

**Progress, Decline, and Redemption:
Understanding War and Imagining Europe, 1870s–1890s**

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Introduction: War and the idea of Europe

In the last volume of his monumental *Jean-Christophe*, published in 1912, Romain Rolland lingered on a disturbing change unsettling European society:

The fire smouldering in the forest of Europe was beginning to burst into flames. In vain did they try to put it out in one place; it only broke out in another. With gusts of smoke and a shower of sparks it swept from one point to another, burning the dry brushwood. [...] The whole of Europe, that Europe that only yesterday was sceptical and apathetic, like a dead wood, was swept by the flames. All men were possessed by the desire for battle. War was ever on the point of breaking out. It was stamped out, but it sprang to life again. [...] Europe looked like a vast armed vigil.¹

It was an accurate premonition; and it was shared by others. In 1913, Carl Gustav Jung’s nightmares of a tremendous flood covering the whole of Europe, a land devastated ‘by yellow

waves, swimming rubble, and the death of countless thousands’, and Ludwig Meidner’s ‘Apokalyptische Stadt’, offering the viewers a burning and devastated city, both announced the impending catastrophe that would soon tear Europe apart.² From around 1900 onwards, the feeling of impending doom came to be shared by an increasing number of writers, artists, and intellectuals. Many of them, belonging to avant-gardes and arrière-gardes alike, were eager to welcome it.³ As Rolland noted, Europe seemed possessed by a seemingly inexplicable lust for war, violence, and revolt. The acceptance of an inevitable decadence or decline, so popular in intellectual circles from the 1870s to the 1890s, had gradually receded, giving space to a yearning for action. A desire for great men and heroic deeds became widespread. Violence seemed the solution to Europe’s predicaments: the only way to arrest its decline.

The place of warfare violence in the history of ideas, images, and representations of Europe is an aspect often overlooked by historians. Partly, this has been a consequence of the prominent role played by the liberal discourse about Europe. In the works of a variegated array of liberal thinkers that includes the Baron de Montesquieu, François Guizot, and Benedetto Croce, Europe has been by definition the place of liberty, usually contrasted with Asia as the land of despotism. Consistently, its history has been the story of the unfolding of freedom – however imperfect – and of the attainment of perpetual peace – despite the many drawbacks. Progress would inevitably lead to a pacified and prosperous Europe. In some cases, as in Richard Cobden’s popular version, peace was preceded or accompanied by some sort of economic unification. In this important vulgate, practical reason and economic interests would eventually lead to a European federation ending all wars. While this has been one of the most important discourses about European identity – not least for political convenience – others, less popular yet more disenchanted and realistic, considered Europe as the place where, despite unending massacres – or, perhaps, because of them – politicians,

intellectuals, and diplomats have relentlessly tried to tame war violence. Carl Schmitt took such a view in his *Der Nomos der Erde* (1950). According to the German scholar, the emergence of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* in the early modern age shaped a space in which violence between states was somehow limited through the recognition of the *justis hostis*, that is, the legitimate enemy. It was a crucial distancing from previous images of the enemy, which, inspired by religion, saw him as the embodiment of all evil. However, this also produced a space, outside Europe, with no laws or rules; a space waiting to be conquered and exploited; a space where the most atrocious violence against the unfaithful or the uncivilized was deemed legitimate.⁴ From such a standpoint, the containment of war violence, rather than the suppression of war itself, might be the thread offering some coherence to European history. But the recognition that war has always been a constant element in defining perceptions of European identity might lead to a very different narrative. Writing shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, the French philosopher Georges Sorel noted that Europe, a space inhabited by so many different peoples with conflicting interests, aspirations, and ways of life, had always been the place of ‘warlike cataclysms’. He noted, with bitter irony, that the ‘people of Europe can be united only by one, single idea: to wage war one against another’.⁵ Certainly, Sorel’s was a sarcastic quip; but the notion that war might have shaped a feeling of Europeanness has recently been suggested by some scholars. Their claim is that through modern warfare Europe has become something very real for thousands and even millions of the middle and lower classes fighting on battlefields throughout the Old Continent.⁶ In the process, its invading armies carried with them ideas, values, and ways of life that helped to create shared forms of a European existence. Placing the pursuit of perpetual peace or attempts to tame its violence at the heart of European discourses, or even seeing war as an element shaping a common feeling of Europeanness, leads to three different visions of Europe. And yet, crucially, these are not mutually exclusive. Tellingly, in his *Arte*

della Guerra, Machiavelli derived the moral superiority of Europe and the love for freedom of its people from the fact they were constantly fighting one another. War brought out the best in men, and with it came freedom – or so the Florentine scholar believed.⁷ Undoubtedly, the relationship between violence and European identity/ies, even in its liberal version, needs to be rethought. And one useful point of departure might be the relationship between different views on war and notions of progress and decline in the years of the ‘sceptical and apathetic’ Europe.

Degeneration, progress, and war: Max Nordau and European unity

That in the age of Europe’s greatest cultural, political, and economic achievements, at the climax of its commercial and diplomatic power, the language of intellectual and scientific circles was heavily influenced by notions of degeneration and decadence might seem a paradox. Indeed, in those years ideas of progress and modernity, so tightly associated with Europe, came to be entwined with images of its decline.⁸ The greater the level of European industrialization and the greater its wealth, the more its morals were threatened. The Janus-faced monster of modernity had improved the material condition of millions of individuals across Europe, and yet, at the same time, it seemed to have voided their lives of all meaning. According to some observers, it was a contradiction that manifested itself in the growth of mental illnesses – a threat that psychology, another nascent product of modernity, was trying to contain.⁹ The publication of Max Nordau’s *Entartung* (1892–1893), soon translated from German into every other major European language and a short-lived yet intense publishing success, was one of the many indictments of such a condition. As one scholar commented,

