

Dear Theo,

I was lying awake half the night, Theo, after I wrote you last night.

I am sick at heart about the fact that, coming back after two years' absence, the welcome home was kind and cordial in every respect, but basically there has been no change whatever, not the slightest, in what I must call the most extreme blindness and ignorance as to the insight into our mutual position. And I again feel almost unbearably disturbed and perplexed.

The fact is that things were going extremely well until the moment when Father – not just in the heat of passion, but also because he was “tired of it” – banished me from the house. It ought to have been understood then that this was supremely important to my success or failure – that things were made ten times more difficult for me by this – almost impossible.

If I had not had the same feeling at the time which I now have again, namely that notwithstanding all good intentions, notwithstanding all the kindness of the reception, notwithstanding anything you like, there is a certain hardness in Father, like iron, an icy coldness – something that gives the impression of dry sand or glass or tinplate – for all his outward gentleness – if, as I said, I had not had this feeling already, I should not have resented it so much.

[Written in the margin] I am not so much interested in a kind or an unkind reception – it grieves me that they do not regret what they did at the time. Now I am again in an almost unbearable state of wavering and inner struggle.

You understand that I should not write as I do – having undertaken the journey hither of my own free will having been the first to swallow my pride – if I did not find real obstacles in my way.

If I had now noticed some eagerness to do as the Rappards did, with the best results, and as we began here with good results too – if I had noticed that Father had also realized that he ought not to have shut his house to me, then I should have felt some confidence in the future.

Nothing, nothing of all that.

In Father's mind there was not then, there is not now, the faintest shadow of a doubt that what he did was the right thing.

Father does not know remorse like you and me and any man who is human.

Father believes in his own righteousness, whereas you and I and other human creatures are imbued with the feeling that we consist of errors and efforts of the lost souls. I commiserate with people like Father – in my heart of hearts I cannot be angry with him – because I think they are more unhappy than I. Why do I think them unhappy? – because the good within them is wrongly applied, so that it acts like evil because the light within them is black and spreads darkness, obscurity around them.

Their cordial reception grieves me – their indulgence without acknowledging their error is for me, perhaps worse than the error itself. Instead of a ready understanding and a certain eager contribution to my, and indirectly their own, well-being I feel in everything a hesitation and delay which paralyze my own ardor and energy like a leaden atmosphere.

My masculine intellect tells me that I must consider it an irrevocable, fatal fact that in the depth of our souls Father and I are irreconcilable. My compassion for Father as well as for myself says to me, “Irreconcilable?” – “Never!” – indefinitely, for ever and ever, there is the possibility of and one should have faith in the possibility of, a decisive reconciliation. But this – ah, why is it probable, alas, that it will turn out “an illusion”?

Do you call this moroseness on my part?

Our life is an appalling reality, and we ourselves are infinitely driven, things are – as they are – and whether we take them more or less gloomily does not in any way alter the nature of things. I think about it this way, for instance at night when I lie awake, or I think about it this way in the storm on the heath in the evening, in the dreary twilight. In the daytime, in daily life, I sometimes look as thick-skinned as a wild boar perhaps and I can well understand that people find me crude.

[Here Vincent crossed out the text “People are much like brushes: those with the finest looks are not the finest in practice.”]

When I was younger I myself also thought, much more than now, that things depended on coincidence, or small things or misunderstandings that were without any foundation. But getting older, I feel it more and more differently, and see deeper motives. Life is “a queer thing” too, brother.

You see how agitated my letters are, one moment I think that it can be done, the next, that it cannot. One thing is clear to me, “that things don't go readily, that there is no eagerness.”

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I have decided to go and see Rappard, and tell him that I myself should be agreeable to staying at home, but that notwithstanding all the advantages this would have, there is a je ne sais quoi in Father which I am beginning to look upon as incurable and which makes me listless and powerless. Last night it was decided that I shall stay here for a time – and notwithstanding this, next morning I again hear, Let's think it over some more – oh yes, sleep on it a night or so, and think it over!!! – when they have been able to think it over for two years – ought to have thought it over of their own accord, as a matter of course.

Two years, every day of which was a day of distress to me; for them – everyday life, as if nothing had happened, as if nothing could happen – the burden did not weigh on them. You say they do not express it, but they feel it – I do not believe it. I have thought so myself, but it is all wrong. One acts as one feels – our acts, our ready compliance or our hesitation, they are what people may know us by – not by what we say with our lips, kindly or unkindly. Good intentions, opinions, in reality all this is less than nothing.

You may think of me what you will, Theo, but I tell you that it is not my imagination. I tell you Father will not cooperate.

I see now what I saw then – I flatly contradicted Father then, I shall now speak out in any case whatever might happen against Father once more because he does not want it, he makes it impossible.

It is damned awful, brother, the Rappards acted intelligently, but here!!!! And everything one has done and is doing about it, it is rendered $\frac{3}{4}$ useless because of them. It's tiresome, brother. With a handshake,

Yours, Vincent

[Written in the margin] They think they did no harm at the time, this is too bad.