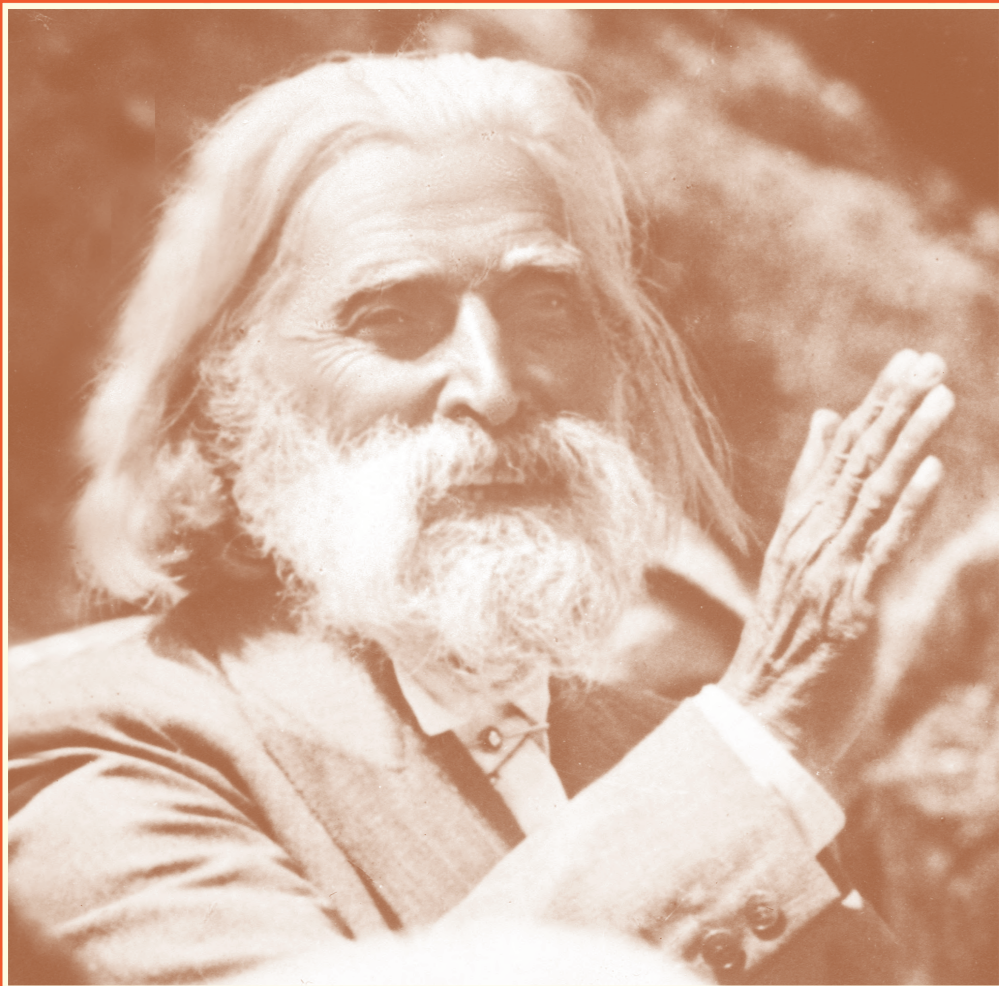


**Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov**



# ***Life with the Master*** ***Peter Deunov***

***Autobiographical Reflections 2***

**PROSVETA**

Du même auteur

***A Living Book***

*Audiobiographical Reflections 1*

*Translated from the French*

*Original title: «AUPRÈS DU MAÎTRE PETER DEUNOV»*

*Éléments d'autobiographie 2*

*Original edition:*

© 2010, Éditions Prosveta S.A. (France), ISBN 978-2-85566-990-8

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Prosveta S.A – CS30012 – 83601 Fréjus CEDEX (France)

ISBN 978-2-8184-0185-9

Digital edition: ISBN 978-2-8184-0297-9

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*An inspiring encounter*

I spent my childhood in a sort of fog, as if I had not yet fully incarnated. It might have been thought (and certainly there were some who did think) that I was a little retarded. Then, during my ninth year, a tremendous shock harshly jolted me into myself: my father died. It was a terrible awakening. After that, in my sixteenth year, suddenly a divine thunderbolt hit me in those three places which are in everyone: the mind, the heart and the will.\* Finally, in my eighteenth year, Master Peter Deunov came into my life, and from that moment on I began to become truly myself.