Entartung threw ‘a chill upon the last years of the *fin-de-siècle*’, causing a greater commotion than any other book written between 1890 and 1900.¹⁰ Even George Bernard Shaw, who in an article published in 1895 went to great lengths to refute Nordau’s theories, later had to admit how influential they had been.¹¹ In general, reactions were critical, and most commentators condemned the views expressed in *Entartung* – though they could not be lightly dismissed. In fact, even if the thesis was controversial, it seemed based on sound knowledge and thorough research. In his review of the book, William James went as far as to call Nordau an ‘idiot’, an ‘imbecile’, and ‘gloomily insane’; but he also had to admit that he was ‘really learned’ in German, French, and English literature as well as in neurology and psychology.¹²

Building in part on Paul Bourget’s psychological theory of decadence, Nordau argued that degeneration was a condition common to civilized nations and that it manifested itself, above all, in the arts.¹³ Considering the works of Charles Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde, Paul Verlaine, Henrik Ibsen, Leo Tolstoy, Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche, and many other great novelists and artists, Nordau saw in them the expression of a nervous distress and exhaustion produced by modernity and leading to various forms of neuroses. It was a condition caused by the frenetic and unsustainable rhythms of modern life and by the difficulties met by some individuals in adapting to rapid urbanization and industrialization. The artist was the spokesman of degeneration, his fanatical audience feeding his delusion. Importantly, ‘the black death of degeneration and hysteria’ unfolding before his eyes was a phenomenon common to the people of Europe rather than of western civilization as a whole.¹⁴ In fact, during an interview in 1896, Nordau made it clear that his idea of degeneration could not be applied to America. Eulogizing Bret Harte as the greatest living American novelist, he praised the novelty of his stories, all set in ‘new surroundings’ and portraying heroic adventurers and daring gold-seekers – places and men that, for Nordau,

were distant from the chaotic and soulless metropolis of modern and industrialized Europe.¹⁵ That degeneration was a predominantly European phenomenon seems to be confirmed in the opening pages of another work by Nordau, *Die konventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*, published in 1883 and soon translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Japanese, and Chinese. Anticipating some of the ideas in *Entartung*, Nordau claimed that England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and even the smaller nations in Europe were all experiencing an unprecedented moral decline. Social ties were being threatened, and so was political stability. Even France, though it might ‘congratulate itself upon the best condition of political health of any European country’, was in disarray. On every street, ‘excited orators are preaching the gospel of Communism and violence’. The masses would soon ignite a war of unparalleled violence ‘to drive the ruling bourgeoisie out of their snug offices and sinecures’.¹⁶ As a critical admirer of modern civilization and a believer in bourgeois values and ways of life, Nordau shunned such a view with horror. And yet he held out hope in a better future for, he wrote, humanity was destined to ‘elevation and not degradation’.¹⁷ In fact, according to Nordau the majority of the peoples of Europe, their middle and lower classes, were still ‘sound’.¹⁸ The degenerate would not survive the conditions of modernity, and a new man capable of withstanding its pace would finally prevail. There was little space or need for politics, since degeneration would come to an end thanks to the struggle for existence and the individual’s capacity to adapt.¹⁹ Such views were consistent with those outlined in the final pages of *Entartung*, where Nordau wrote of freedom, hard work, the sciences, discipline, and (bourgeois) social values as the cure to Europe’s illnesses.²⁰

The ideas that Nordau set forth in his *Paradoxe*, a book first published in 1885, were more sombre. Lingering at length on the future of European civilization, he claimed that

peace among its nations would only stem from a cataclysm that would tear apart most of Europe:

The twentieth century can hardly come to an end without seeing the conclusion of this drama in world history. Before then, a considerable portion of Europe will see much distress and bloodshed, many acts of violence and crimes. [...] Valiant armies will gloriously perish in the fight. However, from then onwards the survivors will enjoy the full possession of their national rights.²¹

Since they belonged to the same racial stock, the peoples of Europe would gradually attain the same level of military capacity and this, in turn, would assure that any war between them would lead to utter mutual destruction. Peace would then ensue. Gradually strengthening their cultural ties, the nations of Europe would eventually come to share common ways of life and values. However, while war would become impossible and even unthinkable on the Old Continent, the demographic pressure of its peoples would push the European man further on in his conquest and exploitation of the rest of the globe. His success would be secured by his technological and racial superiority – the former being a consequence of the latter. Finally, ‘the entire earth will be subject to the plough and locomotive of the sons of Europe’.²² In many ways, it was a view compatible with Schmitt’s later reading of European history. Violence would be tamed and even suppressed within Europe – an outcome of technological progress – and the destructive power of its nations used for the exploitation and colonization of the rest of the world. Here was an imperialistic and messianic view of a united Europe to which other authors still held during the First World War.²³ Importantly, it was even a refutation of the liberal narrative that considered trade and economy as the engine of European unification. Progress would end war in Europe because of fear rather than commercial interests or mutual understanding. At the same time, progress would create the

conditions for quenching the implacable thirst for space and resources and by subduing other civilizations.

Nordau returned once again to the relationship between progress, economic unification, and peace in an article published at the end of 1899 in the *North American Review* and entitled 'Philosophy and Morals of War'. Commenting on Herbert Spencer's belief that the history of civilization was an evolution from war to industry and that the two were antithetical, Nordau was adamant that they were 'not necessarily such'.²⁴ As he saw it, war was not always repealed by commerce, finance, and trade. For industrialization to be a means to end war, 'an equality of evolution must exist between all peoples who have reached the industrial phase of civilisation'. However, he saw this as a 'greater utopia than eternal peace through general altruism'.²⁵ His article was a response to a speech made by the industrialist and pacifist Jan Bloch at a at the first Hague Peace Conference and his attempt to prove that war would be been impossible among great powers because of the financial and commercial losses to all combatants. According to Nordau, emotions would still prevail.²⁶ A few years later, in his famous *The Great Illusion* (1910), Norman Angell presented arguments reminiscent of Bloch's. For his part, the Italian scholar Giovanni Amendola, reviewing Angell's book, insisted like Nordau that countries only rarely took into account economic interests, still preferring the 'philosophy' of risk and struggle.²⁷ However, while Amendola seemed delighted by such a prospect, Nordau only despondently admitted to this reality: '[E]motion which sustains the warlike tendencies of cultured men is stronger than religion, which preaches love to one's neighbour; stronger than philosophy, which teaches the irrationality of brute force; stronger than morals and right, which the civilised man pretends to recognize as the leading powers of his life.' Such a condition would persist as long as cooperation did not replace competition as the spring of progress.²⁸ Importantly, it was an

indictment of a cardinal principle of social Darwinism, one at odds with the ideas Nordau had expressed in his *Entartung*.²⁹

