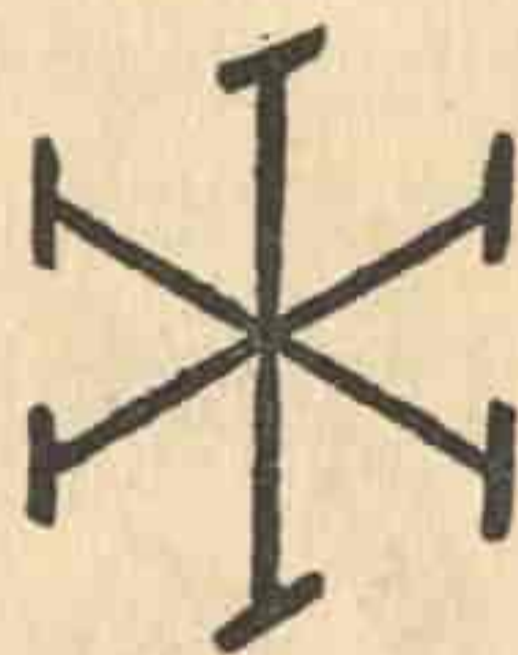


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The
New Atlantis
Foundation



First
FOUNDATION LECTURE
given at
21 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1
on
Thursday, 27th January
1955

CREATIVE CRITIQUE
AND
ANTHROPO PHILOSOPHY

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКА БИБЛИОТЕКА
"СВ. САСА МАРКОВИЋ" БЕОГРАД
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THE NEW ATLANTIS FOUNDATION

THE name New Atlantis was given by Dimitrije Mitrinović to the school which he founded. He delivered certain most important lectures concerning the work of the school during the Spring and Summer of 1941 at 115 Gower Street. The New Atlantis Foundation has been established to continue this work.

The name has three significant meanings or references.

It refers to the ancient continent Atlantis, well known to mythology and perhaps most famous from Plato's reference to it in the Timaeus. Tradition tells us that in those days, before the mighty empire of China and before Noah and the flood, mankind lived intuitively and knew by intuition much that we have subsequently learnt by thought and observation. It may well be that they knew much that we have not yet learnt in modern times.

Indeed those psychologists whose concern is with the human soul, and particularly Dr C. G. Jung, have shown us how the very patterns and symbols which fill the ancient scriptures and seem so strange to commonsense lie deep in the human unconscious even today and reveal themselves in our dreams. And if there is any truth in the assertion by the writer of the Book of Genesis that God made man in his own image these may be intuitive premonitions of truths about the working of the Universe which are yet to be discovered in full consciousness.

A new method of knowledge may be needed which does not deny the critical intellectual consciousness we have gained but adds to it also intuitive knowledge.

The second reference is to the 'New Atlantis' of Francis Bacon, in which he describes his Eutopian vision of the House of Solomon as 'the noblest foundation that was ever upon the earth, dedicated to the Study of the Works and Creatures of God', the aim of which was 'the Knowledge of Causes and Secret Motions of Things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human Empire to the effecting of all things possible'.

Of the significance of this idea for the modern world Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins spoke in his presidential address to the British Association in 1933 as follows:

'Insofar as Francis Bacon visualised therein an organisation of the best intellects

bent on gathering knowledge for future practical services, his idea was a great one.

'When civilisation is in danger and society in transition, might there not be a House recruited from the best intellects in the country with functions similar (*mutatis mutandis*) to those of Bacon's fancy?

'A House devoid of politics, concerned rather with synthesising existing knowledge, with a sustained appraisal of the progress of knowledge, and continuous concern with its bearing upon social readjustments. It is not to be pictured as composed of scientific authorities alone. It would rather be an intellectual exchange where thought would go ahead of immediate problems.

'I believe I might convince you that the functions of such a House, in days such as ours, might well be real.'

