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DIMITRIJE MITRINOVIĆ IN THE QUEST FOR *GNOSIS*. FROM NATIONAL TO COSMOPOLITAN IDENTITY[1]

Dimitrije Mitrinović has been described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by his most diligent student in the West as a "philosopher and social critic".[2] The leading Serbian biographical publication defines him in the following way: "writer, national revolutionary and publicist".[3] Henry LeRoy Finch, thanks to whom Mitrinović's articles from *The New Age* and *New Britain* were republished in English, calls him "a Christian theosophist".[4] The editor of his collected papers in Serbian, Predrag Palavestra, entitled two chapters of his book on him, dealing with the two periods of his life (Bosnian and British), in the following way: "a conspirator or a preacher", and "an unrecognised prophet".[5] Most recently, Dušan Pajin called him

[1] Some parts of this paper were presented at the round table on Dimitrije Mitrinović organised by Dr. Nemanja Radulović and Dr. Aleksandar Jerkov. The round table was held on December 10, 2013, at the University Library in Belgrade.

[2] Andrew Rigby, S. v. "Dimitrije Mitrinović", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008). [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/97877, accessed 23 June 2016]

[3] Bojana Popović, „Mitrinović, Dimitrije", *Srpski biografski rečnik* [*Serbian Biographical Dictionary*], vol. 6 (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2014), 787.

4 Henry LeRoy Finch, "Introduction", in: Eric Gutkind, *The Body of God. First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology. The Collected Papers of Eric Gutkind* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), 12.

[5] Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* [Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2nd enl. ed., 2003 [1st ed. 1977]),

"one of the visionaries of the 20th century".[6] Could one man be all of this: a philosopher, a social critic, a writer, a national revolutionary, a theosophist, a preacher and a prophet?

It is obviously difficult to capture this peculiar personality in just two or three words. Mitrinović spent the last 39 years of his life in London and its vicinity (1914–1953), and after his death a foundation, the New Atlantis, was established and was dedicated to the dissemination of his ideas, as well as studying thinkers who Mitrinović held in high esteem. In 1987, Mitrinović's ideas became available in English when one of his followers collected his newspaper articles, published papers, and edited notes from his lectures.[7] What becomes clear from various comments on Mitrinović is that there are at least two distinctive groups of his commentators. His followers from the late 1930s and the 1940s described him in rather practical terms, insisting on his plans for social reform and the creation of European and world federations. However, his early British disciples from the period of the Great War and the 1920s had depicted him in a different manner. For them he was a theosophist, a guru, even a black magician. This paper re-examines particularly the first group of his British followers in an effort to at least partially decode the neglected layers of Mitrinović's thought. It also endeavours to find continuity in Mitrinović's ideas.

Dimitrije Mitrinović as a Yugoslav Nationalist and Ideologue of the Young Bosnia

Dimitrije Mitrinović was born in 1887 in a village in Herzegovina to a family of ethnic Serbs. Nine years earlier Austria-Hungary had been given a mandate by the Treaty of Berlin to occupy and administer the former Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This act caused substantial dissatisfaction in the provinces among their two biggest ethnic and religious groups: the Christian Orthodox Serbs and

[5], 279.

[6] Dušan Pajin, *Za svečovečansku zajednicu. Dimitrije Mitrinović (1887–1953)* [For a Pan-human Community. Dimitrije Mitrinović 1887-1953] (Belgrade: Pešić i sinovi, 2016), 7.

[7] H. C. Rutherford, (ed.), Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future. Selected writings of Dimitrije Mitrinović*, (New York: Boulder, 1987).

the Bosnian Slav Muslims. By the end of the century the situation was further complicated by the penetration of two national movements into Bosnia: the Serbian and the Croatian. Under such conditions the unilateral annexation of the provinces by Austria-Hungary in 1908 was bound to cause further dissatisfaction, strengthened by emerging local nationalisms. It was precisely in this period that, in addition to the Serbian and Croatian national movements, a third movement also emerged: the Serbo-Croat or Yugoslav movement.

At the beginning of the 20th century, many Bosnian high school pupils and students studying in Vienna, Zagreb, Belgrade and Prague, turned into devoted advocates of Yugoslav, Serbian or Croatian national ideologies. In the period between the Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary and the outbreak of the Great War (1908–1914), every year Bosnian high school youths tended to get progressively more radical and increasingly pro-Yugoslav. Mitrinović was already influenced by the emerging Serbian nationalism while attending the gymnasium in Mostar (from 1899 to 1907). At the very beginning of the 20th century only 30 natives of Bosnia and Herzegovina held university degrees.[8] Therefore, the local gymnasia (grammar schools) played a much bigger intellectual role than in other areas of Europe. Under local circumstances gymnasia pupils became leading intellectuals not infrequently while still in their teens. Literary circles in gymnasia easily turned into political cultural clubs, often imbued with radical political ideas. Austro-Hungarians were eager to modernise Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this included the implementation of a modern education system. Ironically, this effort only encouraged the anti-Austrian feelings among the local high school pupils influenced by the emerging nationalisms.

One such educational institution established by the Austro-Hungarian authorities was the Mostar Gymnasium, founded in 1893. Student associations were not officially permitted in the gymnasia of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Consequently, various informal and covert associations consisting of high school pupils emerged and flourished. Thus, in 1904, Mitrinović formed the "Secret Library", which was soon transformed into a secret literary society called "Matica". Already in this period he was a staunch Yugoslav.[9] The work in the "Secret

[8] Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), 176.
[9] Ibid, 177.

Library" made him inclined to secret societies and he soon joined another one, "Sloboda" (Liberty), which acted under the leadership of a kindred spirit, Bogdan Žerajić. Although some members of this society advocated primarily Serbian views, Mitrinović insisted on Yugoslav unity and on finding ways for Serbs and Croats to come closer through culture and literature.[10] In his Yugoslav orientation Mitrinović was several years ahead of other Young Bosnians. The Mostar Gymnasium became one of the centres of the so-called Young Bosnians, a loosely connected group of secret youth literary societies with the political aim of liberating Bosnia and Herzegovina from Austro-Hungarian rule.[11] At least three different streams may be identified among them: 1) Serbian and Yugoslav (Serbo-Croat) nationalism; 2) revolutionary zeal to create socially more just societies, and 3) ideas on the ethical improvement of man.

In 1907, upon graduating from the Mostar Gymnasium, Mitrinović became a student in Zagreb, where he studied philosophy, psychology and logic. He occasionally attended some lectures in Belgrade, and from 1909 he studied in Zagreb and Vienna. He remained committed to literary efforts in Bosnia and contributed to the literary journal *Bosanska Vila*. His contributions to this journal in 1908–1913 made him famous among the South Slavs and he gradually became one of the spiritual leaders of the literary movement of Young Bosnia. From the end of 1909, he put in a lot of effort into launching a new journal called *Zora*. In the first issue of this Vienna-based journal (with the editorial board in Zagreb), he defined its programme consisting of two principles: socio-political and democratic-Yugoslav. He advocated co-operation not only between Serbs and Croats, but also with other Slavs, particularly with "our great Russia", "with our Czech brethren who are the closest to us in terms of cultural influence", but also with the Poles, "who are so close to us by their national misfortune." He ended his programme by proclaiming the new motto of "personal, modern Serbian culture".[12]

On June 15, 1910, his close friend Žerajić attempted to kill the Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Marijan Varešanin, and

[10] Predrag Palavestra, „Sudbina i delo Dimitrija Mitrinovića" [The Fate and Work of Dimitirje Mitrinović], in Idem (ed.), Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Sabrana djela* [Idem (ed.), *Collected Works of Dimitrije Mitrinović*] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), 24.
[11] Dedijer, *The Road*, 175.
[12] SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 165–167.

having failed to do so, committed suicide. Prior to this Žerajić had even contemplated assassinating Emperor Francis Joseph during his visit to Bosnia, two weeks earlier. Mitrinović was compromised by Žerajić's action, and an anonymous letter was sent to the Sarajevo police by someone in Zagreb, but since the police found no compromising material in his apartment in Zagreb, Mitrinović was only briefly detained.

Starting in the spring of 1910 Mitrinović became a great advocate of the art of the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. He viewed him as a symbol of the emerging Serbo-Croat or Yugoslav nation. He had contacts with and the support of some semi-official circles in Belgrade, but no one has ever been able to clarify the exact nature of these contacts, although some links suggest that he may have co-operated with the nationalist Belgrade organisation "Narodna Odbrana" (National Defence). In Belgrade, Mitrinović was seen as a good promoter of the Yugoslav idea and for this purpose he did receive some funding. However, throughout his student years he proved capable of finding support through personal contacts. Scarce sources, however, preclude the identification of those Maecenas. Judging by his London years, one is tempted to conclude that he was very popular among women. He was encouraged by his contacts in Belgrade to go to Rome and to report from there to the Serbian press. At the beginning of 1911 he moved to Rome, and stayed there till the beginning of 1913, when he moved to Munich. In the same period, he also made visits to Sarajevo and Belgrade and was instrumental in connecting various pro-Yugoslav cultural groups.[13]

From Futurism to Utopian Universalism

What happened to Mitrinović's inner world in Rome is not something that his friends from Sarajevo or Belgrade expected or hoped for. They wanted to have a pro-Yugoslav and a pro-Serbian propagandist and activist. He, however, came into contact with the futurist movement, witnessed the development of avant-garde art and was immediately absorbed by it. The best specialist on Mitrinović and the editor of his collected works in Serbian (Serbo-Croat), Predrag Palavestra, described this Rome transformation

[13] SDDM (1991), vol. 1: 42–42, 47–53

in the following way: "Mitrinović's critical and aesthetic thought, imbued with moral principles and theological justifications, abruptly turned, in contact with the futurist programme, to the future and to utopia. The secular character of that utopia came closer to the esoteric philosophy of new man and to his messianic role in coming times as pure revival of poetic forebodings".[14] A literary testimony of these futurist and utopian strivings appeared in the *Bosanska Vila* in 1913, in 10 instalments published from February to October under the title "Estetičke kontemplacije" (Aesthetic Contemplations).[15] The editor of Mitrinović's works and lecture notes in English, Henry Christian Rutherford, assesses these essays as "the guiding principles which marked the rest of his own life and work".[16]

He came to Munich to study art under the supervision of Heinrich Wölfflin. His interest in cosmopolitan rather than Yugoslav affairs became even more prominent in the Bavarian capital, where he "turned his previous revolutionary dogma into a chiliastic vision".[17] A clear shift is seen in his essay on Benedetto Croce's philosophy completed at the end of 1913, and this essay "had almost no connection to the national idea".[18] Palavestra considers Mitrinović's article "For Yugoslavia", written in Munich in the spring of 1914, as his "final farewell to his life up to that moment, and his farewell to the ideas of Yugoslav unity".[19] In this article, published in the Zagreb journal *Vihor* in May 1914, he made an appeal: "Serbo-Croats with Slovenes, unite your hearts into an uncreated nation, and do not lose your spirit!".[20] His decision to leave his native land and to dedicate his efforts to universal rather than national ideas certainly disappointed many of his former associates. His brother Čedomilj still remembered in 1954 that Dimitrije: "simply disappeared and vanished from the public life of his country. He went away from Serbia and stayed in Rome, Munich, Tübingen. To his fellow country-men at home it seemed that he had become dead and feelingless towards his own country".[21]

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[14] SDDM (1991), vol. 1: 45

[15] SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 91–138. An abridged version of "Aesthetic Contemplations" in English was published in H. C. Rutherford, *Certainly Future*, 17–43.

[16] Rutherford, *Certainly Future*, 1.

[17] Palavestra, "Sudbina i delo", 53–54.

[18] Ibid, 54.

[19] Ibid, 57.

