

My dear Theo,

Enclosed is a letter from Gauguin, which arrived at the same moment as the letter from Bernard. It is just a cry of distress. "I am getting deeper into debt every day."

I won't enlarge upon what he ought to do. You offer him hospitality here and accept the only means of payment that he has – his pictures. But if over and above that he demands that you pay his journey, he is going a bit too far, and at least he ought to make you an ample offer of pictures, and address himself to you as well as me in terms less vague than, "Every day I go deeper into debt, and the journey becomes more and more out of the question." It would be more to the point if he said – "I would rather leave my pictures in your hands since you are kind to me, and incur debts with you who are my friend, than live with my landlord."

But his stomach is all wrong, and when one has stomach-ache and indigestion, one has no will power. Now I myself have nothing wrong with my stomach at the moment, consequently my brain is freer and, I hope, clearer. I think it is absolutely unfair that you who have just sent money – which you yourself had to borrow – for the furnishing of the house, should also have to bear the expense of the journey, especially when the journey is complicated by the payment of a debt. Unless Gauguin pooled everything and let you have all his work, so that we'd keep no accounts but make common cause together. If we had a common purse and make common cause, I think myself that after a few years' working in common we should all profit.

Because if the combination were arranged this way, you yourself would feel, I do not say happier, but a better artist, and more productive than with me alone.

Both he and I will feel strongly that we must succeed because the honour of all three of us is at stake, and that each is not working for himself alone. That's how it looks to me. And I believe that even if collapse is in the nature of things and bound to come, we must still act in the same way. But more and more I reject the idea of this collapse, when I think of the serenity you see on the faces in the Frans Halses and the Rembrandts, such as the portrait of old Six, or his self-portrait, or those Frans Halses in Haarlem that we know so well: pictures of old men and women.

It is better to have serenity than to be too timorous.

Why then such a noise about this Gauguin business? He will do well to come to us, and we would like him to come.

But neither he nor we are to let ourselves be crushed.

On the whole there was a fine calm about that letter of his, although he left his intentions where we are concerned in the air.

Only if this thing is really to come off, we must have loyalty on his part.

I am rather curious to know what he will say to you himself. I reply to him exactly as I feel, but I do not want to say depressing or dismal or malicious things to so great an artist. But from the money point of view the business is taking on serious proportions – there is the journey, there is the debt, and there is also the furnishing, which is not yet complete.

However, it is already complete enough so that if Gauguin turned up here unexpectedly, we should be able to manage until we had time to turn around. Gauguin is married, and we must thoroughly realize in advance that in the long run it is not certain that our various interests will be compatible.

That is why in any case of association, the conditions must be very clearly stated, so as not to quarrel afterward.

If all goes well with Gauguin, you can see at this point that he will make it up with his wife and children. Certainly I should wish that for him. Well then, we must have more faith in the value of his pictures than his landlord has, but he must not overestimate them so much to you that you get only the burden and expense of the association, instead of some profit. That must not be, and anyhow will not be. But you should have his best work from him.

I ought to warn you that I intend to keep several studies at the studio here instead of sending them to you. I think that if I carry on steadily with this plan of making the house here something really artistic, you will have a series of studies later on which will have a lasting value.

By the way, Russell has replied in the negative about buying a Gauguin, but he asks me to go and stay with him for a while, but first and last are the travelling expenses. I do not say however that he will not buy a Gauguin, for he will realize himself that he isn't being very benevolent just now. But after all in building a

house, provided that he puts people up in it, he is doing a very necessary work, against the time when our landlords kick us out.

Good-by for now and a good handshake!

Ever yours, Vincent