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I am grateful and still full of wonder that on mid-april 1922 I came into the world as the first son to my parents and as the long prayed for fulfillement of their great love. My father was then 43 years old ~~and~~ a poor and struggling artist with a great vision and persistent courage. His integrity as an artist lifted him and us above the mediocrity, sham and ugliness of the world around us.

His vision was religious, pure and intense. My father ^{was and} is one of the great, if as yet not fully recognised, religious artist of our century. ^{To my mind}

It was shortly after my birth that my father was, more or less accidentally, given the opportunity to design a stained glass window for a convent near Thurnhout, in the Flemish part of Belgium and which was to start him on a long creative period in, and part of, what was to be the renaissance of stained glass in Europe.

If I have mentionned my father here and lingered on for a while on his work before speaking of my mother and our home it is ~~not~~ certainly not, in any way, because of a filial preference; for, whereas early personal remembrance of an intimate character are bound to be more closely associated with my mother, I seem to have felt the impact of my father's creativity and personality ^{restrained} ~~hover~~ over us all, in his reserved, tactful way. ~~The impact of~~ his youthful enthusiasm, his love of light and color, his gentleness and old Spanish chivalry pervade all my childhood memories, where, in

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a childlike and wonderful way reality and facts ^{MELT} let away into dreams.

8 The only thing about my early childhood I would dare claim to remember, would be a vague, but persistent, "illumination" of harmony and happiness and fulfilment. All other memories of those days I must have reconstructed in my ^{im}agination from stories, told to me throughout my youth by my mother or my father, or told by them, many years later, to my young bride when she came to live among her "new people".

And so I have been told, and believe, that as a little boy I was ^{very} quiet and reserved, but with a great affection and with a great need of love, always active, and full of ^{ex} enterprise and with a very lively imagination.

I seem to have been very careful and precise in my movements, and well behaved but besides this possessed by irresistible and extremely violent choleric fits. I also understand, and this I believe to remember, that all my mother would do was to pick me up with loving and patient understanding and wash my forehead and wrists with cold water, but further ^{than that} she would ignore the whole affair.

A few years after my birth my mother fell ill and after having undergone several different medical and dietetic treatments, without the expected results, she was sent to Switzerland for a period of one year.

My father was making at this time a surprising success as an artist and lived practically isolated in his huge studio. Since

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it would have been very difficult for him, then, to take ^{full} care of me, I was sent to a boarding place at one of the Belgian Coastline resorts. All I can recall of this is that a few days after my arrival there, I started a high fever. After many exhausting days of my fighting ~~of~~ this fever, the doctors, not understanding what the causes might be and failing to improve my condition in any way, wired (to) my father who was at my ~~poor~~ mother's bedside in Switzerland, to hurry back since there was no hope (~~left~~) of saving his little's son's life.

A few hours after my father's ~~x~~ arrived, the fever dropped as ~~x~~ suddenly as it had come. I ~~started feeling much better.~~ I vaguely remember my father guiding my first weak steps through ^{THE} ~~my~~ sunny room overlooking the thundering north sea.

My father took me with him and never left me behind anywhere.

One of my mother's aunts, who also happened to be my god-mother, came to live with us to take care of my father's and my own wellbeing until my mother came back ~~to~~ to us again.

This was a very quiet interlude. My father was working day and night on a series of ^{projects} ~~small~~ cartoons for eventual execution in stained glass. They are among his most excellent works and his later reputation as an artist was largely built up on the exhibition he had of them at the Christian Art Show in 1927.

These cartoons were later reproduced in color and published in a limited luxury edition at the occasion of a celebration of my father's fiftieth anniversary. The best writers, poets, art critics and others of the Flemish cultural world collaborated in this homage to him.

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Fairly soon after this my father went to Switzerland, from where my parents made an extensive tour of Italy before coming (back) home. And a new period started in my young life.