[20] SDDM (1991), vol 2: 205.

[21] Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative. An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (New York: Boulder, 1984), 20, 22.

In his novel *St. Vitus Day*, the British author Stephen Graham offers an imaginary conversation between Mitrinović and Bogdan Žerajić in the presence of a schoolboy named Miloš. He presents them as two personalities characteristic of the youth movement who "made the neighbouring town of Mostar into a cultural centre radiating beyond Bosnia".[22] Since he was Mitrinović's friend and even a disciple for a time, he is very likely to have been provided with some elements of the conversation by Mitrinović himself. The dialogue is supposed to have happened in Sarajevo in 1910, some time before Žerajić made his (in)famous assassination attempt on Varešanin. In the novel Žerajić says that since 1908, in other words since the annexation of Bosnia, "we have all become nationalists." The musician "Mitya Mitrinovitch"[23] replies to this remark in the following way:

> *Nationalists for the sake of Socialism. Nationalism is only wrong when it forgets the larger ideal, the brotherhood of Man. The consciousness of unity progresses by stages. The Austrians are pleased to call us Bosniaks, but we know we are Serbs. The King of the Serbs freed us from the Turks. And Serbs, with Bulgars and Croats, are all Jugoslavs. In Jugoslavia we might have a nucleus for a new civilisation. We shared death in the fourteenth century, and reconstruction in the nineteenth. Our priest is the sculptor Mestrovitch who, through art, unites us consciously with our great past. But Serbia does not rise for Serbia's sake, but for the sake of man as a whole. Our unity, if we achieve it, must be a cell in a greater unity .*[24]

A few paragraphs down, Mitrinović insists that he is against violence and that his only violence was "the violence of our printing press at Mostar", adding that war is not his *métier*.[25] There is no doubt that Mitrinović had espoused precisely these ideas in the period between 1910 and 1914, and the lines attributed to him aptly reflect the gradual transformation of his Yugoslav nationalism into a universalist cosmopolitanism, a process that was fully completed during the Great War.

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[22] Stephen Graham, *St. Vitus Day*, (London: D. Appleton and Company), 1931, 21.
[23] Mita is a common nickname in Serbo-Croat for Dimitrije.
[24] Ibid, 32–33.
[25] Ibid, 24, 26.

Mitrinović, Gutkind and Kandinsky

On the eve of the Great War, in the late spring and early summer of 1914, Dimitrije Mitrinović put all his efforts into publishing an ambitiously envisaged annual, 500 pages in length, entitled *The Aryan Europe or Foundations of the Future (Die arische Europa oder Grundlage der Zukunft)*. The annual was to lead to the establishment of an international movement "Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe" (*Zur Mencshheit der Zukunft durch das Arysche Europa*).[26] He wrote from Munich to Wassily Kandinsky, Russian painter and theorist, that political action was necessary. Kandinsky seems to have believed that mankind was approaching the Third Age, an epoch that Joachim of Flora announced, at the beginning of the 13th century, as the new age of the Spirit. For Kandinsky his abstract painting "was the gospel of this new age".[27] In these ideas he also was under the influence of Dmitrii Merezhkovsky.[28] In preparing the *Yearbook* Mitrinović exploited the concept of an élite group that would spiritually lead the world, and he mentioned in a letter to Eric Gutkind, in June 1914, an "organization for a pan-human little brotherhood of the most world-worthy bearers of present-day culture"[29]. The original idea for the Yearbook came to Mitrinović through the mediation of Kandinsky and Giovanni Papini, who was an Italian futurist at that time. Previously, Eric Gutkind and Frederik van Eeden had already discussed attracting "chosen spirits". They called their fraternity "Blut-bund" (the Blood Brotherhood) and Mitrinović obviously adopted their idea.[30]

He had already been inspired by Russian spirituality and therefore easily found a common ground with Kandinsky, who had similar preferences. It was Kandinsky who connected Mitrinović with

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[26] "Draft of a letter of Mitrinović to Erich Gutkind", June 27, 1914. UB – SC, NAF, 1.4.1. The letter was translated into English by the members of the New Atlantis Foundation (NAF), and was also published in Serbian translation in: SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 235–242.

[27] Frank Kermode, "Apocalypse and the Modern", *Visions of Apocalypse: End or Rebirth?* ed. Saul Friedländer, Gerald Holton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff (New York, London: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 96.

[28] Shulamith Behr, "Wassily Kandinsky and Dimitrije Mitrinovic: Pan-Christian Universalism and the Yearbook 'Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe'", *Oxford Art Journal* 15. 1 (1992): 83.

[29] Ibid, 85.

[30] H. C. Rutherford, "General Introduction", in Idem (ed.), *Certainly, Future. Selected writings of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (New York: Boulder, 1987), 7–8.

another person sympathetic to mysticism, Eric (Erich) Gutkind (1877–1965). In 1910 the latter published a book entitled *Die Siderische Geburt* (Sidereal Birth). Upon reading this book Mitrinović became fascinated with it. In June 1914 he wrote to Kandinsky: "it seems to me that *Die Siderische Geburt* is worthy to be the true religion of a pan-Europe".[31] Two days later he admits to Gutkind that *Sidereal Birth* has become "a book which supports and uplifts me, next to the most important things through which I support and defend myself".[32] From June 1914 he considered it as "the main fundamental book for developing our cultural philosophy of pan-Aryandom". In his letter to Gutkind he states: "We should like to entrust to you the guidance of the religion of pan-Europe".[33]

In the first chapter of his book entitled "Thou, Thou End of the World" Gutkind explained his basic concepts. The current civilisation could not progress forever, "the world must come to an end, but this can no longer frighten us". In accordance with Gnostic and certain other esoteric teachings, Gutkind saw a huge divine potential in humans: "In holy poverty we shall renounce the limitations of our little personality, this merely mechanical, as yet lifeless ego in order to gain our higher seraphic self, which is not subject to death, but partakes of all that is divine and will redeem the silent depths".[34] As Henry LeRoy Finch has noted, *Sidereal Birth* was under the influence of German Romanticism and of authors like Novalis, Schelling, Boehme and Nietzsche. LeRoy Finch has clearly noticed: "Its apocalyptic theme is expressed in terms more Gnostic and Christian than Jewish".[35] However, he neglected another possibility: that of Jewish Gnosticism, which might have influenced Gutkind.[36]

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[31] Mitrinović to Kanindsky, Munich, June 25, 1914. UB – SC, NAF, 1.3.3 (the file includes the original letters in German and English translations typed by someone from NAF. The quote is from the NAF translation).

[32] "Draft of a letter of Mitrinović to Erich Gutkind", June 27, 1914. UB - SC, NAF, 1.4.1; SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 236.

[33] Ibid, UB – SC, NAF, 1.4.1; SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 238–239.

[34] Eric Gutkind, *The Body of God. First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology. The Collected Papers of Eric Gutkind* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), 180.

[35] Henry LeRoy Finch, "Introduction", Eric Gutkind, *The Body of God. First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology. The Collected Papers of Eric Gutkind* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), 13–14.

[36] Gershom G. Sholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).

The Gospel of Philip, a Gnostic text found in 1945, teaches that one who achieves *gnosis* is "no longer a Christian, but a Christ".[37] In other words, there is potential in humans to reach the consciousness of God. Gutkind's sidereal birth is equivalent to the Gnostic discovery of *gnosis* within oneself. Or as he put it: "The transcendence we speak of is Sidereal Birth… And the realm to which we seek to rise, which is the consummation of 'word' we will call, making free use of a gnostic term – Pleroma". Or as he stated even more openly: "Now everything must be imbued with this: that from now on we rise to sidereal birth in which we ourselves become God".[38] From 1914 Mitrinović's quest for gnosis had two aims. One was his own spiritual perfection, and the other was to find other people in search of *gnosis* and organise them into a group.

The fusion of the earlier revolutionary zeal and futurist activism with Gutkind's teaching led Mitrinović to postulate a need for the unity of Aryan peoples: Germanic, Latin, Anglo-Saxon and Slavic. They would create a nucleus that would later unite with India and the Ancient East. In that unity the revelations of Judeo-Christian traditions would be connected with the revelation of India. This was a big and resolute turn for Mitrinović, both in terms of ideas and geography. He shifted his geographic interests from the Balkans to Indo-Europe and the world, and in terms of ideas he directed his attention to the concept of Pan-Humanity. The turn in 1914 had a religious basis: a new syncretic religion of humanity with a (Judeo-) Christian Gnostic basis. This shift to religious inspiration stood in sharp contrast with his previous association with the Young Bosnia literary circles, which were deeply secular and viewed religion as an obstacle for the unity of Yugoslavs, who were desperately separated into three, often antagonistic, religious groups.

As noted above, Mitrinović became an ideologue of the movement of Young Bosnia in the 1910–1914 period. The movement was, in some aspects, even anti-religious, and in ideological terms very close to certain aspects of anarchism and socialism. And yet, it was precisely in that same period in which he fascinated so many pro-Yugoslav secularists (1912–1914) that he defined the basics of his chiliastic and

[37] Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (London: Penguin, 1986), 140.
[38] H. C Rutherford, "Erich Gutkind as Prophet of the New Age" (The New Atlantis Foundation, 1975), 15–16.

utopian teachings in which Yugoslavism was only a small step in his search for the global unity of mankind. These teachings were in sharp contrast with the secular ideology of Yugoslavism, which found its clearest expression in the works of the most influential literary critic in Belgrade, Jovan Skerlić. He had a very high opinion of Mitrinović's pro-Yugoslav and modernist contributions, but died too early (in May 1914) to recognise Mitrinović's transformation.

Towards European and Universal Identity

Mitrinović was lucky enough to escape from Germany on the very eve of the Great War, just a few days before the German police attempted to interrogate him in connection with the fact that the Sarajevo conspirators led by Gavrilo Princip were ideologically connected to the literary circles in which Mitrinović was held in the highest esteem. Discussing the destiny of the Sarajevo plotters, primarily of Gavrilo Princip and Nedeljko Čabrinović, Rebecca West was prompted to remark:

> What these youths did was abominable, precisely as abominable as the tyranny they destroyed. Yet it need not be denied that they might have grown to be good men, and perhaps great men, if the Austrian Empire had not crashed down on them in its collapse. But the monstrous frailty of empire involves such losses.[39]

Indeed, many a great man emerged from the ranks of Serbo-Croat (Yugoslav) secret youth associations and literary clubs that existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the eve of the Great War and that were later commonly known under the name of Young Bosnia. One of them, Ivo Andrić, became a diplomat of the Royalist Yugoslavia and a writer. He was the first president of the Serbo-Croat Progressive Youth (also known as Yugoslav Progressive Youth), a Serbo-Croat union of grammar school pupils in Sarajevo, founded at the end of 1911[40] (a

[39] Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon. A Journey through Yugoslavia* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 1993), 379.

[40] Dušan Glišović, *Ivo Andrić, Kraljevina Jugoslavija i Treći Rajh 1939–1941* [Ivo Andrić, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Third Reich 1939-1941] (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 19–23.

club that admitted Gavrilo Princip into its ranks). In the final year of at the gymnasium Andrić was strongly influenced by Mitrinović and his broad culture. Čabrinović and Princip died in Austro-Hungarian prisons. Andrić survived the war, became a diplomat of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and the best-known Serbian writer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961. Mitrinović escaped from continental Europe just before the outbreak of the war and became the initiator of many social movements in Britain. The two Young Bosnians who survived made a broad intellectual impact and their contemplations reached far beyond their early focus on Serbian, Serbo-Croat and South-Slav nationalisms.