When I met the Master, I did not need him to prove the realities of the soul and spirit to me, nor did I need him to show me that these realities were greater than those of the physical world. I had been born already convinced of these truths. I do not know how long I had carried them within me. But I was very young, and I needed to be guided, so that my ardour and impatience to explore these vast realms that attracted me so irresistibly would not lead me to fly too close to danger. I was not at all moderate and I was consumed by an inner fire. I spent my days reading and dissipated my energies doing all sorts of exercises of concentration,

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\* See *A Living Book: Autobiographical Reflections I*, chapter V: 'The experience of fire'.

meditation and leaving my body. Occasionally I was aware of the dangers I was running, but that never stopped me. How could it, when I was constantly feeling that I had made a new discovery in a world that had been mine in some distant past, a world in which the spirit is all powerful?

The most important events of our lives often seem like a series of circumstances that appear to be haphazard. What is this Intelligence which arranges things so fortuitously? I was now old enough for military service, and I had to go to Sofia for the initial procedures. Before catching the return train to Varna, I went into a bookshop. At that time, many books on spirituality translated from English, German, French and Russian were being published, and I wanted to see what new ones had come in. That is when the bookseller recommended some pamphlets by a Bulgarian author, whom I had not heard of: Peter Deunov.\* On my return to Varna, I became absorbed in these pamphlets, which were a revelation to me. I discovered words unlike anything I had read before. Something awakened within me, and I felt that this was my path. From that moment on, nothing else really counted.

At that time I was living with my family in a wretched little house in the Turkish quarter of Varna. I had a tiny room, which I tried to keep clean and tidy at all times. On the walls that I had repainted, I pinned up symbolic pictures, and as I had begun to experiment with colour, I painted the windowpanes too: some days red, some orange, some yellow and so on. I put a little rug on the table and then placed on it a few symbolic objects which linked me

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\* See *A Living Book: Autobiographical Reflections 1*, chapter VIII: 'Meeting with Master Peter Deunov'.

to eternal truths. But above all, despite the lack of space, I had managed to put an armchair in this room on which no one, not even I, was allowed to sit. Who was this chair for? I had no idea, and yet I knew in the depths of my heart that it was reserved for a messenger from the realms of light. You can imagine my surprise when I learned that, a few years earlier, the Master had lived in a house less than a hundred metres from our home! I often used to walk past this house. Had I sensed his presence? Or did I intuit that I was going to meet him and so reserve this chair for him?

Then, in town, rumours began to circulate... Peter Deunov was now in Varna\*: the clergy of the orthodox Church had been angered by him and by his ideas and had succeeded in getting the government to banish him from Sofia, where he had lived for several years. I did not want to go immediately to see him, because I was still very weak from the illness which, for some weeks, had kept me hovering between life and death; I did not dare introduce myself to him when I was in such a poor state of health. But as soon as I was better...

And then, one day, when I had gone out for a walk on the main street of Varna, I saw a man coming towards me who attracted my whole attention. He was dressed quite simply and, despite his beard, he still seemed young. But his face had such nobility, such gravity, that I immediately thought, "That's him!" I had seen many fine faces in my life, but not one had struck me as forcefully as his, not one had left such an impression on me. He passed by quickly, walking as only he knew how. My heart beat so strongly,

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\* August 1917

and I felt that now the moment to meet him had arrived. I made some enquiries and he agreed to see me.

When I went to see him for the first time, at the Hotel London where he was staying, one of his secretaries opened the door and introduced me to him. Before my arrival, he had been busy composing the music for *Chte se razvesselia*, accompanying on his violin the sister who was singing. I did not know then that he had studied music and that he played the violin... I had longed, since childhood, to play this instrument! After greeting me, he said, 'You are going to sing with us.' I was so overwhelmed that I could hardly make a sound. I watched how he drew the music from his violin; his whole face bore witness to an intense inner life. The tune developed little by little, as we began again and again. It was marvellous!

*Chte se razvesselia* was the first of the Master's songs that I heard and sang, while he was composing the music for a verse from the book of Isaiah (chapter 61, verse 10):

*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.<sup>1</sup>*

Even though the words are filled with joy, the melody and the rhythm of this song have a very solemn quality.

