

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Human, All Too Human

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thoroughly moved so as for once to have a good cry; the artist who sees a new tragedy, on the other hand, takes pleasure in the ingenious technical inventions and artifices, in the handling and apportionment of the material, in the new application of old motifs and old ideas. – His attitude is the aesthetic attitude to the work of art, that of the creator; the one first described, which pays attention only to the material, is that of the people. Of the man between them there is nothing to be said; he is neither people nor artist and does not know what he wants: thus his pleasure, too, is obscure and slight.

167

Artistic education of the public. – If the same motif has not been treated in a hundred different ways by various masters, the public never learns to get beyond interest in the material alone; but once it has come to be familiar with the motif from numerous versions of it, and thus no longer feels the charm of novelty and anticipation, it will then be able to grasp and enjoy the nuances and subtle new inventions in the way it is treated.

168

The artist and his following must keep in step. – Progress from one stylistic level to the next must proceed so slowly that not only the artists but the auditors and spectators too can participate in this progress and know exactly what is going on. Otherwise there suddenly appears that great gulf between the artist creating his works on a remote height and the public which, no longer able to attain to that height, at length disconsolately climbs back down again deeper than before. For when the artist no longer raises his public up, it swiftly sinks downwards, and it plunges the deeper and more perilously the higher a genius has borne it, like the eagle from whose claws the tortoise it has carried up into the clouds falls to its death.

169

Origin of the comic. – If one considers that man was for many hundreds of thousands of years an animal in the highest degree accessible to fear and that everything sudden and unexpected bade him prepare to fight and perhaps to die; that even later on, indeed, in social relationships all security depended on the expected and traditional in opinion and action; then one cannot be surprised if whenever something sudden and unexpected in word and deed happens without occasioning danger or injury man becomes wanton, passes over into the opposite of fear: the anxious, crouching creature springs up, greatly expands – man laughs. This transition from momentary anxiety to short-lived exuberance is called the *comic*. In the phenomenon of the tragic, on the other hand, man passes swiftly from great, enduring wantonness and high spirits into great fear and anguish; since, however, great, enduring wantonness and high spirits is much rarer among mortals than occasions for fear, there is much more of the comic than the tragic in the world; we laugh much more often than we are profoundly shaken.