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THE *Atlantic*

APRIL

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT *speaking*

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APRIL 1939

PORTRAIT OF OUR FATHER THOMAS MANN

BY ERIKA AND KLAUS MANN

WHEN did our father's image first take on living form for us? Let us return for a moment to the land of our childhood, to the meadows and hills of the Bavarian uplands where we used to pass the summer months. They are far away from us now — a distance of a quarter of a century. Father, who looms very large in our childish eyes (he is actually of medium height and lightly built), is coming up the path that leads from the garden gate to the house. Our Tölz house, so called because it is in Bad Tölz, a health resort, stands in full sunshine against a gigantic black forest and looks out on to the Karwendel Mountains, covered with eternal snow. We are busy weeding the tennis court; it is very hot, and the sound of our parents' footsteps on the gravel path is good to hear, for it means dinner. Mother and father are wheeling their bicycles; they have been in the village shopping.

We seldom saw our father. In spite or because of that, we felt him as a great power in our lives, as the final authority from which there was no appeal. He worked every morning from nine till a

quarter past twelve. In the afternoon he rested. Later, after tea, he wrote letters. During all these hours we had to be quiet, and there were terrible moments when he would come to the door of his study, demanding 'Qui-et, there!' in a voice in which vexation struggled with the incapacity to believe that we had forgotten again.

Sometimes, towards evening, when we were sitting in the nursery on the chairs we had long since grown out of, and feeling very much bored with our box of bricks, he would call us. We would tumble downstairs as fast as we could; to be called in the evening meant being read to, and being read to by Father was the height of our dreams. For that purpose only were we allowed in his study — a moderate-sized room full of books, with a red plush carpet, a scrupulously tidy writing table, another round oak table covered with books, a chaise-longue covered with books, every chair stacked with books. The room was never quite free of cigar smoke, and the smell of it, mingled with a faint redolence of glue and dust from the books, was always

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associated in our minds with our father. Father would shut the door behind us. There was a book in his hand: a volume of the *Arabian Nights*, or *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, or Tolstoy's *Popular Tales*. He read beautifully; the figures came out of the stories and filled the room; the funny ones made us all laugh till we cried. We were thrilled, saddened, or shocked as the story would have us be.

We knew that Father wrote stories himself, though we were 'too young for them yet,' but we knew too that he could have gone on the stage if he had wanted to. He was passionately fond of the theatre, and would often talk about what it would be like the first time he took us there. We used to think he could have been a musician; he played the violin beautifully, and when we sang carols on Christmas Eve he would whistle the alto most tunefully. But the fact of the matter was that he ought to have been an artist. Sometimes he would make little sketches for us — a gentleman with a goatee, who he declared, heaven knows why, was the Brazilian Ambassador, or another in tails who was 'the Pride of the Ball-room.'

Sometimes the children at school would ask us: 'Does your father ever trouble his head about you?' It was our mother who took charge of our school reports, and when we had any 'row' at home to tell about it was generally she who had intervened to settle things. It was obviously she who managed our education, and so we used to tell our friends: 'No — I mean yes. You can't really describe it.'

It is a fact that our father did not seem to trouble his head about us. He thought it was better to give us 'a living example' than to make any attempt to bring us up in the way we should go. The atmosphere of our home, the feeling of spiritual responsibility, the discipline of work, the regularity of life, the cheerfulness, the calm, the gravity always tinged with irony which is peculiar to

him, and which he brought to bear on our childish affairs with just the same kindness as on the 'grown-up' matters that touched him personally, his talks with our mother or with the friends who came to lunch — all these things, he thought, were of a nature to help in the formation of our characters. Besides, he relied on what he believed was our innate good sense.

On rare occasions he spoke to us of his own youth, his development, his life. The anecdotes from his childhood were by no means 'moralizing,' but in some way that is not easily explicable they had the power to enlighten us and to stimulate our ambition. Our father confessed that as a boy he had been very lazy — not thoroughly lazy, of course, for he had been an avid reader, had played the violin and written poetry, but lazy as a pupil. He received poor marks and was refractory toward his teachers. He told us many humorous tales about the teachers in his native town, Lübeck. And he also told us about the fine old patrician home in which he grew up — to this day it is shown to visitors as the Buddenbrook House, although the author who was born there has been living in exile, as a 'traitor to his country.' He told us about the room which he shared with his brother Heinrich for many years, of his grave, very correct father, of his beautiful mother, who hailed from Brazil.

