

# The Sexual-Mystical Sophianism of Dimitrije Mitrinović

Nemanja Radulović

Dimitrije Mitrinović is one of the minor and still insufficiently studied figures of Western esotericism. That is why we shall begin by providing a brief biographical overview. This Bosnian Serb was born in 1887, in a teacher's family, at a time when Bosnia was under Austrian rule. He studied in Austria and Germany (Zagreb, Vienna, Munich, Tübingen), apart from travelling widely (he spent two years in Rome, for example). In the Serbian and South Slavic cultures of the early 20th century, he was a prominent literary and fine arts critic, a promoter of avant-garde trends such as Expressionism and Futurism. At the same time, he was also a political champion of South Slavic unity, which was to be realised through the disintegration of Austria, with Serbia as its Piedmont: apart from propaganda work, this also involved conspiratorial activities, of which we still do not know enough. During this period, he was undoubtedly the aesthetic and political guru of a generation. Before World War One, he established contacts in Europe, wishing to establish an artistic and political alliance. What should be particularly emphasised in this context is his contact with Kandinsky, with whom he kept company in Munich. In July 1914, as a citizen of a warring state, with the help of Erich Gutkind, he left Germany and travelled to England. Upon arrival, he was involved in the cultural-propagandistic work of Serbian intellectuals that was supposed to win the English public opinion over for the Serbian cause and the South Slavic union. However, this is where a break in Mitrinović's biography occurs. After World War One, he remained in England, where he spent the rest of his life, until his death in 1953, and although he maintained his connections with the native country,<sup>1</sup> he now wrote in English, participated in the political and intellectual life of Britain, and most importantly of all, he increasingly directed his interests towards esotericism. His first follower was A. Orage, who opened the pages of his periodical *The New Age* to him in the 1920-1921 period. Even though his column was called "World Affairs", Mitrinović's texts (signed M. M. Cosmoi) did

<sup>1</sup> Let us add here that a group of intellectuals in Yugoslavia in the period between the great wars was under the influence of Mitrinović's ideas about panhumanism and the future role of the Slavs.

not constitute merely comments of current events but a macrohistorical mythology. The less than clear style and some of his comments provoked readers' reactions. Orage subsequently distanced himself from Mitrinović, leaning towards Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, while Mitrinović acquired a new circle of disciples. In the 1930's, he was active in the movements The New Britannia and The New Atlantis. Among his contacts (or disciples) were Alfred Adler, Frederick Soddy, Roy de Maistre (who did a portrait of Mitrinović), a young Alan Watts (who left in his autobiography an interesting description of Mitrinović, whom he referred to as a "rascal guru").<sup>2</sup> His library is preserved at the University of Bradford, together with archive materials, and partly at the University Library in Belgrade, while the preservation of his ideational heritage has been entrusted to the care of the Mitrinović Foundation (since 2010; previously: The New Atlantis) in the UK.<sup>3</sup>

His ideas, which never formed a coherent system, are scattered across a multitude of articles and lectures, collected after his death. They are derived from several sources, mainly from theosophic macrohistory (he considered Madame Blavatsky to be "the first Superhuman in the vehicle of femininity, the first woman genius known to history"), but he was more inclined towards the anthroposophic-Christian version. His inclination towards a Christianised version is evident from the fact of his inclusion of Solov'ev and Russian religious thought in his eclectic system. His great interest in the Orient (he knew Sanskrit and Tibetan) influenced the reception of Advaita Vedanta. Finally, he was interested in psychoanalysis, and subsequently his sympathies switched to Adler (he was one of the founders of the Adler Society in the UK). He believed in a theosophic alternation of races (that today's Aryan race would be replaced by a future one, where the Slavs had a special place), but that was merely a part of the *synthetic* process of mankind's development that led towards *panhumanism*, which was his key word. He saw the ideal society (The United States of Europe) as tricameral (the economic, political and cultural chamber), which he took over from Steiner.<sup>4</sup>

Mitrinović has also been studied as a political thinker, a champion of pan-Europeanism, a precursor of the European federation, a socialist, a profascist, an antifascist, his ideas about the relations between peoples, races, epochs have been analysed – all of the above quite justifiably, of course, for Mitrinović's in-

<sup>2</sup> Biography and overview of ideas in English: Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative. An Exploration of the Life and the Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinovic* (Boulder, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Andrew Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović: A Biography* (York: William Sessions Ltd, 2006.); cf. also James Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, La Sale, Illinois: Open Court, 1976), 191-195. In Serbian: Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića*, [The dogma and utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Accessible at: <http://www.mitrinovic-foundation.org.uk/>.

