



*I*hat morning, for no reason I could think of, I felt like driving at random. In a way, I understood my desire, considering that, although I was on vacation, I had never stopped writing what I jokingly called “my Memoirs”, an ambitious title for someone who hadn’t lived long enough to tell the world his side of the story of existence and all its intricacies. Additionally, retired generals and politicians usually get involved in writing Memoirs; but I was neither one of them. Nevertheless, I had an itch, more than ever, to complete that literary composition I had started few days before my vacation (just for fun or for testing my writing skills). Then, my inspiration being stimulated and my imagination being more vivid, I did not want “my wonderful thoughts” to sink into oblivion.

An engineer by trade, I have to deal constantly with numbers, graphs, blueprints and activities of this nature. However, I hardly resist to the drive of writing, which my *legal status*, as a single, makes even more compelling and appealing. Solitude, contrary to many, doesn’t correspond to total emptiness. We fill it with our fancies, our desires, our drives, our *castles in Spain*, our *pies in the sky*; at least it seems to work this way for me. I can’t find any better means by which someone can genuinely get

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lost in thought At times, my writings have led me far back to events and moments in my childhood, which should belong to a distant past ; at times, they have pushed me forward, into a future, apparently so promising, that I sort of taste it.

I have another reason that keeps encouraging me to write: although I haven't known any fame, those, who have some familiarity with my creative works consisting of novels, poems and essays, have expressed great satisfaction from reading them. Therefore, they have seized the first opportunity to advise me on keeping my creativity going and on eventually publishing my literary compositions.

My "critiques" line up behind the most serious-minded and reliable persons I have ever met. They wouldn't entice me to take such decisive course of action if they thought I would make a fool of myself.

They also know me well to understand that their eventual disapproval would not get me offended but disappointed.

Yet, being some kind of *perfectionist*, I believe that my literary creation should stay in my desk drawer a little longer to benefit from the fruits of experience, before reaching the public.

However, that morning, I felt tired of staying home. I needed *some air*, some distraction, other people's company, with whom I would have stimulating conversations. My mind, along with my body, had to go out of the confined space of my home to *expand* outside, until the blue sky,

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the horizon edged with mountains, the open roads, the rivers flowing under the bridges...

Again, I felt a strong urge to exchange views with others, to have new experiences, instead of shutting myself up.

Despite the *compelling reason* for going out, I had to fight my usual liking for staying home, as well as the delight I took to doing *things* at home, like cooking, reading, watching my favorite TV shows, listening to my preferred radio stations, being creative in my own way, dreaming about all kinds of fanciful situations and courses of action.

Finally, I thought that it was *too much*; I shook myself from the *lure of solitude*, went to the bathroom and took a long shower.

I listened to the birds singing at my window, which had no longer fear of me and sometimes pecked grains directly from the palms of my hands.

I believed that I made the right decision to go out; for, a surge of well-being still overcame me. I enjoyed the biting sensation of water on my skin, which I had deliberately set to cool; the rubbing of the sweet-smelling soap on my neck, my face and my chest; the gurgling noise of water reaching the drainer. I reached a state of dream, daydream, rather than meditation, letting my mind wonder freely (everywhere); and I welcomed a multitude of mental images intermingling at leisure with one another, in harmony with my state of euphoria.

When I finished, I went back to the bedroom, a shambles customary to many bachelors. I could have dressed up in order to “match up” the luxury

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of my *brand-new car*, but I changed my mind. I said to myself that a month from that point on, I would have to go back to work in three-piece suit and tie; thus, I had to seize this *good opportunity* to go informal, relaxed, cool (as they say, “casual”). I almost jumped into a pair of blue-jean pants, a pair of ordinary shoes and a plaid shirt.

Although, at first, I felt some uneasiness, I finished by convincing myself that my uneasiness just came from a state of mind, which had nothing to do with the social reality and the new vogue dictating carelessness and inconsistency of human nature.

Today, people wear impeccable outfits; tomorrow, rags to express an insincere solidarity with the poor. Recently, they have attended businesses in shirts, short pants, tennis shoes, flip-flop, topless (well, almost).

I wonder if this lack of elegance does not correspond to a widespread sense of demoralization or I-could-care-less feeling; because, to some extent, elegance and cleanliness mean a willingness to please others, to bring a certain warm feeling in others, to encourage their conviviality or closeness. We would not like a loved one to inhale our unclean teeth, our unwashed bodies and our *athletic feet*. We usually do our best to increase the positive aspects of our personality by those we wish to strike up friendship or love with. I have just told the truth (unless we mean to take a chance on losing them to a dandy, a belle or an inviting person).

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Overall, I believed that no one, during my driving, would even notice my presence, except that I could pass off, occasionally, as another typical *punk* driving a big fancy car.

On my way over to the garage, I had tried again to talk myself out of that random driving. My euphoria frightened me, which, according to me, looked out of place. It rather seemed, as they said, sacrilegious, an outraged manifestation of selfishness, some disturbing sadism, in a world full of miseries of wars, starvation, acts of genocide, incurable diseases, ravaging epidemics and devastations caused by *Mother Nature*.

Recently, she appears mad at humanity for its bad behavior and its affront to natural and human resources.

I should have cried over the world lot, instead of trying to seek pleasure in escaping to random driving.