'And then?' we inquired. 'After you left Lübeck and were no longer a school-boy, what happened?'

He sat in his armchair, his legs crossed, a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'Yes, then the years in Munich followed — we left Lübeck soon after the death of my father, your grandfather. At that time I had already begun to write — or, to be more exact, I had never stopped. But the family was of the opinion that I should have a "regular profession." For a while I worked for an insurance company — but only for a short time. I knew that wasn't the right thing for me;

I had other plans.' Then he would smile mysteriously, almost gayly, as though the thought of those 'other plans,' then already shyly enshrined in his heart, amused him.

'Military service was definitely *not* the right thing for me,' he continued. 'My feet could not get used to the ideal German gait, commonly known as "march past." I became quite ill, was taken to the hospital, and had to be released from military service after a few weeks. I was more fortunate in another position, which I accepted about that time: I was made editor of *Simplicissimus* — you know that magazine with the funny pictures. The first money I ever earned was paid by this magazine. The publisher had accepted one of my short stories and remunerated me with three shining gold pieces — to this day I can feel them as they lay in my hand then. The man who presented these first gold pieces to me was Jakob Wassermann!'

'The real, dear old Jakob Wassermann?' we asked. 'Have you known him that long?'

'Yes,' he said, 'I have known him that long. And we were always good friends.'

Beautiful evening hours under the lamp, the air filled with heavy blue cigar smoke and talk — that was almost better than being read to. Our father spoke to us of Italy, where he had spent several years, together with our Uncle Heinrich. 'It was there I began my work on *Buddenbrooks*. At first I wasn't at all serious about it. I thought to myself: why not tell a little about Lübeck? I have so many memories that will amuse my friends in Munich. And then the book increased in volume. I was terrified at such a growth, but I soon realized that was the only way — not one bit of it must be eliminated. That is the reason why I was so very much upset by the cruel suggestion of my publisher in Berlin, dear old S. Fischer, then quite a young man, to curtail the material to half its size, so that it could be pub-

lished in one volume. I was quite unwilling to do this. While it was really meant only as a sort of jest for my friends, yet it was to be a very *exhaustive* jest. I wrote Fischer: "I cannot permit deletions! I would rather abandon the publication!" I was taking a great risk; but I was fortunate — and Fischer listened to reason. The novel appeared in two volumes and gave pleasure not only to my Munich friends. Success came gradually — not with exaggerated speed, but steadily. And now the *Buddenbrooks* have become famous. . . .'

It sounded almost melancholy, just as though fame meant a kind of degradation. ('Fame is the sum total of all misunderstandings circulated about a person,' Rainer Maria Rilke says in one of his works.)

'And then? And then?' We wanted to hear still more; it was so fine and exciting to learn of our father's life; to realize that he too had been young once, had played silly pranks; that he too had had to struggle for his first success. 'And then?'

Now, however, he adopted the manner of the teller of tales. He took our mother's hand and caressed it a little, while slowly he said: 'And then one day I was invited to a beautiful home in Munich. I went there often — as often as possible. And there were special reasons why I did. For the daughter of the house was so pretty and so clever and quite unusual in every respect — like a little princess.' Possibly he would have told us more, — and we would have given anything just to be permitted to go on listening, — but our mother suddenly said, 'Now it's high time to go to bed, children!'

