



The Dream of a Queer Fellow, Fyodor Dostoevsky

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The Dream of a Queer Fellow

I

I am a queer fellow. They call me mad now. That would be a promotion, if I were not still the same queer fellow for them as before. But I'm not cross with them any more; now I love them all — even when they laugh at me, somehow I love them more than ever. I would laugh with them myself — not at myself, but for love of them — if it did not make me so sad to look at them; sad, because they do not know the truth, and I do. How hard it is for one man who knows the truth! But they won't understand this. They won't understand it.

Before, I used to suffer deeply, because I seemed queer. Not seemed, but was. I always was queer; perhaps I've known it from the day of my birth. Perhaps when I was only seven I knew that I was queer. Afterwards I went to school, then to the university, and — well, the more I studied the more I discovered that I was queer. So that finally it seemed to me that all my university knowledge existed only to explain and prove to me, the deeper I plunged into it, that I was queer. Each day increased and strengthened my consciousness that I looked queer in every way. Everybody always laughed at me.

But not one of them knew or guessed that if there was a man on earth who really knew how queer I was, that man was myself; their not knowing that was quite the most insulting thing of all, but there I was

to blame. I was always so proud that nothing would induce me to confess that to any one. My pride increased with years, and I verily believe that if it had happened that I had allowed myself to confess that I was queer to any living soul, I would have blown out my brains with a revolver on the spot. Oh, how much I suffered as a youth for fear I might not be able to hold out, and might suddenly, somehow, confess to my comrades.

But since I became a young man, though each year I realised my awful nature more and more, for some reason I have been a little calmer. For some reason or other, I say, for even now I cannot define it. Perhaps because a terrible anguish had been born in my soul of one thing which was infinitely higher than the whole of me — it was the conviction that had descended upon me that it is all the same, everywhere on earth. I had suspected it long before, but the full conviction came somehow suddenly last year.

I suddenly felt that it would be all the same to me if the world really existed, or if there was nothing anywhere. I began to feel with all my being that there had been nothing behind me. At first I thought that there really had been a great deal, but afterwards I guessed that even before there had been nothing, but it had only seemed so, somehow. Little by little I became convince'd that there never would be anything.

Then I suddenly stopped being angry with people, and began almost not to notice them. Indeed, that was shown in the most trivial things. It would happen, for instance, that I would walk in the street and knock into people. Not because I was lost in thought — what had I to think about, I had utterly ceased to think by then? — it was all the same to me. And as for solving questions; oh, I didn't solve one, yet what thousands there were! But it had become all the same to me, and all the questions disappeared.

Just after that, I learned the truth. I learned the truth last November, the 3rd of November last, and I remember every instant since that day. It was a gloomy night, the gloomiest night you can conceive. I was going home at about eleven o'clock, and I remember I thought that it would

be impossible to find a gloomier hour. Even physically. It had poured with rain all day, the coldest and gloomiest rain; some of it, I remember, was positively menacing, manifestly hostile to humankind.

Suddenly, at eleven o'clock it stopped, and a horrible dampness followed, damper even and colder than when the rain was pouring. A mist ascended from everything, from every stone in the street, and from every alley, when I looked away from the street into the depths. I suddenly thought that it would be comfortable if the gas went out, for the heart was sadder with the gas alight, because it lit up all those mists.

That day I had had practically no food; from the early evening I had been sitting with an engineer I knew, who had two other friends with him. I was silent all the while, and I believe I bored them. They talked of something provocative and suddenly they became quite excited. But it was really all the same to them. I saw that. They were excited all for nothing. Suddenly I broke out: 'I say, gentlemen, . . . but it's all the same to you.' They were not offended, but they all began to laugh at me. That was because I spoke without any reproach, just because it was all the same to me. They saw it was all the same to me, and cheered up.

While I was thinking about the gas in the street, I glanced at the sky. The sky was terribly black, but I could clearly distinguish the ragged clouds, and between them bottomless spaces of black. Suddenly I caught sight of a little star in one of these spaces and began to stare at it. For the little star had given me an idea: I proposed to kill myself that night. I had firmly decided to kill myself two months before, and though I was very poor, I bought myself an excellent revolver and loaded it that very same day.

Two months had passed since and it still lay in my drawer; it was so much the same to me that at last I longed to find a day when it would not be all the same, — why, I do not know. So, every night for these two months, as I returned home, I thought that I would shoot myself. But all the while I was waiting for the moment. Now the little star had

given me the idea, and I decided that it would happen that night infallibly. But why the little star should have given me the idea — I do not know.

