

## CHAPTER 2

# Munich

**M**ITRINOVIĆ ENROLLED at the University of Munich to study the history of Art under the distinguished Swiss scholar Heinrich Wölfflin. In those pre-war days the city enjoyed the reputation of being the foremost artistic centre in Europe after Paris, and attracted artists and students from many countries. Perhaps the most significant development taking place in Munich at the time of his arrival was the emergence of that school of abstract or non-representational painting that was centred around Wassily Kandinsky and his associates. It was towards this circle of creative artists that Mitrinović gravitated.

Kandinsky had arrived in Munich in 1896 from Russia and since 1908 had been living in a small village, Murnau, in Upper Bavaria with Gabrielle Münter. In 1912 he had been instrumental in organising an exhibition of paintings by new artists who came to be known as the *Blaue Reiter* Group. 1912 was also the year that the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* was published, described by Franz Marc as ‘an organ for all the really new ideas of our day. Painting, music, drama, etc. ...’ Kandinsky’s idea had been to produce ‘a “synthesised” book which was to eliminate old narrow ideas and tear down the walls between the arts ... and which was to demonstrate eventually that the question of art is not a question of form but one of artistic content.’<sup>1</sup>

The views to which Mitrinović had given expression in ‘Aesthetic Contemplations’ placed him in full accord with such sentiments. His critique of materialism and positivism, his rejection of the idea of ‘art for art’s sake,’ his belief in the spiritual and reformatory powers of art, and his insistence on the need to break

down the barriers between the arts, all echoed the views of Kandinsky and his associates, a fact which Kandinsky acknowledged in a letter of February 17th 1914 to Franz Marc, in which he suggested that Mitrinović 'can be very useful to the Blaue Reiter ... I've talked a lot about it with him and he goes to the heart of things like lightning.'<sup>2</sup>

Mitrinović's presence in Munich was also noted by Paul Klee (1879-1940), the Swiss-born painter and associate of Kandinsky's. He recorded in his diary:

Mitrinović, a Serbian, came to Munich and gave a lecture about the new art, Kandinsky etc. He also approached me. Had me lend him some of my works so that he could immerse himself in them. A nice man with a peasant face.

Often comes to our music sessions. Made this classic utterance: 'Yes, Bach knew how to write it, you know how to play it, and I know how to listen to it.'<sup>3</sup>

The lecture referred to by Klee was delivered in the great hall of the museum in Munich on February 27th 1914, and entitled 'Kandinsky and the New Art: or *Taking Tomorrow by Storm*.' In the programme the theme of the lecture was described as 'the new art' and 'the spiritual development of our time in its organic relationships with the past.' Mitrinović was later to claim that in the lecture, on the basis of his study of contemporary artists, he had forecast the violence that was to erupt in war before the end of the year. This sense of impending violence was one that Kandinsky also experienced very strongly. In a letter to Michael Sadler concerning a painting he had sent to the Englishman in 1914, to which Sadler had given the title 'War in the Air,' Kandinsky wrote: 'I knew that a terrible struggle was going on in the spiritual sphere, and that made me paint the picture I sent you.'<sup>4</sup>

It was undoubtedly Kandinsky's vision of the intrinsic links that existed between the spiritual realm, the creative work of the artist, and the ultimate transformation of the human order which attracted Mitrinović. Kandinsky had given fullest expression to these views in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, published in 1912 and in which he presented his justification for abstract art.

