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AESTHETIC CONTEMPLATIONS BY DIMITRIJE MITRINOVIĆ OR: ABOUT AN ALTERNATIVE GLOBALIZATION

*The best political, social, and spiritual work we can do is to withdraw
the projection of our shadow onto others.*

C. G. Jung

It seems that the occasional manifestation of Genius can be defined within the existence of people in time and space, that is - within the world in which we act as individuals. In a strange way, however, a specific dose of regularity in the manifestation of an individual genius can be noticed: somewhere this Change is manifested clearly and unambiguously, as a result of which its bearer is immediately and almost naturally recognized by his environment, while sometimes the Change occurs on the principle of "absence", so her spirit does not necessarily have to be immediately recognized and accepted. Werner Heisenberg, winner of the Nobel Prize in physics (1932), said that in reality there are phenomena for which the objective laws of time and space do not apply, and modern physics sovereignly claims that there is matter that is not real and that for some obviously physical phenomena (e.g. electron behavior) can determine neither place, nor energy, nor measure.

When, in 1999, on the edge of the 20th century, on the Spanish-French border, in Pamplona, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary

of the founding of the European Community and the European Union, a conference of the Center for European Studies was held in Navarre, talking about Dimitrije Mitrinović as a prophet and to the initiator of the current European unification - it was a confirmation of the principle of "absent presence" which testifies to the manifestation of Genius. In the words of the great connoisseur of Mitrinović's total legacy, Serbian academician Predrag Palavestra: "So I was convinced again that Dimitrije Mitrinović really has a strange ability to be present even when he is not there, to renew and return when everyone seems forgotten".¹

What has been relatively rarely pointed out in the theoretical and literary-historical literature so far is an essentially avant-garde theoretical postulate, which is at the very foundation of the thought of Dimitrije Mitrinović, thinker, poet, mystic, visionary and modern preacher, one of the few Serbian cultural representatives, which left an enviable spiritual mark in other cultures as well. That is why, before we call this thought utopian, today we could talk about it as "optimally projected".

Namely, in the very history of the avant-garde, two phenomena are understood and interchanged: individual demolition and collective construction. As Peter Birger stated in his liberal sociological setting, the crucial characteristic of the avant-garde is its demand for the destruction of the entire traditional "cultural institution".² But this does not mean that the avant-garde does not have a kind of positive gender. In his research on the avant-garde, the Zagreb theorist Aleksandar Flaker marked what he called the "optimal projection" as the very core of this phenomenon. Utopia is a symbolic sign for a place or country that does not exist, while the avant-garde declaratively advocates a complete metamorphosis of the entire society, culture and art, in the direction of a kind of comprehensive aesthetic revolution, and in that sense has a certain projective-futurological overtone. Unlike utopia, "optimal projection" is characterized, therefore, by a concrete choice of possibilities in historical time. In his book *The Poetics of Challenge: The Avant-Garde and the Literary Left*, Flacker gives a history of the term, as well as its definition: "Optimal projection does not denote an ideally

¹ Predrag Palavestra, *Nekropolje. Biografski eseji* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011), 42.

² Peter Birger, *Teorija avangarde* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1998).

structured space of the future, it does not seek to define it, but signifies changing reality".³ Confirmation of this phenomenon can be found in numerous program-manifest statements of avant-garde artists, realizations and appearance of numerous avant-garde magazines and publications, as well as in explicit avant-garde works.

We can present this process, as the basic developmental thread of the avant-garde, through the relationship: the culture of "total rupture" - avant-garde "optimal projection". Both of these phenomena form the avant-garde line of development of the new world. In each of these manifestations of the avant-garde spirit, a clear process of movement from complete rejection to new construction is visible, from destructive, anti-structural creative practice to exaggeration and attempts to form a new structure. The named process is expressed in all avant-garde movements: from early futurism, through Cubism, Zenitism, Dadaism, Ultraism, or Constructivism, all the way to later more or less successful attempts at great avant-garde syntheses. Also, the optimal projection is visible in the explicit works of the avant-garde themselves, whenever they start to futurologically project in their work: Apollinaire, Tzara, Zamyatin, Micić, Aleksić, early Krleža, early Rastko Petrović.