The life of our mother is not at all like that of a princess, we know that — although we too think she almost looks like a real princess, with her heavy dark crown of hair, her wise, expressive eyes, and her many embroidered frocks that we call 'the Bulgarian frocks' because they strike us as being vaguely

Oriental. Princesses are genteel, but inactive, while our mother is activity personified. But, whether princess or not, we believe she's quite an exceptional person. Perhaps everybody thinks that of their mother; all the same, what she does is really exceptional. Six children in times like these! And she is not strong, either. After the war she was ill; she weighed less than a hundred pounds and had to be sent to a sanatorium. (A number of the graphic letters she wrote to our father from Davos he used in *The Magic Mountain*.) She is the best thing in life for all of us. And each of us is her 'favorite in his own way' — that's one of her comforting jokes. She finds time to look after all of us and to be our father's secretary, impresario, and assistant at the same time. She writes his letters, types his manuscript, negotiates with his publishers, and it is to her that he reads aloud in the evening what he has written during the day. She is his courier and chauffeur too. We really believe it right to say that she is exceptional.

Although times were so bad, and we knew that our parents had many troubles, both personal and general, we had our family celebrations, great and small, which were carried out with loving attention to every detail. Our father loved festivals; he used to look forward to Christmas almost as eagerly as we did. He would himself set up an old Christmas manger, arrange the pretty wax figures under the Christmas tree, give the dog, whom he had adorned with a bow of ribbon, his Christmas dinner, and wait with us in the dark study while the tree was being lit. He could be as thrilled by some little present — a refill pencil, a reading lamp — as we over our box of bricks or Punch and Judy.

In the summer of 1918, our Tölz house was exchanged for a slice of war loan, and life now went on, winter and summer, at our house in Munich. It was very hot. We four children, ranging from five to twelve, would lie in our

bathing suits on the lawn in front of the house. Father would appear with the garden hose. His technique with the hose was particularly expert. It was not only that he could aim better than anyone else; he could also command the greatest possible variations in the play of the cooling jet of water. 'It's the flick of the wrist that does it,' he would cry. 'It's an art!'

Indoors, the pleasantest room was the hall. That is where we held all our celebrations, and where we used to sit in the evening to listen to the music. The hall was paneled in brown wood, with bookcases reaching to the ceiling. It narrowed down to a bay with three big windows looking on to the garden. From the other end a folding door led into our father's study, with the beautiful, gilded, five-branched candelabra he was so much attached to because they came from his grandparents' home in Lübeck. There were some good pictures in the house, and prints in which our father took great pride.

The big gramophone was in the hall. Our father loved to organize concerts; one evening there would be German songs, another Tschaikowsky or Wagner — very often it was Wagner. If a record squeaked or a woman's voice cracked on the top note, Father was as upset as a pianist who has come to grief over his showpiece.

As soon as we were old enough, we were allowed to be present when our father read his own work aloud in the evening. It was in this way that we got to know *The Magic Mountain*, *Felix Krull*, and the *Joseph* novels as they came into being. At first the audience on these occasions numbered three: Mother, Erika, and Klaus. Then the little ones, Golo and Monika, were allowed in, and finally the littlest ones came too.

For his part, our father has always enjoyed listening to others. 'Parlor tricks,' especially when they are amusing, give him the liveliest pleasure. He is in the highest degree 'amusable,' and this

quality is a beautiful nuance in our father's portrait, like his childlike pleasure in pretty things, in 'feasts,' in attractively got-up meals and all the little delights of life. He is a magnificent, grateful, attentive, and easily pleased 'audience.' His friends would read their work aloud to him, and us. Even we children, when we had something to produce, found the most kindly and sensitive critic in our father.

II

In spite of the troubled times, life in our home for the ten years following the end of the World War was comparatively tranquil. Only after the first decisive election successes of the Nazis in September 1929 did politics have a disturbing influence on us. It was not long before our father realized and hated the monstrous thing he saw coming. His hope that it would suffice to give his fellow countrymen a living example (as he had chosen to give his children a living example rather than 'bring them up') proved illusory. He felt that it was his duty to grapple with the evil directly, risking his whole physical and moral self in doing so.