<sup>4</sup> Steiner may have taken this over from Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, through Schuré. Mitrinović had Saint-Yves' *The Mission of India* in his library (today in University Library in Belgrade), and he was also in contact with Schuré, so that perhaps a direct influence of the French author is possible.

terests were primarily macrohistorical.<sup>5</sup> In Serbian culture, he is remembered primarily as an art critic. In the period between the great wars, he was already attacked as a mystifier and a charlatan, and after the Second World War he sank into oblivion as someone who had “fallen prey to mysticism” and turned away from the domestic culture. From the 1970’s onwards, he has gradually been rehabilitated, not just as a critic but also as an esotericist, so that today he is the focus of both academic papers and popular articles. This kind of a double reception in two cultures, the Serbian and the English one, as well as a two-phase reception in Serbian criticism, provide a good illustration of the break in his biography.

While Mitrinović’s artistic or political views have been analysed up to a point, some others still remain insufficiently known. One of those is the role of Eros, and in this paper we shall strive to present it and to show how it fits in with the tradition of Western esotericism and sexual mysticism. The later term is used by Arthur Versluis in order to separate sexual magic from mysticism (more on this further on).<sup>6</sup>

We find Mitrinović’s ideas connected with sexuality primarily in the 1920’s, when he contributed to Orage’s periodical *The New Age*.<sup>7</sup> They can partly be encountered in his later writings from the 1930’s, although the political aspect was already the dominant one by then; at the same time, we rely on the memories of some of his contemporaries that contain parts of their conversations (it is owing to this, for example, that the ideas of Gurdjieff were popularised even before the publication of the texts themselves). The coincidences between some testimonies and the published texts point in favour of the reliability of those memories.

Mitrinović’s ideas about sexuality can be presented in the following manner. Three levels or three kingdoms can be distinguished in the world: the plant, animal and human ones. While the plant kingdom is an expression of the very life and creation, the inductor of life on earth, the animal is the conductor and enjoyer of that life. This difference is even more important when it comes to the manifestation of sexuality. A plant stalk (thyrsus) is a tool of its immortality, for it serves the purpose of reproduction; the plant is thus a basis of the entire sex in the world. While a plant rests upon the vegetative system, an animal rests precisely upon sexuality, it is nothing but a genital itself, its vegetative basis is outside of it, it individualises the vegetative function of a plant. The plant maintains the cosmic essence of sex, while the animal is its condensation and individualisation.<sup>8</sup>

What is already noticeable here is the notion of the ambivalence of sex. The

<sup>5</sup> Apart from Rigby, an overview of Mitrinović in the context of a theosophical reading of Slavic messianism can be found in: Nemanja Radulović, “Slavia esoterica Between East and West”, *Ricerche slavistiche* 13(59) (2015): 74-78.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Versluis, *A Secret History of Western Sexual Mysticism* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> The texts from the periodical have been published in: Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). The periodical is accessible within the framework of The Modernist Journals Project, <http://www.modjourn.org>

<sup>8</sup> Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 204-205.

idea of sexuality as a foundation, basis (“sex is the ground of humanity”)<sup>9</sup> assumes an even broader concept elsewhere: sex is proclaimed to be holy and God is sex. Sex is the essence of both man and God, of the absolute and the very existence. “Sex and God are the Holy Trinity, and this Trinity is its eternal unity. Sex is the communion between God and man, the communion of Eternity with Time.” And not only that: sex is the kingdom of prototypes, Platonic ideas, the world of concepts. The kingdom of ideas – of eternity – is revealed through the sexual (a rather peculiar form of Platonism!)<sup>10</sup> This is probably the most radical statement pertaining to Eros that can be found in Mitrinović.

