A Comment on Tilo Schabert's *The Figure of Modernity*

Barry Cooper
University of Calgary

The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch

By Tilo Schabert. De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 212. $99.99

The two hundred or so pages of Tilo Schabert's *The Figure of Modernity* condense four decades of scholarship and expand and make more precise the arguments of several earlier books. His aim is to recover the place of human beings within the cosmos using the peculiar perspective on reality that is afforded by "modern" human beings. Such an approach is filled with its own hermeneutical complexities, as we shall see. Here is the problem: On the one hand, *all* human beings exist now, as they always have, as participants within the cosmos that transcends and so situates them. This understanding of cosmos means that it is not a locale that one might abandon for greener pastures. Rather, it is a presence within which we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). On the other hand, the "modern" mode of participatory-existence-within-the-cosmos often takes the form or "figure" (*Gesicht*) of human estrangement from the cosmos within which humans nevertheless exist even as they claim they are estranged from it. Modern human beings, in this context, speak of their autonomy from a cosmos that nevertheless situates them, which raises the question: how can this be?

One familiar way of making sense of this modern mode of existence is to rely on the Greeks, as implicitly we did in the paragraph above. The modern attitude of autonomy the Greeks would have called *hybris*, and an invitation to *nemesis*. Schabert here

quoted a French friend who considered the COVID-19 pandemic a lesson in humility (*nemesis*) for the arrogance (*hybris*) of humanity acting as if it could master the problems of existence using technology alone. Schabert added, however, that such a sequence of insights expressed a very modern attitude, as if we had to see the results of *hybris* in front of our eyes before we understood COVID-19 as *nemesis*. In contrast, for the Greeks, *nemesis* was co-present with *hybris*. Schabert's narrative was not, therefore, a recapitulation of the wisdom of the ancients. Rather, it took the form of an account of several modern voices, each (admittedly) increasingly hybristic, in their discussion of how they *differed* from the ancients and through those differences how they could justify their autonomy.

The most familiar version of this difference is the modern embrace of the domination, through technology, of "nature," conceived not as cosmos but as *partes extra partes* indifferent or inhospitable phenomena into which human beings can act by directing their will toward specified purposes and goals.[1] The change from "cosmos" to "nature" was exemplified in the lives of St. Francis and Pascal. In the thirteenth century, Francis lived in a "divinely animated cosmos," whereas two centuries later Pascal lived in "a mechanically built nature."[2] Thus was the divine logos of reality in the cosmos replaced by the mysteries of nature that could be calculated and measured but never understood.

The change from the divine cosmos of nature to the indifferent world of nature took place "not in the world itself [i.e., not in reality], but in the consciousness of human beings who rejected their inherited cosmological understanding of reality and replaced it with the conception of a *natura agens* [natural drive] understood as the creator and conservator of reality." And "natural philosophy" would give its practitioners power over, and control of, this world of external nature, including human nature. No more concerns for *hybris* and *nemesis*: just power after power as humans exercised what they considered divine control.[3] This "anthropological turn," as Schabert calls it, provided the decisive motive for the emergence of the modern world.

The major constituent-elements of modernity are familiar from such twentieth-century political philosophers as Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, and Hannah Arendt. Schabert's version listed five attributes:

1. "[A]ll tradition is subject to the judgment of the present" so that the old is either a precursor or an error.
2. The hierarchy of the sciences has been reversed: philosophy is no longer the science of sciences; it has been replaced by innovations in technology that are accepted and understood to be improvements in the control of nature.
3. History is the continuous break with earlier practices.
4. Innovation leads to replacement, dissention, revolt, and fragmentation because there can be no order and stability to progress.
5. Truth is historically relativized because what comes later is also understood as more knowledgeable.

This process can never be concluded, so modernity is also an endless crisis because what is newer is *eo ipso* better. In Schabert's words, "[E]veryone pressed against the threshold of modernity, but no one succeeded in stepping over it. No sooner had someone posed as a 'progressive' than someone even more progressive would take his or her place."[4] One can see this process played out daily in pragmatic politics, even during the pandemic.

Schabert traced the unfolding of the implications of the self-canceling contradiction or dilemma at the heart of modernity by looking at three exemplary texts; then he shaped the issue further with a conceptual clarification that pointed beyond the dilemma.

The first text, the *Plowman of Bohemia*, by Johannes von Tepl (1350–1414), considered the author's complaint against, and debate with, Death, which amounted to a complaint against God's creation. Second, Pico della Mirandola's (1463–1494) *Oration*, which praised only the dignity of human beings and ignored human misery (and so abandoned the balance that was still tacitly present in von Tepl's "debate"), simply presupposed and asserted human "autonomy." Third, Montaigne (1533–1592) protested against the

new anthropology, but fully aware he could not persuade his contemporaries, he instead examined their motives and their expectations, both of which revealed an "intellectual blindness" and "presumption" that, in fact, was laughable and grotesque. For Schabert, Montaigne's *Essais* are evidence of a very modern recovery of balance.[5]

Schabert then introduced the aforementioned conceptual clarification, which he called History I and History II. The former, which at one point he called the "ideological" understanding of modernity,[6] can be found in the self-understanding of progressive modern thinkers; the latter referred to the "actual" history of modernity. The disjunction between the two was the source of "skepticism," starting with Montaigne, that confronted the continuous crisis that was intrinsic to the existence of ideological modernity by calling its motivation and bad faith into question. Following all the changes over the past five hundred years both in human action and in the modern self-understanding of that action, modernity in the sense of History I remained only a possibility to which the reality of the modern world, History II, only approximately corresponded. The modern "anthropological turn" claimed that a truly human existence was founded on the premise of *human* authority and an absence of limits expressed as a rejection of *given* rules, authorities, and structures of order. Of course, one way of reconciling History I and History II was through coercion, but that would succeed only in increasing the ferocity of revolt in the face of imposed order.[7] "Put in aphoristic form," Schabert writes, "a modern society is always a society without common convictions," which is both an invitation to violence and an invitation to abandon ideological modernity. But where does the latter invitation come from, and who takes it up?

Schabert then restates the conflict between History I and History II. The plan to remove all limits to human power over nature, he writes, "went hand in hand with the desire also to remove the limits of the *conditio humana* through the process of an entirely presuppositionless self-projection of humankind."[8] But the result of this obliteration of limits, as was self-evident to Montaigne

and rediscovered by Camus in his criticism of Sartre,[9] was not an actual or real transcendence of limits so much as an obliviousness in human consciousness of the difference between the perception of reality and the imagination of unreality. It is in this context that Voegelin wrote of a "second reality" (following Musil and Doderer) and Arendt of various "fictions." In other words, an "impatience with limits" experienced by a being that nevertheless is limited, still occurs within reality—indeed, within a cosmos that humans participate in. The conflict between the aspirations of History I and the actuality of History II cannot lead to anything but "blind rage," disorientation, and immoderation "directed against reality." Any conflict *in* reality that is also *with* reality "cannot be settled except through violence, that is to say, through acts directed at the annihilation of that reality that is the limit for the action of the human imagination."[10] We have seen this particular dialectic played out recently in the streets of major cities in the Western world.