And just as I was looking at the sky, that girl suddenly caught me by the arm. The street was already empty; hardly a soul was in it. Far away, a cabman was asleep on his box. The girl was about eight years old, and wore a little shawl. She had no coat and was wet through.

But I particularly remember her wet, ragged boots; I remember them even now. They caught my eye particularly. She suddenly began to pull me by the arm and to cry out. She did not weep, but cried out some words abruptly somehow. She could not utter the words properly because she continually shivered all over from the cold. She was terrified by something and cried despairingly: 'Mother, Mother!' I turned my face towards her, but did not speak. I walked on. But she ran and pulled at me.

In her voice was the sound which with very frightened people means despair. I know that sound. Though she had not uttered the words, I realised that her mother was dying somewhere, or something had happened to them, and she had run out to call some one or find something to help mother. But I did not follow her; on the contrary, the idea suddenly came to me to drive her away. First, I told her to find a policeman. But she suddenly clasped her hands together and kept running at my side, sobbing and breathless, and would not leave me.

Then I stamped my foot and shouted at her. She only cried out: 'Please, sir, sir . . .'; but suddenly she left me and rushed across the street. A passer-by appeared. Evidently she had rushed from me to him.

I climbed up to my fifth floor. I rent a room from the landlord: there are other rooms. My room is poverty-stricken and small. The window is an attic window, semi-circular. I have a sofa covered in American cloth, a table with some books, two chairs and an easy-chair, old, incredibly old, but still an easy-chair. I sat down, lit the candle, and began to think.

Next door in the other room, behind the partition, pandemonium went on. It had been going on since the day before yesterday.

A retired captain lived there, and he had friends — about half a dozen beauties — who drank vodka, and played faro with old cards. Last night there was a scuffle, and I know that a couple of them pulled each other about by the hair for a long while. The landlady wanted to complain to the police, but she is terribly afraid of the captain. The only other lodger in our rooms is a small, thin, military lady, who is only passing through here, with three little children who have already got ill through being in the rooms. She and the children faint with fear of the captain: all night long they tremble and cross themselves, and the youngest child has had a fit from fright.

I know for a fact that this captain sometimes accosts passers-by on the Nevsky Prospekt and begs. He is turned out of every office, but strange to say — this is the reason why I speak of him — for the whole month he has not aroused my resentment. From the very beginning, of course, I avoided his acquaintance: and he was bored by me at our very first meeting.

But however loud they shouted behind the partition and however many of them there were — it was all the same to me. I sit up all night long, and really I do not hear them, so utterly do I forget them. Every night I do not sleep till dawn. That has been going on for a year. I sit in my easy-chair by the table all night and do nothing. I read books only in the daytime. I sit and do not even think, but even so some thoughts keep wandering, and I let them wander at will. The whole candle burns away during the night.

I sat by the table, took out the revolver, and put it in front of me. When I had put it there, I remember, I asked myself: 'Is it true?' and I answered with absolute conviction: 'Perfectly true' — that is, that I was going to shoot myself. I knew for certain that I would shoot myself that night, but how long I would sit by the table — that I did not know. I should certainly have shot myself, but for that little girl.

You see: though it was all the same to me, I felt pain, for instance. If any one were to strike me, I should feel pain. Exactly the same in the moral sense: if anything very pitiful happened, I would feel pity, just as I did before everything in life became all the same to me. I had felt pity just before: surely, I would have helped a child without fail. Why did I not help the little girl, then? It was because of an idea that came into my mind then. When she was pulling at me and calling to me, suddenly a question arose before me, which I could not answer. The question was an idle one; but it made me angry.

I was angry because of my conclusion, that if I had already made up my mind that I would put an end to myself to-night, then now more than ever before everything in the world should be all the same to me. Why was it that I felt it was not all the same to me, and pitied the little girl? I remember I pitied her very much: so much that I felt a pain that was even strange and incredible in my situation. Really, I cannot give a more definite account of my momentary sensation; but it continued even when I reached home, when I had sat down to my table. I was more irritated than I had been for a long time. One thought followed another.

It seemed clear that if I was a man and not a cipher yet, and until I was changed into a cipher, then I was alive and therefore could suffer, be angry and feel shame for my actions. Very well. But if I were to kill myself, for instance, in two hours from now, what is the girl to me, and what have I to do with shame or with anything on earth? I am going to be a cipher, an absolute zero.