And real they might well be if such a House contained representatives of all the main aspects of culture—priests and clergy, scientists, artists from every branch of art, doctors, psychologists, teachers and professors—who might together give guidance on those profound problems of human life and society which are not simply within the competence of the ordinary citizen as such to judge upon, unless helped by those with a background of study and practice of the whole human inheritance of wisdom, knowledge and artistic genius.

The third reference of the name New Atlantis is to the modern Atlantic World, which Dimitrije Mitrinović described as 'the specific modern scientific world of the European and American West, the world of modern technological civilisation and also the culture background of the West with the ancestral or genic background of the individualist psychology and therefore of Christian axiology or of Christianity as the essence of our culture'. And he considered both Russia and India as woven into the Western web of thought.

The distinctive characteristic of this world is our modern critical cognisance which turns its scorching light upon all things and experiences, and even, as Kant did in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, upon the possibility of reason. 'The transcendental philosopher', he writes, 'in no way pretends to explain the possibility of things, but is content to set upon a firm basis that knowledge by which the possibility of the possibility of experience is conceived.'

After such critical examination, not only of the objects of knowledge but even of the working of reason itself, it is no longer

possible for a mature person naïvely to take any truth for granted on the basis of some authority outside man. Only what man experiences or understands for himself can he accept as knowledge.

The present world crisis is not only a political and economic one. The view that the central issue for decision is between Communism and the 'free world' is essentially superficial. We are in a profound crisis in the development of Man's consciousness. What are the outstanding features of this crisis?

First, that our world has become, for the first time in human evolution, one world. Modern transport and communications and our complete economic interdependence have brought it about that nothing can happen in any part of the world without affecting all the rest.

And yet the conflicts between the races, nations, religions and different world views are becoming ever more intense, each claiming to dominate and order the whole world exclusively according to their own principles.

Second, that the individual everywhere and especially in the West, is becoming more individuated. His inner awareness of himself as a separate individual is becoming lighted and intensified.

And though each of the world elements, whether nations, religions or world views is claiming to dominate the whole individual, and though individuals seem to be more than ever subjected to these vast power blocs and to be losing their own inner power of critical intelligence and initiative, this is only an outward appearance and a temporary pathological state. It is caused by the immense fear which each person feels when he sees that there is nothing before Man but to start realising his own human divineness.

Third, that science has brought to us the real possibility of abundance of physical wealth. As Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins said in the address which was quoted above: 'Most of us have had a tendency in the past to fear the gift of leisure to the majority. To believe that it may be a great social benefit requires some mental adjustment, and a belief in the educability of the average man or woman. But if the political aspirations of the nations

should grow sane and the artificial economic problems of the world be solved, the combined and assured gifts of health, plenty and leisure may prove the final justification of applied science.'

'For many years now', wrote Professor Frederick Soddy in 1931 in 'Money versus Man', 'the problem of producing wealth has been essentially solved. Nevertheless as science ever increases the destructive power of men, they will, if not prevented, end in destroying the scientific civilisation altogether. The problem that is not solved and which must be solved quickly, if civilisation is to be saved, is the problem of distributing the wealth that now by scientific knowledge can be so plentifully produced.'

The economic dilemma of Man now is the congestion of Plenty. The question of our time is whether man has the wit to co-operate in order to consume what his intelligence has enabled him to produce; and this not only in the economic realm but also in the realm of culture. Man's history, the human experience of the past and the whole inheritance of knowledge, art and life wisdom is rich; and yet we feel poor and are poor in spirit and in fantasy. The average human experience is poor. So people demand to be amused and entertained and filled up with accumulation of facts.

That great prophet of the present age, Erich Gutkind, has thus described our human state:

'Today man's world desires to flower. The seed of our world has sprouted from the depths of Nature. The new compelling need is no longer the need for food, it is the need which urges the seed to lose itself in germination that it may not rot; it is the need which urges the flower at its height of blooming to enter once more into the mysterious stillness of seed-life. And as the age old struggle against nature is now in the ebb the former problems vanish. We are now beyond nature, and herein lies the key to all new things that are to come.

