

Ernst Jünger and the the First World War: History and the Crisis of Theory and Language

Biographical Introduction

Ernst Jünger must count as both one of the most prolific and as one of the most controversial figures in 20th Century German literature. The polemics surrounding his 100th birthday last March, with his supporters as vociferous as his detractors, are typical of the reactions to his work since at least 1945. Before turning to Jünger's earliest work, the subject of this evening's paper, I shall briefly sketch out Jünger's life and career. He was born in 1895 into the family of a professional pharmacist in Heidelberg. As a child he was deeply dissatisfied with the institutionalised learning represented by the various *Gymnasien* he attended and sought relief not only in literature and day-dream, but also in the *Wandervogel* branch of the the youth movement, then, in 1913, the French Foreign Legion, from which he was hauled back by his father, and finally, in 1914, the outbreak of war provided a final radical break with bourgeois existence. Jünger enlisted as soon as possible and rapidly proved himself to be an outstanding young infantry officer, highly decorated by the end of the war, noted in particular for his involvement in the the *Stoßtruppen*, the commando troops whose tactical innovation was designed to break the deadlock of positional warfare. After the war, he remained in the *Reichswehr*, published his first few books before studying at Leipzig University and embarking on a period of political activism with extreme nationalist groups from 1923-27. From a brief period of enthusiasm for the Nazis in 1923, Jünger's attitude to Hitler and Goebbels rapidly shifted from one of ambivalence to outright hostility, and under the Third Reich his position has been described as one of *innere Emigration*. His much vaunted enthusiasm for the War and his espousal of national-revolutionary positions under the Weimar republic have been the main cause for the hostility of the left, whilst his refusal to reduce reality to a purely immanent socio-historical universe is at the root of his adoption by generations of right-wing cultural thinkers who see him as rooted in a tradition reaching from Plato to Heidegger and beyond.

Modernity of the First World War

In approaching Jünger's war books, it is crucial to bear in mind that the First World War was the first explicitly modern war, the result as John Terraine writes of 'a compound of the fruits of successive

revolutions of technology'¹. It was a prolonged war involving unparalleled expenditure of men and munitions on two huge European fronts as developments not only in industrial output, destructive potential and logistic capacity, but also in political organisation and propaganda led to the brink of total war. The wholesale application of the techniques of industrialisation to warfare led to what can only be described as a paradigm shift in destructivity, paralleled only by the emergence of the atomic bomb. The experience of this radically destructive modernity was something for which Europe was not prepared - the Franco-Prussian war was rapid, fluid and mobile and the Balkan wars involved powers as yet fundamentally unmodernised.

Cultural Crisis

Whilst the material destruction brought about by the First World War needs no further emphasis, the intellectual and moral destruction that accompanied it needs to be borne in mind as well. For students of modern literature, the cataloging of the utter intellectual disorientation unleashed by the experience of the War needs hardly to be repeated. The sheer incomprehensibility of the events that overwhelmed Europe and the scale of destruction represented a fundamental dislocation in which defining cultural norms - beliefs about progress, rationality, science, religion, fatherland and nation - were problematised to an unprecedented extent by their inability to account for what had happened. The situation was more strongly felt in Germany where defeat further emphasised the collapse of previous value systems and where political turmoil in the early years of the republic further compounded the sense of disorientation. The experience of the war represented such a radical break from the interpretative systems of the past, what I shall call meta-history, that it appeared to escape comprehension. I wish to argue that Jünger's writing must be read in the context of this crisis of meta-historical discourse, and that his texts must be read primarily as attempts to make sense of the War and to stabilise events into a more comprehensible whole.

Jünger's own encounter with cultural crisis

Jünger was as much caught up in this post-War sense of disorientation as anyone else. Although his position as an officer in the rump *Reichswehr* offered a degree of stability, inasmuch as it provided a structure and a daily routine, Jünger's subsequently published letters to his family bear witness to his own personal confusion: 'Ich bin nun 25 Jahre alt geworden und habe beschlossen, mich etwas resoluter

¹ Terraine, *White Heat*, p.37

in der Hand zu nehmen. Ich bin reichlich zersplittert [...]'², he writes in 1920. As late as 1923 Jünger was still plagued by a feeling of desperate instability, of living in world in which both experience and theory had so developed that all attempts at closure and of constructing a solid theoretical position were doomed to immediate self-dissolution:

Ich werde jetzt achtundzwanzig Jahre alt, bin also wieder eine Etappe näher gerückt der Vollendung des dritten Jahrzehnts, jenem Zeitpunkt, an dem die Unklarheit überwunden sein muß. Es gilt, den Willen auf wenige Formeln zusammenzuschmelzen, aus denen alles andere ableiten läßt. Das ist nicht einfach, da er wie ein Havelfluß breit alle Dinge umströmen möchte; man muß da einige Arme abdämmen. Und dann die Zeit. Jede Erkenntnis wird sogleich von einer entgegengesetzten gelähmt und relativiert. Das Hirn ist nachgerade ein Perpetuum mobile, das seine Kraft im Spiele mit Gewichten und Gegenstgewichten verbraucht. Die einfachsten Tatsachen schillern in soviel Lichtern, daß jede einheitliche Farbe verloren geht. Wir sind durch eine liberale Erziehung verpfuscht und müssen sehen, wie wir uns wieder heraushelfen.³

This is the context in which to read Jünger's writing

It is in the light of this paralysing feeling of prolonged crisis that I believe Jünger's early works should be read, a light which has mostly been neglected by critics to date. Even Hans-Harald Müller, whose work on Jünger is typical of the move away from ideological readings, tends to read the early work from a perspective that attributes too great a degree of solidity and centredness to these earliest texts. These works reflect in many ways the dislocations and disjunctures of the early years of the Weimar Republic as much as the difficulty of dealing with the War as such. They represent the first stages of what Hans-Peter Schwarz has termed a search for the 'Sinn der Epoche', a quest for a new meta-historical system.

Militär-Wochenblatt

Before we look at Jünger's literary texts, it is worth briefly examining the articles which he wrote as a professional officer in the *Militärwochenblatt*, the *Reichswehr* weekly journal, and which have so far been largely ignored. A number of salient features immediately draw attention to themselves: firstly, a constant emphasis on the importance of memory - the articles consistently assert the importance of past experience and the need to learn from it; secondly, a reiteration of the fundamental novelty of the Front experience; and thirdly, a recognition of the power of technology which broadens into an acceptance of the new role of the machine in warfare. In this light, the articles illuminate less Jünger's career as a professional officer than his evolution as a thinker, for they epitomise key areas of his early work - the crucial importance of the war experience and the need to fix memory in a meaningful way through

² Letter to his parents, No place given, 30.3.1920. Published in Heimo Schwilk (ed), *Ernst Jünger: Leben und Werk in Bildern und Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), p.87

³ Letter to Friedrich Georg Jünger. Published in Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger*, p.94

writing, the experience of the war as a break with the past, here represented obliquely by outdated military thinking and the central role played by technology in bringing about this catastrophic rupture.

Jünger's first article 'Skizze moderner Gefechtsführung' illuminates a number of interesting points. It describes a successful assault by a *Stoßtrupp* from the point of view of a narrator who is clearly informed as to the plan and progress of events, in stark contrast to the perspective of the narrator of *In Stahlgewittern*. It develops a highly impressionistic style that cultivates a taut rhythm and accelerates pace through a stripping down of full sentences to a bare sense-conveying minimum. This textual attempt to come to terms with the synchronicity of events in the modern experience of battle not only stands out from the otherwise staid text of the professional journal, but also highlights the problem of dealing with the linear, textual rendering and conceptual ordering of the intensity of simultaneous perception encountered in technological warfare. Here, Jünger is able to order events by reference to military theory. It is when faced with meta-historical problems that his accounts become more problematical.

Jünger's next article 'Die Technik in der Zukunftsschlacht' published a year later represents a clear move in his assessment of technology. Whilst in 'Skizze' he had acknowledged the tension of man and machine, but had asserted that ultimately force of human will represented 'die letzte Entscheidung', he now recognises the tragic lack of parity between the human body and the instruments of technological warfare. Even the best *Stoßtrupp* can be wiped out by a burst of a few seconds from a machine gun - the self-image as heroic fighter, precarious at the best of times, is both shattered in this new assessment, but at the same time recast in technological terms. For, emerging from the old values of discipline and heroism is the 'Zukunftskämpfer' whose strength lies in his mastery of machines and technological expertise. Behind this lies the realisation that the dominance of the battlefield by the machine implies a reordering of the world - one in which the human subject is no longer central.