After the September elections, he went from Munich to Berlin, where in a great, urgent speech he besought his audience to be on their guard. Nazi youths, scattered all over the hall, began to riot. They were hissed down by those who had come to listen to the voice of reason. Our father, small and still, stood above the noise; he went on speaking — said what he had got to say into the uproar and in spite of it. 'He is no orator,' we thought, sitting somewhat anxiously down in the body of the hall; 'he is not meant to howl down yelling rowdies. Why didn't we prevent him? Why didn't we implore him to stay at home, at his writing table, where he belongs?' Yet we were proud of him all the same. And it is certain that Germany could have been saved from the worst even

then, in the autumn of 1929, or still later, in the autumn and winter of 1933, if other men of mind, the prominent artists and intellectuals, had, like our father, brought their influence to bear on the situation, had made a stand to defend reason and morality against barbarism. They made no stand, and the enemy won practically without a fight.

On March 11, 1933, we put through a trunk call from Munich to Arosa, for our parents were having a few weeks' holiday there after a lecture tour. We told them that the weather at home was unpleasant, and that we would not advise them to come home the next day as they had planned. We could hardly make our father understand. 'It's rough weather up here too,' he said, to which we replied: 'We're having the house spring-cleaned. You'd better stay where you are.' It was a long, distressing conversation, but in the end our parents consented to wait and see how the weather and the spring-cleaning turned out.

When we ourselves arrived at Arosa the next day, we found our father calm and resolute. He had done what lay in his power to prevent what had now happened. As it had happened, and as, in Germany, his voice would be lost in the rattle of weapons and the clamor of those who had raised up the new leaders, — a clamor which drowned out every other sound, both the sweet voice of reason and the cries of suffering which issued from the concentration camps and prisons, — his place was no longer there, but outside, where his voice could be heard, and whence it might gradually penetrate into the misguided country.

That spring was an ordeal. In Germany they were beginning to resent the absence of the 'Aryan' Nobel Prize winner, whose former delinquencies they would certainly have been ready to overlook. His passport had expired; at the consulates he was given to understand that it would be renewed without difficulty if the holder would take the trouble to have it done at Munich, the issuing

office. But that is just what he would not do. Then came reprisals in Munich. First our car was taken from the garage, then our house and money were confiscated. But the news coming from Germany was so bitter, so ugly, that all personal hardship faded into the background. The weeks immediately following the 'seizure of power' were the worst, because the unimaginable had to be grasped and the incredible gradually believed.

We had become homeless; we belonged nowhere. It was a matter of complete indifference whether our little hotel rooms were in Lugano or the South of France. Of course, we were now poor; and our mother must often have been more disturbed than she permitted us to see, because she didn't know how things could continue this way. Everything our father had achieved and earned — yes, even the honor bestowed upon him by the Swedish Academy, the Nobel Prize — had been taken from us. There must be a new beginning — in foreign countries and foreign languages.

We went down to the Côte d'Azur, spent a few weeks in Le Lavandou, a few more in Sanary. Father had stopped working; for the first time in our lives we found him, between nine and a quarter past twelve, out walking, or talking to our mother, with friends or alone, brooding over the disaster that had come. The world — our world — was out of joint. It had to be set right.

Erika was the only one who returned to Munich. Our father had left the manuscript of his *Joseph* novel at our home on the Isar, when he went to France and Switzerland for what he then thought was a few weeks' vacation. Now the house was confiscated and watched — but we would and could not leave the manuscript to the Nazis. Erika went to Munich. She donned dark glasses, so as to be unrecognizable, but as a matter of fact they only made her more conspicuous. It was all very uncomfortable. And two moments will always be in-

delibly engraved on her memory — one when she opened the door with her trusty old house key, without attracting the attention of the Nazi guards; the other when she crept up the stairs, where so many scenes of our childhood had taken place, picked up the voluminous manuscript, and like a thief ran into her own room with her treasure. At that time, however, there wasn't the dreadful order at the border that would cost her her life were she to appear there to-day. The manuscript and Erika reached Sanary safe and sound.

The house above the sea in which we came temporarily to rest was small. But there was a study with a few books; there was a room in which we could sit together in the evening. Some big new chapters of *Joseph in Egypt* were written there, and when in the autumn we returned to Switzerland, to settle provisionally by the Lake of Zurich, we were already experienced exiles, who knew that life goes on whatever happens, and are at home wherever a writing table happens to be.

