

BURIED ALIVE

The Lost Philosopher:

The Best of Anthony M. Ludovici

Anthony M. Ludovici, Edited by John V. Day

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Reviewed by Samuel Francis

Anthony M. Ludovici, an English writer and thinker on political and social theory who lived from 1882 to 1971, is today almost forgotten, which is why John V. Day has titled his collection of Ludovici's writings on a variety of topics "The Lost Philosopher." Although Ludovici considered himself a conservative and wrote books and essays defending philosophical conservatism, he is not mentioned at all in Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, as Mr. Day points out. Indeed, there is almost nothing that Ludovici believed or wrote about that would be endorsed by the people who in both England and America today call themselves "conservatives."

Despite his criticisms of democracy and his defense of aristocracy and hierarchy in society and government, Ludovici's fierce rejection of Christianity (he called himself a "Christophobe," someone who fears or dislikes Christ and Christianity) would alienate the traditionalist Christian conservatives like Kirk and his followers, while his critiques of capitalism and individualism would anger the "libertarians" and champions of Economic Man who today pervade Anglo-American "conservatism," and his outspoken support for racial homogeneity and eugenics (as well as just about everything else he believed or wrote) would earn him denunciations from the neo-conservatives.

Nor, for much the same reasons, would the left be any more receptive to his writings. It is increasingly easy to see, as one peruses Dr. Day's excellent collection of excerpts from Ludovici's voluminous *oeuvre*, why he has been forgotten—not so much forgotten, perhaps, as buried alive. Nevertheless, precisely because Ludovici's writing so challenges every icon and idol that is worshipped in the Western world today, he is well worth disinterring. Dr. Day,

who holds a Ph.D. in anthropology, has done a masterful job of it. Ludovici was the author of some twenty-eight books of non-fiction on various subjects, including conservatism, aristocracy, democracy, men and women, health, sex, humor, and others, as well as of eight novels, several short stories and poems, and a large number of essays listed over three pages of the seven-page "Select Bibliography" of Ludovici's writings Dr. Day has produced. It must be a Herculean task even to locate and read, let alone to master, Ludovici's works sufficiently well to put together a collection that fairly represents all aspects of his thinking, but that is exactly what Dr. Day has accomplished.

Ludovici's beliefs do not easily fit in conventional categories, but there seems to be a surprising degree of internal coherence in them. Despite his hostility to Christianity, which was based only in part on his rejection of its theological claims and more largely on what he believed were its harmful consequences for political life and racial survival, he was by no means irreligious and in fact expressed the view that "a substantial amount of present-day unbelief may be due to the declining intelligence of Western populations." Only unintelligent people, he suggested, would be so oblivious to the mysteries and beauties of life and the universe as to express indifference to the problems religion sought to address.

Ludovici's own religion seems to have been a kind of naturalism that veered off into modernized paganism, claiming that nature itself is animated by a cosmic Will to Power that he derived from Nietzsche, one of his heroes (he wrote books on him, too). He rejected Darwinism and the concept of the "struggle for existence" because he believed that not existence but power or "overcoming" was the real goal of biological life and even of the inanimate universe itself, "for we see animals and plants doing not merely the bare necessary to keep alive, but also everything possible with the view of overcoming other species" and "there appear to be substantial grounds for the view that a striving after supremacy or power is the basic trend of all Nature."

In other words, there is more in these forces [of Nature] than a mere readiness to vegetate or survive even on a lavish scale, and, unless we turn a blind eye to most of the more disturbing, importunate and gratuitously obtrusive tendencies of both animals and plants, we are constrained to postulate a basic drive in Nature, more dynamic, convulsive, upsetting and consequently, of course, more "evil" than merely the will to persist and keep one's head above water.

This led him to the insight that "Life in Nature is a continuous process of interracial and intraracial struggles for power and supremacy, with no principle, except the one of 'more life' in each race or species, governing the whole. Every species behaves as if it alone had the right to exist on earth, irrespective of all other claims."

Ludovici also argued that Nature itself was imbued with intelligence, that "a primordial and rudimentary form of intelligence must have been latent and inherent in 'stones and the most imperfect things,'" and that "it is now legitimate to postulate the feasibility of reaching and summoning to any activity

whatsoever, and with any object (i.e., evil or benign), the hidden constructive and improvising forces operating incessantly in living matter," which, in a word, means what is ordinarily called magic. Despite insisting that "there is nothing mystical or magical in this intervention," he meant it almost literally, as is evident in such comments as his statement that

But if there is truth in telepathy, clairvoyance and in the alleged terrifying powers of primitive medicine-men and shamans to inflict curses upon people, it seems as if there must be means of moving the cosmic forces through suggestion to produce effects beyond ourselves. The data regarding the unfailing efficacy of medicine-men's curses are certainly too well-authenticated to be lightly dismissed, and many scientists have already expressed their belief in telepathy.