Could my consciousness that I would soon absolutely cease to exist, and that therefore nothing would exist, have not the least influence on my feeling of pity for the girl or on my sense of shame for the vileness I had committed? But that was the very reason why I had stamped and shouted wildly at the poor child, as it were to show that not only did I feel no pity, but even if I should commit some inhuman vileness, then I

had the right to do so, because in two hours everything would be extinguished.

Do you believe that was why I shouted? Now I am almost convinced of it. It became clear to me that life and the world, as it were, depended upon me. I might even say that the world had existed for me alone. I should shoot myself, and then there would be no world at all, for me at least. Not to mention that perhaps there will really be nothing for any one after me, and the whole world, as soon as my consciousness is extinguished, will also be extinguished like a phantom, as part of my consciousness only, and be utterly abolished, since perhaps all this world and all these men are myself alone.

I remember that as I sat and thought, I turned all these new, thronging questions to a completely different aspect, and excogitated something utterly new. For instance, one strange consideration suddenly presented itself to me. If I had previously lived on the moon or in Mars, and I had there been dishonoured and disgraced so utterly that one can only imagine it sometimes in a dream or a nightmare, and if I afterwards found myself on earth and still preserved a consciousness of what I had done on the other planet, and if I knew besides that I would never by any chance return, then, if I were to look at the moon from the earth — would it be all the same to me or not?

Would I feel any shame for my action or not? The questions were idle and useless, for the revolver was already lying before me, and I knew with all my being that this thing would happen for certain: but the questions excited me to rage. I could not die now, without having solved this first.

In a word, that little girl saved me, for my questions made me postpone pulling the trigger. Meanwhile everything had begun to quiet down at the captain's. They had finished their cards, and had begun to settle themselves to sleep, grumbling and reviling each other at their leisure the while. Then I suddenly fell asleep in the easy-chair by the table, a thing which had never happened to me before. I fell asleep quite unconsciously.

Dreams are extraordinarily strange. One thing appears with terrifying clarity, with the details finely set like jewels, while you leap over another, as though you did not notice it at all — space and time, for instance. It seems that dreams are the work not of mind but of desire, not of the head but of the heart; and what complicated things my mind has sometimes contrived in a dream! In a dream things quite incomprehensible come to pass. For instance, my brother died five years ago.

Sometimes I see him in a dream: he takes part in my affairs, and we are very excited, while I, all the time my dream goes on, know and remember perfectly that my brother is dead and buried. Why am I not surprised that he, though dead, is still near me and busied about me? Why does my mind allow all that? But enough of that. I will proceed to my dream. Yes, then it was I dreamed that dream, my dream of the 3rd of November. Now they tease me because it was only a dream.

But is it not the same whether it was a dream or not, if that dream revealed the Truth to me? Surely if you once knew the Truth and saw her, then you would know that she is the Truth, and that there is not, neither could there be, another Truth, whether in sleep or wakefulness. Well, let it be a dream; nevertheless I wanted to extinguish by suicide this life that you praise so highly, while my dream, my dream — it announced to me a new life, great, renewed, and strong! Listen.

III

I said I had fallen asleep unconsciously, as it were still thinking about the same things. Suddenly I dreamed that I took the revolver and pointed it straight at my heart as I sat — at my heart and not at my head. Before I had firmly decided to shoot myself through the head — to be exact, through the right temple. Pointing it at my heart I waited a second or two. My candle, the table, and the wall in front of me suddenly began to move and shake. I pulled the trigger quickly.

In a dream you sometimes fall from a height, or your throat is cut, or you are beaten; but you never feel pain, unless, somehow, you really hurt yourself in bed. Then you will feel pain and nearly always will wake because of it. So it was in my dream: I felt no pain, but it seemed to me that with the report, everything in me was convulsed, and everything suddenly extinguished. It was terribly black all about me.

I became as though blind and numb, and I lay on my back on something hard. I could see nothing, neither could I make any sound. People were walking and making a noise about me: the captain's bass voice, the landlady's screams. . . . Suddenly there was a break. I am being carried in a closed coffin. I feel the coffin swinging and I think about that, and suddenly for the first time the idea strikes me that I am dead, quite dead. I know it and do not doubt it; I cannot see nor move, yet at the same time I feel and think. But I am soon reconciled to that, and as usual in a dream I accept the reality without a question.