This foundation of the world is equated with Sophia, who has a very important role in Mitrinović’s thought. Sophia creation is motherly, through conception and birth she creates Life itself, the blessed kingdom of vegetation.<sup>11</sup> To Mitrinović, Sophia is not immaterial, quite the contrary. She is the *body* of the Logos, mankind in its *physical aspect*. Sophia will be incarnated in the human race (whereas the Logos is mankind in reason and conscience). As opposed to the Gnostic Sophia, Mitrinović’s Sophia is not imprisoned in matter as if in a prison. The pleroma of the future kingdom will be precisely the incarnation of Sophia; and its incarnation is equated with *panhumanity*, the unique organism of the renewed Adam Cadmon. Today’s nations and races are the body of Adam Cadmon, and they participate in the great evolutionary process (wherein the Aryan race and the Slavs currently have an important role) in which they will eventually be synthesised, which will be crowned by the descent of Sophia.

The eternal Female is the whole of existence. Matter is the eternal female, the spirit is the eternal male, and life is their child. She is the incorporeal ultimate nature; the cosmic Sophia is the world, and the human Sophia is mankind. The sun is the body of Sophia, Sophia-Logos, in the solar system.<sup>12</sup>

Sophia is also equated with the Holy Spirit. Mitrinović does not introduce Sophia as the fourth hypostasis, but equates her with the Holy Spirit. In a certain way he feminises and sexualises the Holy Spirit (which is the feminine gender in Hebrew and Aramaic). Mitrinović continues the Joachimian tradition of the third revelation, but the Holy Spirit is equated with a markedly sexualised Sophia. If we systematise his thoughts, it becomes evident that there is an equation mark between Sophia = the Holy Spirit = Mankind (in its corporeal aspect) = Matter = Sex. That is the basis of existence.

This cosmic division is reflected on the anthropological level as well. It divides the human body into the solar plexus (the subconsciousness of the body), thorax, that is, the heart and lungs (emotions), the brain and the sexual system, which has its own consciousness.<sup>13</sup> This arrangement (the brain, chest, stom-

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 234-235.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>13</sup> Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Treća Sila* [Third force] (Čačak: Gradac, 2004), 94-96; first time published

ach, sexual system) is somewhat reminiscent of the arrangement of chakras. It is interesting to note that, although Mitrinović was familiar with tantric works, through the books of Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe),<sup>14</sup> there is no noticeable influence of tantrism on his notions of sexuality. He still remains to a greater extent in the Western tradition. At the same time, this division resembles the systems of the human organism given by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky:<sup>15</sup> the upper floor (the intellectual centre), the middle (emotional) and the lower floor (motoric, sexual and instinctual). His disciple – before he left him for Gurdjieff – A. Orage also distinguishes the cerebral, nervous and instinctive system.<sup>16</sup> It seems that Orage wrote essay on that topic in 1923. at the Prieuré.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps Mitrinović was also influenced by Gurdjieff but he uses psychological concepts. Mitrinović, already distanced from psychoanalysis, states in 1931. (“The Realm of Dreams”) that sexuality is not the master of the subconsciousness, but only one among its parts.

Sex, as we have said, has an ambiguous place in Mitrinović. With a kind of prophetic ominousness, he spoke of a “female uprising” (by which he evidently meant the emancipation of women). It was a part of the rebellion of the humiliated and the offended in the contemporary West, of slaves and women (that is, the workers’ movement and feminism). Essentially, it was the man who was to blame for this state of affairs. The consequence of this uprising is that a woman becomes a man. The glory of the sexes pales, and it is impossible to renew it. To him, the contemporary emancipation movements were an expression of a loss the nature of sex (thought of in essentialist terms), feminism led to the masculinisation of women. It is not difficult to recognise the influence of Weininger, popular during the era of *La Belle Époque*, the time of Mitrinović’s youth. Still, his vision – an essentially optimistic and synthetic one – also sees in this loss the possibility of transition to a higher, suprahuman state, which would then be suprasexual as well<sup>18</sup> (it is not possible at this point not to remember the traditions on the androgyny of Adam Cadmon, where androgyny actually denotes perfec-

as: “The Realm of Dreams” *Purpose*, 3 (1931): 52-58. According to Rigby’s systematisation (Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative*, 178): the a) metabolic, b) nervous, c) respiratory and circulatory system.

<sup>14</sup> He had them in his library (today in University Library in Belgrade).