Coming to Britain in August 1914 Mitrinović had to make his efforts all over again and in the beginning he had few followers. He was associated with the Serbian Legation in London throughout the war, and survived the war by receiving some money from it. Since he was admitted to work for the Legation thanks to his connections with pro-Yugoslav and pro-Serbian circles in Bosnia and Croatia, he had to demonstrate his commitment to Yugoslav propaganda during the Great War, although this may not have been his highest priority by that time. His thoughts and strivings seemed to have been redirected to more global affairs.

His inner spiritual circle in London consisted of the Serbian theologian and priest Nikolai Velimirovich[41] (at that point also very much imbued with the ideas of Christian unity and under some influence of the traditions of the Far East), the British writer Stephen Graham, who had in British terms unusual sympathies for Russia, and himself. Stephen Graham came into contact with Velimirovich and Mitrinović in the winter of 1915. Both left a deep impression on him. Graham described Velimirovich in the following way: "In the spiritual anxiety of the war, with Christians arrayed against Christians, there was a singularly attractive quality of Fr Nikolai. He was gentle, persuasive and original, like a page of the Gospel read for the first time. The Spirit of Truth was pilgrimaging among us". Although he had the highest appreciation for Nikolai Velimirovich, Graham came under the spell of Mitrinović. The Rector of St. Margaret's Church,

[41] The form of spelling "Nikolai Velimirovich" is the one that he himself used when he signed his affidavit following the Second World War. Previously he used several different transcriptions of his name into English.

Westminster, Canon Carnegie, organized a reception at his home. It was there that Graham met Mitrinović. As he himself confesses: "Dating from that evening I came strongly under his influence and while I was in London we were much together".[42]

Graham described what was in Mitrinović's heart at the time. "For him the young Christendom which he planned had to be a secret society. We must operate from the invisible towards the visible, from an initiated few to the many who were as yet unaware of the movement". Graham also quoted what Mitrinović said to him and Fr. Nikolai in the early stages of their friendship: "We are secretly committed to giving our lives to the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth and all we do will be directed to that purpose. We will cautiously seek allies and persuade them to join us and form a Christianly conscious nucleus. All in secret, all below ground. The more secret we are, the greater spiritual strength we draw, till we are ready to break surface and grow to be a mighty tree".[43] That tree never grew high. Among others, Mitrinović tried to draw in the Rev. H. J. Fynes-Clinton, an Anglo-Catholic, and the leading spirit of the Church of England committed to co-operation with Christian Orthodox Churches. Fynes-Clinton had very high opinion of Velimirovich but did not subscribe to Mitrinović's ideas.

Graham was so impressed by Mitrinović that he described him in his book *The Quest of the Face*. In the introduction Graham expresses his hope that for his future readers the book "may be an invitation to become builders of the City in which Dushan and I have been active spiritual masons".[44] Dushan, as Graham explained later, was actually Mitrinović, a man whom he did not choose to be the protagonist of his book. Rather, it was Dushan who chose Stephen Graham. Mitrinović's identity formation was explained in the novel. This new identity was framed in Rome, Munich and Berlin (1911–1914), and was completed in London during the course of the Great War. Dushan was described in the following way: "He is a Southern Slav, a representative of one of the ruined peoples of the Balkans. His country, Serbia, is lost. He tells me he has ceased to be a Serb, because Serbia is not any more

[42] Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene. An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1964), 102.
[43] Ibid, 121.
[44] Stephen Graham, *The Quest of the Face* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1918). See prefatory note to the book.

and cannot be again what it was, even if it should rise from death. He calls himself a European, and pleads that all should obtain, in addition of consciousness of nationality, the higher consciousness of being Europeans". Dushan also offered to Graham a scheme of individual progress: Infant – Individual – National – Group-National – Universal.[45] Indeed, Mitrinović impressed his British friend so much that he was led to write the following: "There is something of this nature about Dushan, that is why I have called him a mystical fraction, a phrase that I thought rightly applied to Christ".[46] To Graham, Mitrinović became, during the war, precisely what a Gnostic would find the highest purpose of life: he became Godlike.

It is interesting that already in his letter to Gutkind, composed on the very eve of the Great War, Mitrinović expressed his desire to deliver four lectures in Berlin. The second lecture was to be dedicated, among other things, to "antipatriotic movements", and in connection with the future of mankind[47]. His full shift from Yugoslav nationalism to universalism obviously took place between 1913 and 1915. Mitrinović found in England a fertile ground for his universalist ideas packed into a pan-Christian framework. His universalism clearly stemmed from Christianity, but in his version, Christianity was blended with esoteric phenomena and was seen as a personal revelation. This made him closer to Gnostic rather than literalist interpretations of Christianity.

During the war he was expected to demonstrate his commitment to the Yugoslav idea. He found a way to combine Yugoslavism and his newly developed universalist ideas by proclaiming the pro-Serbian and pro-Yugoslav Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović an expression of a universal spirit. A Slovene émigré in London during the Great War, Dr. Bogumil Vošnjak, described a meeting, held probably in February 1917, in a London Indian restaurant. It was attended by father Nikolai Velimirovich, Josip Kosor, George Bell, chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mitrinović, and himself. At the meeting Mitrinović said "that every Yugoslav statesman should know that Yugoslavs are a mixture of big Eastern and Western peoples. He claimed that Meštrović was a complete Assyrian".[48] At another meeting, held in

[45] Ibid, 75.

[46] Ibid, 78.

[47] Mitrinović to Gutkind, June 27, 1914. The Letter was published in Serbian translation in SDDM (1991), vol. 2: 237.

[48] Bogumil Vošnjak, *U borbi za ujedinjenu narodnu državu. Utisci i opažanja iz doba*

1916, Mitrinović, "a well-known Christian aesthete", was to speak about Yugoslav ethics. "But they began teasing him that he spoke at some lecture on Assyrians and Egyptians while Meštrović, a Dalmatian peasant, sat next to him, and that he did not understand a single word that was said about his own art". It is characteristic that by 1917 Mitrinović, who had belonged to the very secular cultural movement of Young Bosnia, had already earned a reputation among Yugoslav émigrés of "a well-known Christian aesthete".

Since his teens he had believed he possessed a certain knowledge into which he should initiate those who were selected. It was already in his student years in Zagreb that he invented a password to be used for the mutual recognition of devotees. His secret was gradually transformed and from 1914 it was related not only to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbs, Croats and Yugoslav peoples, but became connected with the future of mankind. In its essence, it was an expression of the optimistic stream within the avant-garde movement, the stream which believed in the vast possibilities of improving the world. To understand the fusion of science and religious teachings that Mitrinović attempted to make, one needs to look at the atmosphere that existed in London in the circles that were of interest to Mitrinović.

Efforts to make a Universalist Society

During the 19th century Christianity faced a great crisis in Britain, especially in intellectual circles. There was a general belief that the Victorian age was the age of profound belief in God. However, the Victorian age ushered in new lines of thought in Britain: those of atheism and unconventional faith. Mitrinović subscribed to the latter. It wasn't just philosophers, writers and priests, but politicians as well, who began to feel that the Victorian Age was the age of deep doubts about established church canons. This means that, in intellectual circles, the 19th century undermined the significance that Christianity had enjoyed in the Western world in everyday life. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to state that it was the era "of religious seriousness

svetskog rata i stvaranja naše države [In the Struggle for a United National State. Impressions and Observations from the period of the World War and the Creation of our State] (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, 1928), 182.

than of faith".[49] The crisis of institutional religion among intellectual élites opened up new avenues of thinking. On the margins of this crisis emerged the need to connect faith with science, a fusion that had various outcomes. One was to identify a secret science, teachings that were left to modern men by older civilisations. Another effort was to reconcile science and religion, which appeared in the very popular form of spiritism. Finally, in an effort to connect faith with secret teachings, occultism also emerged. All these phenomena were very much alive and present in the British society at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

The Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky was founded in 1875 in New York. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831−1891) moved to London in 1887, and lived there until the end of her life four years later. During the course of her last four years she succeeded in spreading Theosophy around Britain to a surprising degree. She believed that evolution was headed by "a chosen elect", by "a brotherhood of hidden masters". This brotherhood revealed its hidden truth from its seat in Himalayas, and Blavatsky was supposed to be one of their instruments. The British Theosophical Society had existed since 1878, and therefore it was able to distribute Madame Blavatsky's book *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). It was as early as 1887 that a person as prominent as W. B. Yeats joined Blavatsky's lodge. Theosophy later attracted such celebrities such as Oscar Wilde, Thomas Edison and artists Mondrian and Kandinsky.[50] The journalist A. R. Orage, who would become Mitrinović's chief propagator after the Great War, was also a member of the Theosophical Society, and an admirer of Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*.[51]

The Theosophical Society had a competitor in The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn founded in 1888 when the Order established its first temple of Isis-Urania in London. Among the prominent persons who soon joined the Order there was W. B. Yeats again. In the 1890s, some of the leading personalities of Victorian London's cultural life joined the Order.[52]

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[49] Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution. 1789 to the present day*, The Pelican History of the Church (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 112.
[50] Merlin Coverley, *Occult London* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2008), 77–82.
[51] Philip Mairet, "Reintroduction", Idem, *A. R. Orage. A Memoir* (New Hyde Park N.Y: University Books, 1966), 16–17.
[52] Coverley, *Occult London*, 82–87.

Besides Stephen Graham and Fr. Nikolai Velimirovich, Mitrinović attracted several more disciples during the Great War. One of them was the writer and journalist Philip Mairet (1886–1975). He mentions that he became "Mitrinović's most intimate disciple by 1917".[53] Another was Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934) who earned a substantial reputation as the editor of *The New Age* (1907–1922), a British literary and modernist journal. *The New Age* was open for radical political thought and it advocated schemes of Guild Socialism and Social Credit. Orage was a student of Plato, Plotinus and Eastern teachings, as well as a committed theosophist, and Mairet provides an explanation of what his encounter with Mitrinović meant to him. The latter appeared "out of the center of what one feared was now the flaming wreck of European civilization, proclaiming a gospel of world salvation inspired by the perennial philosophy and the Christian revelation. He spoke like a prophet with a mission to convict the nations of sin and call them to righteousness, preaching in the language of transcendental idealism to which Orage's mind was well attuned".[54]

Orage was so impressed by Mitrinović that he offered him a chance to address the wider public in Britain through his journal. His contributions to *The New Age: A Socialist Review of Religion, Science, and Art* were written under the pseudonym M. M. Cosmoi, and they include 54 pieces for the section World Affairs in the period from August 1920 to October 1921. In 1920, these pieces were actually co-authored by him and Orage. "M. M." refers to "Mitya Mitrinović", while Cosmoi could be a plural of the Hellenic noun *cosmos*, and is partially explained in the essay from April 1921 where he states: "for the Cosmos of Man is the galaxy of free worlds; each person within the race being an indefinite living universe".[55] Cosmoi would then be humans with their indefinite possibilities, multiple persons with endless potentials who M. M. already contained in himself. At the same time Cosmoi were the persons whom he wanted to address through these articles and who might progress in their possibilities by reading them. There is again something Gnostic in it, since he himself is obviously a person with "indefinite possibilities" addressing others with the same potential.

[53] Mairet, "Reintroduction", xi, 16.
[54] Ibid, x–xi.
[55] M. M. Cosmoi, [Dimitrije Mitrinović]. "World Affairs", *The New Age. A Socialist Review of Religion, Science and Ars*, April 21, 1921, 293.

