

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

**A**LTHOUGH I HAVE MADE every effort to present Arbogast Schmitt's thought as simply as possible, there is no evading the fact that this book unfolds a massive and highly complex argument, one that touches not only upon the different concepts of rationality present in antiquity or modernity in the narrow sense but upon these concepts as they manifested themselves in all areas of life in antiquity and modernity. I therefore would like to use this introduction to preview the main thesis of this book briefly and to clarify the order of the chapters and sections and their relation to each other.

Schmitt's work addresses not only the epistemological foundations of the two concepts of rationality, ancient and modern, referred to in the title of this book,<sup>1</sup> but also their historical origins and their historical consequences. His book is thus also a contribution to the history of philosophy at the same time as it is a contribution to philosophy. Further, since the concept of rationality determines almost every aspect of theoretical and practical knowledge (extending to but not limited to economics, ethics, politics, anthropology, sociology, etc.), this book also includes discussions on topics one might ordinarily not expect to find in a work of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> For all these reasons, it is useful to have a broad overview of the argument at hand, even before tackling the first chapter.

If one were to reduce this extraordinarily rich and complex book to just one central thesis, it would have to be the thesis stated in the

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid a potential misunderstanding of the book's project at the outset, the "modernity" referred to in the book's title does not refer to the entire historical epoch referred to as modernity. As Schmitt explicitly clarifies in the text, the title is rather an abbreviation, since no book could claim to cover such a broad historical period, quite apart from the problems of exactly when this period ought to begin. Rather, what Arbogast Schmitt has in mind with the expression "modernity" is the consciousness of modernity that the early modern period developed in an explicit distancing of itself from the Middle Ages and from antiquity. Thus, this book addresses those historical phenomena that, in keeping with this consciousness of a distance, a contrast, or a "break," have since then (and to a large extent even in the present) been described as "modern."

<sup>2</sup> For example, chapters 9 and 10 of this work present sophisticated critiques of Adam Smith's liberal economic theory and of Darwin's evolutionary theory, respectively, exposing the Stoic and neo-Stoic underpinnings of both theories.

introduction: "Although modernity considers itself an anti-metaphysical age, where 'metaphysics' is understood as the attempt to justify the here and now in a transcendental beyond—it in fact emerged from a transference of the theoretical elements of metaphysics to the world of empirical individual things itself. From this perspective, 'modernity's' foundations are a borrowed (indeed, a falsified and abstractly interpreted) antiquity" (62–63). From this statement arises the book's twofold task: (1) Of challenging and critiquing the understanding modernity has of itself, and (2) Of showing how that understanding emerges from a specific historical constellation. The former engenders the critical task, the latter the historical task of tracing the epistemological misconceptions and confusions through which thinkers such as Duns Scotus, Vico, Descartes, and Kant broke with ancient philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

The introduction opens with a discussion of the consciousness of newness and of a radical break with antiquity characteristic of early modernity. Section 1 develops the thesis that in spite of the ubiquity of this consciousness it is not so easy to establish the origins of modernity. Further, what are the criteria for judging a work or a period or a person to be "modern"? Schmitt argues that it is the radical consciousness of a break that itself constitutes what is modern about "modernity." "A consciousness of being unique and original is intrinsic to the consciousness of modernity . . . The emergence of historical consciousness as well as the emergence of modernity go together. Moreover, this historical consciousness is an essentially antithetical historical consciousness, that is, a consciousness that is completely opposed to the past. For it, the new emerges only out of overcoming the old, from the break with it, from its dissolution or destruction, out of a reform, a revolution or a turn" (4).

Sections 2–4 then attempt to fill in the contours of this historical consciousness. In section 2, Schmitt argues that this consciousness of a break was largely associated with the consciousness of having turned away from a transcendent, other-worldly, or ontological order to the here-and-now; in section 3, he argues that this consciousness of a turn to a world of empirical verities, contrary to its anti-metaphysical intent, actually entailed a metaphysical re-evaluation and an enhancement of individual objects. The individual object becomes the reference point and the standard for everything that can be known of it, a development that Schmitt refers to as a "metaphysical overload[ing]" (16 and 28) of the individual object. "Every individual object must now be a complete, 'well-determined'

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, the two are ultimately one in that the engagement with these authors is not conducted out of a purely historical interest, but is an engagement in terms of and for the sake of the matter itself. Likewise, the critique of modernity is not a critique from an extrinsic locus, but one that precisely seeks to elucidate and expose modernity's origins in a misunderstood antiquity.