<sup>15</sup> Mitrinović’s attitude towards them is beyond the scope of this topic. In a way, they were his competitors, for they “snatched” Orage away from him. Still, he was interested in their teaching, as evidenced by his writings preserved at Bradford. According to the testimony of C. S. Nott, a disciple of Gurdjieff’s, Mitrinović attended the demonstrations of Ouspensky’s English group, as did Algernon Blackwood (C. S. Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff. A Pupil’s Journal*, London, Arkana Penguin Books, 1990, 48). Stephen Graham, a friend of Mitrinović’s, who later married his sister, testifies that Mitrinović did not like Ouspensky, whom he met at Lady Rothermere’s (Stephen Graham, in “Stranci o Mitrinoviću” [Foreigners on Mitrinović] in Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Sabrana dela 3* [Collected Works] (Svetlost, Sarajevo, 1991), 225.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Orage, *On Love&Psychological Exercises*(Boston, York Beach: Weiser Books, 1998), 14.

<sup>17</sup> P.B.Taylor, *Gurdjieff and Orage. Brothers in Elysium* (York Beach ME: Weiser Books, 2001), 96.

<sup>18</sup> The influences of his friend Erich Gutkind can be traced, too. In his book *Siderische Geburt* (1910) Gutkind proclaimed that Eros leads towards “Seraphic State“.

tion). Man becomes transsexual (not in the contemporary sense of the term) and suprahuman.<sup>19</sup> Mitrinović oscillates between Weininger and the Christian-esoteric tradition of androgyny as suprasexuality.

In this system, Mitrinović opposes the North/masculinity/Logos to the South, which is equated with the unconscious, warm, dark. “For passive and negative is the South... and the great glory of the South is not that it should transfigure the North by disfiguring it and debasing it, but that it should be the superb, the worthy, the strong and the true resistance to the actively transfiguring North, to the North of Reason, to the Great Cold of Awareness. Let the Cold and the Lighted be the redemption and fulfilment of the South, of that which is unconscious, hot, dark; let not reason and consciousness be extinguished in Power and Being. For Africa, tropics, the Black man, the Islamic faith, the Sex woman, the Unconscious of our Soul is Being and Power; but Form and System they are not. Logic and Cognizance the South is not.”<sup>20</sup>

Africa, Asia, the tropics, “coloured races”, Islam, sex, the female, the unconscious, the body are *isomorphic* to him, to use a term introduced by Gilbert Durand from the sphere of studying the imaginary.<sup>21</sup> The isomorphism of that aspect and the “Southern” and the racial provides a guideline for studying his imaginarium. Those images are not devoid of stereotypicalness – generally speaking, Mitrinović appears liberal on the one hand, while on the other, in the above excerpts, for example, he advocates views that are far from the contemporary liberal discourse (such as his support to the British rule in India).<sup>22</sup>

This ambivalence is noticeable in his opposition of vegetative and animal sexuality; while the former is an expression of existence itself, the basis of being, the latter is limiting, closed. Psychoanalysis is ambivalent as well. Over time, however, he would come to emphasise its negative side, as “perverted genius of the Jew” as opposed to Adler, for whom sexuality is merely a symbol of power.<sup>23</sup> The negative aspect of sexuality is symbolised by the zodiacal scorpion,<sup>24</sup> as a symbol of death. His opposition to psychoanalysis comes, it would appear, from his view that psychoanalysis stressed that “scorpion” aspect instead of the Sophian one.

We come across even more interesting statements in the memoirs of Mitrinović’s friend and disciple Charles Benjamin Purdome (1883-1965), an architect, subsequently a follower of Meher Baba. It is clear from them that Mitrinović ascribed

<sup>19</sup> Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 245-246; 255; 261-262.

<sup>20</sup> Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 405.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: “Woman is violently awakening today, violently, like Asia and the Negro world, as violently as Judaism and Islam” (236). “The *femininity* of the *Sophian body*, however on the racial plane of the world and in its racial modality is the *immense ocean* of the *coloured races*” (245). “The evolution of the body... is the divine insanity and the *anti-Logoic madness* of the *woman* in Albion. The British Man, the hero, becomes the imperialist and the coward when he transforms himself and loses himself in the insanity of the Body” (244). (My italics.)

<sup>22</sup> “Mr. Gandhi is... wrong... Thus Western values must be imposed upon the East” (ibid., p. 162). It would be superficial to see an opponent of colonialism in Mitrinović despite his Indophilia.

