



# Interview of Raoul

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## Family

### Tell me three things about your father

That's going to be an easy question because I do not have a father or at least I do not know my father. I do not know my grand-father, I do not know my grand-grand-father. So for that part, I'm completely alone on the road and that's exactly also the thought that I had up the age of, I think it was 30 years, that I had no family. I thought that my family died during the war. At least, that was the deduction that I came up with because my mother didn't want to say anything about her past, her history. So we grew-up with the idea that we had no family, no father, no grandfather. And actually at this time, it doesn't bother me. It's something I did accept already a long time ago. There are quite some reasons for that so for me I try to be a good father for my son and my daughter. That's an answer you didn't expect ...

*Were you looking at trying to find alternative father figures or were you one-sided in terms of who was taking care of you?*

Of course. I think that first of all, as a young boy you were asking yourself "why is everyone else having a father and I do not have a father". You try to have that dialog with your mother but she was completely, completely blocking that discussion. So life is moving on and so you are conditioned to accept it.

Did I look for some other father figure? Not really. I think, I accepted life as it was coming in. So I cannot say that I really missed it. Is it shaping my character? Probably yes up to a certain level. Maybe I'm over compensating that what I did not have into the past towards my children in function of responsibilities, but I cannot say that it was really putting a lot of stress on my youth. It was intriguing, just like everything else in life. So it was just something I accepted and tried to live with.

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## Friends

### Three objects that represent you?

That's a very tough question. On the one hand, there is the professional life and on the other hand, the real life. So objects that are more close to me are objects of the real life. There are several objects in that context that are close to me. I am going to show you pictures later on, because I couldn't bring them here, because they're too big. I am having a lot of interest in Science Fiction, movie making and I try to be very creative. So one of my best friends was also a science fiction enthusiast, so we made together some science fiction models, spaceships. I always have dreamt of being somewhere in outer space, doing stuff, and of course, Physics are what they are. So the things that you have to lock-up yourself with are either into a movie or take that one extra step and make yourself a movie.

So that's exactly what we have been trying to do. So I have some very interesting models in that context, and images that we made, Photoshoping, of beautiful science fiction scenery that we could project, and I think that they would give you a very good insight of the "hidden me's" because everyone has "hidden me's". I am very proud of that. I could find some time in my life to spend into there. I had some great, great moments with my best friend who is very closely working together on these topics. Lately my attention has been shifting to other topics, but that is something that I am very proud of.

Secondly, I've been thinking of "what else could I come-up with?". If **Yarid** would still be alive, he would be able to point towards an object that is indeed very close to me. **Yarid** is very strangely the father of my previous best friend, who became my best friend, who died in the meantime and has been replaced by another best friend. The object that he would point to is my collection of middle-age coins which by accident is something that we started to collect together in the sense that he had an enormous passion for middle-age history, and I was intrigued by his enormous knowledge and the passion when he was

speaking about it. So I proposed at a certain time of my life "if you are collecting the silver coins, what else can you collect? The copper coins, or de gold coins?" Well, the copper coins did not exist in the middle age, or hardly did exist, and if they existed, they did not survive. But the gold coins are still there, so maybe you can collect the gold coins. "If you buy ten silver coins, I will buy one gold coin."

That was for me a perfect excuse to be close to him. There was an age difference because he was 30 years older than me, but it was an enormously interesting friendship and it did result into an enormous nice collection of middle age coins, which after his death, I also absorbed his coin collection with the promise that I would every year again open up the coin cabinet and be with him. So I promised him to add every year some coins to the collection because it was his life passion, and every time that I am now opening that cabinet, I am with him. It's the best mean to be very close to who he was, what he was thinking about, his passion and so on... So that is the second object that I am very proud of at this moment in time.

The third object that I would like to point at, is not really an object but is the most important realization of my life. And that's my family. It's not an object. If you look at how much time you put into creating children, raising children, ... they are, according to me, the best reflection of who you are as a person. It's a pity that I have to compare them to an object, but for me if you put those three together, you have a good reflection of who I am as a person.

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## Caring

### Who are the people that you care for ?

That's an easy question and not an easy question. Of course I'm caring for my family, but that's going to be an answer that every normal person is going to put on the list. But then, if I would open that a little bit broader, I think that I care a lot about people who care about other people, and that can be in very different forms. That can sometimes be a very small thing, sometimes, the intellect of a person that really contributes towards creating a better world for people. So all these people who are contributing towards that do get my direct sympathy. It's a warm feeling that I am getting at the point in time. That's very difficult to directly map to a very specific person. It's a feeling that you have when you're talking, when you're discussing, seeing, observing things that people are doing, are saying.

For example, one sentence that is always at the back of my mind is "a person that is good for animals must be a good person." And until now, that is indeed something, according to me, very true. And if you're asking me about "who do you care about?", people who care for other people, for other beings, for the collective good. That's for me, I think, very important.