These views are clearly eccentric, though they have been more widely shared in the twentieth century (and even more so today) than is commonly believed, and they suggest an affinity between Ludovici and Julius Evola, who was deeply attracted to occultism. Ludovici's exposition of conservatism, by contrast, is perfectly conventional, at least in terms of what was generally held to be the conservative tradition of thought until fairly recently, when the term has become so corrupted as to mean anything. Like any sensible adherent of conservatism, Ludovici understood the obvious importance of race and racial integrity to the fabric of society and civilization.

Because he believes in character, health, good taste and pure stock, the conservative must always be opposed to miscegenation and the flooding of his country with foreigners. If the identity of the nation is to be preserved, its people must be protected against blood contamination. Thus, although conservatives may be courteous and hospitable to the foreigner, they ought never to allow this attitude to extend to the toleration of marriages between the people of the country and the foreigner, or to the granting of too great facilities for foreign settlers.

Conservatism also insisted on what he called "realism," including the rejection of the idea of innate human goodness. "Above all," he wrote in summarizing what conservatives believe,

the true conservative entertains no high-falutin' notions about the alleged radical goodness of human nature. All his political schemes, whether they deal with home or foreign relations, are always therefore conceived on the assumption that guile, egotism, acquisitiveness, venality, lust of power, abuse of power and duplicity are likely to be manifested by the groups of humanity concerned, and consequently he is not prone to imagine utopias or ideal states....

His rejection of the innate goodness of man led directly to the "realism" of the conservative in contrast to the romanticism that had produced Jacobinism and modern liberalism. "Following the classic and realistic tradition, he [the true conservative] believes in the natural hierarchy of life, that order of rank which is of nature's making and which cannot be squared with any unreal notions about human equality," and he wrote that Machiavelli, the spokesman for unqualified realism in political affairs, "was probably the greatest political thinker Europe has ever seen."

Ludovici's defense of aristocracy (another of his books) was closely related to his conservatism and to his view of nature, and I consider it to be one of the few shortcomings of Dr. Day's anthology that he devotes far less space to Ludovici's exposition and defense of aristocracy than to other subjects Ludovici wrote about. Essentially, on the basis of what this collection offers, it appears that Ludovici's case for aristocracy involved two main arguments. One was that since human society necessarily involves giving power and positions of great responsibility to certain people, the best way to ensure that such people exercise power and responsibility wisely is by drawing them from a class trained from birth in the skills and habits of leadership, courage, honesty, and other virtues that the beneficent and efficient use of power demands. Secondly, the necessity of leadership in human society itself involves something like aristocracy or the rule of an elite.

From the dawn of social life men have recognized that communal existence is permanently in need of regulation and that, if it is not to be disruptive of good order, human behaviour cannot be left to the uncontrolled direction of natural passion and instinct.

This sentiment by itself separates him from the advocates of "Free Market" utopianism who claim that the market is a natural and universal process that sufficiently governs human relations without conscious intervention and design, and Ludovici argued that those who assume the positions of leadership are not elected or chosen.

Looking back upon history, I find that no such act of installation or election ever actually takes place, save as a surface movement. What really happens, what has always happened save in degenerate times, is that those among humanity who are examples of flourishing life have always asserted and established their superior claims themselves. And in communities in which the proper values prevail concerning greatness, nobility, taste, beauty, power, sagacity and health they find themselves naturally raised to power by their own efforts as a frog rises to the water's surface by the movements of its agile limbs.

Ludovici's beliefs about the necessity of social hierarchy, itself based on natural inequalities, are reflected in his insistence on the need for authority and subordination and his condemnation of liberalism.

It is this disbelief in authority and subordination which, in the ideology of romanticism, liberalism and Jacobinism, always leads to the decline of discipline, for, wherever the ideology prevails, discipline ceases to be upheld. And since without discipline it is impossible to maintain standards, the belief in the myth of human equality and the disbelief in authority and subordination ultimately lead to the loss of a nation's identity.

And these beliefs were closely linked to his quite expansive opinions on the subject of women.