We sang for about half an hour, and then the Master asked me if I had any questions for him. Before this encounter with him, I had done many exercises to develop certain psychic faculties, in particular, clairvoyance. The

visible world was not enough to satisfy my curiosity, and I wanted to know what lay behind it, yet despite my efforts I was not at all satisfied with the results I had gained. I told him this and asked for his advice. Of course I was expecting him to reveal some great secrets to me and then give me some difficult exercises. Imagine my surprise when he replied quite simply, 'It is through love that we become clairvoyant'. What a surprise, and what a disappointment as well! He advised me to abandon all the methods I had been using until then as I had no idea how dangerous they were.

Love leads to clairvoyance... I admit that at first I did not understand: I was young, and what I saw around me made me think rather that love leads to blindness. However, even though I did not understand it, I took this reply seriously. And now I believe not only that love, spiritual love, leads to clairvoyance, but that it alone gives true clairvoyance.

At that time I was a difficult adolescent. I did not want to listen to any advice from anyone, and often not even from my mother, whom I loved and respected greatly. But at the same time I was aware that my judgment was not perhaps the best, and I began to have doubts. I said to myself, 'Just because you think this or that does not necessarily mean that you are right. That it suits you is not enough. How can you really know?' When I met the Master, I felt immediately that he had such natural authority that I could do nothing other than accept his judgment, his viewpoints, his criteria, and follow his advice, even if it did not exactly match what I had thought or hoped. I was like a sailor lost at sea, without a compass, and with no idea what direction to take in order to come to harbour. That is why one of the first things I said to him was 'Guide me!' How could his superiority not have impressed me?



I have never thought of myself as particularly wise and intelligent, but if the wisdom and intelligence of a person are judged by the choices he or she makes in life, in choosing Master Peter Deunov as both my model and my guide, then, yes, I was wise and intelligent. So many people with great intellectual, moral and artistic faculties have not achieved much, because they did not know how to recognize those who could help them to develop them. It is sad to see how many gifted men and women have ruined their lives, simply because they were not guided. It is often preferable to be a little less gifted but to be well guided.

As I took my leave at the end of my first visit, the Master asked me to come back and see him. I could not then put words to everything I was feeling. It was as if a sun was rising within me: the clouds dispersed, a new light flooded me, erasing all my fears and suffering. Everything vibrated and sang in my heart like the first day of spring. So, I returned to his hotel to see him again, and I was present too when he gave his lectures. But more convincing and more eloquent than his words was the life emanating from him, a radiance, a breath of pure air, which enlightened and purified my own life.

In great spiritual beings, the perfection of their features is not what is most remarkable. Whatever their features, there is true beauty in their light, in everything that emanates from them. Even when the Master was silent, his whole being spoke, and when he spoke, his whole being underlined his speech. For me, he was a book, the best book, a living book. Besides, we all need living books; the others, once read, are put back on the shelf where they are forgotten. Whereas living books are never forgotten; they are constant reminders for us. And this is when I began to

understand the difference between intellectual knowledge and living knowledge. What is this difference? The same as that between the smell of paper and of fresh bread! I had discovered the Master's existence and his teaching thanks to a few brochures the bookseller had recommended to me, but the reason I wanted to become and remain his disciple was because I saw, I felt, who he himself was.

The Master's face, its beauty, richness and depth, revealed a vast world to me. In this magnificent face, the most remarkable feature was the nose. Much later, despite consulting the works of the Swiss physiognomist, Lavater, I never saw such a nose, and I cannot explain the thoughts that it inspired in me. It was a perfect nose, and it immediately fascinated me. Yes, fascinated. Just by looking at his nose, I understood that the Master was an exceptional being. In this perfect form, I read wisdom, intelligence, strength of spirit and the laws of harmony, and in the beginning I could not stop looking at it. Also, I was even more bothered by what had happened some time previously to my own nose.

In our neighbourhood in Varna, despite warnings from my mother, I was used to climbing on the roofs of neighbouring houses, and one day I fell. Luckily this fall was not too serious, as I had not fallen from a great height, but I hit my nose, and in time a growth formed, which made it look like a beak. It was not a pretty sight, and I suffered from it. So once, I spoke to the Master about it, and he said, 'Don't fret about it. All will be well'. In fact, little by little my nose regained its normal shape, and there was not the least sign of injury.

What also immediately impressed me about the Master was the rhythm and harmony that he put into his gestures,

his words and his bearing. Such a rhythm cannot be created artificially, it does not appear by chance; it is the result of a deep knowledge of the laws of the spiritual world. These laws must have been studied and internalized, over a long time, in order to make the body conform. The Master never changed his simple, honest attitude; he never abandoned this harmony, this marvellous rhythm which gave weight and meaning to everything he did. I do not know if I am making myself understood, but I can give you an example. When you sing or play a musical instrument, it is not enough to pay attention to the notes, but you must also respect the tempo, the rhythm, otherwise the greatest masterpiece will lose its meaning and beauty.