He looked to the creation of a new age of spirituality after the years of materialism – 'the nightmare of materialism, which turned life into an evil, senseless game.'<sup>5</sup> He wrote that 'to each spiritual



epoch corresponds a new spiritual content, which that epoch expresses by forms that are new, unexpected, surprising, and in this way aggressive.<sup>6</sup> He thus saw the role of the artist as crucial in relation to the development of the new spirituality. True works of art were not only expressions of some profound emotion or spiritual experience, 'produced by internal necessity, which springs from the soul'; they also had the power to 'nourish the spirit.'<sup>7</sup> A true work of art 'has a definite and purposeful strength, alike in its material and spiritual life. It exists and has power to create spiritual atmosphere; and from this internal standpoint alone can one judge whether it is a good work of art or bad.'<sup>8</sup>

Kandinsky adopted the imagery of an acute-angled triangle to represent graphically his vision of the evolutionary process leading towards the new epoch. The triangle was divided into horizontal sections, with the narrowest segment uppermost. The whole pyramid, he believed, could be portrayed as moving almost imperceptibly forward and upward – where the apex is one day, the second segment will be tomorrow, and so on: 'What today can be understood only by the apex, is tomorrow the thought and feeling of the second segment.'<sup>9</sup>

Kandinsky also included the theosophists as 'movers' of humanity, as well as those 'professional men of learning who test matter again and again, who tremble before no problem, and who finally cast doubt on that very matter which was yesterday the foundation of everything, so that the whole universe rocks.'<sup>10</sup> In this Kandinsky was reflecting the reaction of theosophists in general to the emergence of nuclear physics at the turn of the century. If matter was not matter after all, then could not everything be regarded as condensed and shaped spirit? Rudolf Steiner observed that matter was 'dissolved into vapour and mist' in the face of such research.<sup>11</sup> This also provided Kandinsky with an important justification for non-representational art – since matter was disappearing, the time was right for pure abstraction and concentration upon the internal life within objects.

Naturally, Kandinsky believed that artists constituted a significant section of the motor force behind this spiritual movement. In each 'segment' there exist artists who can see beyond the limited world of their fellows, and who therefore, as prophets, help the advance of the whole; despite the fact that they may be scorned and misunderstood in the short term. Their role as 'torchbearers

of truth' would eventually be recognised, as Kandinsky wrote: 'Every segment hungers, consciously or unconsciously, for adequate spiritual satisfactions. These are offered by artists, and for such satisfactions the segment below will tomorrow stretch out eager hands.'<sup>12</sup> Art, for Kandinsky, was 'a power which must be directed to the development and refinement of the human soul, to raising the triangle of the spirit.'<sup>13</sup>

Many of these themes had been echoed by Mitrinović in 'Aesthetic Contemplations.' Like Kandinsky he had drawn a distinction between the vast majority of people and that small minority whose direction was forward and whose aim was 'to embrace, to review, to be aware of and comprehend the entire horizon of truths, no matter how many.' Like Kandinsky he emphasised the role of the artist amongst this advance guard; those who, in their imagination, anticipated the future, 'the dream of the far-away and the great.' Like the Russian artist he had a firm faith that the example and efforts of just a few, those 'true ones ... who are of today yet who were born tomorrow,' could act as a leavening agent amongst the mass of alienated humanity dominated by the world-as-it-is and ill-equipped to envisage the world-as-it-might-be.

As part of this 'leavening process' Kandinsky had been planning to produce a second yearbook to follow the publication of the original *Blaue Reiter Almanac* in 1912. Although Mitrinović had originally planned to leave Munich in the spring of 1914 and move to Tübingen to complete his doctoral studies, his growing involvement with Kandinsky meant that once again he deserted his university studies and channelled his energies into the preparation of the proposed book, taking on the role of chief editor. Planned as the first of a series, the Yearbook was seen as part of a wider movement 'Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe.' This was to be an initiative to transform and unify Europe, working towards the transcendence of the different national cultures and the creation of a 'pan-European culture' which, as a model, would lay the foundations for the overcoming of all divisions between people in the world – the attainment of world fellowship.