The optimal projection, therefore, is not related to ideology, as in the case of surrealism, on the wave of political optimism, because it is based on a kind of prophetic-aesthetic optimism, which is manifested through the avant-garde demand for permeation of life and existence by art. It is not tied to any kind of hope in the metaphysical sense, but is a concrete search for the possibilities of the future.

More than in any of Mitrinović's writings, this avant-garde theoretical weft is expressed in the work "Aesthetic Contemplation: About the criticism that does not exist, or the Defense of Degradation". Relying on the book *Synchronicity as a Principle of Acausal Relationships* by the German psychologist Wolfgang Pauli and the famous Swiss guru C. G. Jung, as well as on Jung's famous book *Memories, Dreams, Thoughts*, Arthur Kestler wrote the book *The Roots of Coincidence*, in which he deals with the phenomenon of synchronicity, a preferred phenomenon in the avant-garde. Dimitrije Mitrinović's extremely diverse activities and diverse direction of his spiritual and intellectual

³ Aleksandar Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja: avangarda i književna ljevica* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1982), 68.

occupations, especially considering his great interest in the supernatural, the otherworldly, the extrasensory and the occult, provides plenty of opportunities for noticing the phenomena of synchronicity.

In line with that, there is the fact that "Aesthetic Contemplations" were published in 1913 and written in Rome, at a time when the Italian cultural and social context is shaking well with violent futuristic revolt, when Russian futurists live in the same space (Burlyuk, Kruchonikh, Mayakovsky and Khlebnikov published the famous "Slap to Public Opinion" in Russia a year before Mitrinović's text, while in the same year as "Aesthetic Contemplation" Apollinaire's manifesto "Futuristic Antitradition" and Papini's "My Futurism" appeared. On the other hand, 1913 is the year in which the most important works of modern European culture appear, and it is probably only 1922 that is comparable to this sifting of the European spirit. In 1913, as Predrag Palavestra⁴ informed us in his unavoidable book about Mitrinović in the context of Serbian literary science, among other things, Sigmund Freud published *Totem and Taboo*, George Lukacz *Theory of novel*, Oswald Spengler's first volume *The Fall of the West*, Nikolai Berdyaev's *Philosophy of Freedom*, Maurice Maeterlinck's *Essay On Death*, and Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*. In the same year, Igor Stravinsky created "The Dedication of Spring", Edward Munk completed a fresco in the hall of the University of Oslo, Thomas Mann wrote *Death in Venice*, George Trakl and Gottfried Ben published their poetry collections, Franz Kafka wrote the first chapter of the future novel *America*, and James Joyce finishes *Dubliners*. It was a crucial moment in modern European history, when before the Great War, European artistic sensibilities began to meet a common culture - what Peter Birger calls a culture of total break with the traditional paradigm.

One technical fact speaks volumes about the need to scientifically revalue this text: this text by Mitrinović represents, in musical terms, a caesura - both in the biographical and in the context of the Serbian cultural reality back then. Namely, after "Aesthetic Contemplations", Mitrinović will no longer publish any poem or art criticism (with the exception of two smaller texts in the same spirit, published just before leaving for England). Also, this text represents a kind of personal testamentary pledge, when it comes to national cultural heritage and

⁴ Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* (Beograd: Slovo ljubve, 1977), 165-167.