Decadence and redemption: Nietzsche, war and the idea of Europe

Other authors, writing between the 1870s and the 1890s, had different views about the place of war and the meaning of violence in European history. For some, war was itself the engine of progress and it therefore defined the very essence of the European man. They assumed that war allowed him to fully express his noble nature, while peace and material wealth made him selfish and inconsiderate. They also assumed that war bore an extraordinary integrating force and was essential for shaping a multitude of individuals into a single national community. Perhaps surprisingly, among those who subscribed to such views was the great novelist Émile Zola. In an article published in 1892, he claimed: ‘War is a sombre necessity, just like death. It is necessary that there be some manure for civilisation to flourish.’³⁰ Elsewhere he went even further: ‘War is life itself! Nothing exists in nature, nor is anything born or grows other than by struggle. One must feed and be eaten for the world to live.’³¹ By 1899 he disavowed such ideas, denied that war could have any progressive role, and had turned into a convinced advocate of disarmament and European unification.³² Even Fyodor Dostoyevsky believed that the sacrifices demanded by war were beneficial to both the individual and his community. In his diary, he criticized the pacifists and their ‘bourgeois moralising!’. As he saw it, the ‘feat of sacrificing blood for all that we consider sacred is, of course, more moral than this entire bourgeois catechism’.³³ It was not war but peace that ‘bestializes and hardens people’, paving the way ‘to cruelty, cowardice, and coarse, bloated egoism and, above all, to

intellectual stagnation'.³⁴ In 1877, Dostoyevsky claimed that Europe was in a state of decadence and that all values had been lost to the shallowness of bourgeois materialism.³⁵ He foresaw an impending war that would decide the fate of France and Germany, solve the Eastern Question, and even settle the relationship between Europe and Islam. It would be a tremendous conflict, of unprecedented violence, in which 'so much precious blood would be shed'. However, that blood would 'certainly spare Europe from ten times more bloodshed should the matter be postponed'. The face of the continent would change forever, and this last 'convolution of the old Europe' would announce its 'great and certain renewal'.³⁶ Even the historian Jacob Burckhardt believed that war was the engine of progress, a 'necessary factor for a higher development'.³⁷ As a critic of modern massification and individualization, he contended that protracted peace weakened the body politic and could lead to its collapse.³⁸ War, which required the 'subjection of all life and property to one momentary aim', he saw as vastly superior to peace since it tamed egoism and strengthened the social fabric by subjecting all men to a 'supreme general idea'. It was this, in turn, that made it possible for 'the heroic virtue to unfold'.³⁹ Although he was not a militarist, Burckhardt believed that war was necessary to progress and stressed how the greatest eras of cultural achievement had not always been times of peace. Wars and political strife had often been times of great 'vitality', and intellectual and artistic accomplishments.⁴⁰ Division and struggle were inextricably tied to cultural achievements. And here, according to Burckhardt, lay the source of Europe's greatness. He saw it as the 'home of all contrasts which dissolve into the one unity', a space with uncertain boundaries where struggle never ended; the place of a 'discordia concors' that in the past had led to those great accomplishments – and those appalling wars – that formed European history.⁴¹

The works of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche have influenced notions of European decadence and ideas of regeneration through war more than those of any other thinker.⁴²

Because of the fragmentary nature of his writings and considering that between the publication of the *Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) and the writing of *Ecce homo* (1888; published posthumously) some of his views changed at a remarkable pace, his texts have often been misinterpreted and misread. In part, this explains the success of various forms of Nietzscheanism in Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy. It also explains why political and intellectual movements so different in nature and aims – including anarchism, socialism, Futurism, Marxism, and, most infamously, National socialism – referred to his works and, more or less explicitly, to his idea that European society would head to its demise if left to itself.⁴³ Indeed, Nietzsche was adamant that Europe was in a disconcerting state of decadence: ‘For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.’⁴⁴ However, unlike other prophets of decadence, Nietzsche argued that the one unfolding before his eyes was simply a phase of a process that had started long ago, with the end of the ‘tragic’ element in Greek thought destroyed by Socrates’s faith in the omnipotence of reason.⁴⁵ Within Nietzsche’s scheme, Christianity was a new phase of decline that dovetailed with the optimism of post-Socratic thought. It was a religion of the weak, preaching peace at all costs and teaching to despise pleasure, pride, and beauty. Moreover, Judaeo-Christian morality, originating in the East and essentially alien to the European classical mind, had produced a movement that from the outset had been ‘a general uprising of all sorts of outcast and refuse elements’ – a sort of first rebellion of the masses.⁴⁶ Modern Europe was now facing a new danger. The ‘death of God’, proclaimed by the madman in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in the face of general indifference, meant that nothing any more had value or meaning.⁴⁷ According to Nietzsche, here was the beginning of European nihilism, of a devaluation of all the highest values that had been the basis of European society and that

essentially stemmed from the Christian understanding of God.⁴⁸ Human reason and the sciences alone were unable to found a new set of values detached from all metaphysical belief.⁴⁹ As a consequence, a feeling of meaninglessness was taking hold of the European mind, so that the most universal sign of modernity was that ‘man has lost *dignity* in his own eyes to an incredible extent’.⁵⁰ Modernity, which Nietzsche equated with European civilization itself, was a ‘time of extensive inner decay and disintegration, a time that with all its weaknesses, and also with its best strength, opposes the spirit of youth. Disintegration characterises this time, and hence uncertainty.’⁵¹