Now I am being buried in the earth. Every one leaves me and I am alone, quite alone. I do not stir. Before, when I imagined how I would really be buried in my grave, I always associated with it only the feeling of damp and cold. Now, too, I felt, that I was very cold, particularly in the tips of my toes, but I felt nothing besides.

I lay there and — strange to say — I expected nothing, accepting without question that a dead man has nothing to expect. But it was damp. I

do not know how long passed — an hour, a few days, or many days. Suddenly, on my left eye which was closed, a drop of water fell, which had leaked through the top of the grave. In a minute fell another, then a third, and so on, every minute. Suddenly, deep indignation kindled in my heart and suddenly in my heart I felt physical pain. 'It's my wound,' I thought. 'It's where I shot myself. The bullet is there.' And all the while the water dripped straight on to my closed eye. Suddenly, I cried out, not with a voice, for I was motionless, but with all my being, to the arbiter of all that was being done to me.

‘ Whosoever thou art, if thou art, and if there exists a purpose more intelligent than the things which are now taking place, let it be present here also. But if thou dost take vengeance upon me for my foolish suicide, then know, by the indecency and absurdity of further existence, that no torture whatever that may befall me, can ever be compared to the contempt which I will silently feel, even through millions of years of martyrdom.’

I cried out and was silent. Deep silence lasted a whole minute. One more drop even fell. But I knew and believed, infinitely and steadfastly, that in a moment everything would infallibly change. Suddenly, my grave opened.

I do not know whether it had been uncovered and opened, but I was taken by some dark being unknown to me, and we found ourselves in space. Suddenly, I saw. It was deep night; never, never had such darkness been! We were borne through space and were already far from the earth. I asked nothing of him who led me. I was proud and waited. I

assured myself that I was not afraid, and my heart melted with rapture at the thought that I was not afraid. I do not remember how long we rushed through space, and I cannot imagine it. It happened as always in a dream when you leap over space and time and the laws of life and mind, and you stop only there where your heart delights. I remember, I suddenly saw in the darkness one little star.

‘ Is it Sirius? ‘ I asked, suddenly losing control of myself, for I did not want to ask him anything.

‘ No, it is the same star which thou didst see returning home,’ replied the being who bore me away. I knew that he had, as it were, a human face. It is strange, but I did not love that being; I felt even a deep repugnance towards him. I had expected utter annihilation, and with that idea I had shot myself in the heart.

And now I was in the power of a being, who was, of course, not human, but who was, and did exist. ‘ So there is life after the grave,’ I thought,

with the strange light-heartedness of a dream. But the essence of my heart in all its depth remained to me. 'And if it is necessary to be once more,' I thought, 'and to live again by some one's inexorable will, then I will not be conquered and degraded!'

'Thou knowest that I do not fear thee: therefore thou dost despise me?' I suddenly said to my companion, unable to restrain myself from a humiliating question in which was contained a confession, and I felt my humiliation like the stab of a needle in my heart. He did not answer my question, but suddenly I felt that I was not despised, neither laughed at, nor even pitied, but that our journey had an unknown and mysterious purpose which concerned myself alone. Fear grew in my heart. Some dumb yet painful influence reached me from my silent companion and penetrated me. We were rushing through dark and unknown spaces.

I had long since ceased to see any constellation familiar to my eyes. I knew there were stars in the heavenly spaces, whose rays reach the earth only after thousands and millions of years. Perhaps we had already passed beyond those spaces. With terrible anguish that wore out my heart, I was expecting something. Suddenly a familiar yet most overwhelming emotion shook me through. I saw our sun.

I knew that it could not be our sun, which had begotten our earth, and that we were an infinite distance away, but somehow all through me I recognised that it was exactly the same sun as ours, its copy and double. A sweet and moving delight echoed rapturously through my soul. The dear power of light, of that same light which had given me birth, touched my heart and revived it, and I felt life, the old life, for the first time since my death.

'But if it is the sun, the same sun as ours,' I exclaimed, 'then where is the earth?' And my companion pointed to the little star which twinkled in the darkness with an emerald radiance. We were borne straight towards it.

'And can there be such repetitions in the universe? Is that the law of nature. . . . And if it is the earth there, is it just the same earth as ours . .