In their approach Mitrinović and Kandinsky were strongly influenced by the visionary ideals of the Russian theologian, poet, and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900). Solovyov viewed the cosmos as an organism, animated by a single spirit and evolving



towards a definite goal – the final reconciliation of the world of God with that of humanity. Such an achievement could only be attained through humans consciously joining with God, as co-partners, to transform personal and social life. ‘The supreme aim of individual and social morality,’ he wrote, ‘is that all men and all things should be conformed to the image of Christ ... it depends on each one of us contributing towards its realisation by trying to reproduce Christ in our personal and social life.’<sup>14</sup>

Mitrinović anticipated that the Yearbook would be published in the Spring of 1915, and by June 1914 he was heavily involved in negotiations with the publishers, the Delphin company of Munich, and in establishing contact with potential contributors. It was an impressive wish-list, including the names of Peter Kropotkin and Thomas Masaryk, the sculptor Ivan Mestrović, Maxim Gorky, Knut Hamsun, Maurice Maeterlinck, Emile Verhaeren, Anatole France, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Rudolph Eucken, Henri Bergson, Franz Oppenheimer, Otto Braun and Jean Jaurès. Mitrinović was also busy preparing articles for various European journals on the idea of the movement, on the significance of the potential contributors to the Yearbook, and on such prophets as Solovyov and Dostoyevsky. He was also planning a series of lectures which he hoped to present in Berlin, prior to a trip to Russia with Kandinsky where he planned to lecture on the theme of a ‘pan-Europe.’ Trips to London and Paris, Serbia and America were to follow the Russian tour.

In a letter to Kandinsky of June 25th 1914 he begged the artist to come up to Munich for a couple of days in order to discuss these plans. Informing Kandinsky of the progress made in relation to the Yearbook, he continued:

I shall write myself to Mr. Volker directly and with confidence because it seems to me that ‘die Siderische Geburt’ is worthy to be the true religion of a pan-Europe. But I ask you also to write to him about the movement; not to lose too much time over it, but all the same to do it; for I think that Mr. Volker, with you, with Chamberlain, Papini and Braun will be the principal thought-bearers of the movement ... it is necessary that you support me to these gentlemen; Volker, after all, does not know me at all ... I am so completely nameless that I cannot command the respect of anybody, at least in Europe.

'Volker' was the pen-name adopted by a young German, Erich Gutkind, who had published in 1910 *Siderische Geburt* (*Sidereal Birth*). Kandinsky had been heavily influenced by this book, had corresponded with the author, and had in turn introduced Mitrović to the work. It had an immediate and profound impact on the young Serbian. In a letter to its author of June 27th 1914 he wrote:

Mr. Kandinsky has given me a picture of you which truly inspires reverence ... He has drawn my attention to *Siderische Geburt* and has strongly recommended it. This book, dear sir, has to my joy become a book which supports and uplifts me ... I am indebted to *Sidereal Birth* as to hardly any other of my pan-human experiences, and was deeply moved on reading it and transfigured much as I was with the first Kandinsky exhibition which I experienced...

*Sidereal Birth* has been variously described as 'a curious work ... (which) consists of a large helping of mystical word salad, for the most part unintelligible but with occasional passages conveying at least a semblance of a meaning to the reader',<sup>15</sup> and as 'a hymnodic rhapsody to a new age, written with little attention to organisation or system, but with an exuberance of poetic imagery'.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the book revealed certain similarities with the theology of Solovyov – the same kind of intuitive mysticism, the vision of the history of the world as a single cosmic process, the recognition of humans as the connecting link between the divine and the natural world, and the same emphasis upon the crucial significance of the free individual combining with others in a movement towards a new utopian age. Despite its difficult and esoteric style, making free use of terms such as 'Pleroma,' 'Seraphic,' and 'Sepulchral,' running throughout the work was a clear apocalyptic theme. The existing world order, world views, religions, were outworn and exhausted. Humanity stood on the brink of an exciting and wonderful new age, one that would finally see the fusion of the world of God and the world of humans, who would become as gods. Perfect freedom would be attained – Heaven on Earth. To move into this new epoch we must sever our links with the old, discard all our old props and supports, whether they be material possessions, fixed ideas or gods. Unfettered and free we shall then be in a position to recognise the organic links that exist between all things, 'experience the whole of the divine cycle' and acknowledge our own divinity.<sup>17</sup> In so doing, according to Gutkind, we shall begin to take upon



ourselves the responsibility not merely for the narrow individual self but for the whole of humanity. 'The most joyful tidings are that we can burst the framework of the world, and that it falls to us to shape it into the highest holiness.'<sup>18</sup>