'But this dying of nature and of natural life which is taking place in us is something for which we have paid a heavy price, having sacrificed our immediacy to nature, our primitive spontaneity and our youth. Like Prometheus, we have separated ourselves from the primeval creative impulse. All that sprang from great passions and unerring instincts, all that drew the individual into electric vibration with divinity, is now being extinguished. The immediacy of the divine presence, the vigour of race and of folk spirit, are passing with all that is of the earth, the peculiarities of peasants, of savages, of folk, of race.

Nowhere on earth is there a store of unused racial vigour which could renew old blood, like a new migration of peoples.

'All great creative elemental thinking is coming to an end and is giving place to historical pedantry and a frivolous romanticism with a partiality for arm-chair archaeology. In philosophy all further possibilities are exhausted. Poetry, painting, sculpture and music have now reached their final limits. We have shown that the purpose of art is significance, and we have brought its form of expression to that highest, noblest apocalyptic style, which expresses the passing of finiteness, beyond which there is nothing. Nowadays it is no longer a question of this or that art, school or style; it is a question of art itself. On applying this newly acquired apocalyptic style to the whole of reality, we lose our belief in a separated solemn domain of art, which indeed is only a lie, and for which in modern culture all inner and outer conditions are lacking.

'Extreme exhaustion is the secret of our time. We no longer believe in the redemptory mission of technics, of civilisation, of medicine or of science. We no longer believe that the eternal human problems and the eternal human tragedy can be solved by the ideals of our present culture. Our salvation cannot come by means of any reform, social revolution or art of life, nor from any of the sects or parties which commend themselves to our notice. Our whole surrounding world has become outworn, everything has become too narrow for us.

'Yet that is nothing to bewail and nothing to complain of. It is due neither to rottenness, to sloth, nor to evil, nor does it mean that the world has gone astray. Great anguish has come because the world has passed its zenith and is now exhausted, as though dropping from ripeness. This is no more an evil or a disease, than that fruit should fall from the tree in autumn. This is our answer to all questions of our time; world zenith and now world descent.

'Instead of lamenting let us shout with joy, for the most blissful glory is about to arise. Divine Life is bursting open the world egg, and never has mankind sung the praise of a more mighty age than ours. Neither Rome, nor Jerusalem, nor Pharaoh nor Byzantium, nor any historic hour of destiny has beheld that which we are destined to behold. Let us overcome the fear that our age is small and petty. The wisdom of the "stick-in-the-mud" is petty, and "hygiene" and "recovery" and "reforms", "welfare-work" and "beauty-culture". Never has mankind faced such an overwhelming new beginning, and at no time was there so sublime a thrill as now. This is the final wisdom of our time: we are not ears of corn to be ground for ever in the mills of hell, but rather would everything fall into dissolution were it not for us.

'Our age is the turning point where the Divine is no longer a mere image within the mind, but becomes deed. Not a pleasant place to live in, but movement and divine limitless vibration are now our goal.'

We have reached that crisis and turning point in which we, ordinary humanity, should no longer expect to receive new help or guidance from outside ourselves either from divine scriptures



or from great teachers or genius or those revelations which have come up within the human soul.

We can no longer look to any authority beyond what our own mind and spirit tell us in full awareness of self. Henceforward we are responsible for our own lives, for Man's development and for the whole evolution of life on our planet Earth.

We have reached a wholly new stage in the guidance of Man's life when we are responsible to, and can be dependent on, no one but ourselves. We must no longer expect crusades and great emotions to move us and make life great and exciting for us. There will be no greatness, no value, no significance which we cannot out of our own spirit put into life. We ourselves must create our new world from our own actual conscious selves.

In this situation a wholly new attitude is necessary to culture and the meaning of life. Such a new attitude and approach Mitrinović gave to the New Atlantis School and this will be carried on as the method of our researches in the New Atlantis Foundation.