III

One of the good things about exile is that it intensifies a man's contact with the world — indeed, that it creates a contact with the world which those who go for a tour abroad, and return home, hardly know. We had traveled about a good deal 'before Hitler'; we imagined we knew our way about in Europe, and even in the United States. In reality, we had always been 'on a visit'; we had never participated in the life of the countries we had stayed in. That has all changed now. And the friendship which unites our father to-day, say, with Switzerland, or Czechoslovakia, or America, is deeper and means more than any connections he could have established from home. In Germany he has been 'deprived of his nationality,' but he is a German writer, whether Hitler and his henchmen will admit it or not. He knows that where he is Germany is; but

at the same time he is at home in the free world — in every place where there is sympathy for things of the mind, and where a man can work in peace and with self-respect.

Although he had been a frequent visitor to America, he made his first lecture tour 'from coast to coast' in the winter of 1937-1938, and it was that tour which confirmed what he had till then only suspected — that here was the country in which life was fullest, most promising, finest. The most important democracy in the world received the exiles kindly. On the great tour which took our father into every corner of the continent, he met with so much understanding, so much interest and receptivity, so much enthusiasm for art and the spiritual things which are above nationality, that, moved and grateful, he felt, 'I should like to stay here.' He therefore accepted an invitation to settle at Princeton, where he will give lectures at the university and continue work on his Goethe novel and the fourth part of *Joseph*.

The German university of Bonn has withdrawn the honorary doctorship it once conferred upon him; but it was unnecessary for him to relinquish the title of Doctor, since Harvard University honored him with the degree, and also Columbia and Yale. At Yale he had the pleasure of being present at a ceremony which took place at the opening of the Thomas Mann Archive. This fine and well-stocked collection of first editions, manuscripts, photographs, and appreciations of his work is a testimony of great and active love. While his books are being removed from the German libraries, while German school children are not allowed to learn his name, here in a foreign land, which has long ceased to be 'foreign' to him, a home has been made ready for him.

Does this image of our father in America correspond to the one which rises from the depths of our childhood into the clouded present? Do we recognize it as the face that bent over us tiny chil-

dren as we played in the garden of the Tölz house? We recognize in it the clear eyes under the dark brows, which rise high in surprise or indignation, the urbane kindness, and the gravity tinged with irony. The face has remained narrow, with the prominent nose we have all inherited, and the little, close-clipped moustache whose neatness and patrician conventionality are belied by the reflective and shimmering depth of the eyes. The voice which, as we sit together of an evening in Princeton, tells us the story of Lotte in Weimar is the same as issued from the corner of the Munich 'study.' We recognize the voice at once; we recognize the figure from which it issues as the one we once knew, though time has transformed it. For between and behind the slim silhouettes there rises, uniting, clarifying, and linking them, the work.

IV

It is difficult, perhaps almost impossible, to see and judge as a public figure one to whom we are closely attached by human ties. It seems hardly possible to separate the man from his work, particularly in a case like that of Thomas Mann, whose work is so intimately bound up with his personality. All his books, and even the great literary essays, are autobiographical in character, a trait which is clearly recognizable in *Buddenbrooks* and in *Tonio Kröger*, which can be discerned as it were under a mask in *Royal Highness*, *Death in Venice*, and *The Confessions of Felix Krull*, and which, for the keen-sighted, is even to be divined in *The Magic Mountain*. Not until *Joseph and His Brothers* does the autobiographical and confessional element seem to fade into the background, yet what a thrill of surprise it gives us to discover and trace it even here. For those characters from a far distant time and an alien scene take on strangely familiar traits. They have the same charms, feel the same weariness of dig-

nity, the same torments of sick or hopeless love, the same degradations and guilt, delight and despair, in forbidden adventure, as the people in his stories of modern times. The motive of a love which burns the more unquenchably just because it is hopeless returns, like some great, sorrowful musical theme recurring throughout a composer's work, in the novel about the aged Goethe which is now being written — *Lotte in Weimar*.