In his letter to Gutkind of June 27th 1914, Mitrinović asked for his assistance in arranging his proposed lectures in Berlin and invited him to join with Kandinsky in helping to organise the Yearbook. Specifically he asked if Gutkind would write a short and relatively simple summary of the main points of *Sidereal Birth* for inclusion in the book. In his rather untutored German he concluded the letter with the observation that if Gutkind acceded to these requests:

I shall have a great joy of my life in that case, for I have the courage to believe that the total revolution of aryan pan-humanity movements will be given a foundation by *Sidereal Birth*. I hope and trust that you, honoured sir, will undertake to carry a considerable part of the organisation of the movement and a most significant part, that of final truth and total faith.

In later life Mitrinović was to remark that if Gutkind had not written *Sidereal Birth* then he himself would have had to write it, such was the lasting impact that the work had upon him. Indeed, he must have felt that in Gutkind he had discovered a kindred soul whose vision mirrored much that he himself had explored in 'Aesthetic Contemplations.' The affirmation of the ultimate unity of all humanity, the bankruptcy and sterility of the contemporary world, the higher order of consciousness that was necessary in order to create the new world that was imminent within the womb of the old – all this struck an answering chord within Mitrinović. Much of his later life was devoted to the development of these insights. In particular, in the group life that he orchestrated in London in the 1930s he sought ways of developing amongst those gathered around him that new consciousness required by the new age wherein, according to Gutkind, 'the *I* must perish, but *We* must put forth life.'

In the meantime, however, his letter to Gutkind was rewarded with an invitation to visit the Gutkind family home in Jena. He set off from Munich on July 19th 1914. In a letter to Kandinsky written on the day of his departure he expressed the hope that whilst at Jena he might meet that 'dear and noble old man' Professor

Rudolf Eucken. He then planned to go on to Berlin armed with an introduction to Gustav Landauer provided by Gutkind, thereby obtaining access to European socialist and anarchist circles. 'Through Landauer,' he observed to Kandinsky, 'one could get to Kropotkin.' In Berlin he also hoped to call on Franz Oppenheimer, then on to Bayreuth to visit Houston Chamberlain. He expected to be back in Munich by July 24th. At a later date he planned to visit Umfrid and then on to 'my much respected' Mauthner at Lindau. But first there was the meeting with Gutkind. Mitrinović set off 'full of confidence' and 'happy with hope.' He was not disappointed; the visit proved a great success. In a note to Kandinsky of July 21st he wrote: 'Gutkind is a wonderful personality; a depth of soul and a purity of inner-ness which elevates one. We have fundamentally understood each other ... it was good beyond expectation.'<sup>19</sup> It was a meeting of two 'men of genius' according to LeRoy Finch, the editor of Gutkind's collected works:

Mitrinović's genius lay in direct dealing with people, while Gutkind's was expressed in ideas and writing. What they shared was that in both of them the ordinary concerns of the self had been replaced by a new intensity of vision (as much, it seemed to many, physiological as psychological). The self-security and self-enhancement (which consciously and unconsciously determine the lives of most men) had been transformed in them into a clairvoyant kind of 'seeing.'<sup>20</sup>

Gutkind was at that time deeply involved in an initiative for world peace based on similar premises to the one Mitrinović and Kandinsky were seeking to launch. Indeed, Kandinsky had already talked with Mitrinović about Gutkind's venture, describing it as an 'organisation for a pan-human little brotherhood of the most world-worthy bearers of present-day culture.'<sup>21</sup> With the Dutchman Frederik van Eeden, Gutkind was engaged in seeking to create an association of the leading spirits of the time who, they anticipated, through coming together and sharing their lives and ideas, might act as an essentially moral force to influence the path of the world's development in the direction of peace and harmony. This proposed association or community of the leaders of world thought and culture came to be known by the name of the *Blut-bund* or 'blood-brotherhood.' The prime mover behind it was undoubtedly van Eeden, a man of far more active nature than the scholarly Gutkind.

