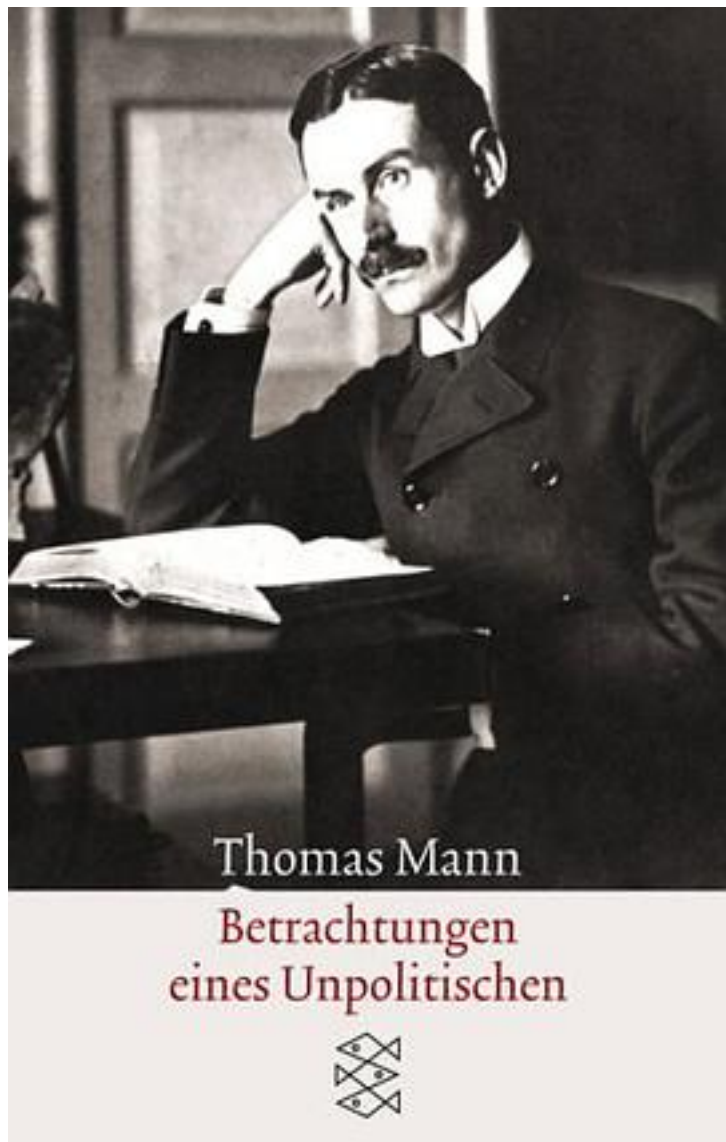


# Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen



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Like most other writers of his generation, he was a profoundly apolitical being, not from any lacuna in his education but as a matter of principle. Politics was not a fit occupation for "aristocrats of the spirit." He was a patriot, but he did not like the machinery of the state. In his early notebooks there are references to "General Professor von Staat," and he now returned to the subject in "Reflections." Spiritual life (der Geist) was by definition the opponent of politics. Mann was a conservative. Politics was by definition anticonservative; it made people conceited, doctrinaire and ultimately inhuman. He supported the war precisely because it transcended politics.

Such ignorance of the real world was deeply rooted in many and, what was worse, they were quite unaware of it. Like most writers, Mann did not really know foreign countries (except Italy) and he read no foreign publications (except novels); so he was bound to swallow official propaganda about the outbreak of the war and the "atrocities" committed by the other side. This innocence made it all the easier to write about the war with great self-confidence and on a level of almost total abstraction. Mann thought of the war mainly as great drama, a conflict of ideas to be described in literary terms. War for him was literature, on the very highest level, needless to say. He had attached certain attributes to the German spirit and also to the French, the Russian and the British; America had no civilization and did not count. The true battles were fought not in the real world but in the realm of the spirit with tin soldiers named Wagner, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, "Republique democratique sociale et universelle," "false humanism," Robespierre, Rousseau, Romain Rolland and others.

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