. the very same, poor, unhapp3r, dear, ever-beloved earth, that rouses the same painful love for her in her most ungrateful children, just as our own? ' . . . I cried, trembling with irresistible, rapturous love for my own earth of old that I had left. The image of the little girl I had wronged rose before me.

' You will see everything,' replied my companion, and I could hear a note of sadness in his words. We were fast approaching the planet. It grew before my eyes. I could already discern the ocean, the outlines of Europe. Suddenly a strange feeling of great and sacred jealousy was kindled in my heart.

' How can such a repetition be, and why? It's only the earth that I love or can love, the earth which I left, which was sprinkled with my blood, when I, the ungrateful, put an end to my life with a pistol-shot. But never once, never once, did I cease to love the earth, and even on that - jglit when I parted from her, I loved her perhaps more poignantly than ever. Is there pain on this new earth?

On earth we can love truly only with pain and only through pain! We cannot love otherwise, and we know no other love. I need pain in order to love. At this very moment, I want, I long, to melt into tears and kiss only that earth which I have left. I do not want, I will not accept, life on any other earth.'

But my companion had already left me. Suddenly, as it were quite unperceived by myself, I stood on that other earth in the bright light of a sunny day, beautiful as Paradise. I believe I stood on one of those islands which on our earth are the Greek Archipelago, or somewhere on the mainland coast near to that Archipelago.

Oh, everything was exactly as on earth, but everything seemed to be bright with holiday, with a great and saeredb triumph, finally achieved. The smiling emerald sea gently lapped the shores, kissing them with love, with manifest, visible, almost conseious love.

Tall, splendid trees stood in all the glory of their bloom, and I am convinced that their innumerable leaves greeted me with a sweet, caressing sound, as though they uttered words of love. The grass was aflame with brilliant and sweet-scented colours. Flights of birds wheeled in the air, and fearlessly settled on my shoulders and my hands, joyfully tapping me with their dear, tremulous little wings.

At last I saw and recognised the people of that happy land. They came to me themselves, thronged me about, and kissed me. Children of the sun, children of the sun — oh, how beautiful they were! Never on earth have I seen such beauty in man. In our children alone, in their very earliest years, one could perhaps find a remote and faint reflection of that beauty. The eyes of those happy people shone with a bright radiance.

Their faces gleamed with wisdom, and with a certain consciousness, consummated in tranquillity; but their faces were happy. In their words and voices sounded a childlike joy. Oh, instantly, at the first glimpse of their faces I understood everything, everything! It was the earth as yet unpolluted by transgression; on it lived men who had yet known no sin. They lived in the same paradise in which, according to the universal tradition of mankind, our fallen ancestors once lived, save that here all the earth was everywhere one single paradise. Laughing joyfully they thronged me and caressed me; they led me to their homes, and each one of them wished to make me happy.

Oh, they asked me no questions; it seemed that they already knew all, and they wished to remove all trace of suffering from my face as quickly as they might.

IV

Again, grant that it was only a dream. But the sensation of the love of those beautiful and innocent people has remained with me for ever, and even now I feel that their love breathes upon me from yonder. I saw them with my own eyes, I came to know them, and to know that I loved them; afterwards I suffered for them. Oh, I knew immediately

even then that in many things I would not understand them at all. To me, a modern Russian radical, and an abominable Petersburger, it seemed for instance unintelligible that, knowing so much, they yet did not possess our science. But I soon perceived that their knowledge was achieved and nourished by other intuitions than those we have on earth, and that their aspirations were quite other.

They desired nothing, but were calm; they did not aspire to a knowledge of life, as we aspire to knowledge, because their life was fulfilled. But their knowledge was deeper and higher than our science, for our science seeks to explain what is life, she aspires to know life, that she may teach others how to live; but they, without science, knew how to live. That also I understood, but I could not understand their knowledge. They showed me their trees, but I could not understand the depth of love with which they looked at them; exactly as though they spoke with their fellows. And perhaps I should not be wrong if I said they did speak with them.

Yes, they had found their language and I am convinced that the trees understood them. In the same way did they regard all nature — the animals which lived at peace with them, did not attack them, but loved them, subdued by their love. They pointed out the stars to me and told me something about them that I could not understand, but I am convinced that in some way they were in contact with the stars of heaven, having connection with them not by thought alone but in some physical way.

Oh, they did not try to make me understand them; they loved me without that. But I knew they would never understand me, and therefore I hardly spoke to them of our earth. I only kissed the earth on which they lived, in their presence, and without words I adored them, and they saw it and let themselves be adored, and felt no shame that I adored them, because they loved much.