But besides that of course, it is mainly my children, my direct family and of course, the person that raised me. It's an independent woman. My mother died, but she was not fit enough to raise me as a child. Probably due to all the history that she had. So I was raised by another woman. She was not family. I was not adopted, but she, without any personal interest or relationship, she did it for exactly the reason that I said before, for being good for humanity. So I think that if I have to pinpoint to one person, that is the person for whom I am caring the most. But don't tell her! (smile)

## Who takes care of you?

Of me? Now at this moment? ... First of all, I am almost never feeling down. I don't know why it is, but it is really my mental state. I can very easily flip-flop and find some interesting things around me. I have a lot of energy. I do lots of things. Can I say that I am really ever down? No, I'm never having that feeling. But that does not mean that you do not enjoy the warmth that people can give you. Just saying "Hey, you should go the doctor, or maybe you should do this..."

Recently I divorced, which was maybe a darker period in my life. Not that I can say that I really felt down or something like this, because it's something that you see coming. So you absorb this and it becomes part of your life. But I recently have a new girlfriend which is giving exactly these kinds of warmth, of signals. Indeed, it's something that is very important, I feel.

Up 'til now, I was very independent, very focused on what I needed to do as a person. I knew very well what I wanted. I knew very well what I was capable of doing, or not capable of doing. So I was very independent, very self-confident, and that is most likely also due to my past. Having no father, I had no more family life, I had to do it myself, and that's something that is really part of my life, even up 'til today. But now that I have a new girlfriend, I must say that I am discovering these values of life much more conscious than I did do in my previous marriage. Of course, when a marriage is breaking apart, there's always two parts which are wrong. I know I did certain things wrong. Now I am learning to do things better because being pointed with your nose against those facts, next time you do better.

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## Self

### Three things about yourself?

About myself? In what context? My interest, my values, things that I'm worried about? One thing that I feel about myself is that I have a quite broad view on society. I am an IT architect and I learned to think in a very abstract way, so I see many, many things happening around me. I see patterns, I see structure and it's not something that isn't stopping in my professional activity. It's something that is part of your being. It's how you have been shaped by society, by yourself.

So one of the things I am quite frustrated about as a person, and I feel that I find it difficult to have myself into having the right expectations around me, is inertia in society. There are so many things that can change, that should change; not in function of the interest of a person, but in function of just getting things better organized. You see that in front of you, and it frustrates me that the society is not seeing that. The politicians are not willing to see that, and things are going so slowly, so damn damn damn slow... which is troubling. So very focused on that I can get nervous, I can get in a certain sense angry, but of course, I have to put myself back into pace in the sense that there are certain things that you can change, some that you cannot change. I just latch-up with the correct expectations around you. But that is one of the things that I feel I am very sensitive about. I often do think that there should better be an IT architect in control of society rather than a politician because I think that I could change some stuff really. But I may have to become a politician (smile).

What else can I say about myself? When I was young, there was a teacher explaining the concept of Heidegger; at least that's what I remember of it. I don't know whether that is true or not. The sentence that had some impact on me was "The more you know, the more you will realise that actually you know less, or you don't know. There is so much more to know". The more you know, the more humble you become, because you realise that there is so much more to learn. You start to realise that, you're running very hard, you're catching up with knowledge, but the more knowledge you start to gather, the more you realise that you're just starting to lag behind. Our brain is not made for all this knowledge to be absorbed, and that's a scary thought. It's something that made a deep impact on me. Maybe that was perhaps a trigger for why I have such a broad interest, whether it is about history, about philosophy, about human interests, geographic interests. Name it, it always triggers my interest. I'm like a sponge, something that absorbs and absorbs. I also feel that that statement from Heidegger is really true, and it's sometimes scaring me.

*Do you see yourself having a lot of sympathy for the encyclopedists? They were people in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century who were amassing knowledge. At the time, there was less than now, but still they were amassing vast quantities of knowledge because they wanted to touch everything. Or are you more like "aweing"? Saying like "there is so much there, and I only touch little bits of it, and I'm impressed by how much is behind what I can actually reach".*

I am definitely impressed. There is so much to know and to learn, and that changes you as a person. Because for example, just looking into the engineering part of a human cell, it's mind blowing. If you open-up your mind and see the ingenuity of what's happening behind all that. The way I am approaching all this knowledge is more from an IT architecture perspective. I am not interested into the details, because I know the details will kill me. I cannot absorb all this details. I'm just going over all this knowledge and I am seeing patterns. I am very interested in the relationships. The relationships from the earliest time of life, up to the point where we are at this moment both historically, culturally... So you see trends. It's maybe another way to look towards the essence of being. It's because I'm an architect, because I am shaped like that. It's because my brain is made like that that I am approaching

it in that sense. I'm not an encyclopedist, someone really trying to remember all the details. I will never participate into a quiz because that's not the way I approach this enormous sea of knowledge, but still, the sea is very, very big.

