

Dear Theo,

Many thanks for your letter and the enclosure, and also for what I still received specially for St. Nicholas. I will begin by telling you that your letter greatly amazed me – seeing that there have been no differences of any importance between Father, Mother and myself, and as to the Begemann ladies, they looked in on Father and Mother only the other day in considerable numbers – and they have done so not just once but many times. Whether they drop in quite as frequently as formerly or less frequently is something I cannot see has anything to do with me, nor am I interested in it.

That I decidedly disapproved of their attitude, and that I shall go on decidedly disapproving of it, is something I told them once – and I did not mince words – without returning to the subject.

But this has nothing to do with their visiting our house or not, which is something that concerns Father and Mother and themselves – and not me. I have always behaved courteously towards all the members of the family, and I did not start the trouble, but they started attacking me and, which I took more to heart, Margot – which is the reason why I have strictly refrained from coming into contact with them – simply because I do not feel capable of changing my attitude of disapproval, or of hiding it. Something which you know yourself – I say this to clarify things, and not to cause you grief – I repeat, something which you know yourself; as, expressly to show you that I said what I said in all tranquillity, I sent you a short note in which I told you that I thought your opinions vicious (you will have to decide for yourself whether it is vicious, but I thought and think it vicious).

This is my subjective conviction – in such matters I have my own views – as to the whys and wherefores – there are things I can feel rather than explain clearly to you or anybody else – especially if they receive neither your attention nor your sympathy.

[Written in the margin] However, my most hearty thanks for the remittance, and know that if I urgently request you to send something extra, it is only because I want to push on until we separate – but in peace – and without harm to you or myself.

I let people say and think what they like of me, more than you perhaps suppose, but be sure of this, when a thing turns out wrong, that's no reason for me to admit that I ought not to have begun it; on the contrary, if it fails many a time, it is a reason for me to try again if the very same thing is not possible yet, and always in the same direction, as my views are well considered and calculated, and in my opinion have their *raison d'être*.

To me personally, an important difference between before and after the revolution – is the change in social position of women and the collaboration that is desired between men and women, with equal rights, equal freedom.

But I can find neither words nor the time, nor the inclination, to go into this more deeply. Enough, the conventional morals are in my opinion quite wrong, and I hope they will be changed and renewed in time. Now, as to what you say, probably for my special information, namely that you “are suspicious” – well, I won't influence this. Most certainly you have shown me this – and it is one of the “symptoms” that I told you I don't think particularly fine, nor can I complement you on it.

But this too is a subjective opinion, if you like. So by all means suit yourself – be suspicious or not suspicious however the spirit moves you, in any case I shall try to make the best of the consequences for me, and for the rest I can only refer to what I said about being on opposite sides of the barricade. Do what you like according to your principles – but I shall do the same according to mine – however, let's avoid taking aim at each other if possible, as we are brothers. I am older than you, and probably I have gone through certain things differently, and have looked upon them differently from you. And of course this is my own responsibility. My being unable to approve of everything I see you do or hear you say is something quite different from wanting to induce you to accept my views. But the fact is, I like to play a straightforward game.

And bearing in mind that it is our duty to try to avoid putting a spoke in each other's wheel, I shall, as I told you already, try more and more to find other connections, in Eindhoven, in Antwerp, in short wherever there is a possibility.

But this cannot be done all at once – and as for me, I am trying to do it for the one and only reason that you have shown me far too clearly and unmistakably that I should not presume to suppose that you are going to take notice of me personally or of my work, except by way of protection. Well, this I utterly refuse to put

up with. And seeing that you have sent me the money every month without a word and without any sign of sympathy, I have toiled on – but – but seeing more and more clearly that a moment might come when we should have to go our separate ways, instead of going the same way both together. I don't imagine in the least that I shall gain by it financially – but as soon as some dealer, however much of an inferior jobber he may be, is willing to give me board and lodging, even if it should be in the meanest garret, and a few colours, I shall be happy to sell – if you choose to call this selling. Rather than protection. Here are my cards on the table. Whether I shall succeed in this and when, I cannot tell precisely; however, I work too hard to be very far away from it.

The drawback to painting is the colour bill. And it worries me a good deal at the moment. I paid some at once out of the 40 guilders you sent me. Besides that, I paid the carpenter, etc. So that, if there remained just 100 francs for you after deducting what you had to pay, for me there remains not quite 25 francs; now for the moment it is true that I don't have to live on it as you do, but I must paint with it a whole month, which – what with models, what with colours – is in fact impossible.

