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## BETWEEN HEGEL, SOLOVYEV AND FREUD: MITRINOVIĆ'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

**Abstract:** This chapter discusses Dimitrije Mitrinović's philosophy of history and his (geo)political views, and maintains that he built on Hegel's philosophy, refracted through Vladimir Solovyev and Sigmund Freud, in order to create a theological topography, in which humanity achieves its synthesis in the form of the Kingdom on Earth, and a historical topography, in which this synthesis is imagined as the triumph of Socialism and European Federation led by the British Empire.

**Keywords:** Hegel, Solovyev, Freud, Philosophy of History

There are several reasons why Mitrinović's ideas about the spiritual rebirth of Europe are difficult to sum up.<sup>1</sup> He did not write in order to prove or convince, but in order to inspire and move to action. Even before coming to London, he wrote:

We require only a philosophy that sings [...] a science that wishes us good, a plasticity that is a symphony, a portrait that is a novel [...] great music that is a performed religion [...]. For whoever has anything to say to us moderns must speak not with intellect but with song, with symbol, with paradox and intuition. To think in concepts is altogether too academic.<sup>2</sup>

The usual line of defence of all those who write in a similar manner, relying on symbols and paradoxes, is that a new content cannot be expressed in the same old way, that new ideas always demand new language, and Andrew Rigby's explanation of Mitrinović's style of writing points in this direction.<sup>3</sup> The problem with Mitrinović's writing style is not that he invented a new vocabulary, but that he attempted to use a mixture of old

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1 This chapter is an extract from Zoran Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2011).

2 Mitrinović, Dimitrije, *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings of Dimitrije Mitrinović*, ed. by H.C. Rutherford (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1987), 36–37.

3 “For Mitrinović, only mythological notions were able to affect human emotions and hence the human will to action and commitment. Commonsense rational ideas necessarily mirrored the world as it was, reflecting the accepted paradigms of conventional thought, and could lead only to commonsense practical action oriented to readily attainable goals”. Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative. An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984), 67.

languages to suggest new meanings. The most obvious example is his use of “Aryan” and “Aryanism”: for him it refers to the values of reason, individuality and free will, and paradoxically includes its traditional opposites – “Semitic” and “Semitism”.<sup>4</sup> “Christianity” for Mitrinović has nothing to do with the religion which goes under this name, let alone with the Christian Churches which for him were hardly better than cults: it has to do with a complex ethical and psychological attitude. However, for him this attitude also exists historically, and the difference between Christian religion and Mitrinović’s atemporal Christianity, which nevertheless goes through specific historical transformations, is very difficult to establish. Mitrinović struggled with language, the main problem of every mystic, with varying degrees of success. Sometimes it is clear that by using, for instance, “New Scythia” instead of Russia he wants his reader to think not of the real country but of its “spiritual essence”, although the reader might remain forever baffled as to what that spiritual essence might be exactly. But the main problem is posed by his ambition of constructing synthetic knowledge, or proving that what he wants to say has already been the hidden and secret, or the revealed and manifest, content of almost all previous mythologies, religions, philosophical systems and knowledges. Mitrinović attempted to integrate into a synthetic system Solovyev’s philosophy, the Cabala and various esoteric knowledges, psychoanalysis, *Völkerpsychologie* and fashionable cultural typology, Steiner’s theosophy, practically all known religious traditions and most of nineteenth-century European philosophy – thus offering the reader an example of the integral, synthetic pan-human culture we should aim to create. The result is, quite naturally, difficult to follow. The synthesis might have been obvious to Mitrinović, but instead of exposing it in a systematic manner, a gesture which would have brought him his readers’ gratitude, he simply assumed that it was equally obvious to all and moved on to writing fragmentary comments on it. Hence his readers’ impression of being given a series of footnotes which originally belonged to a lost or missing book. Writing his editorials for *The New Age* and *The New Britain Weekly* Mitrinović piled up allusions, abstractions, tropes, metaphysical nods and suggestions, and if a reader happens to have the same frame of reference as the author, this accumulation of mythological and religious notions and philosophical concepts can serve a clarifying function, because different segments mirror each other and clearly point to the meaning he wants to transmit. However, most often

4 “Mitrinović based his concept of ‘Aryan’ on culture”, explains Passerini, “and not on blood and race: ‘Aryan’ was a spiritual quality, something noble and generous pertaining to an aristocracy of the mind, a concept close to the Nietzschean idea of what was aristocratic”. Luise Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe. Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 116.

this will not be the case and Mitrinović's clusters of capitalised nouns will remain impenetrable; his philosophy sings, as he required it to do, and a reader or a listener may want to follow this song of Sirens, as many have, but what exactly the song is about may remain obscure.