I distinctly remember my mother's surprise when, looking at some of my many, many drawings of Angels, Saints and God Himself, she asked me what "That" was. I explained to her, rather amazed at her ignorance that "That", looking like a peculiar kind of a green tree, was...lettuce. I never had seen any growing lettuce other than lettuce gone to seed. For among many other things neglected, my father had allowed our vegetable-garden to grow into a real jungle.

Many things changed at my mother's return. One of the major improvements was that my father became part of the family life again, although his studio remained the sacred and impenetrable place of seclusion and work it had always been in the past.

One day, with, perhaps, my mother's implicit encouragement, I walked up all the stairs leading to the top floor of our home and intermittently, patiently and gently scratched at the door of my father's retreat. Many years later I was told about my father's ~~inner struggle~~, pacing up and down in front of the closed ~~door~~ and forbidding door of his self-willed hermitage, in inner struggle between his need and longing for strict solitude and quiet, and the desire to let his one and only baby son into the studio. My father let me in and ever since that day it was there that I spent my days, dreaming, painting and drawing, very quietly.

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My father would design his huge sized cartoons on thick paper ~~sp~~ spread out on the floor and over which he would crawl on all fours, Heroic figures of saints ^{Herods} would grow this way to two, three and four times life size. The first outlines to be, were of nude figures, to determine attitude, proportion and anatomy. After which, gradually they would become wrapped in majestic cloaks and tuniques of deep red and blues.

I loved to see these figures being conceived, grow and pass through the different states of transition. Thus grew in me a great respect, understanding and love of the human body, which for me had a divine quality. After this the outlines for the lead structure ^{were} ~~was~~ ~~designed~~ studied calculated and designed and the deep colored pieces of glass to be used were selected. They looked like over-sized precious and semi-precious stones. Vibrant vermillion, flaming sun-like orange, intense ultra marine blues, royal purple, luminous golden yellow, radiant reds and vivid green.

These colors and the way my father ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ would make them sing in unisson woke in me a paradisiac nostalgia ever since and which, many years later would bring me back to color and make of me an artist, after rejecting art, for a while, as an escape.

Every day my father would give me a dozen scraps of his own heavy, cream colored drawing paper and all the used envelopped ^{of} of the days incoming mail, most of these envelopes, long before the II world war, were very large and of a very good type of paper, with all kinds of interesting textures and suggestive in themselves of new techniques and treatments. I specially liked to use the oversize envelopes of wedding ^{an}ouncements and the back of invitations for exhibitions from my fathers many colleagues.

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After long hours of intensive creative work, my father would spontaneously reward my silence with beautiful stories. These stories were adaptations made up specially for me, about Parcival, Siegfried, Lohengrin, the Knights of the Holy Grail, the wagnerian Ring der Niebelungen and from Dante's Divina Comedia.

When I was older my father would reconstruct for me, in his own words, colors and intensity the world of the ^{ancient} Greek Mythology, of the old Finnish Kalevala, of the Indian Ramayana, the MahaBharata and the Bhaghavad Gita.

To this strain of pictorial memories belongs for me my first visit to the cathedral of Antwerp; although it must have been much earlier in chronology. I guess it was during my mother's illness in Switzerland, for what I do remember about this visit is surrounded by a halo of ^{me} earstness and of a vague loneliness, suggestive of my mother's absence and of quick meals prepared by my father, consisting mainly of bread, cheese, raw tomatoes, tea and french fried potatoes, usually eaten standing up in the kitchen.

The inside of the cathedral of Antwerp was like a majestic, warm-grey forest of pillars, with an imposing muteness and, if paradoxical, an impressive resonance. Far above us deep colored light would filtrate through somber toned gothic stained glass windows.

The titan like pipe organ would jubilate in trembling, all pervading bass tones, that would sound and feel like the roaring of an angry ocean or the mystrey of an earth ~~xxxxx~~ tremor.

At the far end of this forest, the Forest of God and the first forest I ever had seen, man sized candles were burning on the altar.