Now what?

The complex experience of History I and History II, of ideological modernity and skepticism, leads Schabert to pose the question of whether there are *Gestalten* of human existence that have survived amid the "irregularity" of modernity and that do not share in this irregularity or disorder. The "correction"[11] Schabert proposes was, he said, "astonishing"—it is the existence of constitutional, and so limited, government within the modern world, the progressive drive of which looks limitless, at least on its own History I terms.[12] One may consider the creation of constitutional government a recovery of Aristotle's insight that nobody would do anything if they were not going to reach a limit so that the process (such as progress for ideologically modern individuals) cannot be without limit (*apeiron*).[13] For Schabert, constitutional government reconciles or corrects the limitation of existence within the cosmos and the hybristic aspirations of modernity. Constitutional government, Schabert writes, "hedges in" the limitless aspirations of ideologically modern human beings *and* it is an entirely human creation. The *human* creation of a constitution thus provided a *Gestalt* that limits but also does so in the manner or mode of

self-limitation, not limitation from the outside. In this way modern humanity both rules itself and the world and, because the checks and balances are designed by humans, rejects the givenness of checks and balances. "The constitutional regime is a programming of human self-control." The evidence Schabert introduces to support this argument is familiar enough from the *Federalist Papers*, particularly *Federalist* Nos. 15, 49, and 51. His conclusion looks paradoxical but in fact is self-evident: "Limit and modernity contradict each other. And nonetheless a limit runs through modernity. The limit is visible in the *Gestalt* of the constitutional regime." In other words, constitutional government is the free limitation of human freedom. What could be more modern than that?

A Comment on Tilo Schabert's *The Figure of Modernity*

Glenn Hughes

St. Mary's University

The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch

By Tilo Schabert. De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 212. $99.99

Tilo Schabert's analysis of modern culture and consciousness, *The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch* (2020)—translated from the German original (2018)—has an explanatory but also a remedial purpose. As an explanatory analysis built on impressively learned empirical studies, it describes how the attitudes, orientations, and presuppositions that shape the experiment that we call "modernity" came into being, while explaining why the fundamental aims of this project—to be always *absolutely* new, and to *perfect human command over reality*—are essentially unrealizable, built as they are on contradictions between "civilizational desire and civilizational truth."[14] The remedial character of the book consists in its diagnosis of how specific spiritual imbalances impelled the genesis, and inform the nature, of modern consciousness—so that the reader may participate in a retrieval of existential and spiritual balance. This is a retrieval, Schabert makes clear, that must be grounded in remembrance of what he calls "cosmological consciousness": for, among other things, "modernity" is an experiment in *forgetting* that human beings are participants in a cosmos, in a wholeness of reality within which human beings are given to themselves as creatures with moral and intellectual limitations, the ignoring of which has set the stage for modernity's continual cultural chaos and for the violence it continually enacts in its resistance to the order of being.[15]

The following reflections comment on only one strand in the weave of Schabert's extraordinarily rich book: how such a "forgetting" came to pass. What circumstances in Western intellectual history made it possible for "cosmological consciousness"—that is, explicit awareness of the pre-given order of the wholeness of reality—to undergo widespread "imaginative oblivion?"[16] How could so many moderns *have forgotten* their "place in the cosmos" by losing awareness of the cosmos itself?[17]

First, as Schabert explains, it seems that a distinctive *attitude* had to emerge and grow in cultural power: an attitude of "competition" between humankind and the cosmos, in which the "world" is regarded as increasingly susceptible to human control (through empirical observation, modern scientific explanation and experimentation, and ultimately technological manipulation) and human beings regarded as capable of altering reality to suit their desires and needs.[18] But how could such an attitude of competition and mastery find intellectual and emotional purchase, given the innate awareness in human consciousness that the world and humans are *partners* within a cosmos, both of them emergent from a divine ground to which humans have an obligation of attunement? Only, it turns out, through awareness of the transcendent divine ground—which in medieval and modern Europe means "God"—becoming first attenuated and indistinct, and then eclipsed; or, to be more precise, through the *qualities*, *values*, *and meanings* associated with the reality of the Christian God becoming over some centuries imaginatively (1) absorbed into the world of nature and (2) attached to human powers.

Here it will be useful to introduce a notion from the writings of Eric Voegelin, one of Schabert's teachers. Voegelin explains that the "primordial community of being" is made up of four basic "partners": "God and man [i.e., individual], world and society."[19] In early human epochs, when a *"primary experience of the cosmos"* oriented consciousness, the reality of each of these partners was experienced as imaginatively and conceptually interfused or intermingled with the others; the experience of their "consubstantiality" overrode the experience of their distinctness, with the

transcendence of God imaginatively dispersed in the forms of "intracosmic" divinities, forces, and mysteries.[20] But from the first millennium BCE, the history of humankind has seen the increasingly differentiated appreciation and understanding of *each* of these four partners that make up the community of being in its relative conceptual autonomy and how each partner is *related* to the other partners—with the foundational differentiation being that between transcendent reality (in the West: God) and immanent reality (world and human beings). It is especially fruitful, it seems to me, to consider the discoveries and challenges of religious, philosophical, and intellectual cultures over the last three thousand years in the West (and indeed around the globe) precisely in terms of these multiple, overlapping differentiations.

In the West, ongoing differentiation of the divine partner, God, has meant, among other things, a steadily increasing awareness of the mystery of the Creator-God's transcendence—of the transcendence of transcendence, one might say—and of the challenge of finding and creating symbolic representations of divine presence in world and soul that would do justice to this awareness. In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this challenge was intensified by the intellectual success of a voluntaristic conception of God and nominalist assumptions about Being, which together assisted in imaginatively "removing" God to utter inaccessibility and incomprehensibility. Cultural conditions moved into place for, not a sudden forgetfulness about God, but a cultural transformation entailing, on the one hand, a gradually increasing assimilation by "nature" (*natura*) of divine powers and functions and, on the other hand, a shift in anthropological assumptions wherein human beings more and more accorded to themselves the titles, privileges, and prerogatives of divine being. Schabert expertly guides the reader through this transformative process.