Without attempting to disentangle all his references, it can be said that the main source of Mitrinović's underlying narrative is Hegel's philosophy – primarily his philosophy of history, in which world history begins in the East and finishes in the West with an ever increasing consciousness of freedom, but also the epic plot from *Phenomenology of Spirit*. “We conceive the world as one great mind in the process of becoming self-conscious”, writes Mitrinović at the beginning of his “World Affairs” editorials in *The New Age*.<sup>5</sup> However, it is Hegel refracted through Solovyev's theology (reshaped upon Schelling's idea of humanity as an organism), who figures prominently in Mitrinović's visionary mysticism: instead of dialectical progression to freedom, world history is a progressive revelation of God. The final aim of this development is the incarnation of Sophia, divine Wisdom, which despite its divine origin can come into being only through human effort. In social terms, the aim of the history of humanity for Solovyev is the harmony of the principles of maximal personal freedom of every individual and of maximal social integration – a “free collectivity”. It is in Solovyev's works that Mitrinović found the



From the exhibition on Dimitrije Mitrinović organised in December 2013  
at the University Library “Svetozar Marković”

5 Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 72.

powerful interpretative method of refracting the same process simultaneously on the historical, political, theological and philosophical levels, and he repeatedly echoes Solovyev's synthetic vision in which "[t]his liberation of human self-consciousness and the gradual spiritualization of man through the inner assimilation and development of the divine beginning constitutes the proper historical process of mankind".<sup>6</sup> Solovyev's historical scheme follows the differentiation between human and divine "principles" in ancient India, Greece and Israel, through their one-sided affirmation in western Christianity and Islam respectively, and announces their harmonious unity – the Godmanhood – in the future, brought about by Russian Christianity. Even when Mitrinović tries not only to echo Solovyev's ideas, but to build on them, the cornerstones as well as the main interpretative operations – for example Solovyev's tendency to see triads in everything he touches – remain the same as the Russian's.

What is new here, and what represents Mitrinović's original contribution to an already complex multilayered scheme, is the idea that the whole historico-theologico-political process also has a psychoanalytical dimension. World history can be reconstructed with the aid of psychoanalysis, claims Mitrinović.<sup>7</sup> It is as if he enriched the possibilities of translating Hegel's *Geist* – "mind" and "spirit" – with an additional one, "psyche", and decided to interpret Hegel's and Solovyev's "consciousness" as if it was what Freud meant by it. The world is a developing organism in which the human race is the brain. If the world is to be interpreted in psychological terms, then "the unconscious is related to the East, while the conscious is characteristic of the 'progressive' West".<sup>8</sup> The unconscious refers to "the irrational impulses and instincts in the mind of mankind", and has been stirred up by the Great War.<sup>9</sup> The tremendous forces of the world unconscious have been awakened and demand the recognition of the world consciousness – which is Europe. Europe must decide to what degree the irrational impulses and instincts can be allowed and recognized without slipping into insanity, or being overcome by irrationality.<sup>10</sup> However, Mitrinović's psychoanalysis of the world does not follow every point of Freud's individual psychoanalysis. Freud's thought only serves to set the stage and to cast the main protagonists into their roles, but Mitrinović readily drops it whenever it does not suit his interpretative intentions. After all, what is the point of being an eclectic thinker if you can't drop your method and pick up another whenever it suits you? Since