social struggle. On the eve of the Great War, the former uncrowned leader of pro-Yugoslav subversive intellectual activities and the charismatic inspirer of concrete actions of the Yugoslav-oriented youth left his cultural territory and language forever and approaches the great European motherland of the then spiritual, intellectual and esoteric currents, in which it also leaves a specific trace. Although, when mentioning this biographical detail, his apostolic pathos is most often mentioned (visible, for example, from his answer to his brother about the "burning torch" and "sower of the future harvest") or justified fear of potential persecution given the fact of the early leadership in the organization „Young Bosnia“, we are more inclined to view this act in the context of Mitrinović's overall avant-garde work, which, if it wants to remain avant-garde, must go in the direction of radical and concrete identification with the work itself, in a Rimbaudean sense - as replacing theory with practice and confirming creativity with concrete authentic life. "Like a beacon from a romantic legend filled with the pathos of tomorrow, he creates a mythological aura around himself and thus achieves an absolute avant-garde situation, in which action is more important than deeds, resistance than tradition and action than results".⁵

This, of course, is also contributed by the personal charisma that Mitrinović possessed. In the book *Orage and the New Age Circle*, Paul Selver wrote: "I barely shook hands with Mitrinović, when I felt such excitement with his very presence that I almost fainted. That never happened to me before or after. After that, I was left with a strong impression that there was something not so much dark as mysterious in Mitrinović".⁶

Theoretically based, penetrating style and extremely versatile, with rich experience of youthful cultural and social activities, Mitrinović's poetic-manifest expression, in which he advocates the destruction of traditional forms and clichés, represents the first theoretically valid anticipation of the avant-garde and affirmation of a new spiritual order in philosophy, poetry and general cultural practice. It is precisely the avant-garde - Mitrinović's expression in "Aesthetic Contemplations" - that represents the total demand. It is a futuristic platform on the basis of which, through the culture of avant-garde total rupture, a new order of things will be "optimally projected".

⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁶ Palavestra, *Nekropolje*, 31-32.

This work of Mitrinović, however, deviates somewhat from the poetic radicalism of the original, Marinettian futurism (after all, Russian futurism also deviates from Marinetti's poetic school) can still be interpreted in accordance with the attempt of a certain modernist re-interpretation of tradition. This is certainly related to Mitrinović's national cultural motives back then, visible in the attempt to modernize national cultural practice and its connection to the most current intellectual and spiritual currents in Europe, but also to a kind of summary of previous personal reflections on aesthetic phenomena and their connection with other human activities and spiritual culture. In other words, the avant-garde storm that began to rage in Europe at that time was quite naturally adopted by a young thinker, already exalted in character, who came from a traditional environment, which he was trying to modernize.

Mitrinović's courage to link this traditional culture to avant-garde European thought is already attested by the fact that "Aesthetic Contemplations" was published in *Bosanska vila*, the messenger of the patriarchal civic environment, which was not very enthusiastic about new incomprehensible cries against the traditional system. On the other hand, soon after his acquaintance with the latest European spiritual tendencies, Mitrinović formulated his position on the future of Western civilization itself: although he believed in its imminent disintegration and thus hinted at the horrors of the coming war, Mitrinović had no need, such as members of the great European avant-garde, to completely reject the entire European traditional paradigm, but as a descendant of the cultural periphery of Europe, confidently proclaimed the position on the necessity of forming young cultures on proven European values and their accession to the European cultural arena, enriched with new quality through undiscovered values of its own periphery, renewed. The future esoteric vision of a united Europe, one of the first in the European spiritual experience of the 20th century, will have its beginning there. This vision has its basis in the spiritual order, so it sets it apart from all organizations that perceive themselves as a kind of alternative to the United Nations, such as, for example - the World Federalist Movement or the organization "Citizens of the World".

In Serbian literary historiography, the fact of stratification of the Serbian avant-garde into two developmental flows is almost

completely ignored: a radical avant-garde creative practice, which completely rejects any kind of cooperation with traditional forms (Ljubomir Micic, Dragan Aleksić, early Rastko Petrović, etc.) and an attempt modernist re-interpretations of tradition (Miloš Crnjanski - after poem *Stražilovo*, Milan Dedinac, Dušan Vasiljev, late Rastko Petrović, etc.). By the way, when the avant-garde speaks of a tradition that needs to be destroyed, it is almost always the historical period called the modern age, definitely established in the 18th century and irreparably connected with the hierarchical system of bourgeois society. In that sense, the avant-garde very often refers to antiquity, folklore heritage, folk, cyclical conception of time, romantic deviation from the Enlightenment line of development, but also to other distant traditions of Africa and the Far East.

