelation in all its various manifestations and homogeneous developments which are basically one in all the states and conditions of humanity. Finally, since the Author of creation and the Author of revelation is one and the same God, there is a harmony, or “economy”, of the two economies, deriving from the eternal law whereby God governs the entire universe of things including man.<sup>5</sup>

In misperceiving these truths and realities and responding irrationally to them, modern atheism employs “substitute intelligences” in undertaking a kind of implicit admission of, a revolt against, and a substitution for, natural and supernatural truth and reality. This undertaking is radically ideological in character. The modernist scepticism of Hume and others had already denied that there can be any philosophically true reason for acting for any particular end and this inevitably occasioned the substitution of ideology for philosophy. The denial of right reason had left people only to misuse their reason as the slave of their feelings “in order to construct a world in idea to satisfy some practical purpose.”<sup>6</sup> In doing this they became ideologists and not philosophers.

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4. C. JOURNET: “L’économie de la loi de nature”, *Revue Thomiste*, 1961, pages 325–351 and 498–521.

5. MIDGLEY, *op. cit.*, Chapter I. IV and “Natural Law and Fundamental Rights”, *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, vol. 21, 1976, pages 144–155.

6. W.O. MARTIN: *Metaphysics and Ideology*, Milwaukee, 1959, page 72.

Certainly, atheistic “scientism”, based upon the “substitute intelligence of nature”, is ideologically motivated in the sense we are considering. It commonly supports that debased practice which is taken for granted, in a certain way, by modern atheism. St. Thomas Aquinas observes that concupiscence is, in a sense and to a degree, natural but that, since the Fall, concupiscence also manifests the fomes of sin which regularly occasion the common debased human practice of inordinate concupiscence.<sup>7</sup> Atheistic ideology commits itself, without good reason, to a “scientific” acceptance of the “law” of the fomes of sin as if it were a substitute in man for the natural law and for human nature itself.

Yet modern atheism is not content simply to advance its “scientific” law of human mediocrity. It further aspires irrationally to transform this mediocrity in which it has irrationally acquiesced.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, another ideological factor becomes operative in the form of a revolt against the entire human condition in which human nature is wounded but not put fundamentally out of order by original sin. This ideological revolt employs the “substitute intelligence of the superman”. It proceeds as if human nature needed to be put right or re-invented — or, rather, invented, as it were, for the first time — by man.

Accordingly, atheistic ideology fabricates a transvaluation which admits, revolts against and substitutes for, human nature, the economy of the natural law, as well as the divine revelation and its economy. All this amounts to an attempted transvaluation of the eternal law itself from which the two economies ultimately derive. In undertaking this prodigious enterprise, we shall find that modern atheism is driven to seek a pseudo-perennial or pseudo-transcendent stance which is incompatible with its own radical rejection of everything that belongs to the transcendent, the perennial or the eternal.

Although the two substitutes for right intelligence are found conjoined in the history of ideas in recent centuries, they do not emerge fully developed at the beginning of modernity. Let us therefore briefly examine the progressively more radical modernist subversion of, and substitution for, the economies of the eternal law, beginning with Machiavelli.

## II. THE PROXIMATE ORIGIN OF MODERN ATHEISM IN THE MODERNIST RECESSIONS FROM CLASSICAL/JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TEACHING

Machiavelli’s revolt against classical and Judaeo-Christian philosophy is not propounded as a system. He begins not by finding the true morality and religion to be false but by regarding them as unserviceable. Certainly, there are pagan, heretical and potentially atheistic elements in Machiavelli. He covets the power to overcome fortune. He dreams that, if only we could change our nature with time and circumstance, we should have fortune under our control. But Machiavelli does not

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7. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: *Summa theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 91, art. 6 and q. 90, art. 1, reply to obj. 1.

8. A.M. PARENT: “Le Marxisme comme tentative de soustraire l’homme à la loi de la concupiscence déréglée, *lex fomitis*”, *Sapientia Aquinatis*, vol. II, Rome, 1956, pages 149–158. Cf. also MIDGLEY: “Authority, Alienation and Revolt”, *Aberdeen University Review*, Autumn 1976, pages 372–383.

specifically undertake the re-creation of man or the invention of definitive substitutes for true morality and religion. The beginnings of such a deeper revolt are present only in germ.