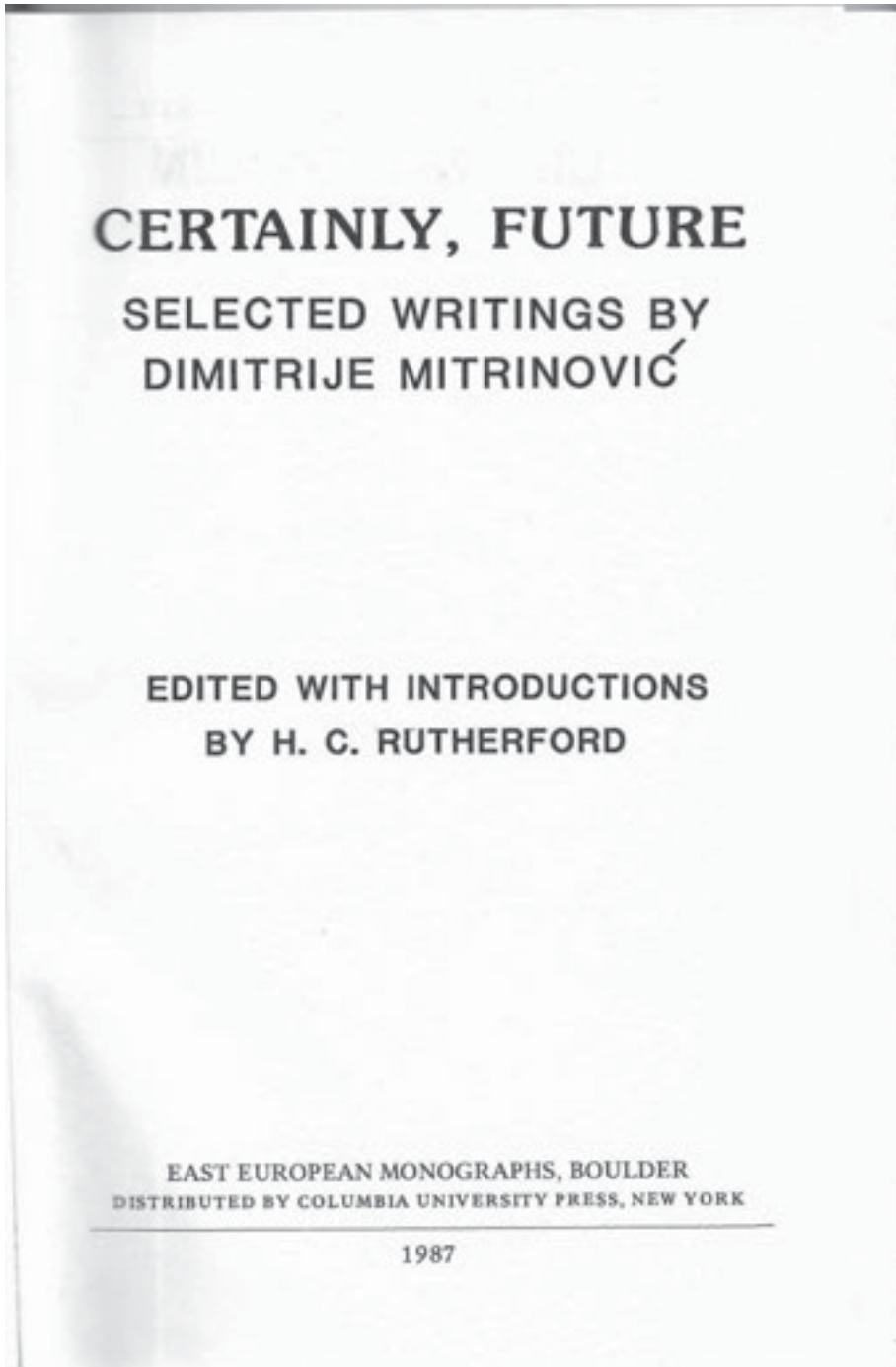
6 Vladimir Solovyev, *Lectures on Godmanhood* (London: Dennis Dobson), 1948, 185.

7 Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 105.

8 *Ibid*, 78.

9 *Ibid*, 80.

10 *Ibid*, 79.



*Title page of Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinović (1987),  
edited by H. C. Rutherford*

it would be unacceptable to allow the East to have any power or influence over the West, Mitrinović pronounces that for the balance between the subconscious and the conscious of the world, Europe – which stands for the latter – must be responsible.