All these torments and ecstasies are interwoven, all these figures bear faces that are akin, and in all these faces we recognize, with reverence and love, the poet who created them. It is the face of Jacob, the thoughtful face of the father watching his son, young Joseph, with anxious yearning. Then a mysterious and comical change passes over it, and it melts into the features of Felix Krull, that genius at 'making faces,' and when it settles again it takes on the lineaments of upper middle-class dignity, the likeness of Thomas Buddenbrook, the last patrician, who indulged in Schopenhauer like a drug fiend, then simply fell dead in the street because a dentist had hurt him — or because he would not put up with life any longer. But again there is a change; the face turns more solemn on the one hand, smoother and more callow on the other. It is the face of Prince Klaus Heinrich, the beloved and secretly melancholy Royal Highness, who had to keep at a severe ceremonial distance from 'ordinary people' and in the end found happiness all the same, an 'austere' happiness, when the sweet and capricious betrothed, the strange girl Imma, came. And we recognize even this Imma — familiar features we have loved since earliest childhood; for the fairy-tale betrothed, the capricious guardian angel of the Prince, has turned into the wife and mother — our mother.

Given such a wealth of memories and associations, of touching relationships, it is not easy to remain 'detached.' On the other hand, we certainly should not wish to turn our personal intimacy with

the author's life into a fatal handicap by regarding his work merely as a complex of family allusions, and hence lose the power to appreciate it as one of the finest manifestations of the human spirit which our time has seen.

V

The range of problems and human affairs which has entered into these creations and formed their artistic and spiritual themes has grown gradually but steadily wider until it has attained the all-embracing magnitude we know today. It is characteristic that the great essays — the writings, that is, of a more general and social nature — have played a preponderating part in Thomas Mann's work only since the World War.

The problem that dominated Thomas Mann's work solely and uniquely, up to the war, was the problem of the creative spirit. The problem of decadence, which gave the great chronicle of the decline and fall of an upper middle-class family, the Buddenbrooks, its spiritual content, was only a part of the problem of the creative mind. For the artistic temperament already afflicts the last of the Buddenbrooks, not only the oversensitive, overaffectionate boy Hanno, but his father too, who was, to all appearances, still sound. They are estranged from the solid business life of their family; they have been touched by the dangerous breath of the spirit. But even Hanno still harbors a yearning for the 'ecstasies of the commonplace,' the soothing solidity of bourgeois life. This longing is also the fate of Tonio Kröger, who is estranged from life because he is estranged from the bourgeoisie.

'The creative spirit' appears in many guises and under many masks, for that spirit is, after all, an actor too, and likes to wear all kinds of strange costumes; but we can always recognize him as the man standing aloof from life, and isolated, the man who does not really 'belong.' And between the two spheres, between

'mind' and 'life,' Eros hovers, a graceful, cunning go-between.

Eros can appear in many forms. Sometimes he even assumes the form of hate, and instead of vows of tenderness we hear curses. It is curses, not vows of love, which Savonarola the ascetic hurls, in *Fiorenza*, at the luxurious sensuality of the Florence of the Medicis. But all the same, Eros is at work here too; the hatred of the ascetic is only the extreme, despairing expression of his longing.

'Whoever has looked upon beauty is dedicated to death,' said a German poet whose knowledge of all things concerning death, beauty, and love was especially profound. It was August von Platen, to whom Thomas Mann has paid homage in a great study: *Platen, Tristan and Don Quixote*. For Eros can also appear in the likeness of the angel of death. His seduction is at times the seduction of annihilation — that very fascination which so ensnared poor Thomas Buddenbrook as he sat reading Schopenhauer in the summerhouse, and to which Hans Castorp, in *The Magic Mountain*, owed so many strange experiences, physical and spiritual. The most cunning and equivocal of all gods — thus Plato describes Eros — is revealed in that feeling of which Platen sang, and which Thomas Mann has described as 'the bias towards death.'