Born in Haarlem in 1860, van Eeden had led a rich and varied life. After studying medicine he had established an Institute for



Psychical Therapy in Holland, based on the belief that 'the body could be cured by the mind.'<sup>22</sup> As he pursued his medical career, he also attained national and international fame as a writer of novels, poems and plays. Moved by an awareness of the ills of humanity and the search for remedies, he read the works of Robert Owen, Henry George, Shelley and Ruskin, and was profoundly influenced by the example of Thoreau. He eventually arrived at the conclusion that the answer to the evils of society was not to be found in the works of Marx, who stood 'with both feet in the swamp of materialism,'<sup>23</sup> but through cooperative living based on fraternal love and friendship.

Accordingly, in the best tradition of the utopian socialists for whom he held such admiration, he established in 1898 a cooperative colony at Bussum, Holland, named 'Walden' in honour of Henry Thoreau's 'high minded example.' Always fond of nautical analogies, van Eeden likened Walden to 'a small pilot ship in the great economic fleet, seeking a proper route over the shallows to the harbour.'<sup>24</sup> Financial difficulties forced the closure of the colony in 1907. Between 1908 and 1910 van Eeden made several trips to the U.S.A. where he sought the assistance of, amongst others, Upton Sinclair, in the promotion of cooperative ventures that would further his vision of a benevolent world-wide brotherhood of capitalist and worker.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his life van Eeden held the view that the working classes, brutalised and incapacitated by the harsh struggle for existence, needed the enlightened leadership of people of intelligence and vision if they were ever to attain true socialism. The publication of *Sidereal Birth* in 1910 caused him great excitement, for here was another advanced thinker who stressed the necessity of social change through individual personal transformation and cooperative effort rather than through class conflict and the struggle for political power; someone who also emphasised the key role to be played by intellectuals and the spiritually advanced in sowing the seeds of the new age.

The two men began a correspondence, and in a letter to Upton Sinclair of December 16th 1910 the Dutchman confided that he was preparing a manifesto which would call for the 'Noblest of all nations' to unite. The rallying call of 'Workers unite' was fruitless, he explained, because a 'united mass of proletarians is a body

without a head. But the Free and Pure, the Kingly and Powerful minds ought to make a stand.'<sup>26</sup> The outcome of the joint endeavour with Gutkind was the publication of a short book called *Welt-Eroberung durch Helden-Liebe* (*World Conquest through Heroic Love*). It contained two essays, 'Heroic Love' by van Eeden and 'World Conquest' by Gutkind.<sup>27</sup> It was intended to be the manifesto for the proposed group of 'kingly spirits' who, by their moral and spiritual example, would lead the rest of humanity out of the morass of materialism and selfish greed into a realm of freedom and fellowship – the *Blut-bund*.

Mitrinović's visit to Jena during July 1914 provided Gutkind with the opportunity to assess the Serbian's potential contribution to the group. He was impressed. He wrote to Kandinsky concerning the visit: 'We had three marvellous days and all is going well.' A copy of 'the little blue book,' as Gutkind referred to *World Conquest Through Heroic Love*, was also given to Mitrinović.