Besides this atmosphere remains vivid in my spirit the sweet and redeaming odor of incense.

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My father pulled aside an enormous green curtain and lay bare for me the "Descent of the Cross" by Rubens. While my father remained in meditation before it, I stared and did not understand.

After what had been like a whole, but very happy, day in the cathedral we emerged again into the world outside, with profane light and sound and size and people.

My father was made to explain one thousand^a things, at the emotional and mental level of his little son, only a few years old.

When my father came to the point where the Christ had been crucified and told me that He had been crucified by his own fellow men and only because of His deep love for them, I burst into tears, crushed by the heavy perplexity and gloom of adult grief. It was many days before I could adjust my child's way of thinking to the cruelty of mankind towards its God and fellow man. An extensive series of sketches and drawings of Calvaries followed. I was four or five years old. ✓

To judge by the quality of the drawings, many of which my father kept for me ^{til} for the time I would be grown up, it must have been (somewhat) around that same period that I drew endless Saint Marie's with child, although I obviously remember my mother's presence.

My mother had explained to me, very beautifully, about love, human love ^{at} this is, and about babies and birth. I still clearly remember the great wonder and reverence ~~for new life~~ it ^{awoke} woke up in me; that same great wonder and reverence for new life that still lives in me and which never for one moment was smothered by apparent profanity, cruelty or ugliness.

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My Saint Marie's were triangular in shape like the Spanish Madonna's and drawn with one clear, decided contour line. On Her head was a huge dented royal crown and inside the triangular body, plus cloak, was a clear design of ^{my} little child Jesus, also with an enormous royal crown on his ~~little~~ head.

The First intentional portrait I ever made was of my father and dates back earlier still. When my parents and I moved to the New House, the walls were still bare white plaster, the floor boards unwaxed. On the ~~landing~~ first floor landing a beautiful bare wall-space called out my creative urge and it was there that I drew a full length representation of my father and this in life size, my own life size at that time. The face was at the height of my own head. The body and limbs had the length of my own. The whole thing was outlined with one bold, simple charcoal ~~stroke~~ stroke. ~~Then~~ To give to the nose the necessary sense of relief I glued a great number of little pieces of paper, torn out of the blank margin of newspapers, on top of one another, with, what I called, when later explaining to my parents the process used, "glue of my own little mouth".

It is strange even to me to realise how the majority of my childhood remembrances are concerned with making things, painting, drawing, modelling.

One ~~of~~ other of these ventures was my modelling of Saint Francis preaching to the birds. In search of new techniques I mixed ~~the~~ modelling clay with an entire ~~tube~~ of burnt sienna oil paint belonging originally to my father and destined by him ^{for} to a slightly different purpose.

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The clay had been given to me by a huge, red-bearded, bohemian sculptor friend of my father's, who, among other things, kept a snake several yards long, in his workshop. The animal was mostly gorged with food and in an archaic sleep, half hidden under some casually piled up blankets and dirty linnen. ✓

After thoroughly mixing clay and oilpaint with my hands, I modelled a conically shaped Saint Francis, a few inches high, who besides form had color.

After this I mixed some more clay with the contents of ^{various} different other oilpaint tubes, thus producing a number of much smaller figures representing fairly identical sitting birds of different colors. These plump little birds were arranged in a wide circle around the burnt sienna Saint.

My parents were pleased with my achievement, in such a fashion that they wisely overlooked the many unpleasant consequences of my newly discovered process and the effects of oilcolor on hands and face, and clothes and surrounding. They unconditionally praised my work. Saint Francis was very much a ^{living} reality for me then and his Joy a daily reality. His Canticum Solis became a young child's, vaguely pantheistic, prayer of love.

Around this period my father produced His very beautiful series of stained glass windows of the life of Saint Francis. It was also at this time that the flemish writer Felix Timmermans, wrote his Harp van Sint Fransiscus, translated recently as the Perfect joy of St. Francis. He was a friend of my fathers and they would talk till late into the night about the Saint who inspired us all.