They did not suffer for me when I in tears kissed their feet, joyfully knowing in my heart with how great power of love they would requite me. Sometimes I asked myself in amazement, how could it be that they

should not have offended such an one as myself all this while, and never have aroused in me either jealousy or envy? Many times I asked myself, how could it be that I, a braggart and a liar, had not told them of my learning, of which, of course, they had no notion — how could it be that I had not wished to surprise them with it, even though only for the love I bore them? They were playful and happy as children.

They wandered through their beautiful groves and forests, sang their lovely songs, fed on ambrosial food, the fruits of their trees, the honey of their forests, and the milk of the beasts that loved them. For their food and raiment they laboured but little and with ease. Love was amongst them and children were born, but never did I see amongst them the transports of that cruel sensuality which overtakes almost all men on our earth, and is the one source of nearly all their sins.

They rejoiced in the children born to them as in new partners of their bliss. There were no quarrels among them, neither any jealousy: they did not even understand what it meant. Their children were the children of all, because they were all one family. There was hardly any disease among them, though there was death; but their old folk died quietly, as though they fell asleep, surrounded by friends who took leave of them, whom they blessed and smiled upon, themselves well sped by their friends' bright smiles.

At this parting I never saw sorrow, neither tears: there was only love, as it were multiplied to ecstasy, but to an ecstasy quiet, consummated, and full of contemplation. One could have believed that they still had communion with their dead even after death, and that their earthly union was not severed by the grave. They hardly understood me when I asked them concerning eternal life, but they were evidently so convinced of it that it was no question to them.

They had no temples, but they had a real, living, and continual communion with the whole universe; they had no religion, but they had the firm knowledge that when their earthly joy had been consummated to the limit of their earthly nature, then would begin for them, living as well as dead, a yet greater expansion of their contact with the whole

universe. They awaited this moment with joy, but without impatience, with no anguished longing for it, but already as it were partaking of it in the presentiments of their hearts which they communicated each to the other. In the evenings, before they went to rest, they loved to sing sweetly and harmoniously in chorus.

In these songs they expressed all the feelings which the dying day had given them; they glorified it and bade it farewell. They glorified nature, the earth, the sea, the forests. They loved to make songs to each other, which rose from the heart and touched the heart. And not in songs alone, for it seemed that all their life was spent in mutual admiration. They were enamoured one of the other, completely, universally.

Others of their solemn and exalted songs I could hardly understand at all. I understood the words, but I could never penetrate their deep meaning, which remained as it were inaccessible to my mind, but, unaccountably, my heart felt it only the more. I often told them that long ago I had had a presentiment of all this, that all their joy and praise had appeared to me while still upon our earth, with an anguish of yearning which sometimes reached intolerable pain; that I had anticipated them and their grace in the dreams of my heart and the visions of my mind; that often, on earth, I could not look toward the setting sun without tears . . . that in my hatred of the people on the earth was always anguish — why could I not hate them without loving them?

Why could I not but forgive them; and in my love for them was also anguish: why could I not love them without hating them? They listened to me, and I saw that they could not understand what I said, but I did not regret that I had spoken to them of it: for I knew that they understood all the force of my anguish for those whom I had left.

Yes, when they looked at me with their dear, love-suffused eyes, when I felt that in their presence my heart too had become as innocent and truthful as their own, then I did not regret that I did not understand them. My feeling of the completeness of their life deprived me of speech, and I revered them in silence.

Oh, every one now laughs in my face, and tells me that it is impossible even in a dream to see such details as I am telling now. They tell me that in my dream I saw or felt but one thing, begotten of my own heart in delirium, but that I myself created the particulars when I was awake. And when I said that perhaps it was so — my God, how they burst out laughing in my face, and what pleasure I gave them!

Oh yes, of course, I was overcome by the sensation of that dream alone, and that alone remained whole in my bleeding heart: yet the real images and forms of my dream, which I indeed saw at the very moment of my dream, were perfected to such a harmony, were so enchanting and beautiful, and so true, that when I awoke I certainly could not clothe them in our weak words.

Therefore they must needs have blurred in my mind, and perhaps I myself unconsciously was obliged to compose the details afterwards, of course distorting them, above all by reason of my passionate desire to tell it instantly even though only in part.

