

Author omitted for blind review

Title: “In Defense of Speculative, Systematic Metaphysics”

Abstract: In his 1958 Presidential Address to the Metaphysical Society of America, William Ernest Hocking begins by praising the members of the Society for “being metaphysicians with conscious intent. For it is the metaphysician who most completely fulfills the ideal of Living Dangerously. It is he who most fully renounces the security of current certitudes in the search for authentic certitude. It is he who chooses – let me say – to *live out of doors* in complete exposure to what we call Fact.”¹ In this spirit my intention is to defend the grand tradition of metaphysics, not as the aim at a closed system of apodictic truths, but as an open-ended, fallibilistic pursuit of ever-more-adequate accounts of reality. Specifically, building on the work of Alfred North Whitehead, I will argue that, if we are, as Hocking said, to live out of doors in complete exposure to fact, we should conceive of metaphysics, not as the quest for absolute certainty, but as “working hypothesis.”² However, before I can defend this positive thesis, it will be important to understand the historical context out of which it emerges and to which it is responding. For, part of my thesis is that, although the sweeping attacks on metaphysics that characterized much of the twentieth century have subsided, metaphysics as speculative philosophy is no less in danger. Thus, my comments will be divided into two parts, with the first being largely historical and critical and the second positive and exploratory.

¹ William Ernest Hocking, “Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 11.4 (1958): 525.

² Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), 222.