The language of the contributions is very peculiar, often mystical, strangely combining the terminology of social sciences and theology with overtones of the esoteric and mystical. For instance, on March 24, 1921, in an essay published in *The New Age*, Mitrinović writes of the gnosis of Christ and Sophia as: "the central and anthropocentric, human, panhuman gnosis of the world. *Vedanta Advaita,* the sacred apophasis of India, is the end, the periphery of panhuman cognisance. Except the miracle and the apophasis of the embodiment of Sophia itself, except the absolute apophasis of pan-human organisation itself, of the Pleroma of the future Kingdom, a greater and more infinite revelation has never been given to Universal Man, to the Geon".[56]

At least some of his ideas obviously stem from ancient Gnosticism. When Mitrinović assembled his first circle of followers, Graham tried to recruit persons who were interested in similar matters. One of them was Georg Robert Stowe Mead (1863–1933), a member of the Theosophical Society and a very diligent researcher of Gnostic and Hermetic texts[57]. He was probably the best-informed person on Gnostic texts and traditions in Britain. Yet, Mead did not join Mitrinović's circle, but certainly inspired him to read his texts. That he was acquainted with Gnosticism may be clearly seen from an account provided by Mairet, who once happened to visit the British Museum with Mitrinović and Orage. The visit took place soon after their first meeting in 1914, but Mairet did not state when exactly. Mitrinović explained the Archaic Greek and Egyptian sculptures to them. Mairet then states: "and I do not know whether it was the Gnostic perspective of world history to which he related all this, or his power of communicating aesthetic understanding that first began to attach me to him as the man who knew all I wanted to know".[58]

Mitrinović had another Gnostic encounter through the works of the Russian theologian and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, who was himself under the influence of Valentin, one of the founders of Gnosticism. He specifically quoted other sources of his ideas, including Friedrich Nietzsche, "a prophet of the Seraphimic or Seraphic dispensation of the world"; Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who

[56] Ibid, March 24, 1921, 242.

[57]His books are numerous and include: *Simon Magus*, 1892; *Pistis Sophia*, 1896; *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, in 3 volumes, 1906, and a series in 11 volumes entitled *Echoes from the Gnosis* (1906–07).

[58] Mairet, "Reintroduction", x.

glorified "Humanity Universal and the eternal Christness of Man"; and Vladimir Solovyov, "the last of the fathers of Christendom and the prophet of the Sofian Christianity". After this, Mitrinović gives us the interpretative key to what he has said: "The universal socialism of humanity is Sophia herself, and the birth of the Superman is the meaning of evolution". In the same article he ends this list with the author who influenced him more than anyone else. "Eric Gutkind is the name of the Superman of our own hour, of the Aryan by spirit and fire, of the Socialist of the ascension and of the earthquake who proclaimed Pleroma in his seraphic scripture. This Semitic call to Prometheus and to the Grail at the same time is proclaimed in the first Christian deed, in the first superhuman act of a Jew after the deeds of Paul the Apostle. The name of this Deed is Cosmic Rebirth".[59] In this essay Mitrinović clearly demonstrated a fusion of the ideals of the Young Bosnians: social justice and ethical improvement of man. His socialism became religious with an aim that the religion of humanity could become socialist.

Mitrinović's associates later interpreted his ideas expressed in *The New Age* primarily in pacifist terms: "In these articles he maintained that real peace could never be achieved so long as the races, nations, religions and all other separate groupings of mankind each fought in an isolated way for domination in what they considered to be their own particular interest. He saw as the only solution to this problem the conception of the world as an organic whole with every race, nation, religion or other grouping recognised as a function within this world-whole".[60] There is no doubt that in these texts Mitrinović indeed expressed such ideas, as well as ideas on the transformation of Europe and its unification. What, however, always needs to be taken into consideration is that his basis for all these initiatives was the (Judeo-) Christian revelation as defined in the works of Soloyov and Gutkind.

Edwin Muir (1887–1959), the British poet and translator, was a friend of Orage's and met Mitrinović through him. Writing for *The New Age* at the time when Mitrinović was also one of its contributors, Muir made some observations about him. "He was the man for whom only the vast processes of time existed. He did not look a few centuries

[59] M. M. Cosmoi [Dimitrije Mitrinović]. "World Affairs", June 23, 1921, 87–88.
[60] *Principles and Aims. New Atlantis Foundation*, The New Atlantis Foundation, 1981, 10.

ahead like Shaw and Wells, but to distant millenniums, which to his apocalyptic mind were as near and vivid as tomorrow. He flung out the widest and deepest thoughts pell-mell, seeing whole tracts of history in a flash, the flash of the axe with which he hewed a way for himself through them, sending dynasties and civilizations flying". He also described the content of his discussions with Mitrinović, or rather the latter's monologues on the universe, "the creation of animals, Adam Kadmon, the influence of the stars…"[61]

Muir missed some of the more secular points in Mitrinović's contributions, but his description gives a very good testimony of the impression that Mitrinović's ideas and style of his texts left even on benevolent readers and collocutors. There was a sense of something chaotic and disconnected in his contributions, of something too distant and too apocalyptic to be given proper consideration. Yet, at the same time, it was something exotic and attractive. Unsurprisingly, Orage faced serious opposition about Cosmoi's articles and their publication inconveniently corresponded with a serious drop in the circulation of *The New Age*. Some were quick to accuse the unconventional style of Cosmoi's articles for this.

From Mysticism to Adler and Jung

Orage was very interested in the psychological teachings of Freud, Adler and Jung. In 1921, he made a study group that included Mitrinović. The task of the group was to analyse these teachings and to assess the possibility of their interaction with religion and morality. Yet, in the spring of 1922, Orage abandoned all of his activities in Britain and went to France to join a new guru called George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (c. 1870–1949), a Greek-Armenian from Armenia, a spiritual leader who impressed many Brits of that age. The loss of Orage was a great shock to Mitrinović, but by 1922 he had already established his reputation of a person very knowledgeable regarding mystical and occult matters. Many artists and writers of that time in London were inclined to these very concerns.

It seems that in the early 1920s Mitrinović began to sketch his own synthesis, strongly influenced by Indian religious concepts, but

[61] Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography* (London: Methuen, 1968) [1st ed. 1940], 174–175.

other activities prevented him from finishing his plan.[62] After losing Orage's protection he developed a new circle around Valerie Cooper. The circle met at her studio and became a place where Mitrinović could exert his influence on her friends, discussing matters of philosophy, occultism, religion, psychology and philosophy. In 1926, Alfred Adler visited London, and Mitrinović met him at Valerie Cooper's studio. The practical result was that Mitrinović formed the British branch of the International Society for Individual Psychology, which became operational in March 1927, and he invested a lot of energy into developing the Society. He turned its London branch into a movement and, in the period 1927–1932, personally delivered over 50 lectures at the premises of the Society, in Gower Street. The premises included his basement study.

The Society in London attracted doctors specializing in psychiatry, but also a vast circle of intellectuals interested in new psychological schools. Adler and Freud faced similar problems. They both established international associations of their followers and wished to include among their followers not only doctors but also a wide range of intellectuals. Yet, in both cases doctors preferred to medicalise the movement. Within the Adler London Society Mitrinović co-opted the Chandos group within Society's sociological group. The Chandos group, whose many members had previously been associated with *The New Age*, was interested in economic and social reforms in Britain, and it shared some socialist ideas, but blended them with the concept of Christian compassion. The Medical group of the Society did not look favourably on the social orientation of some of their colleagues. The Society soon became bitterly divided, but ultimately survived the rift. The chairman of the Society, Philip Mairet, had to announce a reorganisation of the Society in June 1931. It was to restrict its activities to psychology. This obviously did not work, and Adler, who was determined to keep his individual psychology outside of the realm of politics, personally asked his London Society to become independent at the end of 1933. Yet, by that time the Society was very much reduced in its activities.[63]

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[62] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 337.

[63] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 337–339; Mairet, "Reintroduction", xxvi; Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović. A Biography*, (London: William Sessions Ltd., 2006), 91–106.

As an eclectic, Mitrinović could not really restrict his attention to the teachings of any single school. By the end of the 1920s he had adopted some Jungian concepts as well. It was in the 1926–1929 period that he gradually reached the concept according to which Freud was a thesis, Adler an antithesis and Jung a synthesis, to put it in Hegelian terms, which he was fond of using. Almost all historians of Gnosticism who have followed the development of this line of thought in modernity consider people like Jakob Boehme (1575–1624) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) to be followers of Gnostic traditions.[64] It is to be remembered that the first hermetic author who Mitrinović admired, Eric Gutkind, was also under the influence of Jakob Boehme. In this way a revolutionary from a peripheral Austro-Hungarian province became a modern chiliastic utopian and a Gnostic, connecting old-age Gnosticism and European millennial traditions with the teachings of E. Gutkind and C. G. Jung.

For the nexus of modern psychology and esoteric teachings two key texts by Mitrinović are "The Significance of Jung", published in *Purpose* magazine in 1929, and a text entitled "Three Revelations", based on notes taken by his followers. In the text on Jung, Mitrinović defined culture as the "individual experience of objective values".[65] Considering teachings of S. Freud, C. G. Jung and A. Adler, Mitrinović is led to conclude that culture is essentially Gnosis. That this is not only an accidental reference to Gnosticism is ascertained from the paragraph that follows: "The great Anthropos drives, inspires, breathes into all these various racial spirits, giving the impulse but not guidance".[66]

The text on Jung together with the piece "Three Revelations" can be taken to represent the essence of Mitrinović's teaching. Among the three revelations, he first discusses the pre-Christian revelation of ancient traditions and he takes the theosophist Rudolf Steiner as its modern exponent. Obviously under the influence of Jung,

[64] Stephan A. Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead* (London: Quest Book, 1982), 44-58; Gilles Quispel, "Gnosticism from the Middle Ages to the Present", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade (ed. in chief) (London: Simon and Shuster Macmillan, 1993), vol. 5: 574. In 1916, C. G. Jung published in limited circulation his Gnostic visions entitled *Septem sermones ad mortuos* ("The Seven Sermons to the Dead"). For a detailed study of Jung's Gnosticism see: Stephan A. Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung*. The English translation of *Septem sermones* is included in Hoeller's book: "VII Sermones ad Mortuos (Seven Sermons to the Dead)."

[65] SWDM (1987), 332.

[66] SWDM (1987), 334.

he states that the first revelation is about the archetypal man. The second revelation is the Christian one as the Russian thinker Vladimir Solovyov understood it; this is about the archetypal man in history. Finally, the third revelation is the post-Christian revelation; its prophet is Eric Gutkind and this revelation is about "Genius" and about "the cosmic rebirth of individuals"; it deals with the archetypal man "realized in individual consciousness"; it is about "Christ in you"[67] . In order to reach this third revelation, one should use what Mitrinović called the "creative critique" as "the only means of self-knowledge in the future". Yet, at this point he abandons the usual element of various mystical movements, namely that *gnosis* is reserved for the *electi*. Self-knowledge "is not a luxury for the few" but "the duty of all". Revelations will not come through great geniuses any more, and instead every man is a small genius.[68] In other words, all humans are *cosmoi*.

On the surface, one would hardly find a connection between Mitrinović's revolutionary national activity in Bosnia, his idea of Pan-Humanity, his commitment to Adlerian and Jungian psychology, his dedication to reforming global affairs, his research of the occult and his close affiliation with Gnosticism and Hermetic thought. A careful analysis would, however, identify one key denominator common to all of Mitrinović's broad interests. That is a quest for synthesis, so typical of many thinkers of the first decades of the 20th century. He seemed to have believed that secret teachings might help him reach that synthesis. Moreover, Gnosticism had something very common to Mitrinović's own synthesis. Elaine Pagels noticed an important feature of many ancient Gnostics: "How – or where – is one to seek self-knowledge? Many Gnostics share with psychotherapy a second major premise: both agree – against Orthodox Christianity – that the psyche bears *within itself* the potential for liberation or destruction".[69] Gnosticism demands finding the divine within an individual's most hidden layers of being. In other words, it requests introspection, a method that it shares with dynamic psychiatry. In addition to Gnosticism, Mitrinović was deeply interested in Indian religious philosophy. Certainly, some

[67] Mitrinović never published this essay. One of his British disciples, Winifred Gordon Fraser, took notes from his lectures and compiled them from various talks by Mitrinović.
[68] SWDM (1987), 445.
[69] Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 135. Original italics.

of his concepts were inspired by Indian religious tradition, but that part of his teachings is beyond the scope of this study.