As is often the case with Nietzschean notions, there was another side to nihilism.⁵² The great German philosopher made clear in 1887, in a fragment later included in the *Wille zur Macht* (1901; posthumous), that ‘the symptoms of decline belong in the times of tremendous advances; every fruitful and powerful movement of humanity has also created at the same time a nihilistic movement. It could be the sign of a crucial and most essential growth, of the transition to new conditions of existence, that the most extreme form of pessimism, genuine *nihilism*, would come into the world.’⁵³ The ‘death of God’ produced by the will to truth meant that, freed from the lies of metaphysics and of Judeo-Christian morality, man could now create his own values. So, ‘at hearing the news that “the old god is dead”, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel illuminated by a new dawn; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation’.⁵⁴ It was the devaluation of all principles that allowed the creation of notions such as the *Übermensch* and the shaping of new values that went beyond good and evil. But the process would be slow and painful. According to Nietzsche, not all men would complete the journey, and those who did not would remain part of the herd. Fear in the face of the new challenge could be arresting. The false need for a transcendental grounding of morals, the outcome of two millennia of Christianity, would survive as an impediment on the path to freedom. The dead God would continue to be

venerated by many, and still ‘we would have to defeat his shadow’, Nietzsche wrote.⁵⁵ European nihilism was a condition for transcending Christian morality, and on the ‘free spirits’ he bestowed the responsibility for creating the values to overcome nihilism itself.⁵⁶ Their capacity to overcome resistance would make their lives worth living.⁵⁷ Crucially, the strife would not be only of a philosophical or intellectual nature. When truth ‘enters into battle with the lies of millennia, we shall have convulsions, a spasm of earthquakes, a displacing of mountain and valley the like of which has never been dreamed. The concept of politics will then be completely taken up with spiritual warfare, all the power structures of the old society will be blown sky high – they all rest on lies: there will be wars like never before on earth.’⁵⁸

The reference to war as the means of overcoming nihilism and shaping the new European man is crucial. In general, Nietzsche was among those who believed that, in specific circumstances, war had a cathartic power.⁵⁹ In a fragment of his *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, tellingly entitled ‘War essential’, he stated that if mankind should ever learn ‘not to wage war, then one could no longer expect much from it’. Indeed, he argued that the ancient Romans and modern-day Englishmen, tired of waging war, had sought other means to regenerate their fading strength, seeking them in the fights of the gladiators and dangerous and daring explorations respectively. However, he went on, soon the futility of searching for surrogates for war would prove ever more clearly that such a highly cultivated civilization ‘as that of present-day Europe, needs not only wars but the greatest and most terrible wars (that is, occasional relapses into barbarism)’.⁶⁰ In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, he went even further: ‘What is good? To be brave is good. It is the good war that halloweth every cause.’⁶¹ Because of such remarks and for the importance he gave to struggle in general – on and outside of the battlefield – some commentators considered Nietzsche to be a pitiless jingoist. Among them was Nordau, who saw him prophesizing, ‘exultingly, that for Europe

there will soon begin an era of brass, an era of war, soldiers, arms, violence'.⁶² In truth, if Nietzsche seemed elated by the prospect of future wars, it was only because he saw in them a chance for overcoming European nihilism. War could be a remedy for those peoples that had become weak and senile. The shock of struggle would lead them to a fuller and more vigorous existence.⁶³ From war, Nietzsche believed, man could emerge 'with greater strength, for good and evil'.⁶⁴

War could redeem Europe by replacing the principle of happiness, dominating modern democratic societies, with the capacity to establish a hierarchy between needs, desires, and values now lost in the age of nihilism. According to Nietzsche, although war was not always positive in and of itself, it certainly was in the case of late nineteenth-century Europe, when the false idol of nationalism had led to an unprecedented militarization: 'I am glad about the military development of Europe as well as of the internal state of anarchy. The time of repose and Chinese ossification, which Galiani predicted for this century, is over. [...] The barbarian in each of us is affirmed and so is the wild beast. Precisely for such reason, philosophers have a future.'⁶⁵ That future wars would be a spiritual as much as a real struggle, fought on the battlefield, was confirmed by a fragment written in 1884: 'The consequences of my teaching must rage furiously: but on its account countless many shall die.'⁶⁶ The outcome of the long and uncertain journey would be the *Übermensch*. In fact, separating the *Übermensch* from 'the last man' – that is, the last human sort before the beast entirely dominated by desire – were the three human types described in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–1891): the 'camel', the 'lion', and the 'child spirit', which embodied, respectively, the believer bearing the burden, the destroyer, and the innocent who has no memory nor rage. Each new stage would require a new hierarchy of passions and, therefore, a fight and struggle. The metamorphosis from the 'camel' into the 'lion spirit' would be an age of devastation, when the remnants of Christianity as well as the new false idols created to replace it would be destroyed. It would

be a struggle for freedom. As Nietzsche explained in the *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889), ‘The man who has become free – and how much more the spirit which has become free – treads underfoot the contemptible species of well-being dreamt of by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats. The free man is a warrior.’⁶⁷ Out of the aristocracy of free warrior-philosophers would arise the ‘child spirit’ and then the *Übermensch*.⁶⁸ Only after tremendous wars, ‘like never before on earth’, might true peace arise:

Perhaps a memorable day will come when a people renowned in wars and victories, distinguished by the highest development of military order and intelligence, and accustomed to make the heaviest sacrifice to these objects, will voluntarily exclaim, ‘We will break our swords’, and will destroy its whole military system, lock, stock, and barrel. Making ourselves defenceless (after having been the most strongly defended) from a loftiness of sentiment – that is the means towards genuine peace, which must always rest upon a pacific disposition. [...] Better to perish than to hate and fear, and twice as far better to perish than to make oneself hated and feared.⁶⁹

Because nihilism was a distinctly European phenomenon, the outcome of a unique history so different from that of any other civilization, the wars to come would lead to a regeneration of Europe as a whole, beyond national distinctions.⁷⁰ Consistently, Nietzsche dismissed nationalism as one of the new idols replacing Christianity, as a falsification of Europe’s past, and an absurd fetter to making of Europe what it really willed to be:

Thanks to the pathological manner in which nationalist nonsense has alienated and continues to alienate the peoples of Europe from each other, thanks as well to the short-sighted and swift-handed politicians who have risen to the top with the help of this

nonsense [...] the most unambiguous signs declaring that Europe wants to be one are either overlooked or wilfully and mendaciously reinterpreted.⁷¹

Emerging from Nietzsche's vision of the relationship between Europe and its nations was the need to overcome the latter and firmly assert the former. In effect, signs of a cultural unity among its elites were already emerging, and the 'good Europeans', who like Nietzsche himself were immune to the follies of nationalism, were growing in number.⁷² Crucially, Nietzsche's Europe would not be the product of a federation or some sort of political agreement – though he did refer to such a possibility.⁷³ Nor would it be united merely through violence. Only a destructive/constructive violence, a struggle led by a new aristocracy of the spirit and the body, could regenerate the European mind and restore to the peoples of Europe their strength. It would do so, in a typically Nietzschean twist, through one of the great idols destined to perish in the fight. As he made clear in a fragment of his *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, entitled 'Our faith in a remasculinisation of Europe', '[t]he classic age of war, of sophisticated yet popular war on the largest scale' had begun thanks to Napoleon. He should have been credited for 'having enabled man, in Europe, to become the master over the businessman and the philistine'. Having brought war back to Europe and having restored its ancient sacredness, and since he 'wanted one Europe and wanted it as mistress of the earth', Nietzsche counted Napoleon among the good Europeans.⁷⁴ The only possible Europe, according to the German philosopher, would be the one shaped by the aristocracy of the warrior-philosophers, through their struggle and thanks to their will.

Progress and the death of the hero: Europe in the early writings of Paul Valéry

In the history of images, discourses, and ideas of Europe, Paul Valéry is often remembered for his ‘La crise de l’esprit’ – and rightly so. Formed of two letters, first published in England in the spring of 1919, it is one of the greatest works of that literature of crisis flourishing in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁵ In the opening lines of the first letter, the great French poet noted that the war had made it clear that, just like any other civilization, Europe was mortal, its existence as frail as human life. Its greatness and uniqueness were historical facts destined to end very soon: ‘the abyss of history is big enough for the entire world’.⁷⁶ But the war, rather than being the cause of Europe’s decadence, was the inevitable outcome of its inner ambiguities, of the contradictory ‘coexistence in the cultivated minds of the most different ideas, of the most contrasting principles of life and knowledge’.⁷⁷ However, this chaotic mix of ideas and values was at the very heart of modernity – or so believed Valéry. It was a point he pursued by making of Shakespeare’s Hamlet the personification of the ‘modern European’, the hero who, under the weight of knowledge, meditates over ‘the life and death of truths’.⁷⁸ It was the underlying contradiction that led Valéry to wonder whether ‘the Europe of 1914 might have reached the end of this modernism’.⁷⁹ It was a civilization now lost to itself and in need of a future but, most of all, in need of a past. As he claimed a few years later, Europe had to find once again its roots; it needed to recover its Greco-Roman and Christian-Judaic heritage.⁸⁰ But, according to Valéry, in 1919 the question was whether Europe would maintain its prominence or, borrowing an expression from Nietzsche, ‘become what it really is, a small cape of Asia’.⁸¹ The discrepancy between its limited resources and its role in world history had finally emerged.

That the war, rather than being the cause of Europe’s decadence, was the inevitable outcome of its inner contradictions was a view to which Valéry held long afterwards: ‘The Great War was what it had to be: it emphasised and hastened European decadence.’⁸² A

symptom more than a cause of Europe's twilight, the war had finally unveiled the deep-seated contradictions at the heart of its civilization. Interestingly, such views had already emerged long before 1914. Retrospectively, Valéry came to see the ideas in the 'Crise de l'esprit' as the germination of impressions already present in his 'Le Yalou' (1895), a short story in which he fiercely criticized European society and gloomily foresaw its end.⁸³ There were many faults for which he reproached Europe, but a crucial one was the misguided rejection of tradition. In the age of modernity, the European man had incessantly gone against his own past, thus severing the ties with his origins and finally producing a civilization divided against itself. Asking how long he could continue rejecting his past was not a rhetorical question.⁸⁴ Such a condition was tied to the fact that Europe was endowed with a universal mission that made it special, absorbing the knowledge of other civilizations, transforming that knowledge, and disseminating new ideas and principles. Here lay the roots of its scientific, technological, economic, and political greatness. These were the roots of a (European) modernity spreading throughout the globe. And yet, here was also the cause of Europe's downfall. The Sino-Japanese war, which had prompted the writing of 'Le Yalou', had seen the triumph of a non-European country armed and organized following the teachings of European nations. According to Valéry, it signalled the poisonous dissemination of European sciences and technology. The world was experiencing a massification and levelling of knowledge that would ultimately cancel Europe's advantage over other civilizations, inevitably bringing about its end. It was a concern Valéry expressed two years later, in 1897, to the future Nobel Peace Prize laureate d'Estournelles de Constant.⁸⁵ Thanks only to its genius, Europe had been able to counterpoise its lack in strength and numbers. The inequality between different civilizations and nations in the sciences and instruments of war, an inequality on which Europe had built its predominance, would inevitably disappear. In the future, the place of each civilization in the world would be determined by '*the gross material*

size, the statistical elements, numbers'.⁸⁶ Once more, there was a remarkable continuity in Valéry's thought, from 'Le Yalou' to 'La crise de l'esprit', emerging still in his *Cahiers* in 1945: 'Germany dies, and with it, Europe [...]. My "theorem" in the "Crise de l'esprit" – Europe's power laid in its technical monopole. Having given up such a treasure, the masses became preponderant and powers were classified according to the quantitative order.'⁸⁷