The signs of the present time indicate that Mankind is reaching that critical stage past the meridian of life, when all primary impulses, all urgent desire for new achievements and new experiences start to fade away and the individual has to face that his end is nearer to him than his beginning. At this time, as Dr C. G. Jung has pointed out, a complete reorientation is necessary in the life of the individual if he is to find real meaning in his later years. And it may be that the crisis and unrest which face the world now are symptoms that mankind as a whole has reached this stage in his development.

At this time a man has to stop seeking new adventures and conquests and turn round and consider his life as a whole. How have all his endeavours and life experiences fitted into a whole pattern? And what is or can be its meaning and purpose? And if there is to be any meaning at the end of his life, man has then to turn from a life of ceaseless struggle and action in the world to a life of inner activity and wisdom, from spinning the threads of his life to weaving a pattern from the ones he has already spun.

So in the evolution of Man there have been prophets, philosophers, artists, and geniuses in every field, but we should no longer expect any new notions in philosophy, any new revelations in religion or any fresh inspiration in art, just as there are no more lands to discover or races to give us an infusion of fresh energy. The continent in which future races appear to be in process of development has not a new people but a mixture of all the old ones. The frantic search after novelty and originality and the increasing speed at which fashion succeeds fashion in thought and in art are themselves evidence that there is nothing spontaneously new to be produced.

This is not however a sign of decadence but the sign of a new age, a new level of existence. There is no longer any need for new inspiration from a few great originally creative men and it would be an irresponsible renunciation of our present human maturity for us to expect such inspiration. There is now need of that creativity which is possible to the many. Human development from now on will mean regress in creation and progress in criticism. Man's creativity must either go into critique or it will die.

Each age has valued the great geniuses of the past from the point of view of its own needs and its own state of development. Each age, civilisation and nation has emphasised particular spheres of cultural attainment and particular men of genius; and a critique of each age, civilisation and nation could be worked out according to the men of genius it has emphasised. In the course of this rejudging, many geniuses now neglected may well be valued more highly, and many who have appeared most significant in our particular age may be found far less significant in Man's whole evolution.

Critique of this kind is within the reach of anyone who is able to disengage himself enough from the prevailing values of his present surroundings—profession, class, nation or age—so as to look at past history and past genius with a universal judgment.

The legacy of past history and culture is rich and full and is present for the enrichment of the personal life of any individual man or woman. But to experience this wealth requires free imaginative effort on the part of the individual, so that he may, as Rudolf Eucken expresses it, reappropriate the past. He must be

able to see it in its own true setting, experience again the problems of thought which produced a philosophical system, or the emotions which produced a great work of art, or the context in which a historical event was enacted.

This is not a work only for the few. The whole wealth of our human inheritance must be inherited by all. Culture should no longer be the preserve of specialists. Even concepts which are the result of great intellectual labour should now be presented to persons incapable of such labour, so that they can grasp by imagination knowledge which they would not be capable of receiving in any other way. Knowledge should be presented as living experience.

This requires real personal communication between those who specialise in the different aspects of culture so that they may seriously try to relate them to one another not as mere abstract system but as part of the whole life of man. It is the responsibility of those who know the joyous experience of any art or study to make it alive to others by sharing their personal experience of their own subjects and not merely explaining the objective content in popular language. Thus one aspect of culture could be interpreted in relation to another and one art expressed through the medium of another so that the ordinary man might himself experience what was previously only possible to genius.

In the light of our modern critical consciousness, there is need for a wholly new approach to truth and knowledge. The change must be as radical as when Socrates taught his hearers the notion of a concept or when Francis Bacon established the independence of science from religion, while maintaining the validity of both, and thus enabled science to become the foundation of the modern technological era.

We shall henceforward take nothing for granted and allow no unstated assumption to be made. Nothing can be accepted which actual human beings cannot experience. And equally nothing can be rejected just because it is not seen at once or is difficult to believe. Uncritical rejection is as naïve and unscientific as uncritical acceptance.

We do not at all claim that we know the truth, but we do claim that others take too much for granted and make false claims to knowledge.