Regarding the transformation with respect to "nature," Schabert describes (and illuminates with diagrams) how in Western thought the powers and values associated with the divine ground became increasingly ascribed to "an idea of a 'nature' which now itself creates and conserves all things in the world," functions once

attributed only to God.[21] As Schabert explains, this transition involved a crucial existential shift: from human beings having as the perceptual basis of their experiencing of reality a "cosmos of the world," in which the divine partner is recognized to be both mysteriously transcendent *and* divinely present as the formative ground of world and human consciousness, to human beings having as the perceptual basis of their experiencing of reality a "world of nature." This reduction of "cosmos" to "nature" is, as Schabert writes, "the decisive element in the genesis of modernity."[22] And, as he underscores in a masterly analytic note, it is this new "worldview" that underlay the development of the instruments of the natural sciences. That is, the rise of the natural sciences is better understood as a symptom, not as the cause, of the modern worldview; as Schabert writes, the "worldview of modernity cannot be explained through the natural sciences; it is rather the natural sciences that demand to be explained by the worldview of modernity."[23] In other words, modern natural scientific methods and their explosive explanatory results were not just historically "stumbled upon," as if the new forms of empirical method involving observation, mathematical analysis, and experimentation suddenly occurred to the Western mind toward the end of the Middle Ages. One might more accurately say that an attitude *permitting* the domination of the natural world by humankind was a needed preliminary and, notably, that this "domineering attitude of humans toward the world could arise only in consequence of a *partial obscuring of reality within human perception*," that is, by the obscuring of the transcendent God as both the creating and sustaining ground of reality *and* as a commanding divine presence in both nature and human intellects.[24]

By the logic of existential imagination, therefore, if human beings are to take on the role of becoming the masters and controllers of nature to the extent of uncovering her utmost "inner chambers" and "secrets" so as to found on the new sciences a *regnum hominis*, as Francis Bacon put it, and to the exalted condition envisioned by Descartes when, in Schabert's words, "human beings [would be] able to themselves produce what nature produces," then human beings cannot but arrogate to themselves both the *status* of

God in relationship to the world of nature and the *attributes* of divine being with regard to knowledge of and power over nature.[25] And this is what occurs, with steadily advancing consistency, from the early modern period up to the present. Already Galileo stated explicitly that there is no qualitative difference between divine and human knowledge,[26] and Descartes had insisted in his *Meditations* that although God is indeed the creator of human free will, human freedom is as "perfect" as God's in that "it is limited by no boundaries whatsoever."[27] And while Descartes, as Schabert states, still "shrank from the attempt to *wholly equate the meaning of the real* with the self-certainty of the human *ego*," that identity would in historical short order be "postulated by an Enlightenment *philosophe*, namely Rousseau."[28] From the eighteenth century forward, we see come to cultural dominance in the West anthropological views in which human beings ascribe to themselves the powers and value of the divine *realissimum*: first, in seeing themselves as omnipotent masters of nature, and second, in increasingly imagining themselves to be the ground of all meaning.

It appears, then, that Schabert's arguments support the philosophical conclusion that it is possible to forget the divine partner in the primordial community of being—to forget the presence and truth of God— only if humankind and nature are felt and conceived as possessing *between them* the dimensions of meaning that properly belong to the transcendent divine ground. If this transition is successful, as it has been in the career of modernity, then—to use Voegelin's explanatory language —it can be imagined that in the community of being there are only *three* partners: man, society, and nature (world); and with the whole of reality reduced imaginatively to human masters and a manipulable (social and natural) world, humans can come to collectively believe that—since there is no "pre-given" order of the world with limits and natures established by God (72)—any features or orders they do not like about reality may "at will be changed, discarded, or artificially replaced" (3) and, further, that this can occur without consequences such as those symbolized by ancient Greek wisdom as the *nemesis* incurred by human *hybris*.[29]

And so, in accord with the emboldening spirit of modernity, the last few centuries have seen a growing readiness among persons (not least in the sphere of political life) to aim at "the annihilation of . . . reality that is the limit for the action of the human imagination"—encouraged by the miraculous advances of technologies, of course, but also by the inherent *need*, as Schabert explains in his penultimate chapter, for modernity to simultaneously destroy "the past" up to and including the most recent past, which it itself has attempted to establish, and to try to achieve perfections (of social life, of political arrangements, of cultural gratifications, of the "overcoming" of unpleasant features of life in the world) that in fact cannot be attained.[30] Thus modernity, "a process that runs against itself," is "a conflict *with* reality *in* reality"—a competition between humankind and world—that "cannot be settled *except through violence*."[31] And, as James Greenaway notes in his foreword, "often the first victims" of this modern spirit of "limitless domination" issuing in violence are other human beings, those targeted as impediments to perfecting the world, with the assumption of "divine status" by some persons correlated to the "grinding dehumanization" of others.[32] As the poet and literary critic Randall Jarrell once remarked, "Most of us know, now, that Rousseau was wrong: that man, when you knock his chains off, sets up the death camps."[33]

Once one gains adequate understanding of "the figure of modernity," however, it becomes apparent—as Schabert indicates—that out of it must come the defeat of the self-contradiction that modernity is and a rediscovery of the "cosmos" with its transcendent divine partner—however the latter is, or may become, symbolized. Modernity's exhausting self-cancellation and destructiveness ever more insistently evoke remembrance of (1) the limits that are given within the order of being to human aspirations and capabilities (limits already reflected in the structure of the constitutional regime, the subject of Schabert's final chapter), (2) the demonic consequences of the attempted self-apotheosis of humankind, and (3) the remedial and constructive impact of recovering wisdoms of past traditions. As Schabert writes at the conclusion of his Prolegomenon, written for the English edition: "The more we

comprehend modernity, the more we realize that it pioneers the formulation of a cosmology."[34] For privations cannot but proclaim that of which they are privations; major blunders about human knowing and the order of being, simply by being deformations and truncations, "invite reversal"; and analyses such as Schabert's, by illuminating what "the figure of modernity" truly is, reveal how the experience of "the cosmos of the world," grounded in God, is in fact always present and available to us.[35]

Instructing Modernity: Tilo Schabert's *The Figure of Modernity*

S. F. McGuire

Villanova University

The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch

By Tilo Schabert. De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 212. $99.99

In the introduction to *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville confesses to writing "under the pressure of a sort of religious terror . . . produced by the sight of this irresistible revolution that for so many centuries has marched over all obstacles."[36] The "irresistible revolution" he has in mind is the modern turn toward equality. He also calls this turn a "providential fact." Insofar as Tocqueville identifies equality as the essence of modernity, these passages express his sense that the modern world is characterized by the unstoppable historical unfolding of the logic of an idea—namely, equality.

In *The Figure of Modernity*, Tilo Schabert also characterizes modernity as the unfolding logic of an idea, although not with the same sense of historical compulsion one finds in Tocqueville. In Schabert's account, the idea that most fundamentally characterizes modernity is limitlessness (which is also a feature of the equality Tocqueville analyzes). Whereas previous generations understood themselves to be living within a cosmos—an order of being that structured and placed limits on their lives—modern human beings imagine they can do anything, and they treat existing limits as temporary obstacles rather than as the perennial structures of their existence. For several hundred years now, consciousness of living in a cosmos constituted by "God and man, world and society" has been replaced by human self-deification and the modern

understanding of nature as the stuff we manipulate to serve our endless pursuit of progress.