The gradual abandonment of the understanding of man as a real being is typically initiated in Machiavelli's account of the prince as a centaur — part man and part beast. Such a self-contradictory fiction is incompatible with the truth, unity and reality of human nature in man.<sup>9</sup> Evidently but paradoxically, it postulates that there are in man sub-human parts which are manipulated by the supposedly human part according to modes of calculation which can no longer be characterized as truly and properly human. Machiavelli envisages the power of the sub-human parts of the centaur as having a certain autonomy which does not involve obedience to man's right reason. Logically, this postulated autonomy could only consist in what Aristotle calls the "substitute intelligence of nature" which governs the operations of beings that are not self-directed by rational intelligence. This "substitute intelligence" does not have the character of any created rational intelligence whatsoever. It is subject — remotely — only to the Uncreated rational Intelligence — the divine Intelligence concerned with the creation, disposition and government of all created beings. Hence, in purporting to direct the sub-human parts of himself, the Machiavellian prince-centaur apparently seeks to act in a way which, in the end, could only be characterized as potentially a substitution for the divine ordering of the operations of non-rational animal natures.

Unlike Machiavelli, who manifests the modernist revolt largely in potency, Hobbes will begin to bring what is in potency to act. Although paying lip-service to a radically minimized morality and a bizarre presentation of Christianity, Hobbes advances a materialist philosophy which is evidently incompatible with true morality and true religion. On the basis of nominalism, he substantially eliminates the classical/Judaeo-Christian perspectives upon human nature. He states that what is required is something to take the place of a right reason which supposedly does not exist.<sup>10</sup> He also suggests that man is to man not so much a being specifically human but an arrant wolf and, at the same time, a kind of god. Hence the commonwealth is characterized as a mortal god whose sovereignty can determine what is just and what is unjust. The transvaluation of philosophy and theology has begun.

The vestigial survival in Rousseau's work of a limited vocabulary on natural morality and the religion of man, cannot conceal the fact that Rousseau's man, however "noble", is presented as sub-human. Not unexpectedly, Rousseau's political "liberation" is sought specifically by changing human nature. The transvaluation of theology is evident. Bogus divine gifts are attributed to Rousseau's Legislator. The Rousseauian State itself seeks to usurp the authority of God as the Author of human nature. During the process in which man becomes a citizen, he is supposed to become a mere creature of the State as man is, in reality, a creature of God. The State is held competent to define a "civil religion". The infallibility divinely instituted in God's Church is fraudulently transferred to the General Will of the Rousseauian community.

9. MIDGLEY: *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., Chapter 3. II (Machiavelli).

10. HOBBS: *De corpore politico*, English Works, ed. Molesworth, vol. IV, page 225.

Since the time of Rousseau, we find a regular recurrence of this strange combination: the purported diminishing of man to the status of a sub-human animal and an aspiration to achieve the transformation of man to the status of some kind of superman. The whole process involves the rejection of Aristotle's view that the subject of political philosophy is a being who is truly human and not either a beast or a god. Certainly, the substitution for man of the sub-human being and the superman characterizes a series of atheistic ideologies which involve an illicit extrapolation from, and distortion of, natural science and an illegitimate transvaluation of philosophy and theology. Hence modern atheism brings to a kind of consummation the historical conjoining of the errors of scientism and ideology.<sup>11</sup>

### III. ATHEISM AND THE THREE ASPECTS OF IDEOLOGY

The errors of modernity to which I have adverted are always — as human error needs must be — parasitic upon truth. Even radically ideological thinking, which formally repudiates truth as the end of the intellect, cannot avoid depending, to some extent, upon the truth which it repudiates. Modernism is always driven, consciously or unknowingly, to concede implicitly some pre-modern truth. Certainly, it is characteristic of radical atheism that it is in revolt against all preceding truth both modern and pre-modern. Yet, precisely because radical atheism presupposes nihilism, it can formulate its ideological content only by the transvaluation of preceding truths which it rejects.