instance of its concept and everything that can be contained in it and has to reveal this complete conceptual identity to us in an immediate act of intuition [*Anschauung*], of feeling, of intuition [*Intuition*], if knowledge is to be possible at all—to say nothing of the problem of reconstructing such unique experiences through consciousness's abstract concepts" (28–29). In section 4, Schmitt demonstrates how the modern concept of thought as consciousness emerges from this epistemological constellation. As he notes in the foreword, "A direct consequence of this conviction [that is, that all knowledge must be derived from experience, and must conform to the "well-determined" object] is that the task of thought now appears to consist exclusively in (the more or less accurate or symbolically reconstructive) reproduction of the world as we experience it. Thought becomes representation [*Vergegenwärtigung*, *Repräsentation*] of the perceptible and observable world; it becomes representation [*Vorstellung*] or, to use the term that has established itself until today: it becomes consciousness" (xvi).

On the basis of this analysis of the epistemological foundations of modernity, in section 5 Schmitt is then able to frame the inquiry into the origins of modernity not in terms of a naïve faith in intuition versus reason's "Enlightened" self-reflexive disposal over itself, but in terms of the contrast between *two different conceptions of rationality*. Thus, contrary to the prejudice that one cannot find a reflection of thought concerning itself in antiquity, Arbogast Schmitt argues that one can and does in fact find such a reflection, but this reflection is a reflection on a different concept of thought than the one normative in modernity. For Plato and Aristotle, "epistemology does not begin with a reflection upon the manner in which thought manipulates contents it somehow finds within itself, but with a reflection upon the act of thought itself. This act cannot itself already be an act of reflection, at any rate not if the objects thought reflects upon are supposed to be contents of thought and not external objects. Thought must first itself recognize these contents, before it can start reflecting on the conditions and the quality of these contents. For this reason, the basic act of thought cannot already be reflection" (46). Thus Schmitt argues, "thought itself, from itself," must have "a non-reflective component," with the further consequence that "non-reflectivity or prereflectivity" cannot be "a sign of non-rational acts" (46).

This insight into the different concept of thought (that is, as discrimination rather than representation or consciousness) at the root of antiquity leads Schmitt to characterize the two contrasting epistemological approaches (that is, of antiquity and modernity, respectively) as "philosophies of discrimination" (*Unterscheidungsphilosophien*) and "philosophies of consciousness" (*Bewußtseinsphilosophien*). In section 6, he previews his argument that determinacy and distinguishability constitute the basic criteria for knowledge for Platonic-Aristotelian epistemology.

Further, once one realizes that the distinction between antiquity and modernity is not that of a premodern age and a modern one as its logical (that is, both legitimate and inevitable) successor, one will also have reason to revisit the claim raised expressly by the Renaissance of itself as a period that “rediscovered” “the” antiquity. Schmitt argues that the Renaissance does not rediscover “the” antiquity, but rather a different antiquity: a Hellenistic-Roman antiquity rather a Platonic-Aristotelian antiquity. As he notes, “the antiquity-modernity antithesis in its attitude against the Middle Ages plays off one antiquity against another. In its antithesis of intuition and reason, however, it projects a typical late-medieval nominalistic epistemological dichotomy onto the concepts ‘antiquity’ and ‘modernity’—concepts that themselves arose out of the break with the Middle Ages. Within the framework of these concepts, one now understands the present as modern and Hellenism as the only antiquity” (62). From this arises the book’s threefold task of showing: (1) epistemologically, the limitations of the modern conception of reason, (2) historically, how modernity as a whole is an age influenced by Stoicism, and (3) philosophically, how its “foundations are a borrowed (indeed, a falsified and abstractly interpreted) antiquity.” Sections 8 and 9 of the introduction then present an outline of the book in its main theses and arguments and of the order of its chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses the reasons for the emergence of the consciousness of a “break” between antiquity and modernity in the Renaissance. Section 1.1 discusses how Renaissance philosophers such as Vico posited the essence of man as his lack of determinacy—a conception they argued radically set apart the early modern conception of man from its ancient predecessors. Section 1.2 expands on the epistemological content of this break, especially the reduction of the concept of rationality to the spontaneous activity of the reason or understanding in representing or making conscious objects or data that are passively and unconsciously received through sensation.