As his language in the above-quoted passages suggests, Tocqueville does not think we can resist the democratic revolution in modernity. In fact, he argues that efforts to do so have unwittingly served its progress: "[A]ll have worked in common, some despite themselves, others without knowing it, as blind instruments in the hand of God" and "all events, like all men, serve its development."[37] Still, he does believe we can direct it. A place for human freedom remains in his account. Thus, he claims that "the first duty imposed on those who direct society in our day" is to "instruct democracy"[38]— not to reverse or oppose it, but to channel it in a way that serves the human good. Tocqueville is concerned about various features or tendencies of modern equality—universal leveling, tyranny of the majority, soft despotism—but he accepts, even embraces, the development of democracy and seeks to govern and moderate it.

Schabert also seeks to instruct modernity, so to speak. He does not set out simply to catalogue the ills of modernity or to write a screed against it. Rather, like the work of his teacher, Eric Voegelin, his purpose is both diagnostic and therapeutic.[39] In addition to defining modernity and tracing its development in various fields of human activity, he also explains why the modern idea is problematic, and he indicates how its excesses have been and can be corrected. Defining modernity is itself part of his effort to instruct it. Schabert concludes that the "world of modernity is a paradox."[40] His argument is that the governing idea of modernity—the pursuit of limitless newness—means that modernity never actually arrives: "while it is meant to be actualized, it is destined never to be actualized."[41] As such, modernity is therefore "always its own crisis."[42] His account hits with particular force when he argues that "phenomena of violence" are what make "modern society modern."[43] Modernity is, as they like to say in Silicon Valley, disruptive. It seeks to overcome all limits, traditions, rules, and orders. The result is perpetual chaos, disorientation, and, yes, violence.

Schabert also seeks to show how modernity leads to a renewed recognition of the cosmos. As he writes in the Prolegomenon to the

English edition, "[T]he more we comprehend modernity, the more we realize that it pioneers the formulation of a cosmology."[44] While the modern mind forgets or rejects cosmological consciousness, it cannot help but encounter the forms or structures of the cosmos in which it is nevertheless still contained. Thus, "a full experience of modernity . . . counters modernity."[45] Schabert points to two fields of existence in which the idea of modernity must still contend with the reality of the cosmos: architecture and politics. He treats architecture extensively in other publications but recapitulates in this book his insight that architecture is a field that must submit to reality: "Architecture . . . keeps humans from letting their imagination run its own course. As builders, architects, city planners, they simply cannot opt out entirely from respecting the primary *Gestalt* of things"[46] In the absence of cosmological consciousness, the cosmos remains. As he observes, if we want a room to be a room, it will have to have walls and an entrance.[47] Modern architects can try to push the limits, but they will have to concede their existence in the end.

An important question is whether the instruction or correction of modernity comes from outside or within modernity. This question bears on how we evaluate modernity and how we ought to respond to it. Schabert's discussion of architecture suggests that the correction comes from outside modernity in the sense that despite our modern consciousness the form of the world imposes itself on us just as it has always done. Things appear different in the case of modern constitutional government, to which Schabert devotes the last chapter of the book. In this case Schabert seems to indicate that it is a modern solution to a modern problem, just as James Madison offered "a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government" in *Federalist* No. 10. Schabert refers to modern constitutional government as "a peculiarity of the civilizational enterprise of modernity which is, from the perspective of the ideology of modernity, quite astounding." Why? Because it is an instance of moderns recognizing and enforcing limits: "the rulers must be fundamentally and constantly fenced in . . . by the *limits* set to the exercise of political power by the constitution and

the laws."[48] This leads Schabert to ask, "How does modernity show itself here, in an achievement which has certainly been brought about by modernity itself but which is quite different from its other effects?"[49] He also calls this form of government a form of "self-control" and "self-limitation."[50] Thus, Schabert appears to hold up the modern constitutional regime as a rediscovery of limits, but he also characterizes it as a specifically modern construction in response to the modern devotion to freedom.

Schabert's account of constitutional government is reminiscent of Tocqueville's reflections at the end of *Democracy in America* where he discusses ways of constraining the limitlessness of modern democracy. Tocqueville identifies associations, freedom of the press, and judicial power as important restraints on social power. At least some of these could be characterized as democratic solutions to democratic problems. Of the press in particular, he says that it is "the democratic instrument of freedom par excellence" (a troubling thought for Americans today). Especially close to Schabert's focus on *Gestalten* is Tocqueville's observation that "men who live in democratic centuries do not readily comprehend the utility of forms." This is precisely why they are so important in democratic times: "The inconvenience that men in democracies find in forms is, however, what renders them so useful to freedom."[51] It is worth noting that Tocqueville himself is taking a modern view here insofar as he considers forms in terms of their utility, rather than their sacredness, for example. In any event, Schabert would likely agree with Tocqueville's general conclusion that "the first object of the legislator in the age we are entering" is "to fix extended, but visible and immovable, limits for social power; to give to particular persons certain rights and to guarantee them the uncontested enjoyment of these rights; to preserve for the individual the little independence, force, and originality that remain to him; to elevate him beside society and to sustain him before it."[52]

Tocqueville goes yet one step further in his analysis of modern democracy: he acknowledges that there is good in it. While not an unquestioning partisan of equality, he is not simply a critic of it either. In the end, he appears to praise it, concluding that "equality

is perhaps less elevated; but it is more just, and its justice makes for its greatness and its beauty."[53] Thus, Tocqueville looks for democratic means to instruct democracy not simply for historical reasons but for principled ones as well. It is not just that democracy is our inescapable fate in modernity; Tocqueville also seems to think that it better serves human dignity.

This is certainly the general position of the tradition of modern thought beginning with Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*. Setting aside the outcome of Rousseau's own quest to reconcile the tension between freedom and wholeness in modernity, he initiates a line of philosophical reflection questioning whether earlier modern accounts of reason serve the human good.[54] Following his lead, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, and others all attempt to defend the modern commitment to freedom while also seeking reconciliation with God, world, and society.[55] Kant's idea of autonomy is a case in point. He juxtaposes it to heteronomy, thus suggesting there is no legitimate authority outside the individual human mind. At the same time, he argues for a universal moral law that is binding on all human wills and knowable by all. This is certainly not ancient or medieval cosmological consciousness, but it is not limitlessness either. Rather, it is a free limit on freedom. In that respect, it seems similar to Schabert's account of constitutional government, but in the field of morality. Like Rousseau's attempt, Kant's project might not be completely successful in the end, but it nevertheless exemplifies how these modern philosophers continue to recognize the need for, and seek ways to articulate and justify, limits.