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One day, after my mother had told me some or other story, or might it have been a Grimm fairy tale, about a child asking its mother for the moon, I told her that what I would want, would be: "and the moon, and the sun and ~~the~~ all the stars too." This phrase has clung to me, up to now, in the family and among a group of intimate friends, with a slight, if relevant, addition which makes it: "and the moon and the sun and all the stars too, TO GIVE AND TO RECEIVE."

Our house was a very sunny and happy place, with deep orange window frames and light colored wooden board floors, eternally smelling of sweet bee wax. Down stairs there was a very large living room which had the full width of the house, with ~~wide~~ windows and a wide double door that gave unto the garden. The garden was ~~always~~ a sea of radiant calice-like orange and yellow (oost indisse kers) with appetising green, round shaped leaves and a strange, faint, acrid smell.

In the ^{late} afternoon my mother would make tea and after this she usually would sit down at the piano and sing and play music for me. I would sit at her feet or improvise dances on the melodies. Mostly she would sing folk songs from Bretagne collected by the Keltic Bard Theodore Bothrel and his wife and whose motto was: "j'aime, je chante et je crois". I knew all the songs and would make my request selection by "reading" the illustration for each song.

My mother would also sing and teach me, simple mediaval flemish love ballads and lullabies, german "wander lieder", english nursery rhymes and the Raggle Taggle Gypsies, Ho. These were enchanted afternoons and evenings. Often there would be a little burning candle. My mother would bake chocolate cake or almond cookies.

At noon and for supper I would help lay the table and we would

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make a real ritual out of it. Every single day we would improvise new table decorations with flowers and leaves.

On the walls throughout the house hung drawings of strangely shaped trees and of huge tree roots, on rough bister, pale ~~ocher~~ ^{ochre} yellow ~~tender~~ ^{soft} grey paper. Most of these my father made while he was a prisoner of war in 1914-18 in Amersfoort, dividing his ^{free} time between the painting of several hundred oil studies of his bearded fellow prisoners and these very beautiful series of monumental, gnarled trees, huge grotto-like, protruding knotted roots and of endless nostalgic dunes and pastels of dreamlike sunset, that have a, ever so vague, suggestion of Turner.

I had a great desire for a little turtle friend but my parents did not react favorably to my request. When my next birthday was due I handed around, what in our family was known as, the "list of birthday special request", with this time one single and exclusive request. The result was that when the memorable day came I was the happy, proud if perplexed temporal owner of what practically amounted to a small herd of turtles. After enjoying one day of intense and overwhelming sense of fulfilment, I only kept one single turtle. She had a beautiful diamond patterned protective shell, light brown, slightly translucent and reminding me of peasant, pure butter candies. I have no idea how I came to the decision that my turtle was to be, from now on, a "she". In due time she became Pepita, named after a little Spanish Gypsy girl in my father's youth in Andalusia and about whom he loved to tell ^{long} stories. Pepita was as big as a shoe and had very small, intelligent, dark eyes and she lived with us in the house for many, many ^{happy} years.

Life in my childhood's paradise was never disturbed by punishment

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of any form. I was given the full responsibility off any voluntary deed, even at a very young age. I was given to understand that I had full share in the social life of the family and that if I misbehaved I would sadden the other members of it, in this case, my parents. There was no retribution or wrath to be feared from a physically or hierarchically more powerful being. Which fact excluded from my early childhood all possibilities of resentment, self pity, grudge, rebellion or repression. But besides the fact that this ^{earthly} paradise-like young life of mine was never disturbed by retribution, it was equally not disturbed by rewards for deeds good or useful, which were taken as a matter of course and as the privilege and obligations of belonging to this particular human unit, ^{namely} the family.