Chapter 2 takes up the opposition between “nature” and “culture” that emerges from this epistemological theory, especially as it originates from a “common sense” understanding of the world. “Common sense suggests that we perceive the things of the world through our senses and that we construct concepts from what we perceive in this way. If one undertakes a reflective justification of his conviction, one arrives at a ‘philosophical’ theory that sharply distinguishes between the impression resulting from perception and the way we process that impression” (116). Section 2.1 shows how this foundation of reason or of man’s intellectual activity in a common sense understanding of the world could give rise to the impression of antiquity as a whole as a stage of intellectual history preceding the Enlightenment. Section 2.2 clarifies how the early modern understanding of the genuine essence of reason as lying in its capacity for

undertaking a self-reflexive turn toward its own acts leads paradoxically to reason being seen as the faculty through which we subjectively reshape and hence distort the world. This paradox then leads, in section 2.3, to the question of what precisely is “modern” about early modernity: is it the liberation from the naïveté of holding immediate forms of intuition (such as were attributed to antiquity in the Renaissance) to be genuine instances of reason, or is it the liberation from the naïveté of positing absolute and timeless concepts (Forms, ontological structures, etc.) without being aware of their subjective origin in human reason? Section 2.4 discusses the aporias that result from this self-contradictory conception of reason as both that faculty through which humans can undertake a self-reflexive turn toward their own acts and as that faculty through which they subjectively distort what is given them through immediate forms of intuition (sensation, feeling, presemiotic experiences, etc.). Section 2.5 discusses the attempts to resolve these aporias, especially through seeking “pure” forms of intuition, that is, ones such as are “as yet” not subjectively colored by the intrusion of reason. Section 2.6 then examines the elevation of sensory cognition to the primary and genuine faculty of knowledge and the consequences of this elevation for aesthetic theory from Lucretius via Baumgarten to the theory of naturalism in the works of the eighteenth-century writer and dramatist Arno Holz. In two concluding sub-sections (sections 2.6.4 and 2.6.5) Schmitt traces the consequences of the elevation of sensory cognition to the primary and genuine faculty of knowledge for the logical positivism of the Vienna School and discusses the importance of time in the Enlightenment philosophy of Kant and Wolff. Section 2.7 discusses the elevation of demonstrated objects (“I,” “space,” “time”) to evidentiary criteria in the work of Descartes and Kant, and the attendant elevation of consciousness to the epitome of human rationality. In this concluding section, Schmitt also examines some of the consequences of this new understanding of rationality: “The ‘discovery’ of ‘thought itself’ in modernity is . . . not the discovery of thought as such, but a change in direction in the analysis of thought. This change in direction is not . . . an unmediated new beginning. Rather, it is the result of a new, or perhaps, one must correctly say, of an astonishingly careless and simplistic approach to a highly nuanced Scholastic tradition, from which certain rudimentary principles and methods were broken off and combined to a new whole following the logic of common sense thought” (192–93). This conclusion lays the groundwork for the return to Platonic-Aristotelian epistemology (and the culture of ethics, politics, and economics based upon it) in the second half of the book.

Chapter 3 summarizes in outline how, from the perspective of this understanding of thought as the activity of representation or the making conscious of impressions that are taken up unconsciously, antiquity as a whole could appear as an age that had yet to undergo an “Enlightenment”

of thought regarding itself. Contrary to this view of antiquity as a pre-Enlightened or pre-critical age, Schmitt argues that we can find a sophisticated reflection upon thought in Plato and Aristotle—and a systematic foundation of the sciences on the basis of this reflection in the *koinè mathēmatikē epistēmē*.

Chapter 4 works out the epistemological foundations of this concept of thought as discrimination in Plato and Aristotle. Section 4.1 demonstrates how the principle of non-contradiction constitutes the basis of ancient rationality. Because only something that is some one thing can be known, the principle of non-contradiction is simultaneously an ontological and epistemological principle. Section 4.2 addresses the misconception that because Plato bases his philosophy upon this principle, he is unaware of the historicity of man. Section 4.3 addresses the related misconception that because Plato bases his philosophy upon this principle, he must hold a doctrine of “innate ideas.” “Plato’s position,” Schmitt argues, “is not that an identical essence must underlie an empirical object through its various appearances and that, in spite of the ‘manifold’ of its appearances, we intuit this essence through the intellect as always co-present in sensory perception” (220). On the contrary, Plato presents “many examples that show that the assumption of such underlying identical essences is often merely an instance of overhasty generalization” (220) and that these generalizations must be corrected using an epistemological principle, namely that something that is a characteristic of two objects at the same time (for example, a tree and a man) cannot be used to discriminate between them. Thus, the criterion of being some one thing turns out to also be the condition for us to be able to know something as some specific object. It is in this sense that “being” functions as an epistemological criterion in Plato and Aristotle.