This atheistic transvaluation is occasioned by — and gains its spurious plausibility from — the incidence of a multiplicity of inexactitudes and serious errors in the history of thought. Admittedly, these errors, both philosophical and theological, tend to obscure the truths extant in classical and Judaeo-Christian doctrine. Indeed, the errors to be found in pagan antiquity and in the heresies parasitic upon the Judaeo-Christian tradition, are commonly prompted by ideological aspirations. Nevertheless, to respond to the truths and the errors in the history of thought by way of a systematic transvaluation is to offer a response which is fundamentally irrational. Its outcome is the more or less definitive aggravation of the partial ideological distortions which occurred in preceding thought.

What I am suggesting is that the most important controversy in the twentieth century is the comprehensive controversy between modern atheism in its most explicit and self-conscious forms and the classical/Judaeo-Christian teaching, found pre-eminently and specifically in Thomism.<sup>12</sup> Evidently this controversy will concern the real import of the entire history of pagan, Judaeo-Christian and modernist thought. Certainly, there is operative in history a recurring series of attempts to suppress, and to revolt against, the perennial truth of reason and faith. Since this perennial truth — which is available, at least in its essentials, and demands to be

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11. On scientism, cf. J. WELLMUTH: *The Nature and Origins of Scientism*, Milwaukee, 1944; on ideology, cf. MARTIN, *op. cit.*

12. MIDGLEY: "Concerning the Modernist Subversion of Political Philosophy", *The New Scholasticism*, Spring 1979, pages 168-190.

rightly maintained from the beginning to the end of human life on earth — cannot be refuted or really eliminated, no ideological enterprise can ever avoid conceding — however implicitly or unknowingly — that there is a permanent truth which it seeks to suppress and against which it seeks to revolt. Moreover, every ideological enterprise will seek to suppress that truth which it somehow admits, and to revolt against it, under the three aspects of *anticipatory* ideology, *heretical* ideology, and *atheistic* ideology.

The ideological suppression and revolt is always, in view of human ignorance, to some extent anticipatory. The human wayfarer's rejection of truth consists in some sort of pre-disposition towards a kind of irreparable estrangement from the divine truth which is not finally consummated in this life. Yet, if the ideological suppression and revolt is always, in some sense, anticipatory, it is also always, in some sense, heretical. Since there is sufficient promulgation of the truth of faith, the error of the one who has been offered the beginnings of the truth of at least indispensable faith but has partially suppressed and revolted against them, is a kind of heresy. Finally, the ideological suppression and revolt is always in some sense and to some extent atheistic. Since the intentional rejection of divine truth by man is a kind of rejection of God which proceeds, in some way or other, as if God did not exist, the rejection is always at least potentially atheistic.

Although the three aspects of the ideological suppression and revolt are always simultaneously present, one or other of these aspects will tend to predominate in the case of a particular age, a particular people, culture or group, or even in the case of a particular human individual. Which aspect will tend to predominate will depend upon the degree of fullness with which the fundamental and divine truth happens to be actually available in the particular context and circumstances.

The greatest classical philosophers admitted that there is some kind of divine or eternal order and even the polytheistic cultures of pagan antiquity bore witness that man is a religious animal. Nevertheless, in pagan antiquity, there is an endemic weakness and mediocrity which occasion a kind of resistance to the perfection of the philosophy of the eternal order and to the true divine revelation. This resistance consists in a primarily anticipatory ideological distortion of truth which pre-figures that subsequent ideological thinking which is at first primarily heretical and then primarily atheistic.

Ideological thinking immediately parasitic upon the Judaeo-Christian tradition is primarily heretical. Although the Christian heresies do not normally reject formally the very idea of a public objective divine revelation, they inevitably undermine that idea. For example, the Lutheran revolt against the economies of the eternal law is an important precursor of those ideologies which define themselves as post-Christian. However, the heretical revolt against the eternal order did not reach its climax in traditional Protestantism. The subsequent Enlightenment occasioned not only rationalistic theology but also a reaction against rationalism in the form of a traditionalistic theological ideology which rejected reason and found itself unable to connect its own notion of "faith" to the eternal truth. In the context of theological liberalism, the incipient relativism of this traditionalistic theological ideology led to



collusion with that emerging theological modernism which Pius X subsequently characterized as the compendium of all the heresies.<sup>13</sup> This compendium is evidently vulnerable to further transvaluation into explicitly atheistic ideology.