Up to the age of seven or even later I had no conception, use or understanding of the advantages or possible desirability of the intercommunal way of exchange in commercial dealings called money. I never received any regular monetary allowance for unspecified spending, at any age, but on the other hand I was never refused money when I wanted it for a special purpose. This is when there was spendable money available in the house.

The kind of needs for which I might have wanted money were infinitesimal. Since my interest were in painting, drawing, modelling in clay or building, I learned to make use of materials readily available at home, in my father's workshop or in the garden. I even found a great deal of incentive in the challenge of limited material possibilities and, as matter of fact, I still do.

I never found the expendable time to be bored and therefore no

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social games ever caught my interest. As far as I can remember no games of any kind were ever played in our home, except and this only until much later, when my little sister grew up and developed a passion for dominoes, at the age of seven, and at which game she would spend countless hours, with ^{our} ~~my~~ old grandmother. They would play for candies. My little sister eventually gave it up too, finding that grandmother was too easy a match for her and spoiled the fun by always giving in and that she was so disappointingly easy to deceive at the game.

My father would work from eight ^{A.M.} till eight ^{P.M.} p.m., or thereabouts, every day, after that he usually studied and read in his small booklined study, ^{till} up to midnight.

This room was strictly taboo to everyone and few ^{were} the happy souls who ever were admitted. I had to smuggle myself in and had to be satisfied with the status of being tolerated rather than welcome. Until, eventually, this also did change.

I loved to lay there on my ^utommy and for hours at the time look through artbooks, Michel Angelo's sculptures, fresco's and paintings, Phidias, Da Vinci, Giotto, Hieronymus Bosch, Breughel but above all my favorite the Japanese artist Hokusay.

The walls of this inner sanctum were covered with books from the floor to the ceiling. There was a wide, dark oak drawing table, where my father would make his first sketches for his large cartoons, late at night. Next to the window overlooking the garden there was his small writing desk. Here was the only place where my father would tolerate, for himself, any object of predominantly emotional or sentimental

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value. The other parts of the house were devoid of any emotional symbols of a more personal kind. We seemed to, purposely, avoid keeping irrelevant souvenirs, photographs, knick-knacks and the sort.

Against the wall over the writing desk there hung a small iconé-like reproduction of the dark, Virgin of Czestochowa. Two strangely fascinating Japanese theater masks were hung from nails driven into the window frame. One was a dark purplish brown, with an angry frown, thin ~~lips~~ tight lips, both corners of the ^{bitter} mouth sharply pulled down wards, forming a semi-circle and a long moustache of black horse *hair* jutting forward in two little jets. The other mask was a smooth greyish-yellow, placid and with a slightly dumb, satisfied grin and many little folds at the outward corners of the eyes. It had a light grey horse hair moustache protruding in the same way as the other mask.

Half hidden in a dark corner of the old fashioned desk stood a small gild bronze statuette of the Tibetan goddess Kaliyama. I loved to stare at it and let it grow to immensity in my mind's vision. It had a quality of dignity and greatness although superficially seen it looked fierce, cruel, nightmarish and grotesque with its six arms brandishing official, if esoteric, attributes.

Against the door, leading to the workshop, were pinned, with thumb tacks, lists of future projects, personal letters, measurements of church windows to be executed and a photograph of a Mestrovic monumental sculpture, and a reproduction of a tragic Kathe Kollewitz charcoal drawing of scary looking women and hungry children. There also hung a green, blue, red and yellow Keltic ornament of inter-

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laced and intertwined and surprisingly ending in a dragon head.

Life at home revolved, to a great extent, around my father's studio the commissions presently under production, projects under way.

Work and family were under one and the same roof.