His activities with the Adlerian society left a deep mark. He gained new experience that allowed him to inspire new groups and movements, and he acquired a command of certain psychological techniques. Philip Mairet was, for some time, the chairman of the Adlerian Society, whose real commander-in-chief was Mitrinović. Moreover, Mairet wrote *ABC of Adler's psychology*,[70] and was therefore more than qualified to assess Mitrinović's methods in dealing with his disciples, both as his own former follower and as an authority in Adlerian psychology. He says that Mitrinović encouraged his followers to read Gnostic, Hermetic, theosophic, anthroposophic texts and Indian literature, as well as pieces by Gurdjieff. Thereafter, he would lead them to synthesis himself, through his own "inexhaustible flow of interpretative discourse, which was basically in the tradition of Eastern Christianity". In essence his characteristic method was: "to allow and even help the pupil to go on feeding his own favorite ego-ideal (despite warnings he would not heed) to the point at which it burst, and left him in a void with nothing but the ultimate resources of his own being. This was sometimes effective". Mairet adds that Mitrinović never refused anyone who was seeking help. "His compassion, his Dostoievskian panhumanity, inclined him to accept everybody who came to him, even to the serious waste of his own time and energy".[71] What has been neglected very often in analyses of Mitrinović's various endeavours is that in his Adlerian period he apparently acted for some time "as unpaid psychotherapist and counsellor to various individuals who sought his assistance".[72] His psychotherapeutic experience helped him to develop his own method. He seems to have continued using this method until the end of his life. However, he reframed it as a sort of group therapy, as will be seen later.

Experience of effectively heading a psychological society enabled him to connect psychotherapy with occult teachings. It also led him to work with people who were sceptical of religion, and put him in touch with fully secular individuals. This was not a very difficult task

[70] Mairet, Philip. *A B C of Adler's Psychology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930).
[71] Mairet, "Reintroduction", xxv.
[72] Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 99.

for someone who had been an ideologue of a very secular literary movement in his home region before 1914. Therefore, one could say that the late 1920s represented another turn in his life. He began his public engagement as a Yugoslav nationalist and remained loyal to this idea until around 1913. Then he became a pan-Christian universalist, deeply rooted in Gnostic and Hermetic ancient and modern traditions (from 1914 until the late 1920s). Finally, he made another step forward. He developed at least two parallel narratives. One, more secular and socially oriented, was intended for those of his followers who were not very inclined to mysticism. Another, the mystical line, followed his ideas developed since 1914.

This duality seems to have been prompted by his experience with the Adlerian society, where one had to keep together physicians who wanted psychology only, and others who were interested in wider social reforms. By having to deal with both groups Mitrinović developed his ability to keep different groups of his followers. The departure of Orage certainly made Mitrinović painfully aware that in the realm of mysticism his magnetism could easily evaporate with the arrival of other gurus. Doing some psychotherapy helped him to get better acquainted with the two parallel intellectual streams in Britain. This indeed seems to have given rise to some confusion, and therefore in the recollections of Philip Mairet or Alan Watts one sees only a mystical Mitrinović, while his later followers left recollections of a very rational Mitrinović and were more than ready to underestimate his mysticism.

Mitrinović's Projects in the 1930s

Mitrinović's name was kept in high esteem after his death by the members of the New Atlantis Foundation, which survived him. Its members mostly left recollections and impressions of Mitrinović focused on his actions aimed at social reforms, on his Christian socialism, on his Eurofederalist ideas, and particularly on his Senate initiative. The first of these initiatives was launched in 1931 in the form of the Eleventh Hour Flying Clubs. It focused on a future European federation that would gradually evolve into a world federation. More influential than this was The New Europe Group, initiated also in

1931. This group survived until 1957. Mitrinović was successful in convincing Sir Patrick Geddes, a well-known scientist, to become the group's president. He said of the group: "I have been particularly stirred up by your society, the most helpful and exemplary I've come across in London".[73] Among well-known persons who attended meetings of the group were: Henry Wickham Steed, former editor of *The Times*, Katharine Stewart-Murray, Duchess of Atholl, and the historian George Peabody Gooch.[74] Soon a series of lectures was organised and among the group's lecturers were Frederick Soddy, Arthur Kitson, Raymond Postgate and J. V. Delahaye; the secretary of the group became Winifred Gordon Fraser, a lady who remained Mitrinović's associate until the end of his life.[75] The aim of the group was the promotion of a European federation. As H. C. Rutherford remarked "it also had the aim of bringing the continent of Europe more actively into the consciousness of the insular British".[76]

Relative success with lectures led Mitrinović to launch a journal that frequently changed its name and survived for two years. Its first title was *The New Britain Quarterly* (1932–33), then *The New Britain Weekly* (New Series June 1933 – Autumn 1934). Several short-lived journals also appeared under the titles *The New Atlantis: For Western Renaissance & World Socialism* and *New Albion* (1934). Mitrinović's plans seem to have been anything but unambitious. D. R. Davies claims that he planned to initiate "seven daily papers circulating throughout Europe in different languages".[77]

In *The New Britain* Mitrinović began again to write "World Affairs"[78] and continued to advocate universal values, to echo his previous mysticism, and to warn against patriotism as the key value. He was in favour of "the relatively very many and yet also relatively very few" persons who would guide the Western Civilisation to a new path which "arrogance and ignorance of the world leaders of

[73] David Shillan, *Biotechnics: the practice of synthesis in the work of Patrick Geddes*, sixteenth foundation lecture, The New Atlantis Foundation, 1972.
[74] Nenad V. Petrović, "Dimitrije Mitrinović", in Idem, *Ogledi o smislu i zabludama* [Idem, "Dimitrije Mitrinović", in *Essays on Sense and Misconceptions*] (Belgrade: Udruženje književnika Srbije, 2001), 89.
[75] Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 114–116; 197.
[76] Rutherford, "General Introduction", 9.
[77] D. R. Davies, *In Search of Myself* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1961), 124.
[78] He again signed "World Affairs" as "M. M. Cosmoi", and his contributions were published in 10 issues from May 24 to July 26, 1933.

today" could not provide. He warned that humanity faced a potential cataclysm. Although many of his statements were rather secular, he preserved some elements of the Gnostic vocabulary as well: "Christ and his Gnosis are the proof and the voucher that Adam, the Species, will not ultimately and truly fail. Anthropos, our kingdom, cannot finally and fatally collapse and lose the thread of its divine and planetary mission and function"[79]. His references to esoteric teachings and his unorthodox formulations caused new problems, and some correspondents openly voiced their dissatisfaction with the style of Cosmoi. The editor C. B. Purdom advised his readers to read Cosmoi's texts four times. The subsequent editor D. R. Davies compared Cosmoi with the English poet Robert Browning, who had to wait to be properly understood. "Mitrinović, too, has to wait. A profounder thinker than Browning, he will probably have to wait longer. No wonder that those earnest readers of *New Britain* could not understand him, though they read his article forty times".[80]

Yet, the sales of *New Britain* reached 32,000 per week, and by September 1933, 65 groups of New Britain focused on the social state and the "national renaissance" were organised nationwide.[81] This was the most serious social movement that Mitrinović ever encouraged, although it seems likely that he did not want the movement to grow at such a pace. What happened was that the founders of the movement, including Mitrinović, had no clear vision on how the movement should be structured, and the London group headed by Mitrinović collided with others. As a result, the movement soon disintegrated and, by the end of 1934, essentially disappeared.

This poses certain questions regarding Mitrinović's motives. Was his hesitation to spread the movement only due to his inimical attitude towards political parties, or was there something more at stake? Could a large movement be supervised or at least directed by its intellectual leadership? This may have tormented Mitrinović, and he must have become painfully aware that political movements had to make certain concessions that he was unwilling to make. Its leaders had to simplify their ideas and to accommodate their social aims to suit the needs and conceptions of their average adherents, and apparently not only Mitrinović but also his London colleagues, were unwilling to do this.

[79] "World Affairs", *New Britain* (July 5, 1933). SWDM (1987), 291–292.
[80] Davies, *In Search*, 132.
[81] Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 126–130.

His last initiative was the Senate initiative. Since the time of his association with Kandinsky, he was in search of individuals who could lead the world spiritually. Andrew Rigby is of the opinion that Mitrinović took advantage of the London Adler Society and the New Europe Group to find potential recruits for his inner circle and to train such persons for "their practice of cosmopolitan citizenship".[82] What is peculiar is that Mitrinović used an anthroposophist as the basis for his project of social change. He exploited Rudolf Steiner's works to formulate the idea of a threefold state that would have economic, political and cultural spheres, based on equality (economy), fellowship (politics) and liberty (culture). This was one of the main ideas developed within the New Britain Movement and "during the years immediately prior to the Second World War he embarked upon his most sustained educational experiment, seeking to prepare his closest coworkers for living in the new world which they were trying to create".[83] Yet, there were only 30-40 such coworkers who obviously enjoyed being members of a group headed by Mitrinović, and were proud of the role that the Senate would have if Mitrinović's utopia ever materialised. Most of them remained loyal to his ideas till the end of their lives. They all had to study the Athanasian Creed, and he himself sometimes used the pseudonym *Filioque*, a segment from the Athanasian Creed considered heretical in his original Greek Orthodox tradition. "In short, he was trying to create a Kingdom of Heaven. That is, he was attempting the utterly impossible".[84]

It is clear that Mitrinović further developed his psychological method, originally individually employed in the years of the Adler Society. Again it had to deal with the ego-ideal and in the simplest terms this notion means "the self's conception of how he wishes to be".[85] It also refers to the way in which the self wishes to be seen by others. David Davies, the former co-editor of the *New Britain Quarterly*, a former Congregationalist minister, and a committed socialist in the years of his association with Mitrinović (the 1930s), described the technique that his then spiritual leader used. It is important to note that Davies was a passionate reader and subsequent critic of

[82] Andrew Rigby, "Training for Cosmopolitan Citizenship in the 1930s: The Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic", *Peace and Change* 24. 3 (1999): 386.
[83] Ibid, 387.
[84] Davies, *In Search*, 140.
[85] Charles Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 40.

psychoanalysis and that he himself underwent several psychoanalytic treatments. He testifies that "the circle round Mitrinović contained many psychoanalysts, amateur and professional", and also that Mitrinović himself "was deeply read in Freud and Jung and all the schools".[86] In dealing with individuals he implemented the same psychological procedures that Mairet described. Yet, he also had to deal with his followers organised in several smaller groups. These groups consisted of six to seven persons and had three- or four-hour sessions "generally late at night, for one's unconscious was supposed to be less remote in the deep night". A person from the group would then criticise another person from the same group and that person would defend her/himself:

> By this time we were fairly launched, and gradually were out in deep waters. A member of the group would then say, in language that lacked nothing of brutality and candour, exactly what he, more frequently she (which made it worse!), thought of me… Frequently those group meetings ended in electric storms. After they closed, we all made our way to a café… We were good friends once more.[87]

Davies confirmed that, with one exception, they "never got anywhere with these meetings".[88] There were also larger meetings with twenty to thirty persons present. These "special group meetings" were attended by Mitrinović. In them a person would be singled out for grouping, and then Mitrinović would dictate the line of procedure.

