For me, ethics and aesthetics are associated with the word *essay*.

It is said to come from "weighing," and is mostly used by scholars only to characterize the smaller excrescences, those not written with full commitment, of their life's work; it is also called "attempt." I can also make use of it in this latter sense, to which, however, I would like to give a different content.

Is the essay something left over in an area where one can work precisely [in the sense of the natural sciences]. . . Or: the strictest form attainable in an area where one cannot work precisely.

I will seek to demonstrate the second sense.

Now, a rational course of thought can be true or false, as can an affective one, but aside from that it "speaks to us" or doesn't speak to us. And there are trains of thought that really work only through the mode of feelings. For a person who has no ear for them they are completely confusing and incomprehensible. But here it is nevertheless visibly a matter of an entirely legitimate means of understanding, even if it is not of binding general validity. The number of such ways of reaching understanding among people is, moreover, greater than assumed (chimpanzee couples, effect of a leader through charisma, etc.). Even the individual person has the experience that the same thought can be dead for him at one time, a mere series of words, alive at another.

Robert Musil, fragment ["On the Essay" 1914?]