The studio was an enormous place taking the full length and width of our house in Antwerp. It had immense white washed walls covered with notes, which my father would make about the most diversified subjects, in Spanish and written in charcoal. Once every so many years the walls were whitewashed and my father could start writing again "on a clean slate". The ceiling was two full stories high with heavy ~~he~~ protruding wooden beams and skilights so big as to make the place look almost roofless. It used to be very hot in summer and almost unbearably cold in the winter, notwithstanding the loudly snoring potbellied stove, so typical of artist studios. When home and working my father would unvariably be wearing dark brown corduroy trousers deep ultramarine colored, peasant linen shirts, with plump little buttons of bone and an open collar. He wore Mexican sandals on his bare feet. His long hair would stand out on all sides and form an aura like those he would give to his figures of saints. ~~Wix~~ I remember his hair black, greying, to become the snow white it is now.

My father was a deep tan with very light blue ~~eyes~~, radiant, pure eyes and a happy smile. He was small in stature but very souple, full of untiring energy and quick, precise movements. He was very much loved by everybody who knew him. When he spoke French, Flemish, English or German he had a peculiar Spanish ryth and accent, That made his speech sound much quicker than when spoken by other people.

I often wondered if it ~~would~~ ^{always} be from him that I acquired the slight foreign accent which I ~~have~~ ^{always} had, since childhood, and in whatever languages I learned to speak, including my mother tongue.

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My mother was dignified and imposing looking, curiously so, since she was kind and gentle to extremes. She was very beautiful. She had large soft brown eyes, full of love and humility, in a full oval face, with the high forehead, high cheekbones and well formed aquiline nose that betrayed her partly red Indian ancestry. This would show even more strongly, when, sometimes to please me she would wear a beaten silver hairband on her forehead.

She wore, to my taste, the most beautiful home made dresses, preferring turquoise green, delicate browns or purple as color, with a predilection for shantung.

She always wore a keltic cross of green Connemara marble, encased in silver and in which the traces were left of my first teeth, but otherwise I never saw her wear any jewelry.

My mother was more interested in social conditions and reforms and social experiments in India and elsewhere. Her keen interest in Gandhi's spiritual and social pioneering was to be fulfilled many years later by the invitation from Gandhi himself to come to India, which invitation however my mother could not accept due to the war and later to family circumstances. So it was after Gandhiji had been imolated for his cause that my mother did go to India. She went after at first rejecting the whole idea, since the invitation had been extended to her by the Mahatma personally and he was no more, physically this is. When the Ashram, of Gandhi, his community of those closely related to him and who tried to carry on his work, insisted on her coming, adding that Gandhi, if still alive, would have wished her to come for the sake of his ideal and work rather than for him in person.

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My mother was very interested in Dandhi's concept of Ahimsa, or voluntarily not physically harming any other human being and if need be to resist, then to resist "passively", as they called it. Accordingly I was brought up very much along these same principles by my mother, in this also encouraged by the example of my father's old Spanish chivalry, gentleness and self restraint, although these qualities were of a very different kind, psychologically, and they had a entirely different ^{social} implication too.

As a very young child I must have been more than over-sensitive. At the age of six months I had overcome pneumonia but had kept a weak physical make-up from it. As a child I did have an intense distaste of meat of any kind and when inststed upon that I should eat it I could chew on it endlessly, without much further result. At the dinner table I would suddenly stop eating and, with an earnest face, ask "what was this meat before it was killed". On the answer that it had been a little pig or a little cow or a little chicken, I would, with still as earnest a face, ask "was this little pig, cow, chicken or rabbit so very naughty that we had to kill it for this.".

Eventu lly my parents stopped feeding me meat, giving me instead fresh fruit, almonds and nuts and plenty of vegetables and thus it occured that the whole family became vegetarian.

For a short while I was subject to terrifying nightmares of ~~bla~~ ^{four} maddened black horses charging through walls, crushing everything on their trail. I would also complain about one particular nightmare /that would come in through the walls also, but this one would sneak in and would come and sit on my chest with its full weight. This was at the time I started talking, because my parents were never able to clearly find out what I meant or understood by the use of the word "nightmare". In my imagination and interpretation of it, it must have

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been a most wicked something. This was at the time that the word "bambarambam", probably a free interpretation of mine ~~mfxthm~~ from banana, was a generic term for everything edible. "Wa-oowa-oo", a sound interpretation of a dogs barking, describrd any and every animal. For example, would I, very excitedly, point out at a "wa-oowa-oo", yelling out the magic name, to indicate the presence of a sparrow on the window-sill. "A-a", a quickly repeated single sound usually said in a half-whisper, was a danger signal of a more pragmatic nature and heeded to helpfully and diligently, by my parents.