I, who continually lived in extremes, was always astonished to see this measure and equilibrium in the Master. He was not indifferent to what went on around him, but whereas, in some situations, others would be worried or agitated, he always maintained the same rhythm, and you could read in his face that he was in command of the situation. I said to myself, "This is what I must learn. My God, if I could only be like him!" For a long time I tried to guess his secret. Did I discover it?... I can still feel today the effect that this mastery, marked by harmony and benevolence, had on me. With what attention I looked at him, I listened to him! I wanted to have the same thoughts and the same feelings as he had; I wanted to act like him. I told him this one day, and I added that I even wanted to look like him. He was silent for a moment, then he replied, "Yes, one day, you will look like me."

Little by little I abandoned many of the exercises I was doing before I met the Master and, as he advised one

particular practice, I began to go in the morning to watch the sunrise in Varna's large park, where we could see it rise out of the ocean. At this hour, no one went to the park, but the Master and I would often meet each other; one would be arriving as the other was leaving. We would greet each other from afar, the Master raising his hat, a bowler hat which many people wore at that period. At that hour we never spoke to each other, as I felt it was not the moment to approach him. But I was always glad to see him, and then I knew that I could go and see him during the day.

In the room where he received me, usually in the afternoon, there was a simple table with nothing on it. But once, coming in, I saw a book on it. Then, the Master picked it up, handed it to me, and asked me to read a passage from it. The book was... *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas! And the piece I had to read was where the old abbot Faria shows the young Edmund Dantes how, by putting two halves of a sheet of paper together, he could reconstruct the contents of a will which would reveal where a fabulous treasure was hidden. After having read the passage, I gave the book back to the Master, who said not a word, and I dared not ask any questions. Why had he made me read this passage? What did those two pieces of paper signify for me? Was there somewhere a piece of something and I had to find the other half? This was not the only time the Master left me with unanswered questions or, more precisely, questions to which I had to find the answers. But when?...

At that time, Bulgaria was at war with the Balkans and the government had instituted a curfew. One evening the Master had kept me at his house longer than usual, and when I left him it was already past curfew time. Suddenly, at

a street corner, I found myself confronted by two guards on horseback who stopped me, saying, 'Where are you going at this time of night?' 'I am going home.' 'Well, come with us.' And I had to follow them. I walked thinking about the Master, and I was so happy with our conversation that I did not mind spending the night at the police station... Then, equally suddenly, for no apparent reason, the guards said, 'Right then, be off with you and go back home! We will come some of the way with you so that you won't be arrested again. But in future, don't be out at this time.' I was very happy at this turn of events, but the next day I had already forgotten the incident.

Several days later, when I went to visit the Master, he welcomed me with a smile and said, 'So, it turned out all right the other evening. The guards treated you well, didn't they?' 'What? You know what happened?' 'Yes.' 'Did you do something?' 'I told the guards that you were a disciple of the light and that they should let you go home.' After that incident, I understood that the Master, who was clairvoyant, was also able to speak to beings in the invisible world. Those who question the reality of the power of thought – whether it can travel through space, whether human brains are prepared to receive it – should reflect on this fact. The guards had received an order, and their souls had obeyed.

One day when the Master accompanied me as far as the hotel entrance, as I walked away I believed that I could feel his eyes on me. I turned around, and indeed, he was still there, looking at me. I had the impression that he was observing how I walked. This surprised me... And then, a short while later, during a lecture, he tackled the topic of how we move, by drawing our attention to the different

modalities of movement in animals, which, according to the species, walk, crawl, hop, swim or fly. He then added that we can draw conclusions about the character of each human being from the way they walk, and even predict their future. This was new for me; I had never before thought of dwelling on such details. Then, I, too, began to observe my own way of walking, as well as all my gestures, and to compare them with those of the Master: how he got up, sat down, turned his head. And I could study his walk especially when he allowed me to go with him and a few other brothers and sisters to see the sun rise over the heights of Varna.