I am a very responsible person. Sometimes, I am very surprised about the ability of people to not see the responsibilities that they should pick-up. There is something that can start very small with someone throwing paper on the ground. It angers me a lot in the sense that they're polluting the nature, that they're not picking up their responsibility. So I think that if everyone in the world would really pick-up his or her responsibilities in a correct way, and learn from that then it would be a beautiful world to live in. If you're asking me something to tell about myself, it is indeed that deep sense of responsibility. Not because I want to be better than someone else, but just because I feel that being good for yourself, being good for the people around you, the people that you love, but also the people that you have to live with, it starts with being responsible. So it's an important element of my life, of who I am. I think that if you would ask a third person to describe me, they would definitely come up with some reference towards me in that context.

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## Life

### What is hard when you wake-up in the morning?

That's a good question. What is hard for me is the fact that I know I will not be able to drift in the direction that I want to drift to at any moment of that day. I often wonder, what if I would be less linked to this complex society, and I would just be somewhere into the nature and I would follow my interests. I would discover everything around me, and so the life that we're living is not really helping us to really be discoverers. You adjust life a little bit around you, you shape a few things around you. You give yourself the idea that you're controlling everything, but no, that's not really true. So we live in a very time sliced world and that is maybe what is frightening me the most when I'm waking up every morning. The things that I really would love to do, they will be very hard to do, they will stay out of reach.

When I retire, maybe I'll have the time to do them. But it's part of life. It's not that it's worrying me or bothering me. For the rest every day is again a day of discoveries, but maybe not the discoveries I would really want if I was able to control everything myself, around me.

### What makes you smile during the day?

Harmony. When I feel something in harmony. It's true I think. What makes you smile, what makes you happy? When you try to achieve something and you feel that everything fits nicely together. That can go from just a discussion that you planned or a concept that you want to introduce, or a moment that you

planned for yourself. When everything is in balance in what you are trying to achieve, and that you are achieving that everything around you is in harmony. So every moment during the day when I consciously or unconsciously experience harmony, it will make me smile. Humour is maybe a form of harmony. *I vote for that.*

## When was the last time that you saved the world?

The fact that Heideger is so prominent in my mind, I started to realise that saving the world is a very hard thing to do. I think that I still have to save the world. It will come. I think that everyone wants to do good, to have a positive impact, and I'm sure that I have a positive impact. But I think that I am part of the rain. I am one of these drops. It's only because it rains that the soil is getting wet and that something can grow. I am not the one who is causing the rain. I am one of these drops, so I feel that I am contributing to something just because I'm here. I'm leading a professional life, I'm educating myself, I'm good for my children, my family, I try to carry around values. I'm a very out of the box thinker so I create lots of new thoughts. I inspire people.

But at the same time, I am very modest. I am part of a much bigger thing. Not that there's someone above us who is controlling everything, but I think that I can live with the fact that I'm just one of those drops of rain that are making the earth fertile and are creating new grounds for people to build further. That's my part of saving the world.

*I've had people saying that they are part of a network, and that it's their way of contributing to save the world.*

Why am I saying that I'm part of the rain, not of a network? I feel myself enlightened, especially if you see everything that is happening around us, with all the religious or economic clashes. So you feel yourself not being part of those camps. You're networked, so you know that you're part of a way of thinking that fundamentally tries to be good. Maybe that is something that in the longer term is going to be an enormous contribution for saving the world. But sometimes, I'm also frightened. Sometimes I also do think that it's getting smaller and smaller. Maybe at a point in time, we will just be overrun or absorbed.

## The world

### Regarding the world, looking outside is anyone doing something right?

I think there are multiple persons making a difference. Barack Obama was someone who made a deep impression on me. I think that he is a very strong example for the free world. I also had that impression with the new Pope, but at a certain point in time, I don't think that anymore. He also gave me a very good honest feeling. An organization... That's very difficult. I don't trust the United Nations.

*In what sense is each of them doing something right?*

They really gave an impression that they're doing it for the good of people, not for themselves. It's not them who count. It's the collective that counts. It's fundamental values. Honesty, responsibility. It's also the values that they are standing for that I do recognize. There are definitely people that I would move forward.

I am really trying to tease my brain to find an organization that I would believe in. I once hoped that the European Union would be the safe haven of my values, of my thoughts, but now I do not know anymore. Sometimes I do. I think that the Brexit is maybe the best thing that we could get for opening up our minds and taking a new start. But then again, as I am getting older, I also see the bad things of politics.