Why Europe? Because Europe's leadership is in the interests of the whole world, and because Europe is destined to play the leading role in the functional organization of the world.<sup>11</sup> To those who in 1920 might have objected that the "world consciousness" had just undergone a tremendous outpouring of irrational forces – every war is always psychological in origin, claims Mitrinović<sup>12</sup> – and that the results of European ownership of much of the planet had not commended the continent for any future leading role in the functional organization of the world, Mitrinović would probably have responded that this was true, but that it was not exactly what he proposed. Europe is needed because it is the place where the highest virtues known to humanity were conceived, and where they are still preserved: Mitrinović calls them "Christianity" and "Aryanism". One can hardly imagine a less convincing argument, especially if it is to be used in a dialogue with non-Christian and non-Indo-European peoples and cultures. Mitrinović, however, has his own interpretation of both Christianity and Aryanism, and defends the idea that we would all uphold these values if we understood them properly. He is no promoter of European colonialism: "[A] good European must, in fact, be ashamed of the chicanery which Europe, in her present distracted state of mind, is driven to practice in her relations with the other races. There is nothing Aryan or noble in it; but one glozing lie after another is invented to stave off the inevitable issue".<sup>13</sup> Europe's behaviour towards other races so far has been "largely instinctive – in other words, not specifically European; for to be instinctive and not intelligent is to be essentially non-European",<sup>14</sup> and "incredibly little of all that Europe has hitherto done to China lies outside the definition of crime".<sup>15</sup> One truly wonders if this particular way of standing up for non-European peoples and cultures – namely, claiming that they are instinctive and non-intelligent – is the sort of defence they would appreciate, even if Mitrinović repeats that Europe "has betrayed its Christian and human mission".<sup>16</sup> However, in Mitrinović's complex and multilayered system this comparison of cultures and races is not the final aim, but a step towards a full understanding of

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11 Ibid, 75.

12 Ibid, 84.

13 Ibid, 92.

14 Ibid, 95.

15 Ibid, 119.

16 Ibid, 129.

what is to be done if a harmonious world is ever to be achieved – provided that we all agree that the values of Christianity and Aryandom are worth achieving. These two words, again, refer to spiritual essences, not to historical entities. Christianity, or the faith known under this name, is “even more hostile to Christianity than any open enemy”,<sup>17</sup> and by Aryandom everybody would understand “the Teutonic brutality of Germany and Albion”.<sup>18</sup> Mitrinović’s Christianity is not a religion in the accepted sense of the term: though it began as a religion, and in our time undergoes the phase of becoming “Art or Morality”, it must *become* what it *is*: the doctrine of the Trinity, of the equal and interdependent functioning of the three Persons, of which mankind is one: the Father, the Son and Sophia – the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> The Father is the unconscious, that mysterious power active in the universe as well as in each of us. The qualities of individuality and consciousness do not belong to it: it is in the Son that these qualities reside. The third person of the trinity is Sophia, or Wisdom, or Holy Spirit – which emanates from both the Father and the Son, insists Mitrinović who sometimes used *Filioque* as his pseudonym – which can also be regarded as Universal Humanity. This is *us*. Or, better yet, this is what we should *become*, because it is what we *are*: the emanation from the Father and the Son in which the two persons, or the unconscious and the conscious, are harmoniously balanced. In that respect – provided that we do become what we are – we are the Kingdom on Earth, or Sophia incarnated. Let us call it Mitrinović’s theological topography.

This theological scheme has its historical equivalent, or historical topography: “Asia as the Father-aspect, and Africa as the Mother-aspect of consciousness, may be said to have willed the birth of the Son, who should be, of his own nature, as divine as themselves, but self-conscious in addition”.<sup>20</sup> This child is Europe, the place of world-consciousness. Pre-Christian religions, as well as the cultures in which they flourished, saw the world as an undifferentiated unity, and their followers lived an instinctive form of life in them: unconscious, un-individualized, at one with nature and their collectives. Judaism brought about the sense of individuation by creating the Son of God, but it was only in historical Christianity that this sense became realised. Christianity is the religion of individuality and of reason. No other religion knows of a God who wanted to be incarnated in Man. By doing that, he sent us a clear message, which we failed to understand. We misunderstood his invitation to become his equals, collectively as humankind, in the Trinity. We only understood the