> He had a way of penetrating one's last defences, of peeling off, not only one's clothes, but one's skin, and flaying one alive… What Mitrinović said was infrangible truth. The whole twenty or thirty (whatever their number) would take up the theme of Mitrinović's attack, and play variations upon it. The victim was helpless. He was battered (psychically) into stupidity.[89]

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[86] Davies, *In Search*, 130, 139.
[87] Ibid, 141–142.
[88] Ibid, 142.
[89] Ibid, 142–143.

The idea behind this exercise was to expose future senators to the most difficult circumstances and prepare them to be individuals in that way, or at least that is what the group members believed. D. R. Davies doubted the effectiveness of this method and considered that Mitrinović "was no nearer creating a community of independent persons after thirty-six years in England, when he died, than he was when he started in 1914".[90] It was already in his Young Bosnian period that Mitrinović began to contemplate how mankind could improve. The technique that he finally employed made his followers face their weaknesses. But did it really make them more prepared to lead a cultural or a social movement? In retrospect one may seriously wonder about that.

There was also a group of prominent British intellectuals gathered around the New Europe Group who were never a part of Mitrinović's group's psychological exercises but participated in social activities designed by him. In 1948, a delegation of this group attended the Congress of the European Union of Federalists in Rome. The delegation was headed by the radiochemist Frederick Soddy, the nominal president of the New Europe Group, a Nobel Prize winner in 1921.[91] It is clear that Mitrinović supported Eurofederalist projects. There are, however, some misconceptions about this. For him "Europa" was a cultural and religious concept. Its spirituality was its greatest potential asset, but also a potential for endless clashes between national cultures. He was in search of a pan-European model, and that model, in his worldview, was inseparable from Christian spirituality, although this spirituality was a sort of non-denominational Christianity.

[90] Ibid, 143. David Richard Davies (1889–1958) was a congregational minister in Wales from 1917 to 1928, when he resigned due to his new preoccupation with the new socialist social order. He became associated with Mitrinović in London in 1930 and remained his follower until September 1938, when he left him. He became a congregational minister once again at the end of 1940, but found that things had quite changed and joined the Church of England. With the support of the Archbishop of York, William Temple, he was ordained a deacon in Lent, 1941. In his last years he wrote several influential pieces focused on the original sin and was under a strong influence of the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and of Martin Luther (Davies, *In Search*).

[91] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 299.

The Reconnection with Gutkind in 1927-1932. Two esoteric poles who failed to create "a union of men round the globe"

Before he was forced to leave Germany in 1933 as a Jewish intellectual, Eric Gutkind had a liberal circle of eclectic intellectuals who met in Berlin and Potsdam. The circle included Frederick van Eeden, Walter Rathenau, theologian Martin Buber, and occasionally Walter Benjamin and Upton Sinclair.[92] Mitrinović briefly belonged to Gutkind's circle just before the Great War and he left a strong impression on him. At a commemorative session held one year after Mitrinović's death Gutkind said of him: "He was so incomparably present; and often all the others seemed to be less real, to be less present".[93]

In his writings Mitrinović identified four "bearers of revelation." Of them H. Blavatsky and V. Solovyov died in 1891 and 1900 respectively, when Mitrinović was a child. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was Mitrinović's contemporary but there are no letters preserved in the archives of NAF that would indicate that there was a written communication between them. Therefore, the only friend of his among the "bearers of revelation" was Gutkind. Although Mitrinović wholeheartedly promoted Gutkind through the pages of *The New Age* in 1921, they were strangely enough in no communication for many years following the World War. In 1928, Gutkind wrote to him: "If only we had kept up our correspondence just after the war we might have saved years".[94] Mitrinović visited the Gutkinds at Berlin-Gruenan in July 1927. After that visit Eric Gutkind was, in the summer of 1928, very eager to organise a foundation meeting of another association in Germany. He desperately wanted Mitrinović to come to the meeting that was supposed to happen in Hagen near Cologne. In his opinion, without Mitrinović the whole thing would be "spoilt".[95] After the meeting Gutkind was very enthusiastic.

He wrote to Mitrinović on mutual attraction: "We exist. And this is in itself tremendous source of power. Of course neither you nor I

[92] LeRoy Finch, "Introduction", 13.
[93] Ibid, 12.
[94] E. G. to "My dear and very special Dmitri", 07.11.1928. UB – SC; NAF, 1.7.1. Members of the New Atlantis Foundation have translated the Gutkind-Mitrinović correspondence from German into English and have typed it in 19 pages. All the quotes from their correspondence in this text are from that translation.
[95] Erich Gutkind to "Dear Mensch", Paris, 02.08.1928. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1.

must be only one pole, but poles and I am concentrating on reaching the opposite pole of myself here".[96] Gutkind was in communication with the Dutch mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer, W. Kandinsky and Alfred Kubin. He envisaged that a group of kindred spirits would gradually enlarge itself. First there would be the two of them (himself and Mitrinović), then "a Three-some", then a group of seven, followed by a group of ten: "Round this kernel of several layers there must be a body of two dozen persons. Then 'The Hundred'"[97].

In November 1928, Gutkind admitted to Mitrinović: "I consider your presence most important, as our esoteric discussions form the kernel of the whole idea, which must otherwise remain dead unless we continue our talks".[98] He also pointed out that the idea of the meeting he organised was "to achieve a complete metamorphosis – which is also what you yourself demand".[99] In organisational terms it seems that Gutkind had no success since Kandinsky did not reply, and others mostly replied negatively, some even campaigned against the idea.[100] He expressed hopes that he and Mitrinović could "achieve an act of concentration – maybe I will achieve one pole (the other pole)"[101].

In the next letter Gutkind insisted that it was essential for them "to have a talk about esoteric matters", and mentioned that he could summon a conference in Berlin "of so called prominent people" with Brouwer and possibly Henry Borel, and that Mitrinović could bring two or three persons who understood German.[102]

In April 1930, Gutkind wrote about his plans to prepare two books: one that "will go right back into Jewish origins", and "the universal part will be re-written in our spirit." He was very disappointed for not having personal encounters with Mitrinović and he desperately wrote to him: "Our talks were not an isolated once-and-for-all phenomenon – they were of eternity… These talks must live as an eternal source". He warned him that he had unfavourable experience with learned

[96] Erich Gutkind] to "My Dear Mensch", 18.09.1928. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1. Gutkind has underlined the words himself in this and in all the subsequent letters that have been quoted in this section.
[97] Ibid.
[98] E. G. to "my dear and very special Dmitri", 07.11.1928. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid. He later informed Mitrinović that "Scheiermann – Adelchen group" also parted from him. Erich Gutkind to "dear Dimitri", Berlin, 11.04.1930.
[101] E. G. to "my dear and very special Dmitri", 07.11.1928.
[102] E. G. to "dear Dmitri", Berlin, 05.12 [1928]. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1.

people, psychoanalysts and authors. "These fools and traitors have no intention of helping us", he warned. He insisted that their approach had to be changed: "By an amalgamation of authors we shall not be able to achieve what we saw in our vision".[103]

It seems that at some point in late 1930 Mitrinović concluded that Gutkind suffered from the Adlerian inferiority complex and that he tried to avoid responsibility. Gutkind took this very personally and conveyed a message to Mitrinović via Richard Mayer to whom he gave a letter written in February 1931. In that letter he complained that he had no communication with Mitrinović for eight years after the Great War. He put a question in the letter: "How can we create a union of men round the globe, how to build up a new world if impatience motivates our acts?". He begged Mayer to convince Mitrinović to resume collaboration with him, and Mayer passed this letter to Mitrinović[104].

The split that happened between the two friends was particularly painful to Gutkind. Finally, in a special letter to Mitrinović, sent in February 1931, he insists that the letter contains "the most important thing I have ever been able to communicate to you". He observed that "the inner development" of their "common cause" almost reached the point they had "long been hoping for". The vision of *Sidereal Birth* had to be "free of anything that was either neurotic or escapist in it". He further insists that in his last book *Das absolute Kollektiv* he separated in himself "the purely Hebraic elements in it wholly and entirely from those that are universalist". He complains that "our dialogue, this magnificent esoteric dialogue, has ceased, has stopped".[105]

During the course of the Great War Mitrinović definitely abandoned his previous complete identification with the Serbian and Yugoslav cause, and became a universalist instead. He obviously expected something similar from Gutkind and there must have been a point of disagreement between them in terms of local-universalist relation. Their split also came at a moment when Mitrinović began gaining new influence in Britain through various more secular schemes.

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[103] Erich Gutkind to "my dear Dimitri", Berlin, 11.04.1930. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1.

[104] E. G. to Richard Mayer [before 06.02.1931]. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1. Richard Mayer sent his letter to Mitrinović on February 06, 1931, and in that envelope is enclosed Gutkind's undated letter to Mayer which was therefore written before February 06.

[105] Erich Gutkind to "dear Dmitri", Berlin, 14.02.1931.

More than one year later Gutkind touched upon the character of their mutual link: "the first vision which brought us together… and we do not need to touch on our esoteric unity… was imperfect, a patchwork. It was only part. One part of our truth is buried deep in the past, in the great traditions. But the other part is far beyond us in the future. We are bridge-people…that is our historical relativity in this aeonic moment in which the aeons are separating; at the same time it is our mission and our depth. One bridge-head lies deep in the abyss of time – the other far in the future.[106]

It is clear that they met again 1932 and they remained in contact until Gutkind emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1933, and later as well. Their collaboration and problems in 1927–1932 only indicated how difficult it was to establish even a small group of three or five like-minded people who could co-operate to create "a union of men round the globe". Obviously, Mitrinović and Gutkind had similar ideas on gathering a global intellectual élite. However, Mitrinović was much more successful with this idea in London than Gutkind had been in Berlin. Their mysticism was mutual and Gutkind repeatedly insisted on their deeply esoteric link. This was something that was close to Mitrinović's mystical side, but also something that Mitrinović the organiser identified as a potential problem.

Mitrinović wanted to have around him not only intellectuals but also social reformers and generally men of good repute, and to gather all of them he had to offer something more than esoteric teachings. He was able to develop something that Gutkind could not. He simultaneously designed different actions, some of which were seemingly purely secular. Gutkind was confined in any plans he had in Berlin by his book *Sidereal Birth*. It came to personify him, making him look too esoteric and hence it became very difficult for some of his acquaintances to join him in any organisational form.

A Secret Society, a Sect, a Movement or a Social Club?

Mitrinović's interest in Christianity and in various mystical and esoteric teachings was his life-long commitment. There is no doubt that for many years he was in search of *gnosis* – the "true knowledge". This

[106] Erich Gutkind to "dear Dmitri", Berlin, 12.04.1932. UB – SC, NAF, 1.7.1.

was a quest typical of many of his contemporaries. Coming from a very secular background of Bosnian revolutionaries, his quest signified a radical shift from nationalism to universalism and from local issues to divine depths. Around 1913, once he discovered religious and mystical inclinations within himself, it became his obsession. His interest in psychology fitted quite well with his quest for gnosis. In this he was similar to C. G. Jung. Both of them experienced religious transformation precisely during the Great War, and both were attracted to Gnostic and Hermetic authors. There was something that ancient Gnostics shared with their followers from the 20th century. As Elaine Pagels notes: "For Gnostics, exploring the *psyche* became implicitly what is for many people today implicitly – a religious quest".[107] Another inspiration came from A. R. Orage, his first conduit to the higher circles of the British public life. Orage considered psychoanalysis as the new form of "the gnosis of man".[108]

It is difficult to say how much Mitrinović agreed with the Gnostic concept of the whole visible reality being a product of a false god. In Gnostic teachings the imperfection of reality is a natural consequence of its creator – the false god. *Anthropos*, unlike the false god, is for the Gnostics the real and good creator, the true father. Mitrinović often referred to *Anthropos*, but what he meant by this is not easily defined. Since Gnosticism had many incarnations, it is additionally difficult to follow Mitrinović's reception of this teaching, although he must have been particularly attracted to Valentin's ideas, through Solovyov's influence. One may be also certain that he did not discuss all mystical teachings with all of his adherents and associates.