The book explored many of the ideas first raised in *Sidereal Birth*. At the core of both essays was the belief that the most significant division in society lay between the minority who were attuned to the new age and its values, and the mass of folk entrapped within the old. Gutkind wrote:

Economic oppression is no more the root of misery than prosperity is the ground from which genius springs. The unelectric life of the masses and the lack of transcendence and reality are the one root cause of our meagre life. The secret but real rulers of the world must with their heroic love conquer the peoples and make the world as electric as it has always been in decisive moments in order that God may be.<sup>28</sup>

Van Eeden described the 'kingly of spirit' as one:

Who feels mankind's need in himself ... he feels the fault which the multitude, because it is unconscious, cannot feel ... He knows that he bears what the multitude does not possess, but what it needs. His kingly pride lies in this, that he will not lower himself but will stand fast in order that the human mass may follow him and raise itself up.<sup>29</sup>

By thought, word and deed and personal example such exceptional persons would guide the world towards unity. According to van Eeden:

The new way will only begin when these exceptional people unite and form a community. In a new atmosphere of loving confidence,



freedom of spirit, wisdom, devotion and self-discipline a new unity will flourish ... Only unity among the Kingly can bring freedom and self-sustainment to the people, so that they also may be able to come together in love. They will lose their fetters without losing their balance. The few will then have laid the foundations on which many more can build and around which order can be founded.<sup>30</sup>

Mitrinović was just one of many approached by van Eeden and Gutkind to become a member of the proposed brotherhood. According to Upton Sinclair, the two 'were on fire with a plan to form a band of chosen spirits to lead mankind out of the wilderness of materialism' from as early as 1912.<sup>31</sup> In his autobiography Sinclair went on to observe that he 'brought tears into the young rhapsodists' eyes by the brutality of his insistence that the sacred band would have to decide the problem of social revolution first.'<sup>32</sup> Sinclair also accompanied the 'two rhapsodists' on one of their early recruiting drives. The target was Walter Rathenau, the son of the founder of the giant German electrical company AEG. A hint of some of the tensions that were to mar the history of the *Blut-bund* was detected by the American novelist at that early meeting.<sup>33</sup>

Thyrsis (Sinclair) was invited to meet Walter Rathenau. He had never heard the name, but his friends explained that this was the young heir to the great German electrical trust who went in for social reform and wrote bold books ... They united in finding him genial but a trifle overconfident – an attitude that accompanies the possession of vast sums of money and the necessity of making final decisions upon great issues. Van Eeden was a much older man who had made himself a reputation in many different fields – yet he did not feel so certain about anything as he found this young master of electricity and finance. However, there is this to be added: it is the men who know what they think who are capable of action.

Larger gatherings of *Blut-bund* members took place at the summer residence of the Gutkind family at Potsdam. At one such meeting in June 1914 those recorded as being present included the Swedish psychiatrist Paul Bjerre, the German anarchist Gustav Landauer, Martin Buber, Gutkind, Theodor Daubler, Florens Christian Rang, and the Dutchmen Henri Borel and van Eeden. The purpose of the gathering, according to Landauer, was 'to represent the uniting of the peoples of humanity, and bring this to authoritative expression at a critical hour.'<sup>34</sup> Other people to whom van Eeden and Gutkind sent copies of their 'prospectus' for the

proposed association included the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, the Russian symbolist Dimitri Mereskovsky, the German poet Richard Dehmel, Ezra Pound, Rudolf Eucken, the Nobel Prize winner Professor Charles Richet, the British physicist Sir Oliver Lodge, novelists H. G. Wells and Romain Rolland, Rabindranath Tagore, and the Dutch mathematician L.E.J. Brouwer.

Van Eeden proposed that they should rent a large house somewhere to which these 'representative personalities of different nations' should be invited, 'just as guests in a hotel or an English country house.' The opportunity would thus be created for them to meet and discuss freely with each other. There would be no formal programme. Rather:

The mode of life in the house during the months of the meeting must be entirely simple, but sufficient for all demands and without any hint of sectarian tendencies. The guests shall be invited only one season, but the invitation can be repeated every year. When these invitations, with strict observation of the principles of freedom and universality and without consideration of lower values, take place it will soon arrive that such an invitation shall be considered as a great distinction. And when once such an effect has been produced, then all that in those two months in the House was schemed, thought, said, and done, will obtain a world meaning and be capable of moving the rudder which the whole great ship of human culture obeys.<sup>35</sup>