Chapter 5 expands on this concept of thought as discrimination. Section 5.1 demonstrates how, once thought is conceived of as an act of discrimination, its field of operation is not limited to the representation of unconsciously received data, but ranges across all of man’s psychic activities, including perception and opinion. Further, as Schmitt discusses in section 5.2, thought can no longer be restricted to making originally unconscious impressions—such as the sensory data received via perception—conscious. Whether we are conscious or not of an activity is not a criterion of its rationality: in fact, an absence of consciousness (such as is the case when we work in a concentrated manner on a specific task) can be an indication of the intellectually demanding nature of the activity.

Chapter 6 compares the differing conceptions of the soul found in a philosophy of consciousness and a philosophy of discrimination. “If, in contrast to modern philosophy of consciousness, one does not set out from consciousness and the certitude of the ‘I think’ as the fundament of cognition, but, instead, recognizes this fundament in the act of

discrimination, a completely different picture of our different psychic activities emerges. For Plato, these activities do not simply represent different states, ‘modifications’ of a consciousness that underlies all of them in the same uniform way. Rather, they represent either different types of discrimination or complex activities built up on the foundation of one or more acts of discrimination—activities of the one soul of man” (277).

Section 6.1 analyzes the Platonic tripartite division of the soul into an appetitive (*epithymêtikon*), a spirited (*thymoeides*), and a rational (*logistikon*) faculty, and shows why the unity of reason, feeling, and will in antiquity much admired in modernity is not due to the inability to distinguish between man’s psychic faculties (itself due to the inability to undertake a self-reflexive turn toward one’s reason). Section 6.2 analyzes the revival of the theory of a form of intelligence inherent to emotions in contemporary neurobiological and neuropsychological approaches, and demonstrates why these approaches fail to overcome the fundamental gulf between sensation and reason instituted in early modernity. Plato’s thesis is not that emotions possess their own unique form of intelligence, one that would be inaccessible to reason, but that the same faculty of reason is at work in all of man’s cognitive activities.

Because the Platonic tripartite division of the soul appears to correspond to the modern analysis of the soul into the three faculties of reason, feeling, and will, chapter 7 focuses on distinguishing between these two conceptions. Section 7.1 demonstrates that the modern analysis is Stoic in origin: contrary to the view that the opposition between thought and will is a “fundamental problem of modern philosophy, it was, in fact, already formulated within the philosophical systems of Hellenism and of the Stoa. It can be understood both in the ancient Stoa and in early modernity only in the context of a doctrine which sets out from the premise that consciousness or the evident representation [*Repräsentation*] of given representations [*Vorstellungen*] is the primary act in the cognitive process that grounds a unity” (288). Section 7.2 demonstrates via recourse to the Homeric concept of *noos* or “intelligence” why the Platonic faculties do not correspond to their modern equivalents. Specifically, the *logistikon* in Plato is not a pure faculty of thought in the modern sense, but itself contains a volitional component. Likewise, the *epithymêtikon* or the *thymoeides* are not purely desiderative or volitional faculties, but are themselves capable of carrying out rational acts in the sense of acts of discrimination. Section 7.3 expands on this insight by demonstrating how each of these two faculties has its specific cognitive domain, that is, respectively, perception and opinion. The analysis of the differences between these two domains in sub-sections 7.3.1–7.3.6 leads to the formulation of the realization in section 7.4 that the objects of opinion and the emotions aroused by these objects differ fundamentally from those of perception. “The feelings of pleasure or aversion that arise when one

is oriented toward a person's perceptible attributes are completely different from those that arise when one focuses on aspects that can only be comprehended via opinion or concepts" (331). Since opinion is oriented towards a person's *ergon* or "work," and this work can only be fulfilled in a political community, opinion also proves to be that cognitive domain that is at the center of man's existence as a political being.

