

Edam, Nineveh, Babylon were vague and splendid names; the total ruin of these worlds, for us, meant as little as did their existence. But France, England, Russia, these names, too, are splendid. And now we see that the abyss of history is deep enough to bury all the world. We feel that a civilization is fragile as a life.

The storm has died away, and still we are restless, uneasy, as if the storm were about to break. Almost all the affairs of men remain in a terrible uncertainty. We think of what has disappeared, we are almost destroyed by what has been destroyed; we do not know what will be born, and we fear the future, not without reason. We hope vaguely, we dread precisely ... doubt and disorder are in us and with us. There is no thinking man, however shrewd or learned he may be, who can hope to dominate this anxiety, to escape from this impression of darkness ...

We are a very unfortunate generation, whose lot has been to see the moment of our passage through life coincide with the arrival of great and terrifying events ...

One can say that all the fundamentals of the world have been affected by the war ... You know how greatly the general economic situation has been disturbed, and the polity of states, and the very life of the individual; you are familiar with the universal discomfort, hesitation, apprehension. But among all these injured things is the Mind. The Mind has indeed been cruelly wounded; its complaint is heard in the hearts of intellectual man; it passes a mournful judgment on itself. It doubts itself profoundly."

- Paul Valéry, *On European Civilization and the European Mind*, 1922

The idealist of the early democracy regarded popular education as enlightenment pure and simple---but it is precisely this that smooths the path for the coming Caesars of the world. The [Nineteenth] century was the winter of the West, the victory of materialism and scepticism, of socialism, parliamentarianism, and money. But in this [Twentieth] century blood and instinct will regain their rights against the power of money and intellect. The era of individualism, liberalism and democracy, of humanitarianism and freedom, is nearing its end. The masses will accept with resignation the victory of the Caesars, the strong men, and will obey them. Life will descend to a level of general uniformity, a new kind of primitivism, and the world will be better for it....

- Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of The West*, 1922