In retrospect, the attempts of Landauer, Gutkind, van Eeden and their associates to create an initiative that would lead to world peace on the eve of the war might seem pitiful and insignificant, if laudable. Likewise Mitrinović's hectic round of visits, letters and appeals to people throughout Europe during the early summer of 1914 – whilst in his homeland the chain of events that were to lead to the 'war to end all wars' had already started. On June 28th 1914 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated at Sarajevo. A month later, on July 28th, Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, declared war on Serbia. Mitrinović was placed in an awkward and potentially dangerous situation. Nominally he was an Austrian citizen, with an Austrian passport, and of an age that could render him liable to conscription. He was, however, also in possession of a Serbian passport. He was known to the secret police and the prospect of either conscription or of being found in possession of a passport issued by a hostile nation must have caused him considerable concern.



He wrote to Gutkind expressing his disquiet and worry about his personal position. Gutkind replied on July 30th, the day before Germany declared war on Russia. He advised Mitrinović to adopt an attitude of 'Buddhist calm' in the face of the turmoil around him, implicitly criticised him for being so 'active' in his attempts to prevent the war, and recommended that he place his faith in a 'metaphysical electric flash of lightning' that would somehow resolve the situation. The letter is worth quoting at length if only because it highlights the way in which those who believe in a 'higher truth' and a supra-mundane level of existence can, on occasion, insulate themselves from much that is going on around them with what can appear to be a callous disregard for the plight of other people. This was a danger that was inherent in Gutkind's conception of the *Blut-bund* as an aristocracy of persons, qualitatively superior in mind and spirit to the mass of folk who, because of their pre-eminence, should and could exert a determining influence over the direction of world development. Few would dispute that different people possess or have developed different gifts to qualitatively different degrees. However, such a recognition must be tempered by a corresponding acknowledgement of the common humanity that unites all people, whatever their skills or abilities. Without this it can all too easily descend into an arrogant elitism that views the less gifted as 'lesser mortals', as 'cannon-fodder' for history. As far as Gutkind was concerned: 'generals need not get involved in the hurly-burly.'

My very dear friend, you really do not have the least cause to desert the greater and wider cause, and you are not committing treason at all ... I am doing everything I can. I wrote at once to van Eeden and Landauer and when the danger gets very great I shall try to call in our circle. But please do not overestimate the danger. It may all quieten down again. I even consider that this is quite possible. If only you will come away from the idea that – however urgent it may be – we can do anything in a week and that protests and that sort of thing are of the least use. The only thing that is of any purpose here is to tackle the issue from the metaphysical end. There is no point in proclamations calling people to 'reason' and 'justice', but only an unheard of metaphysical electrical flash of lightning, and that we must now prepare. To that end I have contacted the others, and this immediately and with my whole heart. It is exactly the very great tension in the situation which provides a favourable soil for the ignition of the mystic spark. Please don't do anything silly from nervous impatience.

I'm sure it will not be too late, even if it takes a few weeks. Just stay at your post with the idea – the generals need not get involved in the hurly-burly. Only don't let us issue any impotent paper protests, but also in order to do justice to the Slav issue let us go down into the primal depths and there call up the demons. Only a magic of primal power will help, and no rustling of newspapers – the plebs which have been unleashed won't listen to that for even a second. Nor do we need to take the route via the plebs.

I was unable to get hold of Kropotkin's address more quickly. He is always in Brighton in the summer and is known there. Are you in contact with Mereschkowski, Przynizewski? Did you get our Blue-book? Write at once about anything that happens, and please for God's sake do remember that the most severe Buddhist calm is what is required of us, and concentration at the highest post. I am wholly with you, and sincerely so and send my greetings and also those of my wife who shares my feelings.<sup>36</sup>

Mitrinović was obviously unconvinced by this argument. He decided he must leave Germany as quickly as possible, but he was penniless. He travelled to Berlin where Gutkind's mother advised him to flee to Russia. Germany and Russia were by then however nominally in a state of war. He decided to try and reach Britain, and Frau Gutkind provided him with the money necessary for the journey. Travelling by train to the coast, he took one of the last ferries to cross to England before Britain declared war on August 4th 1914. He was later to recall how it was only as the boat neared the British coast that he realised that he was penniless and unlikely to obtain entry if it was discovered that he had no visible means of maintaining himself on his arrival. A fellow-passenger lent him £5 to prove his solvency to the customs officials.