This formula, 'the bias towards death,' is one of the intellectual leitmotifs which run through a long critical and philosophical study, *Reflections of an Unpolitical Mind*, on which Thomas Mann worked during the four war years. This book marks a turning point in his inner life and in his work. For the first time the problem of the creative spirit recedes. The antithesis 'mind' and 'life,' which had predominated in all Thomas Mann's creative work from *Tonio Kröger* to *Death in Venice*, is replaced by other antitheses, other spiritual polarities.

Rather paradoxically, the author's interest in social and political matters is first manifested in the *Reflections*. It is

true that this interest at first takes the form of a long and bitterly angry attack on that type of intellectual who concentrates his efforts and interests primarily on social and political matters — that is, the western, democratic type most clearly represented in Germany by Heinrich Mann. This 'literary prophet of civilization,' with his optimism and his belief in progress, is thrown into contrast with the conservative, nonpolitical German romantic; French rhetoric is contrasted with German musicality, the western idea of civilization with the German ideal of *Kultur* (ostentatiously spelled with a capital *K* instead of a small *c*). The *Reflections* are a pamphlet in the grand style, written with passion and grief against the spirit of the Entente Cordiale, the spirit of the democracies with which the Germany of Luther and Bismarck was at war.

The author of this strange and at times movingly beautiful book has long since outgrown all the opinions expressed in it. All the same, within the whole compass of his work, it is of decisive importance. The profound and painful preoccupation with the 'problem of Germany,' with the difficult task of *being a German*, was only the first expression and symptom of a great inward process. The creative spirit had quitted his tragic, ironic isolation to enter a community. Suddenly the man who till then had held aloof from life, half quizzically, half sadly, participated directly in life with his whole heart, struggling and suffering. It is true that he showed at first no great aptitude for life in the new community, as might be expected of a creative spirit and a Don Quixote. It may well have been a tragic moment for him when he became aware that he had fought with windmills in the *Reflections* and had given warning through five hundred pages of dangers which, for Germany, were never really dangers. For there is no serious reason to fear that Germany will ever fall victim to a 'facile belief' in progress, to a civilization func-

tioning too smoothly and too perfectly. The reasons that make one fear for Germany, which are also the reasons that make one fear Germany, are of a very different order.

For that matter, the *Reflections* themselves, in their deepest sense, are fraught with the premonition that this somewhat hectic battle is being fought for a cause already lost. The patriotism of this strange war book is by no means the hearty, flag-flapping kind; it is a melancholy patriotism, a kind of suspicious enthusiasm, familiar not only with all the greatness of Germany, but also with all her evil potentialities. Not by mere chance is one of the leitmotifs of the book the recurring phrase, 'the bias towards death.'

It is that very bias which had to be overcome. As Nietzsche overcame in suffering his love for Schopenhauer, Wagner, and romanticism, thereby winning a brighter, austerer happiness, the author of the *Reflections* overcame the melancholy conservatism, the secretly rather skeptical enthusiasm for what is already doomed and marked by death. *The Magic Mountain* is the epic record of a process which leads from the interest in sickness, death, and decay to the interest in life, and finally to an all-embracing sympathy with life and the living. But through this new and brighter melody other notes run, the old notes rising from the depths. The experiences that were gathered 'down there,' in the depths, are not to be forgotten up in the light. It is the man who knows darkness who loves the light most.

VI

This new humanism, which is treated dialectically in *The Magic Mountain*, and is the grandiose finale of its intellectual symphony, could not but have political consequences. Its political implications make their first appearance in the *Speech on the German Republic* which Thomas Mann gave on a Goethe Memo-

rial Day in Frankfurt-on-Main, and in which he made his first explicit avowal of democratic principles. The nationalist circles in Germany, who had imagined that the author of the *Reflections* would now be one of them for all time, were beside themselves with anger and disappointment. They howled 'Treachery!' and did not stop howling when Thomas Mann showed that he was going to remain faithful to the convictions at which he had arrived after a long and conscientious process.