The concluding four chapters of the book are dedicated to outlining the ethical, political, and economic consequences of this different conception of rationality. They build on the epistemological and psychological analyses of the central four chapters (chapters 4–5 and 6–7, respectively), and progressively fulfill the task Schmitt assigns himself in this book of presenting and defending the ancient conception of rationality in all its significant aspects.

Chapter 8 undertakes a defense of the Platonic-Aristotelian understanding of feeling, especially in the context of its pedagogical significance. Section 8.1 demonstrates that feelings for Plato and Aristotle cannot be reduced to abstract feelings of pleasure and aversion but always entail a rational component. Sections 8.2 and 8.3 analyze the genesis of feelings in opinion in ancient philosophy and literature. In contrast to the modern interpretation of feelings in terms of a stimulus-response mechanism, the examples of Medea, Oedipus, and the Homeric heroes show that in ancient thought the domain of feelings such as jealousy, anger, wounded pride, etc. is a cognitive domain. Section 8.4 takes up *philautia* or "self-love" as a paradigmatic example of a feeling that is simultaneously intellectual and concrete and universal. Because self-love in the genuine sense implies seeking what is truly good for oneself, "to be truly well-disposed to oneself . . . means that one is seeking the all-encompassing good for oneself" (346). Such a life, however, is a life "according to *nous* (intellect, reason), the highest mental faculty in us, for '*nous* is what every individual really is,' as Aristotle says" (346). Sections 8.5 and 8.6 expand on the pedagogical significance of this conception of self-love. Section 8.5 demonstrates how the distinction between forms of genuine self-love and only apparent self-love, where the former are not opposed to the well-being of the community, since they are, unlike the latter, not egotistical in the narrow sense, enables Plato and Aristotle to develop the thesis that one can cultivate self-love, guiding it away from its false and reprehensible forms to its correct and socially valuable forms. Section 8.6 demonstrates how tragedy enables such cultivation.

Once one sets aside the modern thesis of a contrast between the rational and irrational aspects of man's psychic faculty (and the flawed epistemological foundations this is implicitly based upon),<sup>4</sup> a radically

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<sup>4</sup> The epistemological foundations were addressed first in chapters 3–5; the consequences for psychology in chapters 6–8.



different understanding of man's existence becomes possible—both as an individual in search of the best life for himself and as an individual in a political community. In fact, since there is no opposition between man's reason and his (irrational) desire in such a conception, the two coincide: the perfect unfolding and the greatest possible happiness of the single individual . . . are simultaneously conditions of the greatest possible welfare of all," while the "contrast of egotism and altruism . . . fundamental in many modern-day ethics, does not exist at all" for ancient philosophy "in this best form of egotism" (69).

Chapter 9 is dedicated to tracing this coincidence of the individual and the state in Plato's political theory and in Aristotle's economic theory. Section 9.1 challenges the Hellenistic-Roman conception of the state, which considers the "sovereign freedom of every individual" to be the "basic principle of the state" and the state itself as "the specific organizational form . . . necessary to ensure that the many individual sovereigns do not reciprocally interfere or indeed destroy each other" (372). Contrary to this understanding of the relationship of the individual to the state common to both contract theory and liberal economics, the state is the condition for the rational unfolding—that is, the freedom—of each individual in Plato and Aristotle. As this notion has frequently been the occasion for a misconception regarding ancient political life, namely that the ancients had no conception of individuality or of the autonomy and self-determination characteristic of genuine individuals, the next four sections (sections 9.2–9.6) are dedicated to refuting this idea by demonstrating that one can find genuine forms of autonomy as well as an explicit appreciation of individuality in ancient thought. Section 9.2 addresses this question vis-à-vis Homer; section 9.3 vis-à-vis Plato. Whereas modernity holds individuality to be a self-evident fact, Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy regards it as a task. Section 9.4 demonstrates via discussion of the distinction between the primary and the immanent universal why Plato and Aristotle consider individuality not to be the starting point of their definition of man, but rather, the end point and the culmination of a long process of self-cultivation which, as such, can only take place within a political community. Since the primary universal, in contrast to the immanent, does not refer to that which can be abstracted from many individual examples of "man" as what is common to them, but is an intellectual concept, individuality cannot be assumed to be something that is simply "given" and common to all men. Rather, in order to become an individual in the genuine sense, an individual human being must first become "one," and that means he must "develop his qualities in such a way that he comes as close as possible to what it genuinely means to be a human being and what distinguishes humans from animals" (412). "This is nothing other than to develop a unit of character that is differentiated to the highest degree and to make this unit the guiding principle