17 Ibid, 82.

18 Ibid, 145.

19 Ibid, 112.

20 Ibid, 109.



individuation, and refused to go any further. It is the greatest achievement of historical Christianity and at the same time its greatest heresy, for this religion and its various churches blocked any further development. Instead of becoming what it is, Christianity froze in the state we find ourselves in. The thesis, unconscious, un-individualised and holistic pre-Christianity, was negated by the antithesis: conscious, individualistic, and differentiated. The next step must be a synthesis: not historical Christianity, but the *true* one, in which both the thesis and the antithesis will be *aufgehoben* – at the same time preserved and annulled – and thus reconciled. As Sophia, Wisdom, the Kingdom on Earth, we are not meant to be individuals only. We need to become individualized and self-conscious within the larger collective – mankind – and to recreate a state of primordial unity at a higher level. This state will integrate the oneness with the world and other human beings, which was natural and unquestionable in the pre-Christian religions, with the self-conscious individualism of the Christians. When we achieve that, we will be the third collective member of the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son, and will earn the name Solovyev invented for us: the Godmanhood.

This final leap into the state we are destined to reach will be our spiritual rebirth. As merely self-conscious and individualized creatures, we live in hostility, competition, enmity and the conflict of modern life. This only means that the world-consciousness has not acquired its final form, and that we are constantly being threatened by an outburst of our irrational, instinctual, unconscious beginnings. How else is one to understand the Great War, if not as the betrayal of our rational, conscious and *seraphic* nature? Europe almost disappeared in the war, and it is our Aryan, Teutonic brutal side that led us to it. Aryanism is for Mitrinović somehow related to Europe, the white race and Christianity, but it cannot be reduced to them. It stands for willpower, an excess of which is evident in European wars and conquests, but also for the ethics of heroism and the energy of all those who are capable of building, creating and inventing.

Most of Mitrinović's *The New Age* editorials are devoted to surveying the present condition of the world in view of the possibility of achieving Universal Humanity. Since the world is one huge organism in which different races and cultures are individual organs, whose proper functioning depends on their predispositions and abilities, Mitrinović examines at length their potential for contributing to the creation of a harmonious and well functioning world. Many of Mitrinović's conclusions and claims would raise eyebrows: although what he says refers to the mystical spiritual essences of cultures and races, it seems that when he praises as well as when he criticises them he all too often slips from this mystical and essential level onto a more mundane one. Some of this does remind one of



present-day discussions, such as Mitrinović's views of Islam: both "a salutary criticism of European Christianity" and "the enemy of Christianity and of Europe".<sup>21</sup> However,

[the] attempt to "destroy" it by the mission of a new Crusade is forbidden. Understanding is the first thing needed; and next to understanding, the will to guide. It is incumbent on Europe to remove from Islam every ground of just complaint and, at the same time, to offer to the Islamic communities every aid within Europe's power.<sup>22</sup>

One idea, however, is never put into question: the central position of Europe in the future spiritual rebirth of the world. Although all European values are "fallen, fallen, fallen from their high Aryan estate", although Europe's treatment of other races and peoples is anything but blameless, it is still the only part of the world capable of producing the synthesis which Mitrinović hopes for.<sup>23</sup> Europe's aim has always been to "create a new synthesis, more perfectly Aryan and 'noble' in the higher European sense, more inclusive of cultural and other differences, more tolerant of contradictions".<sup>24</sup> Both Aryan and Christian – which means blessed by strong willpower, reason and self-consciousness, in addition to the highest level of individuation known to mankind – Europe has the means and responsibility to lead the world towards higher synthesis and harmony. It needs to start by uniting itself, by synthesising all European cultures into a unified whole: the creation of a European Federation is the precondition for the wider act of uniting the whole world. This Federation is not only a political union, but a spiritual and cultural one, and it should not be imposed on the rest of the world, but posited as a standard for measuring all others. Europe has already achieved the highest level of human individuation and freedom: what it needs now is the complementary principle of collectivity, the ability to live in harmony. Mitrinović calls this principle "Socialism". A trinity again: Aryanism, Christianity and Socialism, or will, reason and feeling, are the three components of divine Wisdom.

How is Europe to achieve its unity? Great Britain must lead it towards Universal Humanity. In the continent of will and reason, Great Britain is the most reasonable and – as her worldwide Empire testifies – endowed with the strongest will. "The British Empire is that Power, both centripetal and centrifugal, which has spread the Aryan presence throughout the world and keeps the world related to Western Europe, is the indication of the utterly evolutionary and supra-historical importance and mission of

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21 Ibid, 81.