<sup>23</sup> Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 337; cf. “Freud versus Adler”, *Certainly, Future*, 319-329.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 319.

to sex an even greater role than in his articles and lectures. "In whatever form sex is considered it is wrong; marriage is wrong, not to marry is wrong, to have a mistress is wrong, self-abuse is wrong, homosexuality is wrong. Sex is right only in its totality, and by mastering all its aspects, not denying any one of them." "All action is either homosexual, self-love, or heterosexual, love of others." Once again, Mitrinović's striving for totality and synthesis is quite recognisable. Hence: "The lower has to be passed through before the higher is reached." "All conflict is due to wrong sex." Transposed to the level of history: "The quarrels in the Church to-day started with St. Paul's neurosis, which was concerned with sex, and caused him to quarrel with St. Peter."<sup>25</sup> Behind the psychologising phrases such as the one about St. Paul, it is revealed yet again that sex is the ultimate basis of existence. This is no mere psychoanalytical pansexualism, but metaphysics and sexual mysticism.

Finally, although this paper deals with Mitrinović's texts from his English period, it is interesting to note that his poetry written in Serbian from the preceding period contains a very highly charged erotic tone. Exceptionally sensual, written in a Whitmanesque manner, it gave of the impression of being really new at a time when regular Parnassian poems dominated Serbian poetry. We present a part of it here, which not only illustrates the spirit of his poetry but also hints at his subsequent views: "I want the brutal force of your flesh, woman; I want wild rawness compacted in your muscles... Woman, Female, Feminine, let me disappear in an animal spasm; let us sink; I want us never to come back from the essence of being / So that we never see the day again, and so that I cannot distinguish myself from thyself or both of us from being, / from the big, eternal, incomprehensible..." ("The Fire of the Flesh").

In a nutshell, this would be a brief overview of Mitrinović's views, compiled from his writings. Where is mysticism to be found there? Some of these treatises could pass as psychological, essayistic analyses, as a metaphor of sorts. Some parts are written in a style which is somewhere between a Zen koan and a hymnal tone, some are almost like mantras. (For example: "Art is Magic / Magic is Life / Life is Divinity / Divinity is Humanity / Humanity is myself").<sup>26</sup>

But there are elements there that point to the fact that he relied on one of the traditions of Western esoteric thought: Sophianism. From the multiple reception of this old Jewish and gnostic idea, we here direct attention to that stream of Sophianism that appeared within the framework of Boehmeism from the 17th-18th century. From German Boehmeism, it was received in the Russian Rosicrucianism of the 18th century. From Boehmeism and Rosicrucianism, it reached Vladimir Solov'ëv (who directly turned to Boehmeism, Gnosticism and the Kabbalah). Solov'ëv influenced the coming into being of Sophianism in the Russian culture of the "Silver Age", in philosophers and theologians (Florenski, Bulgakov), as well as in poets (Blok). Although it is sometimes considered to be

<sup>25</sup> C.B.Purdome, *Life over Again* (London: J.M.Dent&Sons Ltd, 1951), 275-276.

<sup>26</sup> "Stanzas" in *Certainly, Future*, 45 (first published in *The New Age*, 1921).

a characteristic of Orthodox theological-philosophical thought, on account of its influence in that period of Russian culture, it actually belongs to the reception of this stream of Western esotericism.<sup>27</sup> Mitrinović was familiar with Solov'ëv's work and undoubtedly influenced by him.

It is precisely the role of Sophia that points to the mystical aspect of Mitrinović's understanding of Eros. In Boehme's followers, Sophia often had a markedly erotic aspect (in Gottfried Arnold, for example). Still, whereas in Gichtel, Jane Leade and Solov'ëv there exists personal experience of an encounter with Sophia, Mitrinović, speaking of the macrolevel of mankind, remains a prophet of gnosis but not a mystic of personal experience.