Ideology which is primarily atheistic does not simply react unfavourably to the first promulgations of fundamental and divine truth; it does not simply distort the truth which has been received; it rather seeks to "overcome" fundamental truth, both natural and revealed, and to surpass it altogether. In doing so, modern atheism undertakes a research into the truths and ideological errors which subsist in pagan antiquity and in the Christian centuries. This is no mere academic interest in the history of ideas or in anthropological facts. Modern atheism has an ideological concern to ignore and, at the same time, to disparage the fundamental truths fragmentarily affirmed in former times. Such truths are regarded as no better than the anticipatory and heretical ideologies with which preceding cultures were contaminated. Concentrating upon the negative and ideological features — and assimilating to them the whole of preceding thought — atheistic ideology claims that classical philosophy was only an ideology, that pagan man was, in effect, not a religious animal, and that monotheism, natural law and Judaeo-Christian revelation have neither a truly rational basis nor a truly divine origin but are to be understood in relation to historical terrestrial conflicts amongst non-rational forces.

#### IV. ATHEISTIC TRANSVALUATION IN NIETZSCHE AND MARX

The modernist transvaluations from Machiavelli to Rousseau were subsequently developed by many later thinkers — and especially by Kant, Hegel and Feuerbach. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach undertakes a radical systematic transvaluation of the Thomist doctrine on universals and on existence and essence. In the Stuttgart (1903) edition of his work, there are the explicit references to the relevant texts of St. Thomas in the *Summa theologiae* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*.<sup>14</sup> Feuerbach falsely assimilates all human knowledge of nature and of God to human knowledge of the human self. He therefore erroneously attributes the properties of sub-human nature and of God Himself to the human self. Man is identified as the infinite being, the creator of the universe, and he is also identified with the whole of that sub-rational nature of which he has knowledge.

After many adventures, the entire modernist enterprise enters into a more radical phase in Nietzsche<sup>15</sup> and Marx. In Marx's "scientific" teaching on the "naturalization of man", there is a conspicuous debt to the "substitute intelligence of nature". In Nietzsche, the "substitute intelligence of the superman" is obviously prominent. But, in each case, scientism and ideology are employed in an atheistic synthesis of both the two types of substitute intelligence. In Nietzsche, there is not

13. Lamennais traversed the subterranean connection between the heresies of traditionalism and modernism. Following the rejection of his teaching by Gregory XVI, the entire system of theological Modernism was exactly condemned by Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi* (1907).

14. Cf. the important discussion in MCCOY, *op. cit.*, chapter IX.

15. LEO STRAUSS: "The Three Waves of Modernity", in *Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Gildin, Indianapolis, 1975. Also cf. MIDGLEY: "Natural Law and Fundamental Rights", *op. cit.*

only the purported usurpation of the divine prerogatives in the emergence of the Nietzschean superman, there is also his denial of the human soul and his bizarre exultation in man's animal body.<sup>16</sup> And, in Marx, there is an aspiration to the substitute intelligence of those supposedly "unalienated" supermen who are imagined, in the final state, to people his "socialized humanity".

Both Nietzsche and Marx undertake a transvaluation which systematically misrepresents and seeks to "overcome" radically the difficulties of the human condition. They begin to suppress and purport to "overcome" the difficulty in man's relations with God by proclaiming the death of God. They start to "overcome" the difficulty in man's relations with other men by denying the presence of any natural socio-political inclination in human nature. Finally, they purport to "overcome" the difficulty in man's relations with the lower creation by deposing man, in one way or another, from his natural ascendancy over the lower creation.