Finally, Jünger's work on the new *Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Infanterie*, his last task before leaving the army in 1923, provoked another very interesting article in the *Militärwochenblatt*. This article essentially tries to define the gap between the writing of military theory and the writing of literature. Whilst he again emphasises that the new training manual has grown out of memory of the front, its writing represents a new synthesis. Its memory is not individual but collective, its interpretations not subjective but global in their claims to validity. Interestingly, Jünger bases this

global claim implicitly on the machine-like quality of the new warfare, where the different arms interact like the various parts of a machine, indeed are a machine that determines action:

Der Angriff, und zwar nicht nur der Angriff aus dem Stellungskriege heraus, ist ein Werk, das mit Hebeln, Wellen und Zahnrädern ineinandergreift [...] Technik ist das Zusammenwirken von Feuer und Bewegung, em Gang eines mit Explosion und Expansion arbeitenden Motors vergleichbar. Technik ist der Ansturm gegen ein feindl. Rgt. oder gegen ein M.G.-Nest, Technik selbst das Vorgehen eines Stoßtrupps [...] Unter dem Zeichen dieser techn. Entwicklung steht auch die neue Ausbildungsvorschrift [...] Eine solche Vorschrift muß alles enthalten, was für die augenblickliche Form notwendig ist, doch ihr Rahmen muß auch so weit gespannt sein, daß er jede Entwicklung ermöglicht. 4

However, at the same time as raising the claim to universal validity, Jünger is also radically limiting the text to the field of military training and tactical application. Whilst the text provides a tentative closure to the issues of tactical understanding - 'So ist die Vorschrift, als Ganzes betrachtet, ein umfangreiches, doch übersichtlich gegliedertes Werk, das jedem Angehörigen des Rgts. ermöglicht, alle Zweifel, die auf dem Exerzierplatz und im Gelände auftauchen können, in wenigen Augenblicken zu klären'⁵ - this closure is disrupted both by the acknowledgement that the manual will only provide guidelines for action, and the seemingly incongruous declaration that the most essential aspects of battle have been omitted:

Die seelische Triebkraft ist, abgesehen von den im ersten Hefte angeführten Leitsätzen, wenig hervorgehoben. Es ist aber überhaupt die Frage, wie weit in einer solchen Vorschrift, auch wenn sie sich bemüht, den Gang des Gefechtes in all Einzelheiten zu verfolgen, auf das innere Erlebnis des Mannes und auf die seelische Einwirkung durch die Führer eingegangen werden kann. Zum mindesten muß das sehr vorsichtig geschehen, denn diese Dinge lassen sich schwer sagen, sie sind Fragen des Taktes und des Blutes und bilden sich unmerklich im Körper der Heere heraus. Sie sind von allergrößter Bedeutung, doch lassen sie sich schwer in Vorschriften einbeziehen. Es ist z.B. gefährlich, auch nur anzudeuten, daß der Soldat unter Umständen vom Gefühl der Angst überfallen werden kann. Es ist besser, sich auf eiserne Anforderungen zu beschränken [...]6

Now, although, Jünger's reservations are, on the surface, restricted to the writing of a military manual, they are not far from a more general diagnosis of the difficulties of writing per se. To a certain extent the problematics of depiction of simultaneous events and rendering the intensity of subjective experience have been relieved by the adoption of an impersonal, collective voice that speaks with the authority of the official training manual and resolves experience into the limited field of tactical theory. Jünger excludes 'inneres Erlebnis' from the field of the training manual, but at the same time the very fact that 'diese Dinge lassen sich schwer sagen' implies that there is a fundamental difficulty in both writing and interpreting the 'inner experience' even outside the process of theoretically depicting the objective process of combat. Jünger is able to recognise the novelty of the technological war and to pursue a description of how it functions, but any attempt to integrate it into an interpretative framework, to describe it meta-historically, will founder on this powerful crisis of writing.

⁴ Ernst Jünger, 'Die Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Infanterie', *Militärwochenblatt*, 1923, No 3, pp. 51-3, pp.51-2

⁵ *ibid*, p.53

I am afraid that I shall not be able to comment in depth on *In Stahlgewittern* - for two reasons. I still haven't been able to get hold of a copy of the first edition and I haven't got enough time. Pressure of time means that I will also have to neglect Jünger's short novel *Sturm* in favour of a more detailed account of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, first published in 1922.

Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis: History and the Crisis of Theory and Language

Zuweilen erstrahlt an den Horizonten des Geistes ein neues Gestirn, das die Augen aller Rastlosen trifft., Verkündung und Sturmsignal einer Weltwende wie einst den Königen aus dem Morgenland. Dann ertrinken die Sterne ringsum in feurigen Glut, Götzenbilder splintern zu irdenen Scherben, und wieder einmal schmilzt alle geprägte Form in tausend Hochöfen, um zu neuen Werten gegossen zu werden.⁷

Thus begins Ernst Jünger's second book, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*. It is a book which bears all the trauma of the First World War in a polyphony of styles, ideologies and voices, a fragmented, tortured attempt to make sense in a world where the experience of the radical modernity of the War has dislocated all previous meta-historical systems from that experience. It is a book full of unresolved tensions, whose very form of reflective essays, fragments of narrative, ecstatic epiphany and confessions of utter despair, undermines all claims to unitary meaning. Of Jünger's texts it is the most incoherent, the most decentred and the most honest. Moreover, it is also frequently the most misread. Critics have in the past tended to ignore the confusion it embodies, the rhythms of assertion and denial that mark it, and thus reduce it to a unilinear, monolithic proto-fascist text proclaiming a simple social-darwinistic and militarist orthodoxy. That this tendency has been motivated primarily by a desire to read Jünger from the perspective of his radical nationalist engagement, and thus to want to negate all elements that do not conform to this political straightjacket should need no further emphasis. It is a tendency based, moreover, on the theoretical rigidity of vulgar Marxist socio-historical literary theory with its emphasis on the class subject in a linear narrative of history, in which the First World War can be accounted for in terms of the bourgeoisie, international capital and imperialism. When Jünger is reduced to a mere ideological accoutrement of these factors then the radical challenge he poses to basic left meta-historical assumptions is conveniently disposed of, even if this means ignoring most of the text.

⁶ *ibid*, p.53

⁷ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 1

Time in Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis

Let us first turn to Jünger's experience of history, which I want to define here as the events he himself experienced as a front-line officer over a period of time. Whilst he initially greeted the war along with countless others as a welcome break from the stifling atmosphere of Wilhelmine bourgeois society, the war itself, experienced as time, rapidly became for him equally as oppressive. The exaltation he sought was mostly not forthcoming and was instead experienced as deadening routine, a routine laden with a constant murderous danger. He is always referring to the 'Unendlichkeit' of night watches, to no-man's land as 'Wüste' and as 'Meer', symbolic and parallel references to the extent to which the subject fails to master an experience which thus becomes an unfathomable infinite. Moreover, this experience of time, characteristic of the War, becomes unbearable. Describing the moments of waiting before an assault, Jünger writes:

Wir haben die vorderste Linie erreicht und treffen die letzten Vorbereitungen. Wir sind emsig und genau, denn wir spüren Drang, uns zu betätigen, die Zeit zu füllen, um uns selbst zu entfliehen. Die Zeit, die uns im Graben schon so unendlich gemartet hat, ein Begriff, der alle denkliche Qual umschließt, eine Kette, die nur der Tod zersprengt. Vielleicht schon in Minuten.⁸

Time and experience thus become something from which to escape given the inability of thought to deal with the experience:

Was hilft es, Philosoph zu sein und sich drei Wochen lang für diese Stunde gestählt zu haben, bis man sich hart und ohne Blöße glaubte? [...] Das hilft alles nichts, denn plötzlich ist man aus einem denkenden ein empfindendes Wesen geworden, die auch die Waffe der schärfsten Vernunft wie ein Nichts durchgleitet.⁹

Elsewhere he writes that 'Zwischen Leben und Philosophie liegt eine Welt'¹⁰. We shall come back to this crisis of theory in more detail. One strategy that Jünger adopts in dealing with the experience of time is the flight out of time in which the painfully present and painfully inexplicable experience of the war is suspended. This takes one of two basic forms - firstly, where the war is forgotten, in reading, drinking, drugs and sex, and secondly, where experience is heightened and significance breaks through, in the intoxication of the assault, in near death experience and in the confrontation with horror.