The authors of this stream also speak of the incarnation of Sophia. In Boehme, Sophia is already incarnated as the Mother of God;<sup>28</sup> she is the substantiality and corporeality of the Spirit. The entire creation is Sophia's body.<sup>29</sup> In terms of influence upon Mitrinović, of greatest importance here is Solov'ëv, who also identifies Sophia with the Holy Spirit and mankind at some points of his complex doctrine. He sees manifestations of Sophia through the Holy Virgin, Christ, but also as the Church of the future. As in Mitrinović, mankind united with God is the incarnation of Sophia.<sup>30</sup>

Steiner (who was familiar with the writings of Solov'ëv)<sup>31</sup> speaks of the establishment of anthroposophy as the beginning of the incarnation of Sophia.<sup>32</sup> Sophia is manifested as the "living being Anthroposophy", the movement is the incarnation of Sophia herself, or more precisely, the beginning of the anthropomorphisation and incarnation of Sophia in mankind.<sup>33</sup> The idea of Sophia's future incarnation plays a great role in the work of the contemporary anthropo-

<sup>27</sup> P. A. Buryškin, *Rozenkreicerovskie istoki sofijanstva* [The rosicrucian sources of sophianism] in N.A. Bogomolov, *Russkaja literatura načala XX veka i okkul'tizm* [Russian literature of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and occultism] (Moscow, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 445-462; Solov'ëv's sources are a complex issue; see, for example, Aleksej Losev, *Vladimir Solov'ëv i ego vremena* [Vladimir Solov'ëv and his era], Moscow, Molodaja gvardija, 2009; Konstantin Burmistrov, "Vladimir Solov'ëv i Kabbala: k postanovke problemy" [Vladimir Solov'ëv and the Kabbalah. Towards Positing the Problem], *Issledovanija po istorii ruskoj mysli* (1998):7-104. Cf. Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia. The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 57-88; Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death. A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992), 105-122.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Schipflinger, *Sophia-Maria* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, INC, 1998), 197.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 200-201.

<sup>30</sup> Vladimir Soloviev, *La Russie et l'Église universelle* (Paris, Stock, 1922), 254-260. "Mankind united with God in the Holy Virgin, in Christ, in the Church, is the realisation of the essential Wisdom or the absolute substance of God, its created form, its incarnation" (238). In Solov'ëv, there is also the idea of mankind as an organism whose limbs are nations.

<sup>31</sup> Maria Carlson, *No Religion Higher than Truth. History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia 1875-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 95; Renata von Maydell, "Anthroposophy in Russia", in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (New York, Cornell University, 1997), 155-157.

<sup>32</sup> Repeated, for in the preceding phases of the planet she was also incarnated.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Leviton, *The Imagination of Pentecost* (Hudson, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1994), 200-202.



sophic author Sergey O. Prokofieff,<sup>34</sup> and it is also encountered in the opus of the Russian esotericist and poet Daniil Andreev ("The Rose of the World").

Reliance on the tradition of Sophianism leads us to speak of mysticism, not of sexual magic. The latter also has its tradition, strives to directly influence reality through acts and gestures (ritual relationship, breath control, meditation, etc.).<sup>35</sup> Mysticism possesses gnosis, will not to power or some specific goals, but to a spiritual union. As this distinction was determined by A. Versluis: "But here we distinguish fairly rigorously between sexual mysticism and sexual magic, because whereas sexual magical practices are focused on particular worldly gains or, to put it another way, the acquisition of power to achieve particular ends, sexual mysticism is strictly gnostic in the sense that its adherents aim not for power but for inner or spiritual union and realization. While there may be magical dimensions to a mystical practice, or mystical dimensions to a magical one, by and large one can distinguish one from the other without too much trouble."<sup>36</sup> Mitrinović is closer to the mystical stream. Also, the sexual magic of the 19th and 20th centuries is for the most part anti-Christian, whereas he was a follower of Christian mystical tradition.

If he did take Sophianism over from Solov'ev, what constitutes Mitrinović's peculiarity is his emphatic linking of Sophia with sexuality. In Solov'ev's Sophian, visionary and poetic works, or in the poetry of Blok, there is an emotional, sensual tone, but She reveals herself in the manner of a troubadour's Lady. Mitrinović goes a step further: if Sophia is material, if she is the basis of matter, then she is connected to sex. The branch of Sophianism that took the "Eastern" stream received a radically sexualised turn in Mitrinović. Also, very soon in Mitrinović's thought this sexually charged Sophianism would be psychologised under the influence of psychoanalysis.