All these false steps are occasioned by a radical modernist misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the weaknesses of human nature consequent upon original sin. In fact, however, since original sin does not give rise to a fundamental ontological disorder in human nature, man remains subject to natural and divine law in his relations with God, with other men, and with the lower creation. Over against the Nietzschean and Marxian transvaluations of the last of these three relations, there is the teaching of Pius XII that "Original sin and its consequences have not deprived man of his lordship over the earth but of his security in the exercise of that lordship."<sup>17</sup>

In propounding their own far-reaching claims and their comprehensive quarrel with preceding thought, Nietzsche and Marx cannot simply rest content with any earlier scientism and ideology extracted from the anticipatory or heretical moments of human thought or from the more immediate modernist precursors of their own teachings. Nietzsche and Marx both envisage the "overcoming" of the bondage of all preceding transvaluations — a consummation of, and a deliverance from, the entire history of modernity. Although nihilistic atheism's scientism and ideology must obtain a content by ransacking the debris of preceding thought, Nietzsche and Marx purport to "overcome" this inescapable eclecticism. They seek to bring scientism and ideology not only to a point of crisis but to a kind of consummation which surpasses every preceding scientism and ideology.

In developing their perspectives upon the past and the future, Nietzsche and Marx undertake retrospective — or even apparently retro-active — evaluations of the ideological significance of the past. Each seeks to envelop and to surpass all preceding thought [both true and false] on the basis of a pseudo-transcendent opposition to the eternal order. Marx's thought is usually more opaque than Nietzsche's. On the whole, Marx provides the more plausible synthesis. Despite the duplicity of Nietzsche, his self-exposure enables the perceptive reader to recognize more readily the actual process of atheistic transvaluation. Yet, even amid the comparative obscurity of Marx's reactions to the eternal order, it is obvious that his

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16. C.R. JETTE: *The Philosophy of Nietzsche in the Light of Thomistic Principles*, New York, 1967.

17. PIUS XII: *Christmas Allocution*, 1956.

thought gives rise to a number of definite confrontations. There is a juxtaposition between the Thomist proof from contingency for the existence of God and Marx's refusal to take any proof seriously because he resents irrationally the contingency of human existence. Marx will not be satisfied unless and until man possesses that fundamentally independent existence<sup>18</sup> which true theology can attribute only to the one necessary being, namely, God. Again, there is a confrontation between the eternal law (expounded by Thomism) which governs the world and that commitment to the total re-writing of the history of the world whereby Marx decides that socialist man shall suppress the question as to how man could begin to create man before he had come into existence.<sup>19</sup> In envisaging the deliverance of man from a supposed state of [ontologically] alienated existence [which could not really occur because it is ontologically self-contradictory] by means of "practical-critical activity", Marx purports, in effect, to secure that the substitute intelligence of the superman shall somehow coincide (or become identified) with the finally emergent substitute intelligence of nature.

With such considerations in mind, McCoy seems to have considered that the Marxian ideology was the most significant culmination of the entire intellectual enterprise of a misguided modernity. On the other hand, even Marx could not perfect his synthesis and, since history continued after his death, his atheistic successors are left to multiply the number of atheistic ideologies based on the two substitute intelligences taken either separately or together in some synthesis whether post-Marxian, post-Nietzschean or otherwise. All such ideologies are necessarily unsound for the fundamental reasons we have already considered.

#### V. LIBERATIONIST IDEOLOGIES OF MODERN ATHEISM

The liberationist ideologies of more recent atheism do not envisage either a spiritual liberation of man or even an authentic socio-political liberation on the basis of natural law. They are founded upon a paradox. The eclecticism of preceding atheistic ideology is seriously aggravated. At the same time, the drive towards ideological unity is powerfully intensified. Marcel Clément has referred to these notes of eclecticism and convergence as follows:<sup>20</sup>

"Rousseau dreamed of a political, Marx of an economic, and Freud of a sexual liberation. All of them (but each in his own way) attack religion... the evolution of these doctrines is reaching its end. Though they were opposed to each other a short time ago, they now tend to commingle in a system... the system may be multiform, but in its basic inspiration it is unified: the rejection of human nature defined as dependent on an order established by the Creator in the physical, moral, personal and social structure of man..."

Referring to the ideological aspiration towards "total liberation", Clément points out that:

18. MARX: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

19. E. VOEGELIN: *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, Chicago, 1968, pages 23-26.

20. CLÉMENT: *Christ and Revolution*, New Rochelle, N.Y., 1974.

“The liberation at stake here is, most explicitly, not a social but an ontological liberation... Man wishes to abolish human subordination... because it reflects and expresses man’s ontological dependence on God”.