Let us look more closely at the Jüngerian encounter with horror. Linse writes that 'Der absurde Augenblick markiert die Bruchstelle, das Zerreißen der Kontinuität alter Symbole - ohne daß schon ein neues Symbol bereitstände, das wieder Sinn stiften könnte. Der absurde Augenblick ist ein Moment der Verlorenheit und der Suche'¹¹. Jünger, however, goes further than this. For, in the experience of horror, the 'absurd moment', there lies also for Jünger a perception beyond normal reality, an epiphanic

⁸ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 73

⁹ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p.72-3

¹⁰ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 91

¹¹ Linse, 'Das wahre Zeugnis', in Vondung (ed), *Ansichten von Krieg*, p. 98

moment where incomprehension is overcome by an intuited revelation: 'Entriß sich dann plötzlich in ihrer Mitte ein Glutstrahl der Erde, so trieb ein ein Schrei von erschütternder Erkenntnis ins Unendliche. Dann mochte den Hirnen im letzten Feuer der dunkle Vorhang des Grauens jäh emporgerauscht sein, doch was dahinter auf der Lauer lag, das konnte der erstarrte Mund nicht mehr verkünden'¹².

Crisis of Language

This inability to speak is highly significant - for Jünger, along with many other writers of his generation, language too is in crisis. In conversation all that is achieved is 'Wortfetzen'¹³. The new poetic language of Expressionism is only slightly less inadequate in its capacity to deal with new realities: 'Wenn ich im Unterstande Hefte der jüngsten Kunst durchblättere, finde ich vieles, was auch mich bewegt. Noch ist es ein Stammeln, wenigen verständlich und doch ein fernes Wetterleuchten.'¹⁴ Man as coherently speaking and ordering subject is overwhelmed by the War. Language is no longer adequate in a dislocated world, only the screams of the dying carry full meaning: 'Sie treffen die Seele unmittelbar, alle Sprachen und Gedichte sind dagegen nur ein Gestammel'¹⁵. Furthermore, Jünger recognises a new language, spoken by a new subject. In his works, artillery always 'speaks': 'Ihre Sprache ist jedem verständlich'¹⁶. Indeed, it is not just artillery as such that speaks as an autonomous subject, the whole process of battle that Jünger described in the *Militärwochenblatt*, becomes an acting subject, displacing man from the centre to position of subjugation: 'Jedes Ding hat seine Sprache, der Mechanismus des Kampfes arbeitet klirrend und überspannt die Menschen mit einem Netze aus Feuer und Stahl.'¹⁷ In asserting its own autonomy, technology not only assumes a language of authority, but its displacement of Man as agent in history further complicates the process of extracting a meta-historical system from actual experience.

¹² *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 18

¹³ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 25

¹⁴ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 82. Compare this reception of Expressionism with Jünger's adoption of the traditional conservative position of implacable hostility to Modernism in the last section 'Vorm Angriff', p.115. Jünger also wrote 'expressionistische Lyrik' at this time, which he burnt early in the Third Reich (cf *Strahlungen*, p.??) and of which the only one published is 'Zu Kubins Bild: Der Mensch'

¹⁵ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p.98

¹⁶ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 97

¹⁷ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 103

Crisis of Writing

Related to the consciousness of the inadequacy of language as such to adequately relate experience is a further awareness of the difficulties of fixing the past. Not only does the extreme synchronicity of events in combat render a linear, textual account problematic - albeit one that Jünger attempts to overcome with the 'Kinoblick' that Kössler discerns in *In Stahlgewittern* - but Jünger is also keenly aware of the fact that time changes the past:

Ja, ja, so war es. Wir hatten alles fein überlegt. Und wenn wir die Sache in zehn Jahren erzählen, so wird sie noch in ganz anderen Farben schillern, denn die Zeit ist der beste Romantiker. Und wenn wir in fünfzig Jahren noch leben [...], dann wird diese in Kampf und Feuer zertöbten Jahre wie eine ferne und stolze Insel zu uns herüberschimmern.¹⁸

Jünger is thus keenly aware that all judgements are essentially preliminary, all writing a vain attempt to fix a reality, that even as past, is in constant flux, subject to the dynamics of memory. If memory legitimises his accounts of the war it is already mediated both through the writing of the original diaries and the selectivity of memory, a memory that is all too often a forgetting. Taken together with Jünger's insight into the power of propaganda and the technological media at manipulating truth,¹⁹ the possibility of closure, of providing a systematic meta-history is denied.