With Dimitrije Mitrinović, as the anticipator of the Serbian avant-garde, one can easily see a syncretic ambition, one of the rare attempts, both in the Serbian and in the European cultural area, of a great avant-garde synthesis. In the context of Serbian literature and culture, this tendency is, in various ways, clearly visible only in Rastko Petrović and Stanislav Vinaver, rather than in Miloš Crnjanski opus.

Although Mitrinović's work is most often divided into the period before and after his departure for Britain, a unified view of his opus provides an immediate insight into the syncretic character of his thought. Although this syncretism is most often interpreted as an echo of Masonic mystical syncretism, our premise is that it is initially and essentially of the avant-garde order. This is all the more so because in the book of British Freemasonry by researchers Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas *The Book of Hiram*, we find unequivocal information, based on the list of all members of this Brotherhood in Britain, that Mitrinović was not a member of this organization, although he was a great connoisseur of Masonic teachings and the owner of a fascinating collection of books about them, on which these British authors based their research. Admiring the conclusions stated in Mitrinović's discussion entitled *Freemasonry and Catholicism*, these authors point out the way in which they came to this material:

Mitrinović moved to London around the time of World War I, where he became a leading figure in the Bloomsbury Group, a group of intellectuals named after an area near the

British Museum in central London, where most members lived. (...) Mitrinović was not a freemason, and since it took us seven years of extensive research, with the application of professional Freemasonry knowledge, in order to reach that conclusion, we wondered how he succeeded in that. We found that he did so based on an extensive study of numerous works from his library, so we decided to find those books. When we found that collection, we found that after Mitrinović's death, it was packed in boxes for forty years and placed in his cousin's garage. When we finally managed to collect those books and find a good place for Mitrinović's library, his cousin decided to donate them to the University. Fortunately, the University that offered to preserve them is located in Bradford, where Robert teaches.⁷

This information, therefore, confirms the speculative nature of Mitrinović's interest in certain teachings, which does not necessarily mean that he belongs to them. With this, the thesis about the essentially avant-garde nature of his interests and a kind of overflow of the avant-garde weft from the literary-artistic to the social and esoteric plan gained additional significance. From early poetry, simultaneously overwhelmed by traditional national and social and, on the other hand, the latest expressionist tendencies; through early articles and essays in which the combination of tradition and avant-garde is clearly seen ("National Soil and Modernity", 1908, "From the Lyric of Germany", 1912), to more complex critical reviews and all the way to later syncretic occult-literary-social texts written in German and English - this wide range of activities and reflections is essentially unique, because it is part of the same avant-garde flow.

The best evidence of the syncretic, avant-garde orientation in the early phase of Mitrinović's literary-critical work is one of the first apologies of Vladislav Petković Dis's poetry and the emphasis on the rights and importance of incorporating decadence by Serbian culture, in the context of great attacks by Serbian critics on Dis's collection of poems *Drowned Souls*, already in the year of appearance of this collection - 1911. Dis's collection will be marked by most of the

⁷ Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, *Hiramova knjiga. Slobodno zidarstvo, Venera i tajni ključ Hristovog života* (Beograd: Hiram, 2006), 32-33.

Serbian cultural representatives back then as a work that undermines the traditional and then ruling values of larpurlartism, embodied by Bogdan Popović's book *Anthology of Newer Serbian Lyrics*, published the same years. Precisely because of and around the mentioned Dis collection, two unshakable fronts of the Serbian cultural scene will be formed, which are most often marked as a conflict of "old" and "new".