In any event, the point is that there is a tradition of modern thinkers, of which Tocqueville is also a member in his own way, who seek to uphold but correct modernity by finding a way to bring freedom and order together. They do this because they see good in the modern turn to freedom but recognize the need to rediscover order. Schabert references the thinkers listed in the previous paragraph, but his account of modernity in this book focuses on earlier thinkers and traditions in which it originated and crystalized. It would be interesting to know what he thinks of the efforts of

Rousseau and those who come after him who wish to redirect modernity without abandoning it. Could we see their efforts as attempts to find modern solutions to modern problems?

As Schabert details masterfully in his book, modernity is paradoxical. But are there versions of it, or possibilities within it, that are also good? Or are modern inventions such as constitutional government merely the best substitutes we have for cosmological consciousness, given that it is our historical fate to live in an age defined most prominently by the idea of modernity?

Cosmology Ancient and Modern: A Review of Tilo Schabert's *The Figure of Modernity*

Carol B. Cooper
University of Houston

The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch

By Tilo Schabert. De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 212. $99.99

Like a camera lens, *The Figure of Modernity* gazes through the aperture of a handful of related themes in order to survey more clearly a broad landscape of modern history and civilization. The chosen themes are all examples of the modern turn away from the ancient and medieval "cosmological" way of relating to nature and reality. They include historical arrogance, the presumption to master nature scientifically, an obsession with newness and progress, and a tendency to delusion with concomitant violence against reality. These primary aspects of modernism are painstakingly documented, with examples ranging from the obscure (Renaissance court manners and surrealist art manifestos) to the standard (Bacon, Montaigne, and Descartes all receive thorough treatment). Tilo Schabert's final chapter on prudent constitutionalism provides an unexpected ray of hope and artfully counters those who would throw liberal politics out with the modernist bathwater.

The main contention of the book is that "the switch from the cosmos of the world to the world of nature did not represent a progress in the European understanding of reality, as the moderns themselves like to think, but rather a step back."[56] Technological and scientific innovation have been purchased at a steep cost in meaning, belonging, and trust in one's earthly and bodily existence.

Schabert convincingly traces a host of examples of modern aliena-
tion back to the loss of this cosmological sense.

Yet, in spite of whatever genuine gains modernity has made,
Schabert argues, it has never actualized itself but remains in a state
of perpetual crisis. In one of the most penetrating analyses of the
book, he diagnoses the schizophrenia of modernity in terms of
what he calls "History I" and "History II." The story the modern
age tells about itself—History I—is "supposed to begin with the
break with all *antiquitas*" and end with "humankind's unrestricted
control of nature, that is to say, in a *regnum hominis*."[57] But this
dream never came true; what "actually took place"—that is, History
II—is the story of how humankind "laid waste to, and partially
destroyed the world of nature," thereby making it "uninhabitable
for itself."[58] The distance between these two stories is hardly recog-
nized, though, because the story of History I is so much more
appealing to the modern imagination than the reality of History II.

And this modern imagination—in both its tyranny and its
blindness—also receives an insightful treatment. Modern human-
ity is a narcissist, not only in its arrogance and pride but also in the
way it clings to its imaginary superego, challenging anyone or
anything that dares trouble the powerful story it tells itself.[59]
Because moderns "no longer perceive the limits inherent to real-
ity," their "immoderation is directed against reality" itself.[60] Given
that moderns are perpetually stymied in this futile endeavor, it is
no wonder that imaginary power morphs into very real violence.[61]
The only other option, after all, is to accept a limited reality in place
of a limitless dream-world. Schabert's final chapter shows how
constitutional political systems represent one instance of moder-
nity choosing to accept such limitations. The significance and
success of this example imply that there may be other such oppor-
tunities for human beings exhausted from bearing the unbearable
hubris of the modern age.

I would like to raise one reservation, one challenge, and one
question.

The reservation has to do with the way *The Figure of Modernity*
treats modernity, modern humankind, and the "modern mentality"

as a monolithic, homogeneous entity: "the mental world of a whole civilization."[62] And not only as a monolith, but as an *anthropomorphized* monolith, possessing agency and foresight. This is the case from the first line of the book:

> Beginning in the 17th century, the European civilization undertook an experiment that was unique in the history of humanity: the world originally given to humankind was to be replaced by a different world, in which humankind would contemplate the image of itself created of its own godlike omnipotence. No other civilization had ever conceived and drawn up such a project.[63]

This treatment continues through the rest of the book. This "civilization" or its "modern mentality" has intentions and motives; it is "set on bringing about chaos"; it made a "decision to undertake the experiment of modernity" in spite of consequences it somehow is implied to have known and considered in advance.[64] "What exactly could prompt humanity to switch worlds in this manner?" is asked as if the exchange were merely transactional and the costs accepted up front.[65] The question of how the modern project came to be first plausible, then ubiquitous on a civilizational scale is vitally important, but treating as the willful agent the change itself, or the "mindset" of the "humanity" who lived through the change, obscures rather than clarifies the analysis.

Some individual thinkers quoted in the book seemed to have a clear agenda for the application of modern science, but this is not the same as a demonstration of how their ideas gained broad currency. On the contrary, the quotes are so thoroughly, embarrassingly overconfident that the reader is even *more* puzzled as to how such ideas could have been taken seriously by anyone else. The features of the shift are documented convincingly, but this only covers the *how*, not the *why*:

> What had happened in the time between the *Canticle of the Sun* and the *Pensées* that might explain why, while

Francis' world had been a community of living beings, Pascal's consisted of geometrical spaces? What ideas had pre-modern humanity associated with the symbol "cosmos," for which modern humanity would substitute the symbol "nature"?[66]

These two questions are not, in my view, asking the same thing. Placed together in this manner, they seem to imply that "what happened" was a matter of the "substitution" of ideas and symbols—again, as if it were a deliberately chosen exchange. But the essential problem is not which ideas were substituted as if *by* modern humanity but how and *why* modern humans came to accept and use and prefer the substitution on a mass scale.

The challenge is related to this reservation. In treating both the modern mentality and the earlier cosmological worldview monolithically, the book also seems to treat them as *opposite* ends of the spectrum in their approach to nature. Where modernity imagines human beings seek to have absolute power over a demystified and instrumentalized nature, the cosmological view locates humans in a balanced relationship with a meaningful, enchanted, orderly whole. In this view, nature encompasses and pervades human life; the order of the cosmos informs the order of world, society, and soul.