The attempt to produce a unified atheistic ideology of liberation faces the difficulty that the Marxism of Marx looks forward to the elimination of alienation as the eventual outcome of the revolution. It seems essential even to the superficial plausibility of the Marxian doctrine that there should be some specific possible way of overcoming alienation. Maurice Clavel<sup>21</sup> has analyzed the consequences of the current abandonment of a specifically Marxian view both of the final state and of the means to the elimination of alienation — by those who have sought to combine Marxism with other types of atheistic ideology.

Very evidently, the Marxian element in Max Weber’s ideology of value is severely truncated. The adoption of Marxism in an existentialist perspective, by Sartre and others, involved the loss of the specifically Marxian doctrine of alienation. The same can be said of the attempt of Marcuse and others to reconcile Marx and Freud in the light of a certain dependence on Nietzsche. The incorporation of Marxism as an element in the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss is an important example of the same phenomenon. By comparison with the evident non-humanism of pastiches such as structuralism, Clavel will concede that the Marxism of Marx might be regarded as a kind of humanism because Marx holds that man will eventually come to exist at the end of historical times.<sup>22</sup> However, since the work of the “man” who has not yet arrived cannot really create the “man” who is supposed to exist in the future, the Marxian pseudo-humanism does not constitute a sufficient intellectual obstacle to the advent of non-humanism.

More generally, Michel Foucault has explored, as a student of the history of ideas, the problematic endemic in modern thought arising from the attempt to cope with an “empirical-positivist” and an [entirely secularized and transvalued] “eschatological” type of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Foucault has concluded that, in spite of the supposedly heroic efforts of Nietzsche to achieve an atheistic manifestation of man, the outcome of the thought of modernity is the non-existence of man. Accordingly, the admitted non-humanism of structuralism simply illustrates without prevarication what has been implicit in radical atheistic ideology from the beginning. In Foucault’s view, what is crucial is not simply that modern thought has never been able to propound an intellectually viable morality but also the fact that the atheistic “demolition” of God has led inexorably to the disappearance of man.<sup>24</sup> This logical consequence of atheism was entirely predictable in advance on the basis of Thomist teaching.

## VI. BIOLOGICAL IDEOLOGIES OF MODERN ATHEISM

Like the liberationist ideologies, the biological and ecological ideologies of modern atheism manifest the notes of eclecticism and convergence. Let us begin to

21. CLAVAL: *Qui est aliéné? Critique et Métaphysique Sociale de l'Occident*, Paris, 1970.

22. *Ibid.*, page 22.

23. FOUCAULT: *The Order of Things*, London, 1970, especially pages 305–343.

24. FOUCAULT, *op. cit.*, and also his *The Archeology of Knowledge*, London, 1972, page 211.

indicate the parameters of these ideologies by first taking the doctrine of Konrad Lorenz. Lorenz upholds an erroneous neo-Darwinian long-term evolutionary perspective upon the past and future of man.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, within the kind of time-scale normally considered in studies of man's socio-political relationships, Lorenz holds for the comparative stability of man's basic instinctive drives. He opposes other biological ideologies which minimize the specific character of man's natural inclinations just as he rejects Kant's abstraction of man's real noumenal self from the inclinations of human nature. In the face of certain tendencies towards non-humanism, then, Lorenz upholds a kind of pseudo-humanism.

Certainly, Lorenz attributes to man a substitute intelligence of nature formulated in a scientific doctrine extrapolated from non-human animal behaviour. Lorenz propounds an analogy between culturally ritualized behaviour patterns in man and phylogenetically ritualized behaviour patterns both in man and in certain animals. He also holds that culturally ritualized behaviour patterns at their best are functionally analogous to what he understands as human morality.