When I was about four years old we had another of these magic words. We, meaning here my mother and myself. This secret word was "Barnabe" and was cassually dropped by my mother in the course of a conversation at my suggestion and special request, whenever I would forget my table-manners or commit any offense against the family etiquette. Nor my mother, whom I asked the question, nor myself do remember why the name of Saint Barnabas had been chosen for this purpose. Although I do remember that there was a very pertinent reason for it.

It was at this same period that an ardent dream of and great longing grew in me, for the adventurous life on a virgin island, where everything would have to be started from nathing. Where a new type os society might evolve and a new type of man would become, pure, brave, free of pettyness and envies. I cannot remember how this whole idea had started since, in a way, I did live on a protected isle of love and happiness within the boundaries of my own family. While I write about all this I wonder if, perhaps, the story of Robinson Crusoe might have been related to me and subconsciously caught root in my imagination?

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No matter how it came about this whole idea did take root and very firmly so too. It has grown ever since, together with ~~me~~ me, right up to this date, not as, what might appear to be, at first sight, a form of escape, but as, on the contrary, a creative will to reform and to transform ~~late~~ late into reality nostalgic utopia latent, I believe, in every ~~normal~~ ^{futile} normal human being. This latent nostalgia may be or become a search for the lost paradise, a world detaching quest for the New Jerusalem or for the forgotten empire of Priest Jan as a more or less unsubstantiated dream carrying in its seeds, its own rejection and ultimate defeat or else the very essence of of new and integrated cultural, material and spiritual reality.

Thus grew in me, a renewed attempt at evolving and achieving a satisfactory working personal close system, and, as far as human limits permit a conceitless self reliance. In this blending my father's mystical longing for the absolute as an artist and as a Spaniard, spiritually, and my mother's humanistic and human will to help and love and share with others on a more temporal level.

I would think aloud about this new world of mine, in the presence of my girl cousin, who was not quite one year younger than myself, and who, I hoped, would eventually come and share this new life. She was filled with as much wonder and admiration as a child her age was capable of. She did, however, want to check on one specific detail and promptly ~~reje~~ rejected the whole dream on discovering that I had overlooked a point of major importance to her and that I was not overanxious to rectify this omission, namely the existence, primordial and primary necessity of a candy shop and of a heavy cream pastry bakery. Alone I dreamt on. I thus started wondering about the social dynamics of a, to a great ~~extent~~ extend, self supporting community. Needs and production. Freedom and the

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necessity of planning, utter idealism and bare reality. All this developed first at a young child's mental level and grew from there on.

Infinite questions took shape and demanded satisfying answers, providing me thus with an unrelenting incentive to learning. I conceived then of man, not as an isolated, single individual bent on satisfied ~~xxxxxx~~ his own strictly egotistic needs of many kinds but as a paterfamilias. I conceived of man and woman created for each other, complementary to each other and whose ultimate fulfilment was the family of many children.

From the brother of my father, my uncle Zizi, I learned all I ~~xxx~~ could absorb about the principles of ~~xxx~~ elementary carpentry, building, engineering. I asked him questions about his concepts of irrigation and fortification, but otherwise never developed an interest in pure mechanics. In interests and activity he was as much the opposite of my father as was possible. What I mainly liked about him was his very pragmatic resourcefulness and technical knowledge. I remember him as impeccably dressed, in a somewhat old fashioned but ultra elegant manner. He had a thin moustache and a little pointed beard that made him look like a figure out of the Burial of Count Orgaz by El Greco. He was a vice-consul in Antwerp of the central American republic of San Salvador and spent most of his time yachting and trying to retain his popularity among the Spanish and South American consular and mercantile community of Antwerp, where he was better known as Tio Caramba.