What seems to be missing from this dichotomy is the extent to which this cosmology is already a human conception imposed on a nature that is, after all, not so very orderly. Examples from the ancient world bear out this interplay between human and nature, order and chaos, civilization and caprice. One thinks of the ancient Greek trope of identifying the feminine with the monstrous and irrational and the masculine with the civilized and rational, both in symbolic art and actual politics, where women were confined to the despotic, private realm of natural, biological necessity. Notably, the examples of modern hubristic treatments of nature quoted in *The Figure of Modernity* still persist in referring to nature as feminine, often contemptuously—a notion seemingly inherited from somewhere.[67]

Some contemporary accounts of the cosmological mentality retain an awareness of its unpredictable depths. For example, when Robertson Davies describes what he calls "the Magian World View," a term borrowed from Spengler, he incorporates both enchanted wonder and natural chaos: "poetry and wonder which might reveal themselves in the dunghill, and. . . the dunghill that lurks in poetry and wonder. . . . Wonder is marvellous but it is also cruel, cruel, cruel."[68] To leave these darker aspects out of the description is to imply that the idea of a *cosmos* itself is a declaration of victory by order over the chaos of raw nature. A predictable, stable cosmos is superior for human habitation than a fickle one, because that predictability can be put to *use*. But usefulness is ever only one step away from exploitation, and the cosmological emphasis on orderliness is already a step in that direction.

I will push the challenge one step further: might the insistence on seeing the cosmos as primarily *orderly* also be a matter of errant *imagination*? The patterns of nature are not necessarily more obvious than its arbitrariness. To see the cosmos as *essentially* orderly, and examples to the contrary as unremarkable exceptions to a general rule, is a result of an imaginative interpretation. Even in her patterns nature approximates, surprises, fudges her own rules. To overlook this fact and blithely assert the existence of something like "natural justice"—to take one example from the ancient cosmological world—is to engage in a flight of fancy that arguably differs only in degree, not in kind, from the reality-defying imagination of the moderns as described in *The Figure of Modernity*.

My point is not to play devil's advocate on behalf of a nihilistic view of nature. What I am trying to argue is that the modern mentality is not necessarily a radical break with the cosmological—a "completely new understanding of the human position in the world"—but could quite plausibly be seen as a continuation or intensification of it, or of impulses already latent within it.[69] At best, the cosmological is an intermediary position between a fatalistic submission to capricious nature and the bloodthirsty gods, on the one hand, and a fantastical subjection of pliant, inert nature to bloodthirsty humans, on the other. Perhaps this intermediary

position is a fruitful tension, where modernity represents an attempt to break the tension altogether. But without some recognition of the chaotic power of nature to round it out, the image of cosmological harmony risks seeming too quaint to be believed and thus ripe for disillusion and supersession.

The question I am left with is what kind of future resolutions might be possible and where one should look for them. The first half of the book seems to emphasize the prudence, balance, wisdom, and homeliness of the "cosmological" mentality, and what was lost when that way of being in the world was exchanged for the modern mentality. The argument seems to imply that the solution lies in regaining what was lost. The final chapter demonstrates the success of a modern system built with a respect for natural limits—an example, this chapter asserts, of a cosmological form of human existence that "survived in the midst of the irregularity of modernity."[70] Yet, a few pages later, the same example is described in different terms: "In the construction of the constitutional regime, modernity created a *Gestalt* that is entirely its own and which nonetheless has always been in existence," since it is derived from the universal experience of bodily limitation.[71]

This all makes excellent sense in terms of the analysis itself and is, gratifyingly, a much more nuanced, realistic, and hopeful approach than a revanchist desire for a re-enchanted world. But since constitutionalism is strongly implied to be only one example among others, and yet the possibility of others is left open for the reader to ponder, the book leads me to ask where and how to look for them. Is the task, in the words of Erazim Kohák, one of "uncovering the forgotten sense of the cosmos and our lives therein"?[72] Or is it to identify those persistent natural limitations that can become relevant immediately on being brought into awareness—the many ways in which, as writer Annie Dillard says, "we're here under conditions, and you either accept them or fight them, but the conditions aren't going to change at all . . . so you might as well accept them"?[73] Or is the task to find and form a peculiarly modern style of prudent limitation, to "substitute" a new, more sober life-world for the aging modern one? Essentially, I am asking whether

The Figure of Modernity is a key to unlocking only the historical secrets of modernity's irregularity or also the doorways to a more balanced and regular future?

   That this book presents the reader with such specific questions is evidence of its value. It is distinguished from a slew of academic meditations on modernity by its detailed textual analysis and its surprising but compelling conclusion of hope. Despite the concern he expresses in the Prolegomenon that modern ears will be unwilling or unable to engage with his argument and evidence, Schabert's analysis is consistently recognizable, if sometimes uncomfortable, and ultimately encouraging. The key is to understand that modernity carries the seeds of its own corrective, not of its own demise, and "human nature appears to be resilient."[74]

The Perennity of Diversity: Response to Critics

Tilo Schabert
University of Erlangen

The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch
By Tilo Schabert. De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 212. $99.99

The Notion of "Cosmos"

I gratefully reply to the preceding comments on *The Figure of Modernity*. They honor me in pushing the consideration of the book to a height at which one locates usually all-inclusive treatises such as "Principles of Civilisation," "A General Theory of Politics," or "The Time of Humankind: Past, Presence, Future." However, I have never written such a treatise, nor shall I ever write one. As I explained on other occasions, I have always felt that such treatises are inadequate in view of the diversity and fluidity of the political and historical existence of humans within the diversity and fluidity of reality.[75] Hence I may disappoint some expectations raised in the comments. Yet, my replies will form an argument that will, I hope, be understood as indeed a systematic one. It will be built on various studies I have formerly undertaken.

At the beginning of *The Figure of Modernity* I used the expressions "framework of a primary order" and "encompassing reality" to define the notion of cosmos. Then I continued to use that notion to maintain the clarity of my expositions while implying it means a "pattern," and not a homely world full of enchantment. The replacement of "cosmos" by the physical entity "nature," which the moderns have been thinking of, could simply not succeed because the patterns, the *Gestalten* that together are our cosmos, are

absolutely and perennially real: numbers, space, bodies, time (to name a few). They precede all human activity, temporally as well as systematically.[76]

All in the world is not one but many, and, hence, exists by numbers, and we, the humans, numerous as we are, have so many difficulties in getting entities of "one" together again, however provisional and fragile. That's why politics, our attempt at building and preserving societies—a one out of many—is such an excellent example for studying and apprehending the diversity and fluidity of reality.

To everything that there is in this world is given a spatial presence and within space a bodily presence. One of the eschatological dreams of the moderns, a state of universal peace, is simply irrational because of the potential of encroachment that inheres in all bodies; observe the bodily behavior of people in a crowded subway at rush hour.[77]

Our universe, we are told, is expanding. But, then, we may ask: *Whereto* does it expand? And *wherein*? Is our universe perhaps surrounded by a greater one where indeed it can grow? We are also told that our universe began with a "Big Bang." But, then, we may ask: What was *before* it and *where* did it happen? In considering these questions we approach a realm of mystery. The experience of such a mystery is vouched by contemporary astronomy and thus has well "survived" modernity.