Having postulated a substitute intelligence of nature in man, Lorenz is in difficulties in defining the role of reason in its precarious relationship with man's bodily appetites. He tends to lay the blame upon a supposed deficiency in the structure of man's biological behaviour patterns as compared with those of non-rational animals. Also he not only rejects the bogus "pure reason" of Kant but also denies that human reason can coherently direct and govern man's natural inclinations in a way which does justice both to man's biological nature and to his reason. Whilst rejecting the Kantian dualism and whilst seeking to re-attach the Kantian "thing-in-itself" to man's natural inclinations,<sup>26</sup> Lorenz nevertheless fails to formulate an adequate philosophical account of human nature. Like Freud and others, he regards man as a jeopardized being whose nature is fundamentally out of order.<sup>27</sup>

Lorenz admits that he does not know the function of either human culture or morality. He seems to assume that their function is, in some sense, survival and he postulates man as a "systemic whole" embracing biological, cultural and rational/moral factors.<sup>28</sup> Since this systemic whole cannot be properly ordered, man's reason is considered as both subject to his biological drives and also as autonomous. The element of autonomy is expounded by Lorenz in Nietzschean terms. Lorenz envisages man as adopting a series of [ideological] masks which are apparently meant to liberate modern man but which are found eventually (Lorenz admits) to enslave him. In agreement with Nietzsche, Lorenz considers thought as at first like hot liquid lava and then, subsequently, as solidifying and building a castle around itself. Every such thought is supposed finally to crush itself with "laws".<sup>29</sup> So autonomous man chooses to replace one [ideological] thought with another [equally ideological] one.

25. On the need to distinguish properly between biological science and biophilosophy, cf. E. GILSON: *D'Aristote à Darwin et Retour*, Paris, 1971.

26. LORENZ: "Kant's Doctrine of the *A Priori* in the Light of Contemporary Biology", *General Systems* (Society for General Systems Research), vol. VII, 1962, pages 23-35.

27. LORENZ: *Studies in Animal and Human Behaviour*, vol. 2, London, 1971, pages 178, 181 and 195; cf. also his *On Aggression*, London, 1967, page 205.

28. *On Aggression*, *op. cit.*, page 219.

29. "Kant's Doctrine of the *A Priori* in the Light of Contemporary Biology", *op. cit.*

Evidently, Lorenz has sought to complement his scientific ideology (based on a substitute intelligence of nature) with another ideological aspiration (a substitute intelligence of the superman) apparently more effectual for the changing of man's behaviour patterns. The outcome of this pastiche of substitute intelligences is, for Lorenz as for Freud, open to doubt. Certainly, a number of other ideologists reject the teaching of Lorenz.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, they deny Lorenz's view that there is in man an innate instinct of aggression. More generally, they adopt an ambiguous attitude towards the ontological contradictions in Lorenz's pseudo-humanism. Although they do not accept his account of the juxtaposition of the biological, cultural and moral elements in man, they do not advance any philosophical basis for the unity of man's nature and operations.

In response to Lorenz, these opponents simply envisage — in substitution for man as he really is — an alternative system of human elements which lack stable natural characteristics and are represented as more or less indefinitely plastic. Accordingly, the ideological opponents of Lorenz postulate — instead of man — an "entity" which is so insubstantial and incoherent that it could hardly be even imagined to be capable of existing. Over against Lorenz's pseudo-humanism, they apparently tend towards a non-humanism. The substitute intelligence of the superman is stressed at the expense of the substitute intelligence of nature.

Within the primarily atheistic parameters of these diverse biological ideologies, the prominent ecological ideologies do not manifest a legitimate concern for the human environment on the basis of natural law. These ideologies are variously classified:<sup>31</sup> as "conservative" or "utopian"; as supposedly "scientific" or apparently "anti-scientific"; as an ecological "individualism" or an ecological "totalitarianism"; as admittedly materialist or apparently involved in some kind of "mystical" or "spiritual" approach to nature. Also there seems to be a disagreement — at least a difference of emphasis — between those pseudo-humanists who are primarily concerned with a certain conception of human survival and those non-humanists primarily preoccupied with a certain conception of the survival of the global eco-system. Without seeking to deny that meanings can be attached to distinctions of these kinds, it must be remembered that all these primarily atheistic ideologies are variants belonging to the same ideological spectrum.

Already in Hobbes and in Rousseau, we find potentially atheistic syntheses of an erroneous individualism with an erroneous totalitarianism.<sup>32</sup> Rousseau is also one of the ideological precursors of the socio-political doctrines<sup>33</sup> of both "conservative"

30. Ashley Montagu (ed.): *Man and Aggression*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1973. Cf. also MIDGLEY: "Natural Law and the Renewal of the Philosophy of International Relations (IV: Aggression and the Biological Ideologies) Year Book of World Affairs, vol. 29, 1975, pages 121-136.