In one aspect Mitrinović strikingly revised Gnostic ideas. Gnostics generally rejected the visible cosmos, but Mitrinović wished to understand it and to improve it. Since the establishment of the Adler Society in 1927, he advocated certain practical policies that were supposed to make the world better, and this line of action would be fully irrelevant from the Gnostic point of view. Yet, Mitrinović was above all an eclecticist and Gnosticism was only his ideological basis. As it turned out later, it was a good way to fuse mysticism with psychology. His other sources of inspiration were Indian and Chinese religious traditions and philosophy, but that part is beyond the scope

[107] Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 132.
[108] Mairet, "Reintroduction", xiii.

of this analysis. It is, however, clear that his main inspiration comes from Judeo-Christian traditions since all of his "prophets" (Steiner, Blavatsky, Nietzsche, Gutkind, Solovyov, Adler and Jung) come precisely from that tradition.

He only partly revealed his religious ideas in his M. M. Cosmoi articles. Therefore, most of his religious points are known from the notes collected by his associates and later published by the New Atlantis Foundation. This creates a problem since he seems to have shared his innermost ideas only with a select few. Therefore, one cannot be certain if his religious philosophy can be fully gauged from pamphlets and articles compiled from these notes. It is, however, also clear that starting from his involvement with the Adler Society Mitrinović became fully aware that he was able to recruit secular followers as well.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s he had two types of adherents: 1) those interested in mysteries like Graham, Orage or Watts, and 2) those interested in his social activism. Naturally there were those who combined both streams. It seems that his last group of 30–40 followers was a combination of the two groups, although overall it was closer to the second one. He also had a group of prominent intellectuals who were associated with him but did not belong to his followers. That group was definitely focused on social activism. Mitrinović was able to gradually get some of his followers interested in mystical religion and philosophy as well. Some of them were interviewed by Andrew Rigby and they all gave statements about the group around Mitrinović in terms primarily based on plans for social reform, the Senate initiative and practical policies.

As is plainly evident from Watts's description, Mitrinović demanded complete loyalty of those whom he initiated in mysteries and even if there were any such persons among the last 40 of his associates, they were unlikely to discuss it publicly. In the 1920s and 1930s, he demonstrated an interest in learning Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese and he seems to have learned these languages sufficiently to be able to read sources. That is completely in line with the ideas advocated by Blavatsky and Palmer Hall and was obviously connected with his efforts to understand religious and mystical teachings written in these languages. He also encouraged some of his followers to learn Sanskrit. One of his closest associates was Violet MacDermot. She

translated several of Gnostic texts, including *Pistis Sofia*, a text known to Mitrinović in the interpretation of George Robert Stowe Mead. MacDermot's work attracted many years later the attention of like-minded persons committed to the dissemination of Gnosticism.[109] She seems to have been in charge of collecting Mitrinović's notes on theosophy and Gnosticism, since her notes with such contents have been preserved in the archives of the New Atlantis Foundation.[110]

It is not known if Mitrinović belonged to any secret or discreet society in London. He discussed the question of Freemasonry and considered it as one of four major internationals, together with Catholicism, Communism, Science and Technology. He considered "the world fraternity of builders" as "the chief factor in the world-guidance as far as this present world is concerned".[111] Many details, however, indicate that he himself might have established some sort of a secret club with universalist aspirations. To his first two followers, Stephen Graham and Fr. Nikolai Velimirovich, he spoke of a secret society composed of the three of them.

In the 1930s, Alan Watts (1915–1973) became Mitrinović's follower. Later he became an Episcopal minister and then one of the main propagators of Zen and other Eastern philosophies in the United States. He mentions in his autobiography that in 1936 he came to Mitrinović's apartment at 33, Bloomsbury St. On this occasion Mitrinović invited him "to join an eternal and secret fellowship which will watch you, guard you, and keep track of you wherever you may go in the world". The sign of recognition was carrying a packet of the cheapest brand of cigarettes in England. Mitrinović also said to Watts: "Now if you are inclined to enter into this masonry you must confer

[109] Carl Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia*, tr. and notes by Violet Macdermot, Nag Hammadi Studies, Vol. 9 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1978); Carl Schmidt (ed.), *The books of the Jeu and the untitled text in the Bruce codex*, tr. and notes by Violet Macdemot, Nag Hammadi Studies, Vol. 13; The Coptic Gnostic library (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1978); Violet Macdermot, *The fall of Sophia: A Gnostic text on the redemption of universal consciousness* (Lindisfarne Books, 2001). The book by V. MacDermot has a foreword by Stephan A. Hoeller (1931-), a Gnostic scholar, and a bishop of Ecclesia Gnostica since 1967. I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Rigby for drawing my attention to MacDermot's interest in Gnosticism.

[110] Emma Burgham, *The New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrinović Archive: Catalogue* (University of Bradford, 2015), 73-74. I was unable to locate these files in UB – SC, NAF.

[111] SWDM (1987), 266.

ith the Jehovah which is in your heart of hearts, and answer me yes or no".[112] Alan Watts further mentions that Mitrinović told him about the secret fellowship: "I am going to tell you a mystery which you must never, never reveal to others. It will unlock for you the meaning of all kinds of ancient symbolisms".

Although Watts refers to this in his autobiography as a kind of joke, in another section of his book he mentions that he is not allowed to recount certain conversations since "I promised him not to reveal them".[113] Taken together, the two paragraphs written by Watts indicate that Mitrinović conferred upon him secrets that he, even many years later, was not ready to reveal. Instead he offered modified statements that could appear in their full meaning only to those who had already been initiated in them. Watts termed the circle of Mitrinović's followers "devoted disciples and adoring women", and he described the apartment where Mitrinović lived as "sanctum sanctorum". He also mentions that he both loved and feared Mitrinović "for my Buddhist and Theosophical friends were of the opinion that he was a black magician".[114]

Blavatsky acted through Lodge Blavatsky; both theosophists and members of the Golden Dawn had their temples, and everything suggests that Mitrinović's apartment on Great Russell Street was in fact not merely a meeting point of people who wanted to organise a new and more just social order but also a temple of his teachings. Yet, this does not mean that he established a defined secret society of any kind. He had already experienced utter disappointment when his most loyal adherent Orage left him. So, the Adler Society was a continuation of his previous efforts to organize a group of persons fully attached to him and his ideas. The Adler Society was a new turning point that transformed his religious ideas into a blend that included both mystical ideas and practical policies. Even his articles written for Orage included more than just Theosophy and Gnosticism. They discussed "the changed problem of Britain in Europe".[115] Since the late 1920s his appreciation of practical policies was obvious. But even his practical policies were still strongly based on teachings of

[112] Alan Watts, *In My Own Way. An autobiography 1915–1965* (Pantheon Books, 1972), 123.
[113] Ibid, 109.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Mairet, "Reintroduction", xvii.

authors who he identified as bearers of revelations: on Eric Gutkind, Rudolf Steiner, Helena Blavatsky and Vladimir Solovyov.

Mairet described Mitrinović's associates rather differently than they described themselves. He insists that Mitrinović exposed them "to acute emotional experiences, largely analogous to what has been recorded of the conduct of the Gurdjieff school: they were also collectively employed in a succession of public activities".[116] He also discussed the question of successive public activities that Mitrinović launched, which were all brief and usually had chaotic ends. For him "this is the way with most, if not all esoteric schools".[117] To understand the spirit of the age one needs to be reminded of the list of intellectuals who, for some time, joined the Gurdjieff school, in spite of his strict methods of dealing with his disciples. The list includes: the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, A. R. Orage, the French actor Louis Jouvet, and writers Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler and Katherine Mansfield.[118] To more secular European readers of the late 20th or early 21st century, mystical clubs and schools may seem very alien. For the spirit of the 1920s, however, it was something novel and promising, and the way that Mitrinović dealt with it places him among very lenient gurus, and among the very rare who appreciated the opinions of his followers and even liked to encourage discussions among them.

His group with esoteric pretensions was fully in line with traditions already present in London. It was a fashionable thing in the Bloomsbury area of London, where Mitrinović lived. Its culture was connected to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The Golden Dawn is based on Kabbalah. Adam Kadmon, so often mentioned in Mitrinović's texts, is the first heavenly man or the idea of the Universe in the Kabbalistic tradition.[119] His Gnostic equivalent is *Anthropos*. Mitrinović's philosophy is based on the philosophy of Eric Gutkind, as defined in 1910 in his book *Sidereal Birth*. He came in contact with Gutkind through Kandinsky, who was himself influenced by Theosophy. It may well be that Mitrinović, in addition to many other groups, also had a group of devotees who viewed him as a religious guru in the 1920s and early 1930s. After 1936 any such action

[116] Ibid, xxvi.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 337.
[119] Manly Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages. An Encyclopaedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (San Francisco, 1928).

was impossible. He suffered a stroke and was very restricted in his activities.

An indication that even the last group of Mitrinović's followers engaged in certain rituals is provided through a testimony that Predrag Palavestra left describing his meeting with members of the New Atlantis Foundation. Four members of the Foundation met with him on an exact day at an exact time, at 4 pm (instead at 5 pm, which would have been the usual tea ritual by the social rules of that period) in the archives of the Foundation based in a cellar, in the last house in which Mitrinović lived, in Richmond-upon-Thames. They were seated so as to form a symbolic circle around the table, and in this way they closed the space from all sides of the world. Then they informed Palavestra of the conditions that he was to follow in order to gain access to the materials of the Foundation and they exposed him to "a hermetic test". When Palavestra declined to accept the conditions, his refusal was interpreted as a sign that the hermetic circle did not recognise him as a chosen person to use and make the Foundation's scripts known. This put an end to any co-operation between Predrag Palavestra and the Foundation. He described this experience in his last book, *Necropolis*.

When he later described his experience to Mitrinović's brother-in-law, Stephen Graham,[120] the latter explained to him: "Well, my dear, you had no chance at all. They closed all exits to you, and you could not have passed anywhere neither to the left nor to the right, nor up nor down. They know such magical tricks and they deal with all kinds of crazy sorceries in order to make themselves look significant. It is for this reason that you had to wait for the four of them to meet on an exact day at an exact place. Had they really wished so you could have peacefully made an agreement with them at any time with an obligatory glass of disgusting cherry".[121] The very name of New Atlantis was originally used by Francis Bacon for his unfinished utopian novel of the same name (1627). It could imply the building of a perfect society, but it may also be connected to esoteric inspiration, suggesting a transfer of secret teachings from the primal to the new Atlantis. In line with my suggestion that Mitrinović developed two

[120] In 1956, three years after Mitrinović's death, Stephen Graham married his sister Vera (Graham, *Part*, 295–6).

[121] Predrag Palavestra, *Nekropolje* [Necropolis] 1 (Belgrade: Dosije and Zavod za udžbenike, 2012), 34.

parallel narratives, one must assume that he did not bother some of his more secular followers with the same kind of secret teachings into which he wanted to initiate Watts, and that he obviously did discuss them with Stephen Graham, Father Nikolai Velimirovich, Philip Mairet and most likely some of his later followers as well.