A framework of a primary order, we may conclude, is well in place *in* this world, *for* this world, *through* this world. To presume that modernity can touch it seems a strange, even comic idea.

The Time Structure Humans Live In

Moderns presuppose a *linear* time axis along which human history positively evolves. That is why they speak of an ever-greater advancement of humankind, of "progress." In response to the issue of the impact of modern ideology, raised in the comments, I wish to emphasize the *cyclical, periodic perception of time* in accordance with which *all* humans live, regardless of modernity. Or do you not celebrate every year, hence periodically, hence in a cosmological

sense, your birthday? Or religious and public holidays? Do you not welcome, after one year is over, a *new* year? All of us return every so often to new beginnings, recreate a cosmos of regular sequels in the dimension of time.

Democratic elections are another example of a generally practiced periodicity. There are cosmological elements in them: the languages of renewal, of rebirth and refounding, coined by successive candidates, is applied to changes of personnel, initiations of new programs, of new legislation.

"Cosmos" and "Chaos"

Enthusiasm for the notion of "nature" led the party of moderns to deviate from that classical terminological pair on which cosmologies have generally been built: Cosmos versus Chaos. This was a singular deed, a break—or rather the attempt at a break—with the worldviews informing European civilization since its earliest times. The struggle for a cosmos of order against forces that threaten chaos and could bring it about has *unceasingly* been a subject of religious, philosophical, and poetic reflections, articulations, and representations in Europe throughout the centuries—and during the "modern" age as well.[78] All the propagation of the modern ideology couldn't entirely suppress the cosmological perception of a stability and constancy of human life to be striven for and to be kept from falling into disorder. The moderns themselves, though, as I pointed out in *The Figure of Modernity*, consequently went the way toward chaos, in looking there for an "order" that made them totally "free." They succeeded and they failed. The encompassing *Gestalten* that precede the existence of humans can be ignored, up to a point. But then they make themselves felt—if you wish to live in this world. Voluntary death is the only way out of the *Gestalten*. All our fellow humans who simply continue with their daily routines—rituals, as it were—falsify modernity.

The Test: The Question of Evil

All modern thinking starts with this presumption: human reason—a reason recognizing only the rationalism of its functioning—is the sole

authority. Great systems of thought were built upon this presumption. They may have the effect of astounding us. It seems that the world is explained. Is it, indeed? We may test this notion by asking, What have the moderns to say about the question of evil? Evil is in the world and needs to be accounted for. Why? For the obvious reason that ways have to be found as to how it can be or will be conquered.

Religions, of course, impart such ways, put them, in fact, at the center of their teachings. Think of the Fall in Christianity, or the struggle between two divinities, a good and an evil one, in dualistic cosmologies. Classical philosophy—let's think of Plato or Aristotle— identified the human soul as the place where the struggle between good and evil is fought. The *psyche* is an area of multiple forces, and this multiplicity is by itself not ordered. A governing of it is required; otherwise the *psyche* plunges into an *anarchia animae* (Philo of Alexandria). Governing the *psyche* is a continuing effort that takes on different forms—for instance, an aristocratic one that may engender an aristocracy under the influence of many aristo-cratically ordered souls. Or a paradigmatic society may emerge, ordered by prudence and justice, if in many souls an *eros philosophos* rules over the society of psychic forces.[79]

Traditionally, then, the origin of evil and the continuing presence of evil in the world were associated with and located in the structure of reality and the disposition of human nature. To the moderns this was unacceptable. Reason, their Queen, is innocent. She has to be, otherwise she couldn't be the Sovereign of the world. It is she in whom, with whom, and through whom the essence of reality lives: justice, liberty, fulfilment. The origin of evil does not lie in the fabric of reality or in human nature. It has to be made out elsewhere. But where?

The burden of this question led Rousseau to blame society for having caused all evil by its development, Kant to identify evil with an unfinished disposition of humankind that induces it to bring into being a progressive development—called "history"—toward a state of perfection, and Hegel to declare evil to be the inevitable, but eventually surmounted phase of alienation in the process of the self-realization of the spirit. In all three cases—chosen here because

of their representative significance—ambitious bodies of thought served to get rid of this burden: to explain evil.[80] Responses were given, responses on crutches, I should say, but one response was forbidden: it is within the human soul that evil resides. Of course, this response had to be eclipsed. What an insult, such a response, to the modern human being on the way to her or his divinity!

The Party of Modernity

In *The Figure of Modernity* I was concerned with describing and analyzing the gradual development of the modern worldview on the level of *intellectual* history. I did not dwell on the spread of this worldview on the *sociological* level. I took this approach for two reasons: First, given how complex the material concerning modernity is, I wished to secure at least the thread of the intellectual origins and evolution of modernity. Second, there does exist a considerable body of scholarship regarding the historical sociology of modernity. On the basis of that body of scholarship a historical sociology of modernity could indeed be written. But this would be a book quite different from the one I had in mind.

Nevertheless, useful here might be a few remarks on the *Party of Modernity*, on those people who developed, adopted, and propagated modern ideas and, at the advanced stage, the ideology of modernity. This party had precursors of whom I speak in *The Figure of Modernity*: the School of Chartres, Giordano Bruno, Pomponazzi, Telesio. The latter were followed, in Italy and France, by Giulio Cesare Vanini (1585–1619), Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), and Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653); these individuals are described in the literature as "free-thinkers" or, in French, *libertins érudits*. They successfully prepared the ground for the Enlightenment, that period during which the party of modernity became a mass movement, half underground, half aboveground. Its instruments were books, pamphlets, tracts.[81] In France, the Jesuits tried very hard to suppress the spread of freethinking but lost their battle in the course of the eighteenth century. Everywhere in Europe everyone who could, read the writings put forth by the party of modernity.

History I and History II

The comments emphasized the distinction I made between History I and History II in *The Figure of Modernity*. There is agreement, then, that modernity is not fully with us. What, however, do we have to expect? My last chapter on modern constitutionalism received particular attention. The commentators appreciated the chapter's underlying intention: let's see that within modernity there are limits set by moderns. And, yes, a further question logically follows: Is this all? My answer is no, by no means. Modernity is with us, but it has never been with us everywhere, and wherever we look, its failings are noted and nonmodern modes and conditions of life are continued, or restored, or newly built.[82]

This is the general answer. An empirical answer can be given only by a large-scale study. Its theoretical starting point would have to be the recognition and demonstration of all the diversity of human life in the diversity of this world. This diversity is perennial. It surpasses modernity.