There is, however, a place in Mitrinović, or more precisely a note in Purdome, which is indicative of his knowledge of another tradition, closer to sexual magic. That is the idea that the Holy Spirit is sperm and that a sin against sex is a sin against the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> Even this fragment, mentioned as a mere aside, which seems merely bizarre, has its tradition in the history of Western esotericism. Naturally, it has to do with the Borborites or Phibionites within the framework of Gnosticism, also referred to as sperm Gnostics ("Sperma-Gnosis", as formulated by K. R. H. Frick, and after him also P. R. Koenig)<sup>38</sup> or "pneumatics" (Eliade,

<sup>34</sup> Sergej O. Prokofjev, *Nebesnaja Sofija i Antroposofija* [The heavenly sophia and anthroposophy] (Moscow: Antroposofija, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> According to Hugh Urban's definition: "the explicit use of orgasm (whether heterosexual, homosexual, or autoerotic) as a means to create magical effects in external world" (Hugh Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2006, 3).

<sup>36</sup> Versluis, *The Secret History*, 8

<sup>37</sup> Purdome, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> K.R.H. Frick, *Licht und Finsterniss, Okkulte geheimgesellschaften bis zur Wende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: MarixVerlag, 2005), 113-129; "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo Gnosis" <http://www.pareligion.ch/spermo.htm> (last accessed 15.08.2016)

Drury)<sup>39</sup>, who equated sperm with pneuma and psyche, as the divine part in man. As is well known, some scholars were prone to the thesis about the continuity of this concept and practice through the centuries,<sup>40</sup> and to universalism in the broadest comparative-anthropological sense (Eliade), whereas more recent investigations (Urban) were more prone to seeing a heresiological topos, which served as a role model to new age sexual-magic groups.<sup>41</sup>

A bibliophile and erudite as he was, Mitrinović could get his information in any history of early Christian heresies. At the same time, however, this concept, that is, the reception of the Gnostic concept or one ascribed to Gnostics, was a part of what, to Mitrinović, was a contemporary, living esoteric milieu, in Crowley and O. T. O.<sup>42</sup> Mitrinović's fragment, transposed indirectly, is still different in conceptual terms: he speaks of the pneumatic, not Eucharistic character of semen. No far-reaching conclusions should be drawn on the basis of a single fragment, but it quite simply shows that even this quote can be contextualised and that through it Mitrinović stands firmly within the framework of the esoteric scene of his time. But it is interesting to note that, biographically as well, it is possible to establish connections between Mitrinović and O. T. O., to which greater attention has been paid only recently, owing to the investigations of Marco Pasi. For example, Crowley mentions in his diary entry of 16th August 1930 that he met Mitrinović in Berlin; on the same day he mentions meeting Adler as well. The connection between Mitrinović and Crowley's circle was not restricted to this. General Fuller, a Thelemite, was a member of Mitrinović's *The New Britannia* for a while.<sup>43</sup> The connection between *The New Britannia* and Mitrinović and Crowley and O. T.

<sup>39</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago press, 1978), 109-112; Nevill Drury, *Stealing Fire from Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105-106.

<sup>40</sup> Frick is even of the opinion that "sperm-gnosis" is the starting point of all mediaeval and new age secret societies (Frick, *Licht und Finsterniss*, 113).

<sup>41</sup> Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, 22-40. Urban therefore, as opposed to Frick and Eliade, considers sexual magic to be an essentially modern phenomenon, *ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>42</sup> Crowley received the concept of holy sperm from Theodor Reuss, and it also appears in the work of the Belgian spiritist Clément de Saint-Marc (Marco Pasi, "The Knight of Spermatophagy", in *Hidden Intercourse. Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 360-400; Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, 109-139; Hugh Urban, "The Yoga of Sex", in *Hidden Intercourse. Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 401-444). Introvigne is of the opinion that the use of semen for the purpose of creating an immortal "other" body existed in the 18th century, in the magical practice of Cagliostro (Massimo Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago*, Milano: SugarCo Edizioni, 2003), 148. Cf. Hakl, "The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified by Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century", *Hidden Intercourse. Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 452-453. For a polemic with Introvigne, see: Pasi, "The Knight of Spermatophagy", 395, footnote 73 (which brings us back to the issue of the continuity of a particular tradition, that is, the (non-)existence of transmission). A similar use of semen (alchemically interpreted) also occurs in Giuliano Kremmerz (Hakl, "The Theory and Practice", 456-457).