## NOTES

1. W. Grohmann, *Kandinsky: Life and Work*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1959, p. 37.
2. Quoted in introduction by Klaus Lankheit in W. Kandinsky and F. Marc, eds., *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974, p. 33.
3. *The Diaries of Paul Klee*, edited and introduced by Felix Klee, London: Peter Owen, 1965, p. 280.
4. Michael Sadler, *Modern Art and Revolution*, London: Hogarth Press, 1932, p. 19.



5. W. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, New York: George Wittenborn, 1947, p. 24.
6. Kandinsky, p. 11.
7. Kandinsky, p. 75.
8. Kandinsky, p. 74.
9. Kandinsky, p. 27.
10. Kandinsky, pp. 31-32.
11. See S. Ringbom, *The Sounding Cosmos*, Abo: Abo Akademi, 1970.
12. Kandinsky, p. 27.
13. Kandinsky, p. 74.
14. V. Solovyov, *God; Man and the Church: The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (transl. by D. Attwater), Cambridge: James Clark, 1974, p. 190.
15. Ringbom, pp. 63-4.
16. H. Le Roy Finch, introduction to L. B. Gutkind and H. Le Roy Finch, eds., *The Body of God: the Collected Papers of Eric Gutkind*, New York: Horizon Press, 1969, p. 14.
17. Gutkind and Finch, p. 217.
18. Gutkind and Finch, p. 188.
19. Letter to Kandinsky, July 19th 1914.
20. Finch, p. 12.
21. Letter from Mitrinović to Gutkind, June 27th 1914.
22. Lewis Leary, 'Walden goes wandering: the transit of good intention,' *The New England Quarterly*, pp. 3-30, vol. 32, March 1959, p. 4.
23. Leary, p. 5.
24. Leary, p. 12.
25. The similarities between van Eeden and his friend Upton Sinclair were striking. Both were successful authors; both had lived in intentional cooperative communities; both had lost substantial sums of money through financing cooperative projects; both pursued unconventional dietary habits; and both were involved in scandalous divorce proceedings in their respective countries. In February 1911 van Eeden wrote to Sinclair: 'The other day I was pleased to see a Dutch paper mention you as "the American van Eeden".' Leary, p. 27.
26. Leary, p. 26.
27. Both essays were republished in translation in the 1930s by Mitrinović.
28. 'Volker,' *The World Conquest, Our New Atlantic Religion of Steel*, London: Nova Atlantis, nd., p. 19. Gutkind's use of the term 'electric' is reminiscent of Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophist movement who represented electricity as 'the life of the universe.' His reference to 'the secret but real rulers of the world' also resembles Blavatsky's thesis that there exists a fraternity of High Initiates or Masters of Wisdom who intervene at crucial stages in the history of the world.

29. F. van Eeden, *World-Senate, Unite in Heroic Love! Testament to the Kingly of Spirit*, London: Nova Atlantis, nd., p. 5.
30. *World Senate*, pp. 9-10.
31. Upton Sinclair, *The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair*, London: W. H. Allen, 1963, p. 196.
32. Sinclair, p. 196.
33. Sinclair, pp. 197-8. Rathenau helped found the German Democratic Party after the war and advocated his 'new economy': a combination of employee participation and state control of industry. He was murdered by right-wing extremists in 1922.
34. Quoted in H. Borel, ed., *Brieven van Frederick van Eeden aan Henri Borel*, Den Haag: Brussel, 1933, p. 133.
35. Letter of van Eeden, undated. Copy in New Atlantis Archives.
36. Letter from Gutkind to Mitrović, July 30th 1914 (New Atlantis archives).