And I have the same pleasant prospect for January too, when I shall have to pay for all kinds of things again. So the reason why I complain, and why I said that I really needed something extra now, not later, was that I want so dreadfully to go on working; if I cannot do so for financial reasons, it makes me very unhappy. And I haven't only myself to blame for it, for the very reason that my expenses are caused not by extravagance but by working.

If you cannot accept this point of view or sympathize with my feelings, and choose to remain suspicious – well, old fellow, I am willing to believe you mean excellently well, and so – I am not very worried by your suspicions. Unless the fact is that you purposely act this way in order to get rid of me, and by heaven, you are well on the way to reaching this goal.

You know that in the past I often positively begged you to see to it that our relations should be kept up – now I should not be able to urge the matter any longer in the same way. Once again, I work too hard to be obliged to remain in a dependent position for too long a time if this should degenerate too much into protection, whereas, when I write about it in a businesslike way, I don't even get an answer. No, old fellow – I cannot reconcile my sense of honour, my sense of justice, to seeing anything in it that might induce me to consider it permanent. Listen – Father has felt suspicious of me very often and to a high degree. For that matter, you know something about it, and I for my part know perhaps even more about it. But – for all that – he always called himself “my friend” – for all that – the man really thought he was in the right, and he was unable to take any other view of things, and – after all is said and done – he meant well, that is to say, if you want to take it that way – but one fine day I told him flatly: Don't call yourself my friend as long as you think such and such things of me. People who think that way about me are not my friends but my enemies, and as sure as  $2 \times 2 = 4$ , they are my worst enemies. And the same applies to you, in reply to what you say about being suspicious. With this difference (which I am willing to appreciate and take into account), Father did not mention that “he was suspicious,” you do mention it – which neutralizes a lot. But for all that, I consider it basically pretty much the same thing.

However, I don't want to influence you – and therefore I tell you straight out that on my part I don't in the least pledge myself to agree with Father or you. Please understand this thoroughly – it is quite possible that there is more than one “ditch” between the two of us. And because this is quite possible, also understand thoroughly that I'm not giving you the slightest encouragement to think all kinds of nice and good things of me according to your views or Father's. It might well be that mine were opposed to them in quite a revolutionary way!

Under the circumstances I cannot do crazy things at a short notice and stand in my own light by giving up things at a moment that is not propitious just because you find yourself in a suspicious mood. But please understand thoroughly that, if this suspicious mood should be lasting and prove to take root in your mind – even if I should not do crazy things at a short notice – I am strongly inclined to see to it that we can separate in peace, and without harm to either you or me.

Separate – but in peace – and without forcing things too much.

I cannot bother about what people think of me, what I have to think of is getting on.

So I go my own way with a certain obstinacy, believing in some things and not believing in others.

You are, and rightly so, anxious about your position, aren't you? – about the progress or non-success, the prospering or the failure of your business. Bear in mind that the reasons why I stand by my profession are certainly no less important than the ones for which you stand by yours. And without exactly proceeding very delicately, I must and will push on.

I certainly intend to hold on to my studio here, as for instance Stenglin does; he has one on the moors of Drenthe, though at times he lives somewhere else. I have rented it as a kind of refuge, and it will remain useful to me as such. Taking rooms in Eindhoven would be downright nonsense, I cannot even think of it. Later on, taking a room in Antwerp, all right, that's my intention, but in the first place I have no money for it now, and in the second, I want to paint a rather large number of heads first, which will go more smoothly the better I can pay the models.

But, as you say, things are not exactly favourable for this.

I wish you could understand that I am not actuated by a desire to quarrel in wanting to separate – on the contrary, I want to separate in order to be able to keep the peace. I should not be able to bear it if I had no prospect of different circumstances. Not primarily with regard to financial matters, but because I want to live more pleasantly than in the house itself – but I don't feel at home in it, and from your own words it is evident that you cannot understand me, nor can I understand you. Therefore – with steady courage and serenity and without rancour: I must plod on in order to separate in peace, and without harming anybody. But never think I desire to quarrel with you or with the people at home – for this is not in character – although you suppose it is, and so do others, for that matter.

Quite the opposite is true of my character – the fact is that I cannot endure life without more peace and cordiality.

I can only shrug my shoulders at such an opinion – however, I most decidedly do not consider the persons who think of me this way as my friends. Though they were a thousand times my father or my brother – if they think that way it grieves me, but, fortunately for myself, I have my wits about me sufficiently not to be crushed by it.

As to this the road is pretty clearly indicated, I should say.

[The end of the letter is missing.]