<sup>43</sup> Marco Pasi, *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 69-72.

O. attracted the attention of conspiracy theorists of that time, mostly those of Catholic orientation.<sup>44</sup> Although Fuller, being dissatisfied due to the fact that the group was insufficiently organised, switched to Mosley's fascist movement, he did not sever connections with Mitrinović.<sup>45</sup> As late as 1950, we find Fuller among the participants of a meeting of the *New Europe* group.<sup>46</sup> Material from Mitrinović archive confirms that in 1951. Fuller wrote a letter to Mitrinović, about Gurdjieff and Ouspensky among other topics.<sup>47</sup> We may mention that David Eder, an early propagator of psychoanalysis, Mitrinović's close collaborator, also took an interest in Crowley.<sup>48</sup> Mitrinović's friend (who later married his sister) the writer Stephen Graham met with Crowley 's biographer John Symonds.<sup>49</sup>

This connection should not be overemphasised either: Mitrinović took from a multitude of sources. Also, his thought remains Christian (in a rather specific way), while Thelemism is anti-Christian.

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Still, this tells us something else: what Mitrinović's place on the esoteric scene was, and that his connections with various people still offer a fruitful area of research in biographical-historical terms. In the general sense of the significance of a network, for example in Australia, the pioneer of abstract painting Roy de Maistre in his ideas on colour relations reflects Kandinsky in a way – it would be interesting to determine to what extent Mitrinović contributed to that. Is it perhaps precisely this view of sexuality that influenced Alan Watts, who, according to Versluis, was the first populariser of sexual mysticism?<sup>50</sup> Perhaps that came from none other than Mitrinović?

Let us conclude: Mitrinović took over the stream of Sophianism through Solov'ev, but he gave it a specific form. He combined the thesis about the fu-

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 125-126; 157-158.

<sup>45</sup> Mitrinović had in his library Fuller's book on the Kabbalah (*The Secret Wisdom of the Qabalah. A Study in Jewish Mystical Thought*, London: Rider&Co, 1937), today in University of Bradford Library.

<sup>46</sup> For example, together with Soddy he attended the lecture "The New Europe Group and Atlantic Initiative for the Order of Man", which Mitrinović delivered on 17th February 1950 (Palavestra, *Dogma i Utopija*, 354).

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/media/library/specialcollections/documents/Mitrinovic-Archive-Catalogue-Nov-2015-proofed.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> One should, of course, pay attention to the time frame. Eder's article on Crowley's book *Konx Om Pax* was published as early as February 1908 – in Orage's periodical *The New Age* (James Webb, *Harmonious Circle* (London: Thames&Hudson, 1980, 211), which constitutes another connection. In the "psychosynthesis" group, which was made up of Havelock Ellis, Maurice Nicoll and Eder, and which Mitrinović occasionally visited, psychoanalysis was connected with an interest in esotericism - James Webb,ibid. 216-217

<sup>49</sup> Michael Hughes, *Beyond Holy Russia. The Life and Times of Stephen Graham* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014), 312.

<sup>50</sup> Versluis, *The Secret History*, 128-129. Versluis considers his book *Nature, Man and Woman* from 1958 to be the first popularisation of what is referred to as a trend of Anglo-American pragmatic mysticism.

ture incarnation of Sophia and panhumanism with the theosophic alternation of races, and to Sophia herself, as the bearer of matter and the created world, he added a strong sexual tone. We can see in this, as a specific characteristic of Mitrinović's version, a pronounced modernisation of Sophianism. It is evident in the interpretation of sexuality as a universal key, which began in the 19th century already.<sup>51</sup> Another important trait of his sexual mysticism is psychologisation. On the evidence of this, we can even view Mitrinović as a precursor of the New Age, if we consider "the psychologisation of religion and the sacralisation of psychology"<sup>52</sup> to be the defining characteristic of this phenomenon.

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. "...like the new forms of *scientia sexualis* that emerged in the nineteenth century, the literature on sexual magic also identifies sex as the innermost secret or 'hidden truth' of the self, the most powerful force in human nature, and the key to understanding the mysteries of human existence" (Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, 6).

<sup>52</sup> Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion, and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden- Boston: Brill, 1996), 224-255.

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