We met each other and waited for the Master outside his hotel. When he emerged, he paused motionless, for a moment, looked in front of him, then to the right and to the left. He never started walking without being oriented first, as if he was consciously owning his space, and then his step was both quick and supple, yet full of dignity. I never saw him walking with a bent back or a lowered head. It could be said that he found real delight in moving because his steps were so light! Then with what joy we watched the sun with him, as it rose deep red just above the sea; it spread light of such beauty that we wanted to drink it. Afterwards, we did the breathing exercises and the gymnastic exercises.\*

One day, however, I arrived at the Master's house absolutely overwhelmed and in tears. I was so taken by this wonderful new life I was discovering with him that I had forgotten that I should soon have to leave for my military service. I had just received notice to present myself at a specific time and date at the barracks. This departure was

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\* See chapter XI, 'How to work in all three worlds'.

a tragedy for me; not only was I devastated to leave the Master, his lectures, the sunrises but, as Bulgaria was then at war,\* I was in danger of being sent to the front, and the idea of bloodshed horrified me. Moreover, I had to fight the French, when, I don't know why, I already loved France. So there I was before him, overwhelmed, and expecting him to share my sorrow. Not at all! He looked at me calmly, almost joyfully, and said, 'Don't worry, Providence is looking after you. You will be released very swiftly.' As he said these words, he looked at me with such intensity, such love, that I was swept up in such a whirlwind of light that not only my grief disappeared, but I was in Paradise. I have never been able to forget that look, for he never looked at me in that way again. Although he gave me kind looks, there was never again one like that day.

Now, if I tell you about my life as a soldier, you will really laugh. I turned up at the barracks and, as I was not in any great hurry to get my equipment when I arrived, the others had already helped themselves and I had to take what was left: a uniform and boots that were far too big for me, a helmet which covered half my face and a rifle without a strap. My God, it was funny! Then, while the others marched with their guns strapped over their shoulders, I carried mine on my shoulder, and what's more I found that looked much smarter. I made sure, however, that I brought up the rear so that no one would notice me.

Sometimes, when we were summoned to the drill field, I would distance myself a little to sleep in a corner. As I spent part of my nights reading, obviously, I was sleepy. One day, a passing officer found me. He shook me and, irritated at

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\* The First World War

being woken, I told him to leave me in peace. I think he was so astonished at my nerve that he did not punish me.

Others, however, began to question what strange individual they were dealing with, for I was a sleepwalker. Yes, I was a sleepwalker for a long time. At night, I got up and wandered around in my nightshirt. Obviously, the soldiers on guard duty saw me and made out a report. Two officers came to look into the matter, and when they found a suitcase full of philosophy books by my bed, their faces were a picture! They put their heads together to come up with a solution to my situation, and they decided to send me to a clinic in Sofia for an examination. Instead of going there, I went back home to Varna. I dressed as a civilian and went for a walk in the park by the sea. Someone recognized me there and also made out a report. At that time, in Bulgaria, people were beaten for the smallest offences, and it is extraordinary that I was never beaten. My audaciousness, or just my simple lack of awareness, undoubtedly made those in higher ranks think that I was a little bit cracked, due to all my reading, so perhaps it was better to leave me alone!

Then, I got jaundice. So I had to go to the barracks' infirmary to be treated by the military doctor. But was he really a doctor? Whatever symptoms the patient had, he used just one remedy – swabs of iodine tincture. He clearly thought that he had found the universal cure-all. After a few dabs of the brush, he said, 'There you are, all done, you can leave.' I did not stay long enough to see how many he healed, but I, too, had my iodine treatment. I do not know the connection between iodine and jaundice, apart, of course, from the colour! Obviously, being daubed with iodine had no effect on me, and as I was really ill I



Even if the words of a spiritual Master can be contained in books, paper books would never be enough for him. He is himself a living book, and he needs his disciples to become living books too. First of all, he writes on them; in their head and heart he sows the seeds of his Teaching in the hope that one day they will bear fruit throughout the world. So, the Master wrote a book which no one but he could have written: me. Yes, I am a book he wrote.

The earth is so far from the sun! But the distance does not stop the sun from writing on the earth, and this writing is the stones, plants, animals and humans it gives its light, warmth and life to. Like the sun, the Master wrote on me from afar. He wrote thousands and thousands of pages, and they are now all brought together in the book that is me. Then, one day, he said to me, 'Now, you are ready; you can leave.'

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

*The spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900-1986), left his native Bulgaria for France in 1937. He gave several thousand improvised lectures and informal talks, initially recorded in shorthand and later on tape and video cassette. His teaching continues to be published in book form, with more than 80 volumes now available in French and translated into many languages.*

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ISBN 978-2-8184-0185-9

