GERMAN PHILOSOPHY AND
THE FIRST WORLD WAR

How did the First World War, the so-called Great War – widely seen on all sides as “the war to end all wars” – impact the development of German philosophy? Combining history and biography with astute philosophical and textual analysis, Nicolas de Warren addresses here the intellectual trajectories of ten significant wartime philosophers: Ernst Bloch, Martin Buber, Ernst Cassirer, Hermann Cohen, György Lukács, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Franz Rosenzweig, Max Scheler, and Georg Simmel. In exploring their individual works written during and after the war, the author reveals how philosophical concepts and new forms of thinking were forged in response to this unprecedented catastrophe. In reassessing standardized narratives of German thought, the book deepens and enhances our understanding of the intimate and complex relationship between philosophy and violence by demonstrating how the 1914–18 conflict was a crucible for ways of thinking that still define us today.

NICOLAS DE WARREN is Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of Husserl and the Promise of Time (Cambridge University Press, 2010), A Momentary Breathlessness in the Sadness of Time (2018), and Original Forgiveness (2020).
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NICOLAS DE WARREN
Pennsylvania State University
An meine Heidelberger Freunde
Rick, Paul, Charlie, Rupert, Jan-Ivar, Jörg, Christian, Albrecht, und Christina Marie
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Acknowledgments

During the writing of this book, I benefited from advice, discussion, and ideas from friends and colleagues: Gérard Bensussan, Roland Breeur, Joseph Cohen, Sophie De Schaepdrijver, Stein De Cuyper, James Dodd, Kenneth Haynes, Ulrich Melle, Susan Neiman, Panos Theodorou, Thomas Vongehr, and Sam Willems. Michael Gubser and William Remley kindly read earlier versions of the manuscript and offered valuable comments. Years ago, I was fortunate to have been warmly received by Michael Hampe, whose inspiration has since never abated. My thanks as well from those days to Dominic Kaegi and Hans-Peter Schütt. I am particularly grateful to Hilary Gaskin for her patience and encouragement with the long-overdue completion of this book. This project was launched through a European Research Council Consolidator Grant, obtained in 2015 during my stint as Research Professor of Philosophy at the Husserl Archives, Higher Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.