

TO THOMAS MANN ON HIS SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

(1935)

My Dear Thomas Mann, Accept as a friend my affectionate greetings on your sixtieth birthday. I am one of your 'oldest' readers and admirers and I might wish you a very long and happy life as is the custom on such occasions. But I shall not do so. Wishing is cheap and strikes me as a relapse into the days when people believed in the magical omnipotence of thoughts. I think, too, from my most personal experience, that it is well if a compassionate fate sets a timely end to the length of our life.

Nor do I think the practice deserves imitation by which affection on these festive occasions disregards respect, and by which the subject of the celebration is compelled to hear himself loaded with praise as a man and analysed and criticized as an artist. I shall not be guilty of such presumption. I can allow myself something else however. In the name of a countless number of your contemporaries I can express to you our confidence that you will never do or say - for an author's words are deeds - anything that is cowardly or base. Even in times and circumstances that perplex the judgement you will take the right path and point it out to others.

Yours very sincerely,

Freud

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