Of course, conservative critics will evaluate Popović's *Anthology* as the greatest event in recent Serbian literature, while they will label Dis's collection as a product of a sick mind. However, a different type of critical inscriptions, as well as a different evaluation of Popović's *Anthology* and Dis's collection, embodied in the texts of Dimitrije Mitrinović, Stanislav Vinaver and Svetislav Stefanović, in contrast to the general celebration of the first and complete rejection of the second, will blur the established image of Serbian poetic reality, anticipate the avant-garde. Gojko Tešić also emphasizes that.

The schism of the critical understanding of poetic practice can be considered as an early announcement of the Serbian avant-garde, primarily because at that time the hotbeds of critical radicalism with a positive and negative sign began. The two confronted conceptions simultaneously act as an opposite poetic couple within Serbian literature, testifying to different poetic tendencies that are mutually exclusive, denied, rejected.⁸

In the same year, Mitrinović wrote about the traditional paradigm extremely negatively, seeking rejection, from the perspective of the demands of modern times, of the empty and artificial decorativeness of traditional lyrics in the review "Croatian poet Dragutin Domjanic", also from 1911. In the text "The Case of Svetislav Stefanović", from 1913, in an almost completely futuristic way, he tries to create a platform on the basis of which he will break the traditional paradigm and establish a new order of things. This continues in one of the last texts before leaving for Britain, "Crochet's Coup or the Aesthetics of Intuition" (1914), which was written as an apology for a new creative dynamic, which was deepened and expanded by the French philosopher Henri

⁸ Gojko Tešić, *Srpska književna avangarda: književnoistorijski kontekst (1902-1934)*, (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, Službeni glasnik, 2009), 45.

Bergson after this Italian esthetician In that text Mitrinović hints at the predominance of intuitionism in the avant-garde poetics of the 1920s.

The later synthesis, related to the unique esoteric school, also manifests a certain avant-garde heritage. In that sense, we should not forget that trust in the brotherhood of all people is an avant-garde (specifically expressionist) motive par excellence, as well as insisting on a new social structure, as an echo of change on an individual level, which sharply separates Mitrinović from other spiritual teachers. At the same time, he is distinguished by a kind of metaphysical optimism, the origin of which could be sought in the idealistic foundation of avant-garde "optimal projections", which is why the avant-garde was sharply criticized later by postmodernism. "While Guenon is a pessimist of the cosmic level (kali-yuga), and Gurdjieff of the anthropological (human conditioning), Mitrinović has a bright prophetic vision on both levels, close to expressionist poets".⁹

However, this avant-garde alternative potential today seems to be a very interesting possibility to respond to the trend of the current process of globalization. After all, it has already been noticed that Mitrinović's specificity, as a spiritual teacher, is, among other things, the connection of individual change with the social one - a motive without a doubt of the avant-garde order.¹⁰ Therefore, it can happen, as evidenced by the case mentioned at the beginning of this paper, that the current global tendencies will, in a way, naturally revalue the avant-garde thought of Dimitrije Mitrinović, which could soon become privileged in the contemporary cultural context.

Not only that. According to the nomenclature of Boris Groys,¹¹ the Serbian avant-garde, as well as all other Central European avant-garde, are classified in the so-called non-paradigmatic avant-garde. Until now, the paradigmatic avant-garde has been mostly called the French, Italian, German and Russian historical avant-garde, as large, typical or hegemonic avant-garde that determine a certain horizon of historicization of the international concept of avant-garde. A

⁹ Nemanja Radulović, *Podzemni tok. Ezoterično i okultno u srpskoj književnosti* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2009), 236.

¹⁰ Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe. Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), 125.

¹¹ Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism, Avant-garde, Aesthetic, Dictatorship and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

hypothetical modern avant-garde, with a strong spiritual influence of Mitrinović's provenance, so today - in the modern social context and digital-technological environment - could not only serve as a kind of aesthetic filter, but also rise to the heights of a paradigmatic avant-garde that would indicate on the way to a concrete change of the reality paradigm.