31. MIDGLEY: "Traditionalism and Modernism in Ecological and Liberationist Ideology", *Catholic Social Review*, vol. VI, Trinity 1977, pages 13-30.

32. E.J. ROESCH: *The Totalitarian Threat: The Fruition of Modern Individualism, as seen in Hobbes and Rousseau*, New York, 1963.

33. For example, at least indirect influence of Rousseau seems apparent in the discussion of "self-regulating" societies in Appendix B to E. GOLDSMITH, R. ALLEN and others: *A Blueprint for Survival*, Harmondsworth, 1973.

and "utopian" ecologists. The supposedly "scientific" ecological ideologies of atheism are based, at a crucial point, not upon science but on a scientism inseparably connected with a more substantive ideology. Those other atheistic ideologists, led by antagonism towards technological pollution to adopt an anti-scientific posture, do not thereby become philosophers; they remain radical ideologists.

Those ecological ideologies which employ a pseudo-mysticism are, in their essential orientation, no less atheistic in character than those which are openly materialist. In T. Roszak<sup>34</sup> and others, we encounter a pseudo-mysticism which is tantamount to a revolt against religion. It is of the same generic character as the pseudo-mysticism of Rousseau and the "mystical allure" which surrounds the basically anti-religious doctrine of Hegel. Similarly, F. Fraser Darling's ideology<sup>35</sup> — derived mainly by illicit extrapolation from, and distortion of, results drawn from the special sciences — grounds its claim to be "holistic" partly upon a basically atheistic transvaluation of religion.

We have seen that orthodox Marxism — despite its fundamental errors — retains a superficial plausibility to the extent that it envisages the decisive "overcoming" of the human alienation which it has postulated. This "overcoming" of alienation seems to involve some kind of more or less decisive "overcoming" of scarcity. In so far as ecological ideologies do not look to any decisive overcoming of scarcity, they are more realistic about the human condition but, in another respect, less coherent as atheistic ideologies. In so far as ecological ideology — whether pseudo-humanist or non-humanist — seriously endeavours to achieve a synthesis, it will employ the two substitute intelligences. Employing the substitute intelligence of the superman, it will seek to undertake some kind of ideological *prise en conscience* whereby the supposed primitive ecological balances (founded upon the substitute intelligence of nature) are to be somehow both restored and consummated though never decisively perfected.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have seen that modern atheism cannot find in its liberationist and biological/ecological ideologies any solid foundation for an intellectual synthesis. These various ideologies sometimes presuppose a false concept of human nature as ontologically flawed, dislocated and self-contradictory. Sometimes they postulate a concept of human nature as almost indefinitely plastic and indeterminate. Very generally, these ideologies tend to lead, either implicitly or explicitly, to the conclusion that man has no ontological reality at all. These pseudo-humanisms and non-humanisms obtain their ideological content by the transvaluation of previous modernist and pre-modern teachings, both sacred and profane. In each case, the atheistic premises render an objective intellectual synthesis impossible.

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34. ROSZAK: "Ecology and Mysticism", *Humanist*, 86:5, May 1971, pages 134-136.

35. FRASER DARLING: "Man's Responsibility for the Environment", in Ebling (ed.): *Biology and Ethics*, London, 1969, pages 117-122.

Modern atheistic ideology advances beyond the ambiguous modernist concept of “social engineering” to the more radically ideological enterprise of a more explicit “ontological engineering”. In certain cases, the nihilistic or relativizing principle is dominant and the “ontological engineering” is envisaged as piecemeal, eclectic and ambivalent. This bringing together of relativized elements from originally incompatible atheistic ideologies does not deprive the pastiche of its radically ideological character, although it may sometimes reduce its ideological thrust or effectiveness.

In other cases, there is a dominant search for a unified ideological synthesis of the two substitute intelligences which advances an “ontological engineering” which is drastic, quasi-dogmatic and global in character. Finally, we encounter (especially in recent ideologies of “total liberation”) the attempt to make the relativizing principle and the principle of unification equally and jointly dominant. This latest undertaking reveals yet again the fruitless conjunction of the fundamental errors endemic in the entire history of the ideological revolt of modern atheism.