The manifold spheres of the human world and the state of modernity in them have to be considered. In *The Figure of Modernity*, I briefly discuss some instances. As to each, the question of modernity—how far modernity has advanced, whether it has advanced at all, whether and how its impact is removed—ought to be extensively examined. I have undertaken such an examination with regard to cities and city architecture.[83] In other studies I have tried to show that in the realm of governments, classical structures of governing—*Gestalten* again!—have prevailed, irrespective of all the modernity of the governmental setup and devices.[84]

Equally, all the geographical diversity of the human world should be made the *terminus a quo* for researching the question of modernity. In most European cities, for instance, submission to the automobile, this quintessential modern device, which boosted throughout the 1970s, has increasingly been rejected as urban spaces are remade into human spaces. Civic associations worldwide advocate and fight for surroundings—in the countryside, in villages, in towns and urban neighborhoods—that offer the quality of a truly human habitat. The *polis* does not die. Mass society of atomized individuals is a myth.

Nor should we ignore that other example of a great political renaissance comparable to the sustainment of wisdom, prudence, and limitations through constitutional government. I think of the construction of a unified Europe. Its founding fathers, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi, acted under the experience of those three political offspring of modernity in Europe—nationalism, the spirit of conquest, and totalitarianism. Only a state of unification would neutralize in Europe the compulsions born all over the continent along with these offspring and would establish instead a general regime of political and judicial limitations. The member states of the European Union lost the sovereignty of waging war against each other. And they gained the sovereignty of peace.

Notes

1. This is my formulation, not Schabert's. For details, see Barry Cooper, *Action into Nature: An Essay on the Meaning of Technology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).
2. Tilo Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity: On the Irregularity of an Epoch*, trans. Javier Ibáñez-Noé (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 50.
3. Ibid., 79–81.
4. Ibid., 27–28.
5. Ibid., 82–105.
6. Ibid., 162.
7. Ibid., 152–53.
8. Ibid., 158.
9. Ibid., 157–58.
10. Ibid., 158.
11. Ibid., 9.
12. Ibid., 163.
13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. 1, bks. 1–9, trans. Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library 271 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 994b–c.
14. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, xxxi.
15. Ibid., 9.
16. Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, ed. Ellis Sandoz, vol. 5 of *Order in History*, vol. 14 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 76–77.
17. James Greenway, forward in Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, xix.
18. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 3.

19. Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, ed. Maurice P. Hogan, vol. 1 of *Order and History*, vol. 14 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 39.

20. Eric Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, ed. Michael Franz, vol. 4 of *Order and History*, vol. 17 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 118–28. Italics added.

21. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 57.

22. Ibid., 45.

23. Ibid., 46.

24. Ibid., 72. Italics added.

25. Ibid., 112–13, 112.

26. Ibid., 75.

27. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 38.

28. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 188. Italics added.

29. Ibid., xxiii–xxiv.

30. Ibid., 158.

31. Ibid., 125, 158. Final italics added.

32. Greenway, forward, xv.

33. Randall Jarrell, *No Other Book: Selected Essays*, ed. Brad Leithauser (HarperCollins, 1999), 278.

34. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, xxxi.

35. Bernard Longergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 3 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 413–15.

36. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 6.

37. Ibid., 6.

38. Ibid., 7.

39. James Greenaway also notes this feature in his illuminating preface to the English edition of the book.

40. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 152.

41. Ibid., xxvi.

42. Ibid., 151.

43. Ibid., 149.

44. Ibid., xxxi.

45. Ibid., xxx.

46. Ibid., xxix.

47. Ibid., xxviii.

48. Ibid., 163.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Tocqueville, *Demcocracy in America*, 669.
52. Ibid., 672.
53. Ibid., 675.
54. Richard Velkley, *Being after Rousseau* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
55. David Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
56. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 70.
57. Ibid., 123.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 104.
60. Ibid., 158.
61. Ibid., 151, 160.
62. Ibid., 150.
63. Ibid., 1.
64. Ibid., 150, 80.
65. Ibid., 62.
66. Ibid., 50.
67. Ibid., 112, 114, 119, 122.
68. Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 293–94.
69. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, 49.
70. Ibid., 162.
71. Ibid., 166.
72. Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 26.
73. David Remnick, "Episode 28: Annie Dillard, Anohni's New Sound, and Torture in a Florida Prison," April 29, 2016, in *New Yorker Radio Hour* (podcast audio), https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/the-new-yorker-radio-hour/episode-28-annie-dillard-anohnis-new-sound-and-torture-in-a-florida-prison.
74. Schabert, *The Figure of Modernity*, xxx.
75. Tilo Schabert, *Boston Politics: The Creativity of Power* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 271ff.; *The Second Birth: On the Political Beginnings of Human Existence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); "Response to 'The Figure of Modernity' & The Cosmology of the

Architecture of Cities," *VoegelinView*, January 11, 2021, https://voegelinview.com/response-to-the-figure-of-modernity-the-cosmology-of-the-architecture-of-cities/.

76. Schabert, *The Second Birth*.

77. Schabert, *The Second Birth*, 15–31; "Die Politik der Körper," *Jahrbuch Politisches Denken 2018* 28:123–36.

78. Tilo Schabert, "Chaos," in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Setti (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 190–91; Tilo Schabert and John von Heyking, eds., *Wherefrom Does History Emerge? Inquiries in Political Cosmology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 1–6.

79. Manuel Knoll, "The Political Struggle for a Well-Ordered City and Soul as a Historical Striving for Peace: Plato and Aristotle on War and Peace," in *Wherefrom Does History Emerge?*, 39–56; Schabert, *The Second Birth*, 81–95.

80. Tilo Schabert, "Rousseau," in *Der Mensch als Schöpfer der Welt*, ed. Tilo Schabert (Munich: List, 1971), 35–82; Schabert and von Heyking, *Wherefrom Does History Emerge?*, 162–75.

81. Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Gianluca Mori, ed., *Clandestine E-Texts from the Eighteenth Century*, updated December 1999, https://web.archive.org/web/20120505135214/http://www.vc.unipmn.it/~mori/e-texts/; Martin Muslow, *Enlightenment Underground: Radical Germany, 1680–1720* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Gianni Paganini, "Enlightenment before the Enlightenment: Clandestine Philosophy," *Etica & Politica/Ethics & Politics* 20 (2018): 183–200; René Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Boivin, 1943); Tilo Schabert, "Einführung," in *Aufbruch zur Moderne: Politisches Denken im Frankreich des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: List, 1974).

82. Tilo Schabert, "Modernity and History II: On the Edge of Modernity?" in *The Promise of History,* ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986); *Modernität und Geschichte: Das Experiment der modernen Zivilisation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990).

83. Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 271–321; *Die Architektur der Welt: Eine kosmologische Lektüre architektonischer Formen* (Munich: Fink, 1997).

84. Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 22f., 213–17, 251–67; "A Classical Prince: The Style of François Mitterrand," in *Philosophy, Literature, Politics: Essays Honoring Ellis Sandoz*, ed. Barry Cooper, and Charles R. Embry (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005).