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Speculative philosophy as systematic is the most difficult of the arts and sciences. While it is especially difficult for the contemporary intellect due to the empirical and historical assumptions of our time and place, there never has been a time or place when thinking in a pure or presuppositionless form has been easy.

The tradition of speculative philosophy beginning among the Greeks, who discovered the unique activity of thinking about thinking, is long and honourable and unbroken to this day. For the activity of thought as the primary activity of God and man and in some sense of the cosmos as such always transcends time and history and empiricism in all its guises. At the same time a true thinking must always think through anew the temporality of its time and place.

On the human plane as time stretches out into the history of our being much is forgotten as also much is discovered and the effort to retain the ancient treasures and the modern discoveries as well as our need

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to create afresh is an imperative forever required for our freedom and self-understanding.

The paradox is ever present that the precious quality of our life must always transcend its own effort and lift us beyond ourselves both toward the divine above and the natural below. The transitoriness of this paradox is mostly too difficult and leads men to impose on themselves one form or another of dogmatism or scepticism, usually in a humorously self-congratulatory mode, hopelessly and helplessly naive and innocent of its unselfconscious assumptions.

On the one hand it is not possible to simply regain the past, on the other simply grasping for the future is similarly futile. Yet living in the present is no easy task since its temporal structure is always on the cusp of the past and the future, between the perfection of divinity and the flaws of nature.

The perennial difficulty of the enterprise which is *mentaphysics* may perhaps justify our few preliminary though necessarily unphilosophical remarks about the effort to thoroughly rethink systematically what can be thought. A short outline of the simplicity of our intentions may also be of help.

MENTAPHYSICS is intended to be a comprehensive and systematic exposition of philosophy. The title is suggestive of the traditional term 'metaphysics' but is also meant to indicate a departure from the idea of a knowledge beyond physics to that of one in which

thought and being are not separable – hence, the subtitle: *the Life of Spirit as Love*. The subtitle is a more concrete expression of the idea that Spirit – the ultimate principle – is not a simple thinking as opposed to feeling or personality but a living and loving actuality.

The term *mentaphysics* is meant to be taken in conjunction with Spirit in the sense that Spirit is not the opposite of physical and a synonym for mind but rather the relation of the inseparability of the mental and physical. Neither the Greek nor the German tongues – the two natural human languages which have been the primary source of speculative metaphysical philosophy – are able to make such a distinction between Spirit and Mind. Philosophy completed as Mentaphysics as Spirit brings the English tongue for the first time to the forefront of speculative thinking.

Many even most readers will find the effort of thinking about thinking speculatively a difficult labour. But I am confident that those who persevere will come to appreciate and wonder at the power and marvellous flexibility of the English language when truly engaged in speculative thinking. I have had at points to consciously extend the limits of normal English word usage, spelling and syntax, and to put words together or separate them to clarify the meaning of a thinking conscious of its own peculiar demands.

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Throughout the work I have tried to *allow* the argument to speak for itself and to do so in as uncluttered and accurate a way as possible. The absence of references and footnotes is deliberate. Of course, there can be no doubt that it is particularly hard for modern readers to do without historical or empirical props, but then speculative philosophy is the presupposition and confirmation of such idylls. Readers who are versed in the thought and languages of speculative thinking from prior times will be able to discern that the present work is the result of the study of and reflection on the whole detailed history of philosophy and culture – but the thinking of *metaphysics* is also the result of a deep conviction that our own time is ripe for a philosophical renaissance which can have the necessary philosophical confidence to wade through rather than be either simply immersed in or simply innocent of the treasured accumulations of the past. Such confidence is only possible at rare moments in human history, at the end or the beginning of an era.

We all as heirs to the great intellectual and existential labours of our forebears must be forever grateful for their effort and achievement. At the same time we honour them best in the recognition that the most important intellectual treasures must be won anew by each man for himself and by each generation of men for their fellow wayfarers. The wonder of intellectual activity is that it is in itself universal and so can be won by anyone willing to go through the struggle of speculative thinking. Thinking is a free choice which has no substitute.

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The Preface to the present volume is written as a prolegomena for the reader but *not* for the philosophy. The argument lays out in a somewhat immediate way the predicament of our time and place and is intended to show that thinking is the last and fruitful possibility. The Preface is, therefore, neither mentaphysics itself nor even strictly an introduction to it. Rather it is a portrait of how a person living *now* would come to want to think and thereby to know and understand.

For those who wish to continue in the enterprise of speculative metaphysics as finally mentaphysics I should add that the present volume, while meant to stand completely independently on its own, is also intended to be part of a speculative trilogy. The companion volumes are to consist of a volume on the history of speculative thought and one on the individual soul in relation to the necessity of participating in that speculative activity. A fourth volume is planned as a commentary on the present text, which is necessarily compressed and precise.