

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

# A Philosophy of Universality



Izvor Collection



P R O S V E T A

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## Chapter One

# What is a sect?

For thousands of years, human beings have been in the habit of paying attention to the form, the external wrappings that are visible to the eye, and of neglecting the inner content and the hidden meaning of things. And the sacred scriptures also have form, content and meaning: they are no exception to the general rule. The form – the story – is for the ordinary person; the moral, symbolic content is for the disciple, who strives to grasp its underlying message and put it into practice, and the hidden spiritual meaning is for the initiate, who is capable of interpreting it.<sup>1</sup>

The great initiates have always been builders of new forms. They have always recognized the need for forms, but those they introduced were alive, imbued with a science that the average human being was incapable of deciphering, precisely because of this ingrained habit of heeding only what can be seen, touched or heard. Of course, it is true that forms can be helpful and stimulating,

but they would be far more so if people could feel and understand the truths they contained and put them into practice in their lives. Every religion has a body of esoteric teachings that exists alongside its exoteric doctrines, for there has always been an elite who felt the need for a deeper understanding of the mysteries of creation. The meagre scraps that satisfied the masses were never enough for them. In the Christian Church, alongside the mainstream Church of St. Peter, to which the great majority of believers belonged, another stream has always existed and flourished in secret: the Church of St. John, guardian of the true spirituality, the true philosophy of Christ.

This question of spirit and form is very far-reaching. You only have to observe human beings to see that most of them are so obsessed by form that they end up identifying with it. In this way they actually identify with their own physical body. Whatever they do, they do for the benefit of their physical body; they cannot see their spirit, so they don't bother with it! They do not realize that in this way they are only weakening themselves, and that they will become more and more like animals, for true strength and light have not been given to the physical body. If they identify with the physical body (the form), they will never develop their spirit, which is eternal, immortal and omniscient, a spark of God himself.

The materialistic philosophy so prevalent today severely restricts the scope of people's lives, for when they are no longer enlightened, guided and inspired by the spirit, they shrivel up and become small-minded and sectarian. They judge everything in life from their own strictly limited point of view, in the firm belief that it is the best. And how wrong they are! A materialistic point of view is hopelessly biased and sectarian. Yes, sectarianism exists in every area: economics, politics, science, religion, philosophy, the arts... everywhere. And I shall prove it to you.

The notion of sector is a common one today. In the language of geometry, a sector is a wedge-shaped 'slice' of a circle; in a city or a country, the word sector is used to indicate a specific region, and, in the human body, which forms a perfect whole, an organ could be termed a sector. But then, what is a sect? Well, it is quite simple: once a religion has achieved official status, it declares that any group that refuses its dogmas, beliefs or practices is a sect. It is the official Church that pronounces this judgment, and history tells of countless thousands who have been thrown into prison, persecuted or burnt at the stake, because they refused to adhere to the doctrines of a Church! Later, history passes its own judgment on the judgments of that Church!

But now let me tell you something that you do not know – something that is quite new to you. It is this: it is not up to human beings to decide who is sectarian and who is not; that decision belongs to nature alone. Take the case of members of a Church who work for the propagation of the faith: their fellow-believers would never think of accusing them of sectarianism, would they? No, but perhaps nature has another point of view, other criteria by which it judges them; it may well condemn them for their sectarianism! Yes, nature may condemn them for being sectarian and sentence them to bed, to hospital – or even to the grave! Why? Because their way of thinking and behaving contradicts certain laws of living, intelligent nature. They neglect these laws; perhaps they have never even known that they existed. Their life is not in harmony with the Whole, and, in spite of the opinion of the faithful of their Church, they have to be classed as sectarian. On the other hand, nature may show her approval of those who have been condemned as sectarian by those same faithful and shower them with health, peace and perfect fulfilment. Why allow those who have no discernment to judge? Cosmic Intelligence alone is in a position to know if we are sectarian or not.

If you observe what goes on in the world, you see that everyone chooses their activities according to their temperament and tastes or according to



external conditions and circumstances, without taking into account their need to develop and grow on every level of their being. Human beings are endowed with a mind, a heart and a will, and they must develop and function in all three dimensions if they are to be fully balanced. Experience shows that those who are equally developed in the three areas of thought, feeling and action are very rare. You will find many intellectuals who are heartless and lacking in willpower; others have a strong will but are utterly brainless and so on. Yes, we see nothing but cripples all round us: people who are gifted in one area and handicapped to a greater or lesser degree in all the others.