Mitrinović's integrative thought, which merges avant-garde and tradition-sanctified ideas and motives (all with the initial goal of modernizing the domestic cultural paradigm and brotherhood of South Slavic peoples, which will very quickly expand into a global vision of pan-European and universal human evolutionary leap, through a broad cultural synthesis humanistic and psychological project) can be interpreted today in accordance with Habermas's call for the renewal of "essential, integral reason", which ruled Europe until the Enlightenment, which initiated the future dominance of specialist thought. The Enlightenment turn would later lead to modern particular identities and contemporary micro-interests.

However, this syncretic discourse is most noticeable in "Aesthetic Contemplations" and it is not, in connection with this text, Mitrinović's unreasonable abandonment of the particular national culture or literature itself. In a theoretical sense, this turn was certainly decisively influenced by the book *The Side Birth* by Erich Gutkind, a German philosopher and poet of Jewish origin. This book turned Mitrinović's national and Yugoslav idea forever towards wide European and planetary spaces. Gutkind, together with Vasily Kandinsky, helped Mitrinović in 1914 to publish the never-realized almanac *Aryan Europe*, and later Mitrinović retaliated by helping him to publish the hermetic Kabbalistic book *The Highest Community*, which Gutkind wrote after leaving for America before the Nazi rise in Germany.

However, at the same time, it is another confirmation of the avant-garde "total" demand for a change in the real paradigm itself. In other words, this text, like other truly avant-garde manifest discourses, is not written as literature, in the traditional sense, but as a publication of a new philosophy of total global life and the culture of the future in which the free citizen of the world (candleman) will live an authentic life. So, once again, the avant-garde origin of Mitrinović's views comes to the fore, just as Palavestra concludes:

Mitrinović almost certainly did not take over the first and perhaps the most expressive principle of the avant-garde, its life-giving activism, only from futurists. Activism was a general psychological property of the progressive and radical spirits of the epoch, and Mitrinović felt it as a part of his being, as a natural state of awakened consciousness which, in social action, communicated with the ethical criteria of the general age.¹²

That is why in the text, philosophical, social, theological, cultural-historical, political and eschatological topics promote side by side. Precisely, therefore, because Mitrinović's ideological orientation belongs to avant-garde discourse, which tries to replace the outdated cultural paradigm with a new reality, his aesthetics actually becomes the ethics of the modern age and the pledge of the future idea of humanity.

*Revival is the ideal of what the people need and what they want, and the only way is to overthrow violence and establish humanity, to enlighten the people and strengthen the thought. We must move forward because the immeasurable will of life is in us that persecutes us.*¹³

At the same time, by linking to the early currents of German expressionism and Italian futurism, this text by Mitrinović marks the establishment of a connection between modern Serbian culture and the most lively and largely exclusive efforts of the current European intellectual elite, a connection that has been broken for a long time.

At the same time, that binding was not based on a mechanical takeover, but on a simultaneous projection of one's own, very special mythology. In the context of the general avant-garde tendencies of the time, it was a common, pan-European attempt to situate creativity in reality itself, instead of some transcendent Kant-type reality. It was the beginning of building a "new myth", a "modern mythology" of modern culture, based on avant-garde "optimal projection". The fact

¹² Palavestra, *Dogma*, 175.

¹³ Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Estetičke kontemplacije* (1913), last modified 01.10.2018, <http://afrodita.rcub.bg.ac.rs/~pajin/dm/tekstovi/kontemplacije.html>.

that there are revelations in reality for man in general, from a human point of view, means that the numenon is utterable, because intuitive reason, the reason that "knows" that numenon, for this, as for other European avant-garde, is a creative instinct, rather than just concrete creative realization.