On the top of everything, I imagined that, like a child in his mother's womb, my home represented the only safe place for me to stay in. Each time I had to step out of it could turn deadly to me, with rampant crimes in New York and the world. I figured out criminals crouching in every corner and every dark alley for mugging and killing people. Of course, I alluded to a childish fear and I smiled all the way to my car.

I got on it, closed the door nonchalantly and locked it. I felt good.

By the way, sitting in my new car provided me with another source of security feeling. I believed that, unless from *bad luck*, no one would attack me in my locked vehicle; although, lately, fearless thugs have invented a

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new type of crime related to what I had just thought about: *carjacking*. Human mind has no limits in its invention, for the better or for the worse.

I definitely made up my mind: I would drive at random and, as a bachelor, I would go as far as I wished to. “Come on, Bernard,” I said loud, “nothing will happen to you. Try your hardest to forget the world miseries (at least for a while). They will keep going, on your return. They could belong to a wholesale make-up of reality; but you have the right to feel good.

“Happiness also goes with the world. Grab it as it comes. You will feel wonderful.

“Trust me.”

Indeed, looking for a permissible distraction betrays the most innocent and the purest intent one may have.

I drove away and did not look back. Then, I didn’t take my *escapade* for a mistake, since I still enjoyed serenity, optimism, joy and well-being. I listened to my favorite songs on cassettes and I did sixty-five miles an hour, well within the *State speed limits*, to stay away from trouble.

I marveled at the countryside, a marriage of modern dwellings, rocky mountains and greenery. I particularly admired the persistence, the resilience of nature in a region where vehicles of all kinds passed by every second and left their obnoxious scent of carbon monoxide behind. Actually, giant trees gave the impression of feeling at home in any setting; and green grass paved the empty spaces among the houses.

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I also noticed a profusion of natural beauty where I had the least expected it.

Suddenly, in the middle of this immensity of splendor, I saw a shrub! It looked so small that I could barely see its branches. I stopped the car.

I had never experienced such artistic arrangement by *Mother Nature*. That shrub foliage betrayed a rare nuance, a kind of mauve, like the shade of a gorgeous dress made by one of the most skillful couturiers in town.

I went into raptures over such unprecedented natural display of charm.

Finally, I pulled myself together and kept on driving, not without looking back to see that *beauty* until I lost sight of it.

Without having an awareness of my driving progress, I almost reached the State Capital, my first stop.

I believed that my subconscious had pushed me there; for, I remember having made myself a promise to visit, one of these days, most of that city's celebrated public buildings, just to satisfy my professional curiosity.

I drove through the main street, a marvel of cleanliness.

In addition, the boldness of some of the building styles had truly impressed me.

I stopped for a short while at the museum and found delight in seeing works of art, scientific specimens and past cultural artifacts, rocks from the Moon, dinosaurs, Indian outfits, pictures and attires reminding of earlier men, women and children.

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Of course, my mind traveled back in time, allowing me to shake hands with all my ancestors, from the Pithecanthropus, the Neanderthal, the Zinjanthropus, the Atlanthropus, to the ones that belonged to a more distant past and got lost in the mists of time.

I could somehow *sense* their actions in order to survive and to scatter all over the planet.

I saluted those giants who had conquered nature when it seemed at its worst shape. I took pride in descending from them and in acquiring later on the status of a human being.

Only, then, I understood that the idea of belonging to humanity bears a great deal of responsibility: men and women should shy away from participating in savagery and chaos. They should make *Mother Nature* proud of them.

I got back on my car and drove across the city. I stopped again to buy a toy gun for my nephew Gerald. He becomes an untiring collector for toy weapons inspired by futuristic movies such as Star Trek, the Jedi, Space Commander, Captain America, Spiderman and Robocop. Knowing his craving for *present* and *futuristic toy weaponry*, my gift would certainly please him, the more so as that toy gun looked like something real, to such a par that I felt a pinch of guilt about the prospect of giving it to him. I had no reason to entertain feelings of violence in his young mind. “What kind of uncle am I?” I said to myself.

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From that point on, I made a resolution to select, carefully, my gifts to my *favorite nephew*.

In addition, I would have to spend more time with him to teach him some *positive values* and *wisdom* I might possess. What could they be? I couldn't identify them on the spur of the moment.

This idea of wisdom and values brought me a sad but, fortunately, evanescent feeling of my frailty: I asked myself how I would look sixty years from that time.

I showed reluctance to mull over something of this kind. Anyway, I imagined I would turn so weak, so feeble, that I would barely walk; I would become bent with age; I would hardly drive a big fancy car like the one I was driving.

Would I feel that weak?

Didn't Nature or God build me like the rock of Gibraltar? I palpated my biceps and my chest to take notice of their firmness.

"They will never turn flabby," I thought unconvincingly. "I will always keep my good shape, since I will never stop taking care of my body."

Then, I smiled at the idea according to which sixty years from that time, although old age would sap my strength, I would also acquire wisdom peculiar to that stage of existence. I imagined that people would come to seek my advice as they normally do in respect to old folk; because, for existence sake, reality would have to change; *wisdom* would have to return. My actual experiences and observations of human reality could not

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keep going on without making the future of the world in a state of danger of annihilation. I echoed my thought loud, “So, I have to start working on my wisdom, in order to make myself useful, sixty years from now.”

Finally, I admitted, against my will, that I had enough *mixed feelings* and had to go back home where I belonged. I had no other choice.

“It’s too much enjoyment for me in one day,” I regretfully said aloud. “It’s getting late.”