Jünger's attempts at Meta-History

However, despite all these difficulties which emerge from the ideas and structure of the text itself, Jünger still pursues his goal of understanding the 'inner experience' of the war, in other words of establishing an interpretative framework that includes and implies a meta-historical system. Critics have essentially taken him too much at his own word and seized on the fragments of assertion that attempt to fix an understanding whilst ignoring the deconstructive impetus inherent in the text that denies all these attempts at closure. Furthermore, the fact that many different voices seem to be speaking, each asserting a distinct system, should leave no doubt that this text is not the monolith of ideology it has been made out to be.

We do not have enough time to examine each of these in depth, but I can indicate a number of different meta-historical strategies that Jünger pursues. Initially he adopts a pseudo-Heraclitian stance -

¹⁸ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 106

¹⁹ 'Und ist es doch auch nicht das Schreckliche, daß sie uns töten wollen, sondern daß sie uns unaufhörlich mit ihrem Haß übergießen, daß sie uns nie anders nennen als Boches, Hunnen, Barbaren. Das erbittert [...] Wir sind selbst nicht besser [...] Schreibt einer von der Kultur des Anderen, so kann er sich nie verkneifen, sie in Anführungsstrieche zu fassen. Na ja, in hundert Jahren wird man vermutlich darüber lachen [...] Zu jeder Betrachtung gehört eben Abstand. Abstand in Raum, Zeit und Geist.' *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 63

'Der Krieg, aller Dinge Vater ist auch der unsere'²⁰. He reduces war to a dynamic principle whose significance lies solely in the fact that it is the motor behind an abstract Becoming that is its own significance. This strategy attempts to negate the traumatic significance of actual experience by locating significance in an empty exaltation of meaningless change. The way in which this is linked to protests that 'Es hat doch einen Sinn' suggests that this metaphysical direction carries little conviction for Jünger. The adoption of a pseudo-Nietzschean *Raubtieranthropologie* is equally problematic. The War is seen as simply as releasing the eternal *Urmensch* whose aggressive drives have been fatally repressed by civilisation. The implicit rhetoric of the eternal return is inadequate to deal with the acknowledged modernity of the War. Jünger thus shifts to a celebration of the new. For example, of his *Stoßtrupp*, he writes: 'Das ist der neue Mensch. Die Sturmpioniere, die Auslese Mitteleuropas. Eine ganz neue Rasse, klug, stark und Willens voll.'²¹ Jünger is also very unclear as to the postulated subject of his meta-historical system. Either it is War itself in an eternally repeating process, or it is humanity as a whole, working on a quasi-Hegelian 'Turmbau'²², or it is the front-line soldiers who will cast the world anew, or it is Germany and its vaguely implied 'Sache'.²³ Jünger mouths Wilhelmine ideology as a temporary support and yet condemns the 'zwecklose Irrsinnigkeit'²⁴ of it all. He adopts Spengler's phraseology of a decline of the West but also sees the War as an event that breaks away from a previously fixed pattern to a new beginning. To put it bluntly, the intellectual and ideological incohesion is evident even without the complications of textuality.

Concluding Remarks

Trying to extract a coherent approach to the problematics of history in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* is an impossible task. Although Jünger sets out to investigate the inner meaning of the First World War, both the form he uses and the ideas that he puts on paper in themselves deny the possibility of ever fixing that inner meaning and arriving at a meta-historical solution. At this stage Jünger is still afflicted with a sense of cultural apocalypse that profoundly shakes his faith in thought, language, history and theory, leaving him clutching to remnants of the past, exalting in the new, but deeply unsure of the validity both of what he is saying and the language with which he is saying it. Ultimately, it is a crisis of

²⁰ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 2

²¹ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 74

²² *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 6

²³ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, pp. 110-12

²⁴ *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, p. 16

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theory, unable to articulate any final, authoratative account of what happened or why. It is this sense of a crisis of theory that leads Jünger to explore futher those epiphanic states of consciousness that lead out of time and to seek certainties both beyond the contingently and incomprehensibly historical and beyond the machine of Modernity.