It does not follow, because philosophers and philosophical systems have up to now contradicted one another and have not produced any universally acknowledged philosophy, that they are for that reason all false and that there is no truth to be found in them.

Nor should it be assumed that all the world's religions and scriptures are out of date and irrelevant to modern times, simply because they use a language which does not correspond to the ordinary experiences of daily life.

Nor is it axiomatic that only what is measurable in space and time and perceptible to our physical senses should be taken as evidence of truth. We say, indeed, because our modern minds cannot with honesty do otherwise, that we will not accept anything as true that is not based on what we ourselves can personally experience. But we question whether the outer world—that which is perceptible by our five senses—is all that we are able to experience and whether purely intellectual conclusions based on the evidence of our senses can be taken for granted without far more critical examination.

We cannot reject without consideration the assertion that our true experience is inner—that is within our own personal consciousness—and that therefore only what is inner—what human beings think and feel—can truly be taken as real.

Certainly the individual subjective consciousness is by itself no guide to truth, for the human capacity to cherish illusions and deceive oneself is quite evident. But that is not sufficient reason to affirm that truth must be objective and wholly outside human consciousness, or that there is no truth and real knowledge is impossible because there must always be realms which are unknowable to Man.

It is possible that the real standard of truth may be intra-subjective, that is to say within Man's own consciousness, but attainable only between persons sharing together their own subjective truth and not by any one singly.

It is now naïve to think that there is an Absolute Final Truth knowable to any one man, or that any of the major world views



or systems of thought is the one key to Truth. Such an approach to truth is altogether too abstract and simple in a world which we experience as moving and complex. Our own life experience is full enough of relative and temporary reality without grasping after *the* Truth, which can only be an abstract idea. We hope to discover a system of relationships within our life-experience, and by that criterion investigate the philosophic and religious systems and world views and their relationship to one another.

They do indeed contradict one another, but as our own personal experience is full of contradictions we do not exclude the possibility, which has at least been thought by Hegel, that there is a system of Truth itself which is a continuously developing system and contains and always will contain logically irreconcilable contradictions within it.

It may be that not only our physical senses and intellect but also our feelings and will are organs of knowledge and that there can be an integral science of knowledge and a science of Man. But the method and end of these sciences would not be the attainment of some intellectually self-consistent truth, but the gradual self-knowledge by which Man is able to discover the relationship between the Universe, the Earth and himself. It would be that living wisdom by which Man may meet actual problems and situations so as to work towards the realisation of his meaning and purpose on the planet Earth and to enable each individual to attain his own fulness of life.

The knowledge at which we aim, then, is knowledge for the immediate uses of Man—towards world synthesis, or Loka Sangraha, and towards individual self-attainment.

We shall start our investigations from Man as the centre, since it is with human thought that we must work and on human experience that we must rely. We take it as a reasonable point from which to start that Man is the central key to the knowledge of the planet Earth and of the whole Universe.

Organic wholeness is the only integral unity of which we have any experience, for we cannot imagine mere aggregations or pieces of machinery, however complicated, as possible patterns for

the working of the Cosmos. Thus we intend to take the human organism as the pattern of world wholeness. For if we take the human organism with all its muscles, nerves, blood, bones, psychic tensions and growth, and if we take the Earth and observe its geology, species, kingdoms and epochs, and if we take the solar system with its complex relationships between sun, planets, and moons, these are the phenomena we visualise when we speak of wholeness.

This view of Man as the pattern of wholeness is the very oldest tradition, starting from the book of Genesis in which it is said that God made man in his image and running right through all ancient religions and wisdom. Protagoras declared that 'Man is the measure of all things' and it is said in the Gospels 'The kingdom of heaven is within you'.