Dr. Day devotes nearly half his book to what Ludovici wrote about women and men, children, health, sex, and education—a selection that is no doubt fair since it reflects what Ludovici himself produced in the course

of his career, but frankly much of this part of his work strikes me as quite perishable. Women seem to have been one of his favorite subjects, though his view of them was hardly positive and often seems to have amounted to simple misogyny. A good deal of what Ludovici wrote about the foolishness and dangerousness of feminism is sensible and refreshing, given the nonsense that today surrounds the subject, but much of what he wrote about women themselves is not convincing and leaves the impression of a deep-seated grudge.

He ridiculed the idea of women's intuition as "a great myth, the outcome of a woman's habit of saying the first thing that enters her head, and which, according to the laws of chance, must be right sometimes" and held that "woman's lack of taste on the one hand, her vulgarity and her love of petty power on the other, are all seen to be exercising a deleterious and dangerous influence on modern society."

Woman, like the female butterfly, the female housefly or the female horsefly, has the very vital and useful instinct to deposit her eggs only where there is a sound promise of food, and ample quantities of it, for the support of the larvae that are to be reared from them.

Moreover, vulgarity is so "fundamental and vital" in women that "the notion 'lady' [is] absurd nonsense. It is the grossest and most palpable fiction. No 'lady' ever existed or will ever exist."

Rejection of feminism and sexual equality is perfectly consistent with Ludovici's view of nature, hierarchy, tradition, and authority, but much of what he had to say (and kept saying on and on) on the subject of women suggests that something else is going on with him. Had Ludovici offered very much empirical support for any of his bitter and often windy generalizations, the reader might find them more persuasive or at least more interesting. One has to suspect that there is an empirical reason for his negativity toward women but that it is strictly personal. *Cherchez la femme.*

What he wrote on eugenics and racial mixture is of more interest. Unlike almost every other advocate of eugenics in history, Ludovici strongly opposed both contraception and abortion. He insisted that the "voluntary use of contraceptives must inevitably lead to racial suicide" because "birth control is a precaution that naturally appeals to the more prudent, the more intelligent, the more self-denying and the more desirable sections of the population, and where it is encouraged and promoted only the lowest and most undesirable sections of the population will be left as unrestricted and unlimited multipliers."

As for abortion, his reasoning is by no means as succinct and clear, but he seems to have opposed it mainly because he claimed it appealed only to the "masculinoid female" but would be extended to healthy women as well (he did believe there were such things as healthy women).

His case for eugenics was only in part racial, though he felt strongly enough about interracial marriage to leave a large sum in his will to the University of Edinburgh for the study of the effects of miscegenation, a fund that now has been diverted to the study of the genetics of Huntington's chorea, according to Dr. Day. But "mongrelization" involved interracial breeding only in part.

The modern world accepts without question or perplexity an amount of defectiveness in human nature to which only long and steady habituation to the sight of inferior quality in man could possibly have blinded us.... The very blindness shown toward the mongrelization of the population, high and low, is nothing less than astonishing. It amounts to childish simplicity to suppose that mongrelization occurs only when different races mix. In England this is now probably its rarest manifestation. It occurs chiefly in healthy, sound stocks mongrelizing themselves by mating with unsound, weedy and tainted stocks....

"Mongrelization" was to Ludovici simply the most grotesque violation of the principle of hierarchy, and the consequence of romanticism and Jacobinism and the Christianity that had helped spawn both of them.

It must be said that Ludovici's case for eugenics and his interest in it showed little attraction to "inventing a new race" or creating a new species. His concern was always with the preservation of his own race and people, and their health, beauty, character, intelligence, and capacities for creating and sustaining civilization. Due to the ignorance of eugenics and the consequences of poorly considered breeding habits fostered by rampant individualism and romanticism and encouraged by capitalism, the race was already degenerating.

The most disparate couples unite without the faintest suspicion of the enormity of their action. Faulty sight, faulty teeth, halitosis, bodily flaws of all kinds, asymmetrical features, a bad heredity, deaf-muteism, mental defect, even insanity, evidence of endocrine imbalance, and skeletal imperfections which in the female impair normal parturition are cheerfully accepted, if only people can find such 'spiritual' qualities as the frivolous fashion of the day ordains.

Ludovici's views on economics were also all of a piece with his naturalism and concern with the character of his race. Despite his adherence to a naturalistic ethic, he argued that applying the "struggle for existence" concept to human society would probably lead not to the survival of the best, the strongest, or the smartest but of "more money-lenders, commission agents, stockbrokers, middlemen, lawyers, doctors and storekeepers" than "poets, artists, producers of all kinds, agricultural labourers and science-workers." As with everything else he believed, his economic views were founded on his concern for quality rather than the quantity that has become the idol of Economic Man today.