But, for all that, how could I not believe that all these things had really been? It was perhaps a thousand times better, brighter, and more joyful than I have told. Let it be a dream, but yet all this could not but have really been.

I will tell you a secret: perhaps all this was not a dream at all! For something happened, a thing to such a degree of horror true that it could not have belonged to a sleeping dream. Let my heart have begotten my dream, but could my heart alone have begotten the horrid truth, which happened afterwards? How could I alone have invented it or dreamed it within my heart? Could my paltry heart and my capricious, petty mind have risen to such a revelation of truth? Oh, judge for yourselves: hitherto I have concealed it, but now I will tell openly this truth also. I reveal them all!

Yes, yes, it ended with that. I corrupted them all! How could it have been achieved — I do not know, yet I remember clearly. The dream passed aeons away, and left in me only the sensation of the whole. I only know that the cause of the fall was I. Like a filthy germ, like an atom of pestilence, infecting whole peoples, so did I infect with my soul that happy land, that knew not sin before me. They learned to lie, and loved lying, and knew the beauty of lies. Oh, this perhaps began innocently, from a jest, from playfulness, in a loving game, perhaps indeed from an atom, but the atom of lie entered their hearts and they loved it. Soon was begotten voluptuousness, of voluptuousness — jealousy, of jealousy — cruelty. . . .

Oh,

I do not know, I do not remember, but soon, very soon, the first blood was spilled. They were surprised and horrified and began to be disunited and to disperse. Unions appeared, but they were unions one against the other. Reproach and recrimination began. They came to know shame, and made of shame a virtue. The idea of honour was born and each union had its flag. They began to use the beasts ill, and the beasts withdrew into the woods and became their enemies.

A war of disunion began, in which they fought for separation, for personality, for mine and thine. They began to speak different tongues. They came to know and to love sadness; they longed for suffering and said that truth could be achieved by suffering alone. Then science appeared among them. When they were angered, they began to talk of brotherhood and humanity, and conceived those ideas. When they committed crime, they invented justice and prescribed for themselves whole codes of laws to maintain it, and to maintain the codes they set up a guillotine. Hardly, hardly did they remember what they had lost; they did not even want to believe that they had once been innocent and happy.

They laughed even at the possibility of that old happiness and called it a dream. They could not even present it to themselves in forms and images, but it is strange and wonderful, that when they had lost all belief in their former happiness, calling it a legend, they conceived so

great a desire to be innocent and happy again once more that they fell before the desire of their hearts like children, and worshipped this desire; they built many temples to it and began to pray to their ideal, to their own desire; though they fully believed it was impracticable and impossible, still they worshipped and adored it with tears.

And yet if it could only have happened that they might return to the innocent and happy state which they had lost, and if some one had suddenly showed it to them and asked them if they wished to return to it, they would surely have refused. They would answer me: 'Grant that we are liars, evil, and unjust, we know that and weep for it, we torture and torment ourselves, and punish ourselves more hardly perhaps than even that merciful Judge, who will judge us and whose name we do not know. But we have science, and by her aid we will find the truth again, and this time we will accept her consciously.'

Knowledge is higher than feeling; the consciousness of life is higher than life. Science will give us wisdom; wisdom will reveal to us laws, and the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness.' That is what they said, and after such words, each one loved himself above all others, neither could they do otherwise. Each one had become so jealous of his own individuality that he sought with all his might only to degrade and belittle it in others; therein he saw his life. Slavery appeared, even voluntary slavery; the weak readily submitted to the strong, with one aim alone, that the strong should help them to crush those yet weaker than themselves.

Godly men appeared who came to these people with tears and spoke to them of their pride, of their lack of measure and harmony, of their loss of shame. They were laughed at and stoned with stones. Sacred blood flowed on the thresholds of the temples. Yet there began to appear men who pondered how they might be united in such a way that each, without ceasing to love himself most of all, might yet not stand in the way of others; they might live all together as it were in a united society. Whole wars were fought for this idea.

All those who fought believed firmly that science and wisdom and the instinct of self-preservation would at last unite men into a harmonious and reasonable society; in the meanwhile, to help the work along, 'the wise' tried to exterminate with all speed 'the foolish' and those who did not understand their idea in order that they should not prevent its triumph. But the instinct of self-preservation quickly began to weaken. Proud and voluptuous men appeared who straightway demanded everything or nothing.

