On Calculation

By Friedrich Nietzsche

Noble and common. – For common natures all noble, magnanimous feelings appear to be inexpedient and therefore initially incredible: they give a wink when they hear of such things and seem to want to say, 'Surely there must be some advantage involved; one cannot see through every wall' – they are suspicious of the noble person, as if he were furtively seeking his advantage. If they become all too clearly convinced of the absence of selfish intentions and gains, they view the noble person as a kind of fool: they despise him in his pleasure and laugh at the sparkle in his eye. 'How could one enjoy being at a disadvantage? How could one want with open eyes to be disadvantaged? Some disease of reason must be linked to the noble affection' – thus they think and look disparagingly, the way they disparage the pleasure that a madman derives from his fixed idea. What distinguishes the common nature is that it unflinchingly keeps sight of its advantage, and that this thought of purpose and advantage is even stronger than its strongest drives; not to allow these drives to lead it astray to perform inexpedient acts – that is its wisdom and self-esteem. In comparison, the higher nature is more unreasonable – for the noble, magnanimous, and self-sacrificing person does in fact succumb to his drives; and in his best moments, his reason pauses.