Thus, he was highly critical of the classical liberalism that today passes for conservatism and rejected not only the unrestrained economism of modern capitalism (and socialism) but also a good deal of industrialism itself. He favored what in England was known as "ruralism," which was similar to what

in the United States in the same era was advocated by the Southern Agrarians, and like the Agrarians, his views also resembled those of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the Distributist movement. But, unlike either the Distributists or the Agrarians, he drew attention to the roots of economic activity in race itself:

It is often alleged that political systems, and even a nation's religious, social and moral convictions, arise out of its economic conditions. This is a standpoint constantly emphasized by the communists, and is generally acceptable to all those who are inclined to lay particular stress on environmental as opposed to hereditary influences.

I submit that what history teaches us is, rather, that economic conditions, together with the religious, social and moral convictions associated with them, are preeminently the creation of national character, and that this national character is predominantly determined by heredity or what is popularly known as race and better referred to as type or stock.

Further, I submit that, when once a well-established national character has established the institutions and customs suited to its peculiar capacities, tastes and virtues, these institutions can be modified not by moral suasion or argument but only by a determined attack on the national character itself, which in practice means an attack on the national type or stock.

This is as succinct a statement of Anthony Ludovici's entire social-political world-view as can be found in Dr. Day's anthology, and it is a perfectly appropriate one.

If there is one major flaw in Dr. Day's collection, it lies I think in the lack of an introduction that would tell us more about Ludovici's life and personality as a man. Except for his life dates, the facts that he was born in England to a mother who had been an actress and a father who was an artist, that he was devoted to his mother (perhaps she was *la femme* for whom we should *cherchez*), who largely educated him, that he was of German, French, and Basque ancestry, and that he worked for a time as the private secretary to the French sculptor August Rodin, we are told virtually nothing about his life and career. Did he have any connection to such groups as the Distributists or Agrarians, whose economic views resembled his own? What was his view of the British Conservative Party of his era or of Oswald Mosley and the British Fascists or of the European Fascists? What did he think about the two world wars through which he lived (he served in the first and rose to the rank of captain, of which he remained proud for the rest of his life). Did he have any relationship to the literary right of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, et al.? What kind of formal education did he have, and for what publications did he write? What kind of personal life did he lead? The book could have profited immensely from an introduction that addressed these and similar questions.

I have to conclude that despite Dr. Day's best efforts and despite the attractiveness of much of what Ludovici believed and wrote, Ludovici strikes me as a writer and thinker too uneven to survive as a significant figure even

among those who will share or sympathize with his views on some subjects. Much of what he argued about “conservatism” is outdated today, and not simply because “conservatism” itself has abandoned most of the identity and commitments from which Ludovici drew his own thought. There is simply little “tradition” to conserve anymore, and the British aristocracy, like the American “Protestant Establishment,” is a sick joke, as are most of the other institutions that traditional conservatives used to defend.

While offering a defense of the principles of hierarchy and aristocracy remains important, there are other writers who do so at least as well as if not better than Ludovici—including T.S. Eliot, among others. The same must be said for his other positions on sex and the family, race, eugenics, and the intellectual history of modern leveling, and personally I find much of Ludovici’s style wordy and stiff, and on his favorite subject of women his ideas are simply impossible to take very seriously. Probably his greatest value today is the case he makes that a serious and authentic conservatism must seek to conserve the race and therefore the character of the people who created the social “traditions” and “culture” that most conservatives claim to want to protect, a position he tended to regard as so axiomatic that it needed little argument. Most so-called conservatives today much prefer to forget, ignore, or deny anything having to do with race. If those who talk so much about “tradition” and “culture” could learn from Ludovici the importance of race to what they say they want to conserve, they would find him well worth their time and effort to read.

Yet for all the flaws of his thought and style, Anthony Ludovici was clearly a man of immense character, intelligence, talent, and courage who understood the whole of his civilization and its relationship to race better than most of his contemporaries and most who have come after him, and he wrote with what seems to have been absolute integrity and indifference to any consequences to his personal interests. Dr. Day has done his own race and civilization a great service by making the thought and writings of this Lost Philosopher available to us once again.

*Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist, the Political Editor of **Chronicles** magazine, and Associate Editor of the **Occidental Quarterly**.*