Valéry's 'Theory of levelling' made the case for a form of globalization that, starting on the Old Continent, opposed the plurality and complexity defining the European mind and created the conditions for its own demise. The notion was restated in a short essay entitled 'Une conquête méthodique', published in 1897 in the *New Review* and later republished with a different title during the Great War to support the Allies' war effort.⁸⁸ The kernel of Valéry's argument was that the military victories of Germany could be understood only if they were seen as 'part of the same system' that ensured its economic successes.⁸⁹ Its greatness was the consequence of the acceptance of a 'method', of a soulless and dispassionate reflection; the result of a 'disciplined intelligence' that did not rely on ingenuity and rejected unexpected illuminations.⁹⁰ It was the outcome of the modern industrial logic acting through a whole nation rather than through individuals. The Germans were united in their efforts to win on the battlefield or to gain new markets – between the two, Valéry saw little difference. Commercial interests were pursued in the same way as military objectives: 'just as troops must arrive as numerous as possible [on the battlefield], products must arrive at the lowest possible cost' on the market. Such a brute and disciplined force, turning certainty and calculation into its most important weapon and overlooking no detail to attain its goals, seemed 'in peace more fearful than in war'.⁹¹ According to Valéry, General Helmuth von Moltke was the personification of such a system. Making use in the fullest of all modern technologies, he subjected the energies of the whole nation to a single aim, that of winning the war. Daring and luck, which had been valued by generals and commandants for

centuries, now became the greatest enemy of warfare. Considered from such a viewpoint, what the method required was ‘a real mediocrity of the individual’. The only qualities worthy of praise were in fact patience, precision, and attention – clearly, not the qualities of great heroes. Individual abilities had to be mediocre to ensure the success of the nation as a whole: ‘There, heroic times are passed; they have been deliberately closed.’⁹² Following such logic, war itself could only be declared when victory was a mathematic certainty. It was no longer an unpredictable duel between nations. But Valéry made the case that such arguments were valid for all spheres of life of the German nation.⁹³ Everything had to be certain, already determined; and just as there was no hero, there could be no genius. This levelling of the individual was a corollary of Valéry’s broader theory of the levelling of civilizations, and, although such a condition was more apparent in Germany, in some respects his essay might be considered an indictment of the whole of European society.

The notion that there was little or no space for heroes or geniuses in modernity must have been profoundly discomfiting for Valéry. In 1891, in a letter to his friend André Gide, he offered a rather disturbing praise of war and violence, clearly at odds with the pacifism of his later works:

I desire an almost monstrous war where to escape to amidst the clash of a mad and red Europe, where to lose the memories and the respect for all writing and of all dreams in real visions, gloomy stampings of tapping hoofs and tearing of gunfire, and to never return! I do not know what blood speaks in me, nor which wolf of ancient times yawns in my ennui, but I feel it here! The hideous mechanical literature sickens me, and all life is not worth it. Does this barbarian surprise you?⁹⁴

Gide himself might have thought of Valéry’s wishes as little more than artistic musing.⁹⁵ In effect, there are few explicit references to the regenerative power of war in his works. Yet his

idea of an ‘oddly constructive nihilism’ surfacing time and again in the history of the west evokes, as has been noted, the ‘apocalyptic principle of death and rebirth, of deconstruction for the infinite reconstruction’.⁹⁶ Valéry became a pacifist only much later. In two letters to d’Estournelles de Constant of 1899 and 1900, although he used less enthusiastic tones and set forth more realistic considerations, he still stressed the inevitability of a European war. He saw it as the consequence of progress and the outcome of that levelling of qualities that modernity carried within it; a process that, having laid the basis of Europe’s greatness, was now turning into the cause of its downfall.⁹⁷

Conclusion

When looking at the early works of Valéry and comparing them with his later writings on Europe, the contrast is striking; even more so since his unconditional pessimism of the 1890s seemed to give way to (some) hope after the First World War. Of course, his fears over Europe’s decline remained constant throughout his life, as did his distrust towards the values of modern, materialistic, bourgeois society. However, he did not only come to recognize that politics could be a valid means of avoiding war. More importantly, he started to believe that a certain idea of Europe, one built on those values lost to modernity, might gradually take hold. This, he contended, would be the outcome of the action of an intellectual and cultural elite. The new Europe would be built – in what may seem a paradox – not on the rejection but on the recognition of its past. It was a markedly elitist view, based on faith in the capacity of a few enlightened men to achieve a colossal aim. It sharply contrasted with his gloomy image of modern Europe as a whole. Comparing the ideas in Valéry’s early writing with those in

Nordau's, there emerges, in the latter, the idea of a superiority of European civilization that the French philosopher would have dismissed with scorn. In fact, according to Nordau, Europe's global political and military hegemony was dictated by nature; for the French philosopher, it was a historical matter destined to end. It was Nordau's understanding of a European racial unity and superiority that enabled him to envisage a bright (distant) future for Europe. Dismissing the liberal vulgate and its visions of perpetual peace and economic integration as utopian, he was convinced that technological progress and the threat of mutual destruction would one day unite the Old Continent. Progress and fear would cement Europe into a single polity. Unlike Valéry, Nordau refrained from assigning to any elite, whether political or intellectual, a salvific role. Again in contrast to Valéry, he praised the values of the bourgeoisie, claiming that the future global hegemony of the European man would be the work of the middle and lower classes, the strong and vigorous backbone of European society. As for Nietzsche, although he firmly rejected the liberal discourse on European unification, he did so on a very different basis than Nordau. Rather than progress and the threat of mutual destruction, war fought on the battlefields throughout the small 'cape of Asia' would bring about European unity. Crucially, the struggle would not be fought along national divides. Standing opposed to the warrior-philosophers, bearers of the new values that went beyond good and evil, would be the masses and the forces of conservation. The rejection of nationalism and the assumption that modernity and decadence were indissolubly tied to – or even coincided with – the history of European civilization make of Nietzsche's an eminently Europeanist perspective. Of course, more than any other author, he argued for the cathartic power of war, and his works helped spread such a notion in the first half of the twentieth century. But the important aspect, here, is that his redemptive war could only take place in Europe. In turn, though this depended on the nature and the outcome of the struggle, only Europe could be the place where a new kind of history would unravel – a history without

false idols, violence, or rage. In this sense, Nietzsche's views, though less optimistic than Nordau's, were more positive than Valéry's. Nordau, Nietzsche, and the young Valéry, set forth three different views of Europe, each one built on a different reading of progress and connected in a different way to war. They were united by their rejection of the liberal vulgate. All three denied that interest could unite the peoples of Europe and sought in an alleged racial unity (Nordau) or the overcoming of European history (Nietzsche) or its rethinking (Valéry) the basis of unification. In doing so, they contributed to the debates about Europe on the eve of the First World War and in its aftermath. Their ideas, and those of the many others who rejected exceedingly optimistic discourses on European unification, depict a dark and gloomy notion that might shed new light on twentieth-century intellectual history.