Precisely because of that, for Mitrinović's opus (just like Marinetti himself or some other avant-garde artists), today we cannot say that it is rounded off by some system, nor that literary activity has the exclusive right to that opus. The lack of a system is another distinguishing factor when it comes to Mitrinović as a spiritual teacher. The syncretic character of these avant-garde "optimal projections" does not allow any molding, and their fragmentation today can represent a metaphorical spelling of a new, emerging, real paradigm, which will place new cultural and even more - spiritual values at the core of the global process, a free man, as, in Bakunin's words, a "free seeker of truth."

This anarchist potential of Mitrinović's thought, as well as any other truly avant-garde conception of culture, entails a kind of judgment of the establishment. Therefore, forgetting this "cultural hero" does not necessarily represent a spontaneous act of one forgetful culture. We remember after all, in the context of Serbian literature, the fate of another syncretic mind - Rastko Petrović. Or the decision of Dragan Aleksić to manifestly shut up himself, together with the rest of the European Dada, in 1922, projecting the possibility of establishing Dadaism as an academic style for the then distant 1999. If you stubbornly stick to the radically avant-garde demands, you can only starve, which was almost the fate of Ljubomir Micić, the founder of Zenitism (and aside from all the stories about his "awkward" nature).

It was similar, after all, elsewhere. Already at the time when Goebbels closed the Bauhaus, that school almost completely rejected the request of its founder Gropius, accepting the functional (Corbusier's and Niemeyer's) architectural style, and it already used its applied art for market and industrial purposes. Artists such as Clay or Mitrinović's associate and acquaintance Kandinsky were already at that time in the institutional hierarchical chain "lowered" exclusively to the level of lecturers. Mitrinović's "escape" into the occult thus can be interpreted as his specific and practically avant-garde response to the establishment practice.

The aesthetic function of this avant-garde cultural practice, today can be interpreted as a filter of social grooming. In other words, the modern hypothesis of social grooming by the Russian-American theorist Mikhail Epstein,¹⁴ based on the natural self-purification of culture, which in its gradual development has the potential to create “new life” in the Bacon sense, is most obvious can prove by the example of the avant-garde. Namely, culture is often defined as a very gradual system of language, by which humanity speaks only to itself. As Michael Epstein informs us, in Robin Dunbar’s book *Cleansing, Intrigue and the Evolution of Language*, based on extensive material from the field study of primates, the hypothesis is that language originates from lustration rituals, which have the function of connecting social groups. In that way, Epstein concludes, physical self-purification would be an analog and a phenomenon of all cultural processes, where, in accordance with man’s mental evolution, the external is replaced by the internal. During this process, man passes the entire surrounding world through a set of different filters, so the culture can be interpreted as one man’s giant shelter from garbage.

When the “death of God” was completed with the “death of man”, there was talk of the “death of the avant-garde” and we are living observers of the disintegration of two ideas that were the basis of alternative global potential: the disintegration of the vision of the future and the disintegration of the “aesthetics of change” per se. This latter term was a regenerative mode of European spirit, culture and literature, beginning with the Renaissance. Art and culture today are only part of a global media product. Fictional art – which is definitely enthroned as dominant by co-opting modernist re-interpretation into the system (even in the case of so-called dissidents) - is not dangerous to the establishment and even confirms the exclusivity of class identity, whether we are talking about citizen identity in traditional bourgeois society, the identity of the consumer in a modern consumer society, or the identity of a manager in the current corporate environment. It is no longer a “crisis of the avant-garde.” That is the end of aesthetics.

If we look at the current global process in the light of Heidegger’s long-standing statement that technique takes over all the prerogatives of humanity - today theoretically accompanied by theoretical texts such as Sloterdijk’s *Rules for the Human Garden* or Foucault’s *Birth of*

¹⁴ Mihail Epštejn, *Filozofija tela* (Beograd: Geopoetika, 2009), 259-281.

Biopolitics and artistic texts such as Michel Houellebeckq's *Atomised* - the alternative aesthetic-ethical and social potential of Mitrinović's thought becomes more than obvious, so the need for reevaluation of his work, not without some redaction, is urgent and necessary.

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