To acquire all things they had recourse to murder, and if they failed, to suicide. Religions appeared devoted to the cult of not-being and of self-destruction for the sake of eternal rest in nothingness. Finally these men became tired of their foolish labour, and on their faces showed suffering; and they proclaimed that suffering was beauty, since thought was in suffering alone. They praised suffering in their songs.

I walked among them wringing my hands and wept over them; yet I loved them perhaps still more than when there was no suffering in their faces, and they were innocent and beautiful. I loved the earth which they had polluted more than when it was a paradise, for this alone that sorrow had appeared upon it.

Alas, I have always loved sorrow and sadness, but for myself, myself alone, and I wept for them, pitying them. I stretched out my hands to them, accusing, cursing, and despising myself in my despair. I told them that this was all my work, mine alone; that it was I who had brought corruption, infection, and the lie among them!

I implored them to crucify me on the cross, I taught them how to make a cross. I could not kill myself, I had not the power, but I wanted to submit to tortures from them, I yearned for torments, I longed that in those torments my last drop of blood should be spilled. But they only laughed at me, and at last began to think me mad.

They defended me; they said they had only received that which themselves desired, and that everything that was, could not but have been. At last they declared to me that I was becoming dangerous to

them, and that they would put me in a mad-house if I did not hold my peace. Their sorrow so mightily entered my soul that my heart shrank and I felt that I would die. . . . Then I awoke.

It was already morning; that is to say, day had not yet dawned, but it was six o'clock. I awoke in the same easy-chair, my candle was burnt out. They were asleep at the captain's, and all about was a stillness such as was seldom in our house. First, I jumped up in surprised astonishment. Nothing like it had ever happened to me before, it was strange even to the smallest details. For instance, I had never fallen asleep in my easy-chair. Then suddenly, while I stood regaining my senses, my loaded revolver suddenly appeared before me.

But instantly I put it away from me. Oh, now — life, life! I lifted my hands and called upon the eternal truth, not called, but wept. Rapture, ineffable rapture exalted all my being. Yes, to live and — to preach! Oh, that very minute I decided to preach, yes, to preach all my life long. I would preach, I longed to preach — what? Truth, for I had seen her, seen her with my eyes, seen her in all her glory.

Since then I have preached. More than that, I love all men, above all those who laugh at me. Why is it so? I do not know, I cannot explain, but so let it be. They say already that I'm wandering: if he wanders now what will the end be! It's true. I wander, and perhaps it will be worse in the future. And of course I shall wander many times before I find out how to preach, with what words and deeds, for these are hard to find. Even now I see all this as clear as day; but listen. Who does not go astray? Yet all are tending to one and the same goal, at least all aspire to the same goal, from the wise man to the lowest murderer, but only by different ways. It is an old truth, but there is this new in it: I cannot go far astray.

I saw the truth. I saw and know that men could be beautiful and happy, without losing the capacity to live upon the earth. I will not, I cannot believe that evil is the normal condition of men. Yet all of them only laugh at my belief. But how could I not believe? I saw the truth, I did not invent it with my mind. I saw, saw, and her living image filled my

soul for ever. I saw her in such consummate perfection that I cannot possibly believe that she was not among men. How can I then go astray?

I shall wander, of course, more than once even, and I will perhaps even speak with another's words, but not for long. The living image of what I saw will be with me always, and will correct and guide me always. Oh, I am strong and fresh, I can go on, go on, even for a thousand years. You know at first I even wanted to conceal that I had corrupted them all, but it was a mistake — the first mistake, you see! But truth whispered to me that I was lying; she guarded and guided me. But how to make a paradise I do not know, because I cannot express it in words.

After my dream I lost all my words, at least, all the important words, those I need most. But so let it be; I will go on and preach untiringly, because I saw plainly, although I cannot relate what I saw. But the mockers do not understand: 'He saw a dream, a delirious vision, a hallucination.' Ah, but is this really wise? A dream? What is a dream? Is not our life a dream?

I'll say more! Let it be that this will never come to pass and there will be no paradise — that at least I understand — well, still I will preach. And it is so simple: in one day, in one hour, everything would be settled at once. The one thing is — love thy neighbour as thyself — that is the one thing. That is all, nothing else is needed. You will instantly find how to live. Though it is an old truth, repeated and read ten million times, yet it is discovered. 'The knowledge of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness — is higher than happiness' — that is what must be fought. And I will fight. If only every one wanted it, then everything would be right in an instant.

And the little girl I found. . . . I'll go to her, I'll go.

The End