¹ Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, vol. 3, t. 3, 207–208.

² Jung, *The Red Book*, 231. Also see, *ibid.*, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, 68–69. On Meidner's paintings: Schmid: 'Die sogenannten "Apokalyptischen Landschaften" (1912–1916).'

³ On this, see the classics by Stromberg, *Redemption by War*, Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, and Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*.

⁴ Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde*, 111–186. In part, such a view has been recently restated by Geyer, 'The Subject(s) of Europe', 267.

⁵ Sorel, 'Sur l'Europe d'avant 1914', 16.

⁶ Frevert, 'Europeanizing German History', 12–15.

⁷ Machiavelli, 'L'arte della guerra' (1521), *L'arte della guerra; scritti politici minori*, 119–120.

⁸ On Europe as the locus of modernity, see Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*.

⁹ The literature on the ideas of decadence, decline, and degeneration is endless. On the theoretical issues relating to decadence, see Freund, *La décadence*, and Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*, 1–21. For a good historical overview of the idea of decline, see: Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, and Berheimer, *Decadent Subjects*. On the notion of degeneration, see Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 1–27. While there are important and rather obvious differences between the three notions, what they share is, here, more relevant.

¹⁰ Knight, *The Critical Period in American Literature*, 70. Some scholars have written of a 'Nordau effect': Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880–1940*, 120–133, and, with reference to Italy, Acocella, *Effetto Nordau*. On the diffusion and the reception of Nordau's book in England and the USA, see Foster, 'The Reception of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* in England and America.'

¹¹ Shaw, 'The Sanity of Art' (1895), *Major Critical Essays*, 313. The reference is to the preface that Shaw wrote in 1907.

¹² James, review of Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895), *Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, 508.

¹³ On Nordau's ideas, see: Baldwin, 'Liberalism, Nationalism, and Degeneration'; Söder, 'Disease and Health as Contexts of Modernity'; Mosse, 'Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew'; Schulte,

Psychopathologie des Fin de siècle; Murphy, *Max Nordau's fin-de-siècle Romance of Race*; Pross, *Dekadenz*, 105–170.

¹⁴ Nordau, *Entartung* (edition of 1892–1893), vol. 2, 471.

¹⁵ [Serviss], ‘Nordau’s High Estimate of Bret Harte’, 621.

¹⁶ Nordau, *Die konventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 353.

¹⁸ Nordau, *Entartung* (edition of 1896), 5, n. 1. This passage was added to the second edition; here, I am quoting from the third.

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought*, 219–220.

²⁰ Nordau, *Entartung* (edition of 1892–1893), vol. 2, 491–506. In some respects, Nordau’s views were indeed those of an ‘improbable bourgeois’: Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 19–35.

²¹ Nordau, *Paradoxe*, 400–401.

²² *Ibid.*, *Paradoxe*, 410.

²³ See, for example, Muir, *The Expansion of Europe*.

²⁴ Nordau, ‘Philosophy and Morals of War’, 795. In truth, in the last chapter of the third volume of his *Principles of Sociology*, published in 1896, Spencer had been less optimistic: Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. 3, 609–611.

²⁵ Nordau, ‘Philosophy and Morals of War’, 795.

²⁶ On Bloch, see: Bauer, ‘Jan Gottlieb Bloch: Polish Cosmopolitanism versus Jewish Universalism’.

²⁷ Amendola, ‘La grande illusione’, 230.

²⁸ Nordau, ‘Philosophy and Morals of War’, 797.

²⁹ For an overview of social Darwinism and war: La Vergata, *Guerra e darwinismo sociale*. On social Darwinism and peace theories: Crook, *Darwinism, War and History*.

³⁰ Zola, ‘Les trois guerres’ (1892), *Œuvres*, vol. 9, 1013.

³¹ Zola, ‘Sedan’ (1891), *Les Rougon-Macquart* (Paris, Gallimard, 1960–1967), v. 1415.

³² Zola, ‘Sur la guerre’ (1899), *Œuvres complètes*, xiv. 844–854. On Zola’s cosmopolitanism, see Carmen Mayer-Robin, ‘“Justice”, Zola’s Global Utopian Gospel’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol. 36 (2007–2008), 135–149.

³³ Dostoyevsky, *A Writer’s Diary: Volume II*, 935.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 938.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 939–940. Cfr. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 301. On Dostoyevsky’s idea of Europe: Dianina, ‘Passage to Europe.’ Also see: Morand, *L’Europe russe annoncée par Dostoïevsky*, and Zen’kovskii, *Russian Thinkers and Europe*, 154–187.

³⁶ Dostoyevsky, *A Writer’s Diary: Volume II* (September 1877), 1124–1125.

³⁷ Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 203. The *Betrachtungen* are based on a collection of lectures held between 1868 and 1885 and published posthumously in 1905.

³⁸ On Burckhardt’s views about modernity: Tonsor, ‘Jacob Burckhardt.’

³⁹ Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 205.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 233–234.

⁴¹ Burckhardt, *Historische Fragmente*, 192–193. The fragment is dated 4 May 1869. On Burckhardt’s idea of Europe: Gollwitzer, *Europabild und Europagedanke*, 399–408, and Nurdin, *L’idée d’Europe dans la pensée allemande à l’époque bismarckienne*, 445–525.