His moral and political development, however, by no means came to an end with the *Speech on the German Republic*. It went on, and the pace at which it progressed was hastened by the fatal turn things took in Germany. The struggle against the barbarism which first menaced, then overwhelmed Germany was in very truth no 'fight against windmills.' Barbarism — the degradation of human beings by the 'totalitarian state,' the atavistic relapse into the pre-civilized stage of life, the life of the jungle, subject to the 'law of might,' where the notions of justice, freedom, and compassion provoke either scorn or helpless stupefaction — that is what Fascism is. But the new humanism, the new, age-old goal of a culture no longer based on social injustice — that is the idea under whose ægis Thomas and Heinrich Mann came together, and for the sake of which they both became irreconcilable enemies of Fascism.

This new humanism is comprehensive. It is faithful to the great values, the inalienable heritage of the past; hence it is also conservative. But it points boldly to the future, it has socialistic hopes; hence it is revolutionary. It is of its nature synthetic rather than antithetic, since it reconciles opposites by uniting them within itself, instead of playing them off against each other. It has both dignity and fire. It has room for all that is human, and is the sworn, inexorable enemy of the dogmatic inhumanity represented by Fascism.

The example which Thomas Mann follows with reverence in his new vision of man is above all the great figure of Goethe. The being of Goethe, the greatest of Germans and the greatest of Europeans, seems to him to show the most wonderful fusion of nature and culture, of national and supernational qualities. And yet in that huge mind of Goethe, who could endure 'injustice rather than disorder,' there is an element of rigidity, of aristocratic exclusiveness, of fear of changes that might occasion disorder — traits and tendencies that might well narrow the concept of a coming humanism and check its development. Thomas Mann knows that; he has always observed the great objects of his admiration — Nietzsche or Wagner, Frederick the Great or Tolstoy — with a curiosity tinged by criticism and skepticism. No one will venture to doubt that Goethe would have turned his back on the Third Reich with a still deeper disgust than on the patriotic clamor of the War of Liberation in 1813. Yet we have also reason to doubt whether he would have achieved more than the gesture of cold disdain, whether he would really have made up his mind to enter the struggle. It is a well-known fact that the great man of Weimar never quite fell out with those in power.

But as soon as the Nazi danger became acute, that is what Thomas Mann resolved to do — to enter the struggle, and to enter it publicly. He could no longer be satisfied with serving the new form of humanity with his creative power alone, by conjuring up, in *Joseph and His Brothers*, primeval human figures, by bringing them close to us and 'humanizing' early myths of humanity. His love of the future made him indignant at the horror of the present. As long as there was time he warned his fellow countrymen, in a host of articles and speeches; and when it was too late, when the disaster he had foreseen made it impossible for him to live in his native country, he fell into a brief silence of

grief, and then found words again — eloquent words, glowing, angry, sorrowful, and yet not comfortless words, words that were confident for all their indignation and pain. They were heard not only by the outside world; they found an echo within the Reich itself. The famous letter *To the Rector of Bonn University*, that great answer to a petty action which consisted in withdrawing from the author of *Buddenbrooks* the honorary degree of Doctor once conferred upon him — that letter, which aroused attention in five continents, was greedily read in Germany. Read *with danger*, as may well be imagined. But thousands in the Third Reich really wanted to hear Thomas Mann's voice and ideas again, instead of the everlasting 'voice of their master,' long since become nauseous to them. And they risked prison and the concentration camp for the sake of that joy, that refreshing encouragement.

It cannot be assumed that those who dared to do so were moved merely by literary curiosity. They realized that they were not utterly degraded as long as that voice still spoke. The solace which that calm yet fiery pronouncement brought them came, on the one hand, from the memory of a better past; on the other hand, as a message of hope. The future of Germany, of Europe, of the world, cannot be so gloomy as long as a few proud and greatly gifted minds continue their active endeavors. That those few do not fail, but courageously carry on their difficult work, the work that so often creates new enemies for them — that is a guarantee.

A guarantee of what? Of the nearness of the Golden Age, of that lasting peace which would be a boon to all mankind? By no means. But a guarantee that the struggle is not quite hopeless, and that it has aims which make it worth while.

That is what those Germans thought who risked the concentration camp. That is what readers still living in five continents thought. And that is what we, his children, think.