And yet, if we question Cosmic Intelligence about it, it will tell us that humans were created to be in the image of their Creator, capable of understanding and loving perfection and of achieving it here on earth. Why did Jesus say, *'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'*?<sup>2</sup> Because he knew all this! He knew that humans had been created to become all-knowing, all-powerful and all-loving just like their heavenly Father. But if you look at them, you will see that most of them do nothing but cultivate one very limited area – mathematics, poetry, music, swimming and so on. And if they have only developed the things that came most easily to them, they are sectarians. And the most serious thing about this is that they don't know it!

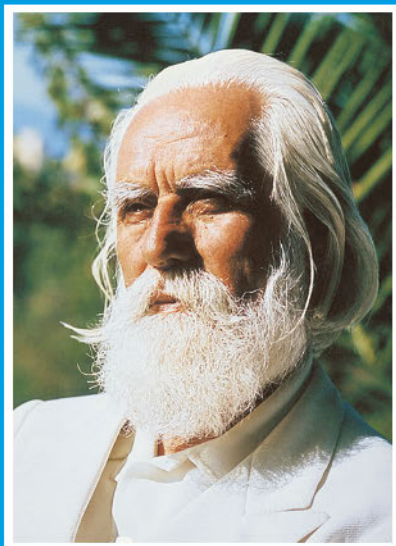
Humans must grow and develop on the three levels of mind, heart and will. They must understand, love and achieve. But what must they achieve? They must achieve the kingdom of God and his righteousness on earth;<sup>3</sup> this is the only way to be 'saved'. Humans will not be saved by the means that most Christians believe in. Do you really think that faith and a few good works are sufficient to win you a place in heaven at the right hand of God? The poor Lord, what he is going to have to put up with, surrounded by coarse, ignorant humans, by gluttons, drunkards, smokers and dissipated libertines! It doesn't matter what kind of lives they have led, they had faith and considered themselves to be upright people, so they will go straight to heaven when they die! Don't you believe it! Let me tell you what is going to happen to them.

There was once an Orthodox priest in Bulgaria who never stopped scolding his wife. He kept telling her she was an ignorant sinner, whereas he was a model of perfection. One day he felt that his last hours had come, so he bade farewell to his wife, saying, 'Goodbye, my dear. I shall be waiting for you in heaven.' Not long after, the wife died and went to heaven, and she started looking for her darling husband, but he was nowhere to be found! Finally, she went and asked St. Peter, who looked through his big register but couldn't find the priest's name anywhere. 'I can't find him',

said St. Peter. 'He must be in the basement!' And he gave her a pass to go and look for him in hell. When she got down there, there was her husband, up to his neck in a cauldron of boiling water. 'Oh, my poor husband!' exclaimed the good woman. 'What a terrible fix you're in!' 'Don't be too sorry for me', replied her husband. 'I'm relatively well off. I'm standing on the archbishop's shoulders!'

And that is what happens to many of those who think they are just and upright people: they go and spend a little while in hell before coming back to earth to learn to develop themselves and reach perfection. In the eyes of the universal Initiatic Science, almost all human beings are sectarian as long as they are still not perfect.

And what about the tendency we see all round us to work for the aggrandizement of one group, whether of a union, a political party or a country? Of course it is considered to be very generous, but in fact it is still too personal and egocentric. Just as long as your activity does not have the goal of peace and happiness for the whole of humankind, it is limited and therefore sectarian. Since even science tells us that we are part of cosmic life, and since we owe our very existence not only to the earth, the water, the air and the sun but also to the stars, why must we always huddle up in a corner with our own petty interests?<sup>4</sup>



*The distinguished philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900-1986), was born in Bulgaria. In 1937 he moved to France, where he lived and taught for almost fifty years until his death. One of the most striking aspects of the Master's teaching is the enormous variety of ways in which he presents the one central theme of man and his growth in perfection. Whatever the question under discussion, it is invariably dealt with in terms of how man can better conduct his life.*

For the last few decades, men have been trying to deal with the world's problems on a global scale and, for this purpose, have created countless cultural and political organizations. But it is not enough to set up organizations with a universal vocation: as long as the individuals they represent are unaware of their own vocation to universality, all their organizations will be powerless. Haven't we already seen proof of this? An awareness of universality is the fruit of a long and patient education and it is the foundations of this education in universality that we find in the teaching of the Master Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov.

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