⁴² On the idea of Europe in the works of Nietzsche, see: Nurdin, *L’idée d’Europe dans la pensée allemande à l’époque bismarckienne*, 479–525; Elbe, *Europe: A Nietzschean Perspective*; Rudolph, ‘Nietzsches Europa’; Emden, ‘The Uneasy European.’

⁴³ On the diffusion of Nietzscheanism(s) throughout Europe: Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*; Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England*; Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris*; Fazio, *Il caso Nietzsche*.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 3.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 90.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, ‘Der Antichrist’ (1895 but written in 1888), *Der Fall Wagner*, 229. In a fragment written in 1880, Nietzsche defined the Judeo-Christian morality an ‘Asiatic invention’: Nietzsche, ‘Nachgelassene Fragmente’, *Morgenröthe*, 356.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, ‘Die fröhliche Wissenschaft’ (1882), *Idyllen aus Messina*, 8.

- ⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 9. On the notion of nihilism in Nietzsche's writings: Kuhn, *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus*; Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, 174–254; Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, especially 21–53.
- ⁴⁹ Nietzsche, 'Zur Genealogie der Moral', *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 420–423.
- ⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 16. Italics in the text.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 40. On the equation of modernity and European civilization: Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 288.
- ⁵² See Vattimo, *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, 134–141.
- ⁵³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 69. Italics in the text.
- ⁵⁴ Nietzsche, 'Die fröhliche Wissenschaft', 256.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.
- ⁵⁶ See, on this, Burch, 'On Nietzsche's Concept of "European Nihilism".'
- ⁵⁷ See Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 266–268.
- ⁵⁸ Nietzsche, 'Ecce homo', *Der Fall Wagner*, 364. On this, see Kuhn, *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus*, 213–214.
- ⁵⁹ See Gentile, *L'apocalisse della modernità*, 135–160. On Nietzsche's views about war: Pangle, 'The "Warrior Spirit" as an Inlet to the Political Philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra', and Gillespie, 'Toward a New Aristocracy'.
- ⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 321–322.
- ⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 303.
- ⁶² Nordau, *Entartung* (edition of 1892–1893), vol. 2, 355. On Nordau's criticism of Nietzsche, see Schulte, 'Nietzsche Entartung 1892.' For a comparison and contrast of the two authors and their ideas of decadence and degeneration: Aschheim, 'Max Nordau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Degeneration.'
- ⁶³ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Zweiter Band*, 272.
- ⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Erster Band*, 299.
- ⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 261.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ⁶⁷ Nietzsche, 'Götzen-Dämmerung', *Der Fall Wagner*, 133–4.
- ⁶⁸ See Gillespie, 'Toward a New Aristocracy', 29–31.
- ⁶⁹ Nietzsche, 'Der Wanderer und sein Schatten' (1880), *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Zweiter Band*, 316–317.
- ⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 543.
- ⁷¹ Nietzsche, 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse', *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 209. On this, Emden, 'The Uneasy European'.
- ⁷² Nietzsche, 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse', 188–190.
- ⁷³ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Zweiter Band*, 322.
- ⁷⁴ Nietzsche, 'Die fröhliche Wissenschaft', 291–292. Also Nietzsche, 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse', 210.
- ⁷⁵ Ifversen, 'The Crisis of European Civilization After 1918', 15–17. On Valéry's idea of Europe, see: Bonneville, *Prophètes et témoins de l'Europe*, 54–63; Derrida, 'L'autre cap', *L'autre cap, suivi de La démocratie ajournée*, 11–80; Celeyrette-Pietri, 'La genèse de l'idée européenne chez Paul Valéry', and Blüher, 'Paul Valéry's Idee des "homo europaeus".'
- ⁷⁶ Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', *Œuvres*, vol. 1, 988. Cfr. Paul Valéry to Jean Valéry, 11 November 1917, fragment of an unpublished letter, *Œuvres*, vol. 1, 40.
- ⁷⁷ Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', 991–993. On Valéry's idea of decadence, Pelmont, 'Paul Valéry, critique de notre civilisation.'
- ⁷⁸ Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', 993.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 992.
- ⁸⁰ Valéry, 'Note (ou *L'Européen*)' (1924), *Œuvres*, vol. 1, 1000–1014.
- ⁸¹ Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', 995. Cfr. Nietzsche, 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse', 70. For a comparison and contrast of Valéry and Nietzsche's ideas of European civilization: Gaède, *Nietzsche et Valéry*.
- ⁸² Valéry, 'Regards sur le monde actuel et autres essais', *Œuvres*, vol. 2, 927.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 927.

- ⁸⁴ Valéry, 'Le Yalou', *Œuvres*, vol. 2, 1018.
- ⁸⁵ Valéry, *Cahiers* (29 July 1897), vol. 1, 298. On the risks of globalization for Europe in the writings of Valéry, see Schmidt-Radefeldt, 'Nation – État – Peuple', 189–191. On d'Estournelles de Constant and his views of a united Europe, see: Wild, *Baron d'Estournelles de Constant (1852–1924)*.
- ⁸⁶ Valéry, 'La crise de l'esprit', 998. Italics in the text.
- ⁸⁷ Valéry, *Cahiers* (April–May 1945), vol. 29, 798.
- ⁸⁸ Valéry, 'Une conquête méthodique', *Œuvres*, vol. 1, 971–987. On the publishing history of the essay and its different names, see *ibid.*, 1765–1766. On Valéry's essay: Kimura, *Le mythe du savoir*, 71–90, and Pick, *War Machine*, 101–102, and Guellec, 'Du caractère national aux méthodes du capitalisme.'
- ⁸⁹ Valéry, 'Une conquête méthodique', 972.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 976.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 979–980.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 982.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 984.
- ⁹⁴ Valéry to Gide, 6 May 1891, *Correspondance*, 101–102. On the letter, see Bertholet, *Paul Valéry*, 76–77.
- ⁹⁵ Gide to Valéry, 12 May 1891, *Correspondance*, 102–105.
- ⁹⁶ Chopin, 'Apocalypse Valéryenne', 139. Valéry's words are taken from his *Cahiers*, vol. 17, 352. The note is from 1934.
- ⁹⁷ Both letters are in Thuillier, 'Paul Valéry et la politique', 369.

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