There was something extraordinary about Mitrinović, and both streams of his associates acknowledged that. Mairet was of the opinion that both Mitrinović and Gurdjieff "lived, at least much of their time, at the level of consciousness above our usual human condition; that they were *awake* to a degree of intensity of which we ordinary people have but rare and brief glimpses, if any".[122] Rigby summarized the experiences of many of those who had met him: "Time and again people remarked that they sensed that he could see right into, and through, the deepest recesses of their being".[123]

Although his Christianity was focused on personal revelation, nonetheless it was a sort of Christianity. In this sense Z. Milutinović **is** correct to conclude that "Mitrinović's Christianity is not a religion in the accepted sense of the term". It is his own doctrine of the Trinity that Milutinović sees as his theological topography. In it the Father represents the unconscious, the Son the individual and the conscious and the third person, Sophia, represents Wisdom and Universal Humanity.[124]

That Mitrinović's teachings were intimately related to Christianity can be seen from the striking fact that many of his associates and followers were or at some point had been priests/ministers of various Christian churches: Father and later Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church Nikolai Velimirovich, Alan Watts, David Davies, Rev. A. D. Belden, Rev. Clifford Harley. They all must have seen a certain Christian essence in his ideas. Mairet, who was well acquainted with Blavatsky's doctrines, described articles by M. M. Cosmoi as "Christian theosophy".[125] Valerie Cooper, in whose studio Mitrinović met Adler, left the recollections of one of her talks with "D.M." about Christ: "Once I said 'But does it really matter whether he really lived

[122] Mairet, "Reintroduction", xxii.
[123] Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 172.
[124] Zoran Milutinović, *Getting over Europe. The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 175.
[125] Philip Mairet, *A. R. Orage. A Memoir* (New Hyde Park N.Y: University Books, 1966 [1st ed. 1936]), 81.

on earth or not?' and he replied, 'it matters more than anything else in the whole universe'".[126] This seems to be the statement of a profound Christian believer.

Some of his decisions from the final months of his life indicate what he cared about most deeply at that time. He had lived in a house in Richmond since 1948, and in the last months of his life he was confined to his bed. He asked that several symbolic objects should be placed in his room. They included a copy of Lao Tse, a book of Serbian folk tales and a Christian cross. His gravestone at Highgate cemetery in London includes a special symbol, a spherical cross. "The society 'New Atlantis' used it as a symbol of general unification of mankind and of all world churches and faiths".[127] Undoubtedly, that is exactly what Mitrinović stood for. Yet, there is no doubt that for him the basis of such a unification of mankind was a kind of Christianity. His Christianity was Gnostic, it contained theosophical components and was strongly under the influence of the Sofian Christianity of Solovyov. His ideas stemmed from various sources. In N. Radulović's opinion, they derived "mainly from theosophic macrohistory… but he was more inclined towards the anthroposophic-Christian version".[128] At the same time, it was primarily a mystical and Gnostic Christianity focused on introspection and open to various other faiths, and particularly to Indian and Chinese teachings.

Mitrinović's Gnosticism is a modern version of this teaching, and it fits within the definition of what Gilles Quispel regards as "modern gnosis". Quispel lists within this stream of thought the following persons: Jakob Boehme, William Blake, J. W. Goethe, German historian Gottfried Arnold, and a prominent Hegelian, Ferdinand Christian Baur. Under the same section he mentions Henri-Charles Puech, Károly Kerényi, Carl Gustav Jung and himself as persons who understood Gnostic symbols as "a mythical expression (i.e. projection) of self-experience". One should add also Solovyov and Stephan Hoeller, and in some respects Elaine Pagels, to this list.[129] Mitrinović also belongs to this group of the proponents of "modern gnosis". Two main features of his teachings bring him to this group: his focus on an introspective approach to revelation, and his Sophian Christianity.

[126] Rigby, *Initiation*, 62; "From the note book of V. V. C.", UB - SC, NAF, 1.1.6.
[127] Palavestra, *Nekropolje*, 40.
[128] Nemanja Radulović, "The Sexual-Mystical Sophianism of Dimitrije Mitrinović", *La Rosa di Paracelso* 1. 1 (2017): 88.
[129] Quispel, "Gnosticism", 573–574.

Based on all of this I believe that Mitrinović's efforts could be summarised as a project of a Gnostic Christian social club that, at times, developed into a movement, but was soon reduced, by Mitrinović's own initiatives, back to the format of a club. The aim of the club had been to educate spiritual élites in Britain that could help a utopian transformation of the world. The project had been much more utopian than his associates were later ready to acknowledge. With the magnetic personality of DM around them, even fully utopian endeavours seemed as something worthy of engaging in. Without him they remained merely unfulfilled prophecies.

Dilemmas of Interpretation

Some of the leading experts on Mitrinović have been under the strong influence of their talks with the members of the New Atlantis Foundation, NAF. The members systematised some of his ideas that had been substantially more chaotic, but they all contained much more mysticism in the original form pronounced by Mitrinović. Andrew Rigby specifically thanked five associates of the Foundation for their help in drafting the first comprehensive analysis of his work and life in English.[130] Members of the Foundation remained fully committed to Mitrinović's ideas as they understood them. They made a kind of commune, bought Mitrinović's house in Richmond and placed the archives of the Foundation there. When Predrag Palavestra visited them in 1966, seven or eight of them lived in the house. He was allowed to sleep in Mitrinović's room and to consult his archives and his library. Palavestra described the members of the New Atlantis Foundation in sympathetic terms, yet he left a testimony that they claimed to be the sole interpreters of the legacy of their founder. When he asked to take some documents to Belgrade and to copy some other documents for the preparation of Mitrinović's collected works, he was asked to accept certain conditions. "I could not publish a single of Mitrinović's manuscripts without their previous permission. All copyrights for texts written in English belong to them. I am obliged to show the final version of my study before printing it and to accept all their remarks if

[130] Rigby, *Initiation*. See "Acknowledgements" in Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative.*

they refer to my interpretations of some of Mitrinović's views – since they are the only ones who are called and authorised to advocate them, explain them and pass them to others".[131]

In 1977, Palavestra published the first edition of his book on Mitrinović, entitled *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* [*The Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović*], which is still the best study on Mitrinović. The second, expanded edition of this book was published in 2003. The NAF reacted with its own criticism of the last chapter of Palavestra's book on 72 typed pages. To do this they had to translate parts of Palavestra's book for internal use and that task was performed by David Shillan, one of the Trustees of the NAF.[132] His translation was revised by Dr. E. D. Goy of SSEES. This text was written for NAF followers. The text was typed in 1977, and in June 1980 David Shillan personally brought a copy of this text to the University Library in Belgrade. In his last will Mitrinović bequeathed a substantial part of his personal collection of books to this Library (some 2,000 books) and the NAF obviously wanted to make their criticism available to any subsequent researcher of Mitrinović's ideas. In the foreword, the Trustees insist that Palavestra never met Mitrinović "and the Trustees knew him well and worked with him during the last twenty years of his life".[133] It is characteristic that the Trustees disagreed with the last chapter since it dealt with the period of their founder's life, when he lived with them. However, they also objected to the chapter entitled "Utopian Messianism". The Trustees made no acknowledgment of the great efforts Palavestra made. They rather focused on the points of interpretation in which their views differed from Palavestra's. The fact that in the communist Yugoslavia Mitrinović **was half-proscribed**, and that prior to Palavestra's book no serious study on him had ever been published in Yugoslavia, while occasional references to him had very negative connotations, was not duly mentioned. They also neglected the fact that Palavestra risked his academic career by discussing the religious aspects of Mitrinović's thought.

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[131] Palavestra, *Nekropolje*, 33.

[132] Burgham, *The New Atlantis*, 259.

[133] "Critique of the last chapter of Dr. Predrag Palavestra's book *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* by the Trustees of the New Antlantis Foundation" [typed text], The New Atlantis Foundation, 1980, 1. A copy of *Critique* is kept in the Rare Books Department of the University Library "Svetozar Marković" in Belgrade. UL SM – RBD, folder Mitrinović.

This hypercritical assessment of a very substantial effort that Predrag Palavestra made is quoted here only to illustrate that the Trustees believed themselves to be the only legitimate interpreters of Mitrinović's ideas and teachings. And they indeed partly succeeded through their publications and personal communications in presenting Mitrinović in the way they understood him. Since some of Mitrinović's teachings are known only from the NAF pamphlets and from the notes collected by NAF members, one may wonder if they fully represent his ideas? The commitment of the members of the Foundation to their founder even after his death is moving. On the other hand, it seems that they were not always able to process all of Mitrinović's ideas, and Stephen Graham is only one of several persons who has pointed this out.[134]

In a pamphlet entitled *Principles and Aims: New Atlantis Foundation*, a kind of official interpretation of Mitrinović's ideas has been provided. It essentially insists on two aspects of his theory. The first is that he rejected "either-or" reasoning and with it he dismissed three traditional laws of thought postulated by Plato and Aristotle. Instead he offered the "third force", based on "above, between and beyond the extremes and opposites". The other is that the pattern of trinity has an organic equivalent in the human body, and the succession of three revelations corresponds to three major world views. The first is the cosmic, the second is the individualistic and the third is the universal, based on the "inter-relationship between many individuals". The pamphlet adds that there is also a fourth approach: "to accept the equi-validity of all three revelations simultaneously".[135] In this last statement the New Atlantis Foundation probably described what it viewed as Mitrinović's ultimate legacy.

Palavestra states that Mitrinović lived in England "like some guru, in a small brotherhood of associates and friends".[136] What was the aim of that small brotherhood? Did they ever learn what their founder had in mind when he gathered them? Mitrinović follows Gnostics and certain other mystics in their idea that there is a hidden knowledge within us that we can reach, and he obviously considered himself as a man who should pass on *gnosis* to others, more specifically

[134] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 323.
[135] *Principles* 12, 20–24.
[136] Palavestra, *Dogma*, 30.

to his followers. Moreover, in Mitrinović's and Gutkind's ideas the revelation of their age was the final aim of mankind. What was left was to find and educate a group of humans who would be able to decipher it to mankind. He realised by the late 1920s that there was not a single code of decipherment, but that it needed to be realised through parallel narratives. As early as the age of 49, due to his illness, he became unable to fuse the two narratives both in terms of theoretical synthesis and in terms of transforming his followers into something more than a social club.

More than half a century after his death his ideas may be only partly identified. His entire teaching was, in my opinion, based on Gnostic and Hermetic foundations filtered by Gutkind and Solovyov. This is, however, only half of the answer to his puzzle. His Young Bosnian nationalism was extinguished in 1913–1914. However, his Young Bosnian revolutionary zeal remained. His reading of mystical texts was always a kind of reading undertaken by a person who never abandoned the enthusiasm of a young revolutionary. His chiliasm and utopianism is, therefore, a blend of mysticism and revolution, a blend that existed among early Christians and many subsequent Christian revivalist movements, but also among some of his contemporaries like A. R. Orage. The Great War made many in Britain lose faith in the prospects of humanity. In this atmosphere of resignation, many a man became open to any new possibility of reconstructing humanity. In Britain of the 1920s one could be a Platonist, a theosophist, a Gnostic and a Socialist, all at once. What was true for Britain was even more so for London. Mitrinović probably chose the most receptive geographic location in the world of that time for spreading his all-human Christian syncretism and for his pan-human socialism. Only in Britain of that time, with so many Christian denominations in crisis, could he have found so many devoted lifelong followers.

Archives

UB – SC, NAF, University of Bradford, Special Collections, New Atlantis Foundation

UL SM - RBD (University Library "Svetozar Marković" in Belgrade, Rare Books Department), folder Mitrinović

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ABREVIATIONS:

SWDM - Mitrinović, Dimitirje. Certainly Future, Selected writings of Dimitrije Mitrinović, H. C. Rutherford (ed.), Boulder, 1987.

SDDM - Mitrinović Dimitrije/Митриновић, *Димитрије*, Сабрана *дјела* [Collected Works of Dimitrije Mitrinović, P. Palavestra (ed.)], Svjetlost, 1991, in three volumes.