for one's actions to the extent this is possible for a being that exists as an active agent in the world of experience and in a social context. In this sense, true freedom is not something that is always at the individual's disposal 'ready-for-use' as an inalienable . . . fundamental right. Rather, it is a task one must first master in an individual effort" (412). On the basis of this understanding of individuality, section 9.5 argues that there is no conflict between individual justice and happiness in the state. Section 9.6 then addresses a twofold misconception of the Platonic equation of the happiness of the individual with that of the state as a whole: (1) that it is based on a "metaphysical" conception of man, whereas the modern conception does away with any and all metaphysical residues and (2) that what the Platonic conception aims at is the same as the maximization of political freedom aimed at in Hobbes's political theory or the maximization of economic welfare in Adam Smith's classic economic liberalism. Section 9.6.1 discusses the Stoic and neo-Stoic foundations of both these modern theories, and demonstrates just how essential this metaphysical inheritance is to each. Sections 9.6.2 and 9.6.4 develop this thesis vis-à-vis Adam Smith and Hobbes, respectively, while sections 9.6.3 and 9.6.5 show how, contrary to the claims made about the "metaphysical" foundations of ancient thought, the corresponding Aristotelian theories (that is, Aristotle's economic and political theory) entail substantially fewer metaphysical commitments. However, the point of this analysis is not merely a contribution to the history of philosophy or even providing an epistemological clarification; rather, the exposure of the tenuous scientific foundations of this conception of man also has the function of an ethical and ontological critique. Thus, Schmitt notes in the concluding paragraphs of this chapter, "a political theory such as that of Hobbes or an economic theory such as that of Adam Smith does not just permit the members of a political or economic community to behave in accordance with their drive for self-preservation. Rather, they explicitly insist on its 'natural' enforcement and provide 'scientific' theories, which, by pointing to a final state no one can control, declare the clearly visible and well-known negative consequences of such behavior to be a necessary condition for the well-being of all" (450). The critique of modern rationality from the perspective of antiquity thus does not have a restorative intent, but is meant as a critique of problematic aspects of contemporary existence, aspects that we are unable to see because we take the underlying conception of rationality for granted and no longer inquire into either its historical origins or its metaphysical foundations.

Chapter 10 appropriately takes up the question of self-preservation and decline, vis-à-vis both the evolution of nature and the evolution of the state. Section 10.1 demonstrates how the implicit Stoic metaphysics at the root of modern conceptions of the state, of economic agency, and of ethics no longer makes room for chance, failure, evil, or destruction of

the individual. Rather, all these are now clarified as necessary occurrences, stages or steps on the way to the development of a greater, that is, higher and more comprehensive, rationality. Section 10.2 demonstrates how this assumption is only tenable if one already assumes something like a divine yet immanent *logos* (whether conceived of as the self-corrective mechanism of the market or as the law of natural selection) that steers all things and ensures that all things turn out for the best. The criticism in this section of the attempted “scientification” of what is, in reality, a metaphysical theory in contemporary evolutionary biology lays the grounds for a reappraisal of the Platonic conception of the state in section 10.3 and of Aristotle’s economic and social theory in section 10.4. Section 10.5 concludes with an analysis of the forms of decline of the state and of the individual in Plato and Aristotle, focusing especially on the failure or reluctance to discriminate as the cause of this decline. This section also concludes by reinforcing the book’s central message that from the perspective of Plato and Aristotle (and perhaps antiquity as a whole) modernity would be a time of reduced discrimination, of a leveling of nuances, both as concerns the experience of pleasure and as concerns intellectual distinctions.

The conclusion is divided into two chapters: chapter 11 and chapter 12. Chapter 11 summarizes the basic contrast between “ancient” and “modern” as it emerged around the fifteenth century and became canonical by the seventeenth century. Section 11.1 recapitulates the basic outlines of this consciousness of a radical break with antiquity and of a new beginning in modernity; section 11.2 recapitulates the main characteristics of the construction of the “antiquity/modernity” antithesis; while section 11.3 restates the main arguments of this book for why the notion of an “Enlightenment” of thought concerning itself in early modernity is false and therefore not a valid criterion for distinguishing between antiquity and modernity. Chapter 12 then summarizes the main conclusions of this book concerning the distinction between the Platonic-Aristotelian and the Hellenistic conceptions of rationality.