It was from him that I learned Spanish to the delight of my father who did not have the time to teach me. My uncle loved the challenge of solving technical problems of any kind, even when coming from a

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child and thus indulged with me in my fantasies of pioneering. With my mother I would discuss social organisation, the necessity of some kind of social order, peace, freedom, a minimum of economic and material security and the further possibilities to achieve intellectual and moral progress. Or at least what we have amounted to these subjects in a child's mentality. These inspiring and fulfilling conversations with my mother extended over a period of many years. They were interrupted for a period of four years due to war circumstances and were to be resumed even more intensively afterwards, enriched by precious material and spiritual experiences on both sides. When during my boyhood I left home to live among a nomadic tribe of Gypsies and eventually became fully part of their community and was socially active in it, I had the opportunity to gather unvaluable background material and possibilities of comparison.

My mother would always stress the importance of the family as the basic social unit. She did sometimes have over-idealistic views on certain subjects and I gladly granted her this tolstoyan privilege, wanting to spare her the cruder side of life. This was since the first day I spent at school. This closed one paradise like part of my life and started another one, that was to be much more rough, unsensitive and lacking in respect, which respect, in my opinion, is the primary requirement for any religion or any possible sort of happiness in life.

With my father I would speak ~~maxxx~~ almost exclusively about art and other related cultural subjects. Gradually my father would try to inculcate me with his own classicism, ideal canon of Beauty of the ancient Greeks and Da Vinci's quest for the Golden Rule and Goethe's color theories.

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He would read to me passages from Shakespeare, whom he admired greatly. I must to having enjoyed nearly as much as the text itself, the fantastic and delicately romantic illustrations for it by ~~Rxxxxx~~. Rackham. All other outside interest from my part were considered a loss of time and a loss of concentration in the eyes of my father, although he never did express it as openly.

When the New House had been built but recently, it stood almost isolated in, what had once been, a huge private estate, with many trees and ponds. At that time the back end of our garden had been experimentally used by my father as a vegetable garden. His experiment in agriculture did limit itself in time and space to the planting of one and exclusive lot of several hundred cabbages, which eventually attained the happy stage of going to seed through lack of consumption. I have been told that I became very afraid of this part of our garden filled with these grotesque and seldom seen cabbages-gone-to-seed much higher than myself and that would obliterate the house from my point of vantage and make my home coming a difficult and unsafe venture. In due time I took over this part of the garden, which then became screened off from the house by small bushes. There I build huts at the entire satisfaction of my budding architectural ambitions. Sometimes my father would come down from his studio and help me dig trenches, which were then covered with wooden boards and became intricate subterranean secret passages connecting distant corners of my private art of our garden.

At a later stage the combined use of chicken wire, cement and plaster came in too. These activities and plans were limited to sunny days when it rained I took refuge again in the workshop and painted and drew, pleasing my father immensely by doing this. The evenings, after

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meals, were spent with my mother. One of such evenings that I was lying on the floor of the enormous room, I made a drawing, which somewhat surprised my mother. It represented our New House, from the outside, in a fantastic landscape. Through the window was discernible a joyous celebration going on inside, with many candles burning. and in the air something, some kind of vague yellow spot, without my usual clear, strong outlining, was diving towards the window. My explanation of it was that this was a new little soul wanting to become a child and be part of this one and happy family.

Many new things started happening from then on. in the New House. My mother was radiant with a secret happiness and became even more beautiful. My father spent more time with us in the big living room and read aloud to my mother.

After many months my mother's steps grew heavier and slightly slower and more careful also.

I was made a full part of all the wonderful happenings and intensely and intimately followed the miracle of the beginning of a new life. Many more months later I was the proud and protective big brother of a small baby sister.