22 Ibid, 83.

23 Ibid, 88.

24 Ibid, 85.

the giant and the sphinx, Albion”.<sup>25</sup> This idea is only mentioned in *The New Age* editorials; it was in *New Britain* and the publications which followed from it that Mitrinović explained why Great Britain should resume her responsibilities for the world synthesis.

The reader of the *New Britain* editorials will notice with relief the absence of Sophia, the Trinity, capitalized nouns which refer to spiritual essences, and all the other mystic paraphernalia which made *The New Age* editorials such a difficult read. Mitrinović’s intentions are here both clearer and more overtly political, even though the author increased his prophetic rhetoric and preserved a distinct Solovyevian bent. We live in the age of plenty, claims Mitrinović, which has made possible a level of individualism previously unheard of. This, however, is not enough: something important is still missing. The man of the East experiences the world without being an individuated self; the man of the West, on the contrary, only as an empty, contentless, isolated selfhood.<sup>26</sup> What we need is a synthesis in which the individuated self will not confront the world, but will feel at one with it without losing its individuality and freedom. This synthesis, Mitrinović still considers a Christian ideal. There is no time to hesitate, claims Mitrinović, because “the West itself, and most of all, Europe, [...] is faced with the catastrophe of extinction”.<sup>27</sup> “The end of our human existence is swiftly approaching”, and “our future extinction and planetary passing” are certain.<sup>28</sup> We are not told why this should be so: has the rise of Fascism and Communism contributed to the feeling of the “eleventh hour”, or is it so because we have succumbed to the “seductive experience of mere individualism, of materialist self-divinization”?<sup>29</sup> Rutherford explains this prophetic announcement of the imminent catastrophe as Mitrinović’s warning that the East, which has always been the world’s reservoir of spiritual energy, has embarked on the Western path of individualization, and that unless the West quickly develops a holistic synthesis, the East will soon reach the same level of materialist self-divinization, seduced by science and false individualism: “If that were to happen, then the whole world could disintegrate into a technological dictatorship, as portrayed in Solovyev’s *Anti-Christ*”.<sup>30</sup> The light will not come from the East, it is the West that needs to achieve the synthesis. This synthesis in the *New Britain* editorials fortunately has only two aspects: a religious and a political one. Religiously, it is the triumph of the “Christ-principle”: “the experience,

25 Ibid, 125.

26 Ibid, 278.

27 Ibid, 355.

28 Ibid, 357.

29 Ibid, 278.

30 Ibid, 66.

the truth, the knowledge, that all souls are contained in all souls, and that in the centre of each of all the souls, the same, the very same universal is living and present”.<sup>31</sup> Christ is the symbol of the reconciliation of the discreteness of individuality and the wholeness and unity of mankind, in whom the divine and human worlds are reconciled. “The Christ-Principle is the realization in the mind and will of the human individual of the universality and commonness of human nature”.<sup>32</sup> Politically, however, the Christ-Principle equals Socialism:

We cannot start the construction of the New World and its glorious civilization [...] as long as the wealth and the luxury of plenty that is locked up in the potentialities of our Machine Age is not actualized and divinely distributed throughout all humanity. [...] [T]he New Culture [...] would not be possible if humanity were to remain much longer in the chains of mere Money and its self-responsible creators, the financial rulers of Rulers.<sup>33</sup>

The Christ-Principle means renouncing violence and revolution, and embracing the political order, which also renounces the excesses of individualism such as greed, selfishness and materialism. To be “at one with the world”, if translated in political terms can only mean to be at one with our fellow-humans:

Let us produce the first community in history which actually shall have been produced by Social Contract! Let us transform ourselves into the first Social State: the state which is, also, above and between Communism and Fascism in the revolutionary method of bringing the new State about! By consciousness, by agreement, by persuasion, will our New Nation be born.<sup>34</sup>

This theologico-political orientation is neither leftist nor rightist, but as in Velimirović’s article on the position of the Balkans, *above* the two political possibilities.

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31 Ibid., 67.

32 Ibid, 375.

33 Ibid, 359.

34 Ibid, 368.