Our present physics and cosmology suffer from having arisen out of the purely quantitative mathematical disciplines and are entirely inorganic in conception. To the Greeks physics was living nature. The great idea that the individual embryo recapitulates the evolution of the species opened the gate to a scientific, yet organic, cosmogony. The apparent collapse of this idea in the face of detailed knowledge has been shown by Dr Karl Koenig to be resolvable in the light of a deeper conception of cosmogony. Through this work embryology does indeed become the key to cosmogony in which Man takes a central position. So also Dr Hélian Jaworski has shown that the stages of a child's growth are the key to the interpretation of the historical epochs.

We do not start with the dogmatic affirmation that this is so, but since it has been a central tradition of all religions and all ancient wisdom from the beginning, and since modern science has not refuted this tradition or found any other which can supersede it, and since start somewhere we must, we believe that we should not reject without inquiry a view which has been so consistently held and so carefully worked out.

Our start, then, will be the organism of Man, and it is Man himself which we must first investigate beginning with the central human science, psychology. By this we mean not merely external scientific observation, but man's experience of himself and his own processes as they are lived. And we must ask whether from this

science of man's own inner experience there may not be deduced a true science of values, which we may call Axiology.

From psychology we shall proceed to that other central life science—biology—and to all the other sciences or studies which concern human life—sociology, anthropology, history, geography, language and mythology. Our hypothesis is that the world whole, the planet Earth and Mankind, past, present and future, may be an organic wholeness in course of development, as each individual is an organic wholeness; and that thus the nations, races, religions and philosophies of the world may all be functions of this whole, each with its own proper development and significance in relation to the whole and to the others.

But such a system if it exists cannot be found by individuals who identify themselves completely with any one nation, race, religion or philosophy and affirm it as the only true or right one. So we will study all the parts in their relationship with one another without taking sides with any, for our only concern is with the organism as a whole—the world whole or the individual human whole. We take all human points of view as having a validity of their own, and have to inquire how they come to be so different and whether there may not be a dynamic system of Truth containing all possible contradictions.

We must therefore investigate most carefully the view which has persisted throughout all ages expressing reality in terms of Triunity; in ancient India as Sat-Chit-Ananda, or as Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu, in Egypt as Isis-Osiris-Horus, right down to the thesis-antithesis-synthesis of Hegelian dialectic, and in its most perfect form as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of the Athanasian Creed. This has also been expressed in modern times by Dimitrije Mitrinović as the triunity and equivalidity of three actual revelations to Man: the revelation of pre-Christian cosmic wisdom: the Christian revelation of the incarnation of God in Man: and the revelation of genius, of the potential divine attainment of Man himself. We must then inquire whether this doctrine of Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is not the supreme expression of the pattern of organic wholeness in Man, Earth and Universe, and the only hope before us for the attainment of world-synthesis and the creative Peace of Man.

Now, at this time, when we see around us bewilderment and despair, and preparations for new and more disastrous wars, when men do not know which way to turn and to many all life is confusing or empty—exactly now there lies before Man the immense creative work of revaluing, and thereby recreating, the whole of human history and human culture as the past life of the human species, so that he may understand the present and work creatively for the future justification and fulfilment of human life on the Earth.

‘Leisure and Plenty are in front of us’—it was written in the first New Atlantis Quarterly in 1934—‘in the West and over the whole of our human earth; for great and deserved is our inheritance from the toil and creation of our species throughout our evolution. But we ought to be courageous and ripe-of-age today, and begin realising our own human divineness. Provided that we fix for our aim the organisation of our human household and the deepest and most intense self-culture of the individual, let us inherit our inheritance and let us not be afraid of ease and nearness of perfection and glory for the sake of the Creative Infinity and the one Ever-Living Self which is Eternity and is both our own essence and also our goal and origin.

‘Onward, then, towards organisation of our knowledge and organic world guidance! Onward to the integration of individuals in the direction both of true Interiorisation and true Individuation for the sake of the Human Collective and our common world. Onward to the Realisation of Reality and the cognisance of its norms and structure; so that we may apply Principles of Reality to the facts of the human state and the need and norm of our high souls. To this end The New Atlantis shall exist. This end shall it earnestly serve.’



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