*Between basic fundamental values and what is really happening, the gap is very apparent. Is that the dilemma?*

That's really a dilemma. I hope it will come, but I'm also realistic and I don't think it will be in my lifetime... or in future lifetimes. So looking for an organization, I find it very, very difficult to pinpoint any organization.

On the one hand you are being driven by big names like Barack Obama, or the Pope, but there are also some small things that you see happening like the white helmets that you see in Syria. That was really impressive. That girl who was shot through the head (*Malala*). It's very encouraging to see these people. Not knowing them of course, but there are certain things that they've been doing or they responded in very impressive way that is indeed having a deep impact on me.

### What would be the last event that you could roll-back?

*In a dream world, if you could do it.*

Am I going to say that? ... The election of Trump! I've said it! I've said it! Yes, and you can publish it!

I really think that now we have a crook on the head of state of Russia and a crook on the head of state of America. It's a scary thought. I would roll that back.

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## Future

### In your dream life, where would you be tomorrow and what would you be doing?

That's a very easy one. I would either be a director of making one of the most brilliant games or be director of one of the most brilliant science fiction movie that you would ever have seen.

*Do you consider that as something that will not happen or could it still happen?*

No. I'm very realistic, it will not happen. Not that I'm missing it, but if you would ask in my dream world, where I would have been, I would have been there. Absolutely.

### What will you be doing when you get old?

Enjoying my old days with my best girlfriend. Enjoying life. I would be very active. I can go from being active in the garden to visiting museums, or really going into the nature. I think that in my old days, I will lead a very active life. Still pursuing knowledge. Trying to be good for myself, for the people around me. Enjoy life because life is here to be enjoyed, ranging from small things to big things.

And of course, I still have those fifty-five hobbies that I once wanted to start. For example, I wanted to become a pilot when I was seven or eight years old. One of my teachers asked me "What do you want to be" and my answer was straight "I want to fly". Again something happened in my life that I did not become a pilot. Maybe I was too frightened by the enormous responsibility of such a large airplane, which is still frightening me because every time that I am sitting in a plane, I am wondering "Wow, this captain. What a responsibility". And it's just a plane. Just one small thing. But still if you're sitting into there, you'll see the might of such a machine and the technology that sits behind.

But, being a pilot was definitely something that I wanted, and so one of the things that I still want to realise is creating such a complete flight simulator in which I have the feeling of really sitting in an airplane cockpit. With all the technology that we have today, with all my IT knowledge, we can build something like that. So all I need is time. And when will I have that time? I hope that it will be when I retire. So that's one thing that is definitely very high on my agenda. But also for example, look into the

sky. I'm very interested in everything that we see, as sky ornaments. Looking into the telescope and just wondering how small we are. Preparing myself for that very last moment. Maybe something I would do.

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## Closing

### **What message would you want to pass to those people who read your interview?**

I think the most important message that I would like to pass on to anyone who reads this interview is "The essence of life is to be happy." Happiness is, according to me, only to be found when you are open for the harmony. That is the key driver of happiness. People are often trying to run behind something that they do think will make them happier than they are today, because everyone of us fundamentally wants to be happy, but it's difficult.

I think that if you're open to the idea that harmony is the absolute essence of being happy. Actually happiness can be found where harmony comes together. That can go from very small things to very complex things. So the only thing that you as a human person has to take care of is that you are the one who is controlling the input parameters of that harmony. What you want, how you want to achieve it, what you want to achieve, with whom you want to achieve it, what you want to experience. All that is essential to start to brew something. And as everything starts to fit together, you feel that suddenly it feels good. It's harmonious. You feel happy.

Happiness is just behind the corner. If look towards the notion of harmony, and if you're starting to see that, then you're also in the mind-set where you're starting to appreciate the harmony at bigger levels. Harmony in the nature, harmony at society, harmony at Art, Harmony at politics, harmony in computer systems, where things all operate correctly together. Where there's no tension, where everything seems like clicking nicely together. Looking for that, seeing that, I think that's a very important message.

Besides that, make sure that you think a little bit different from the people around you. That is the best antidote for making sure that you do not get ill with this society. And be proud of that. You do not have to be a rebel, but just give yourself the time to look towards things in a little bit different perspective. It helps a lot in shaping who you are and seeing your shadow coming off the wall. It's not that you're part of a black and white picture. You're a little bit different. That is what I would like to give.

## What is the impression that you would want people to walk away with after having read your interview?

Deep questions. This guy enjoys life. This guy is proud of himself. This guy is also proud of what humanity has achieved, is achieving, will achieve. He is very well aware of all the shortcomings, both on his own side, as in the family context, as in the society, but is always looking with a bright eye towards it. For me the glass is never half empty. It's always half full. I think there is always... life goes on.

Tomorrow someone else will try to do it in a different way, and maybe it will be better than what it was today. So I think that's a very important thought that is driving my personality. I think that is it. Voilà.

*Thank you so much.*