



## Moderately Modern

By Rémi Brague

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### Moderately Modern By Rémi Brague

*Moderately Modern* wears its thesis on its sleeve. Modern men and women, those thoroughly imbued with modernity's ideas, hopes, and projects, need to moderate themselves. They need to rein themselves in, they need to think and act beyond their comfort zone. Implicit in this claim, of course, is a slew of topics, claims, and an argument. What is modernity? What's lacking in it? Where should its adherents look outside and beyond it? What would they find? And what would a conjunction of a chastened modernity and a newly respected outside look like? It would be difficult to find someone more equipped to raise and pursue these questions than Rémi Brague.

*Le règne de l'homme: l'échec du projet modern* (The kingdom of man: the failure of the modern project) already laid out his basic views: modernity is the project of radical anthropocentrism, of man construed as the sovereign of the world and of his very humanity. If the traditional order of the West located man within a wider scheme of God/world/man, with the former two providing models of excellence for the latter, then modern thought reverses the order, expelling God and the divine from public centrality and, by means of technological science, aiming to make man, in Descartes' famous phrase, "master and possessor of Nature". *The Legitimacy of the Human* picks up the theme and surveys the results. Birth dearths, looming ecological disasters, and the threat of destruction on enormous scales testify to something having gone terribly awry. Its concluding chapters advise a reconsideration of the rejected premodern option: the biblical God and his providential care.

*Moderately Modern* brings all of the foregoing together, mixing cultural critique with cultural restoration. It does so in characteristically Braguean ways: attention to the meaning and history of important terms; brilliant aperçus of the contemporary scene; enormous learning worn lightly and brought to bear deftly; a personal tone with intellectual and *spiritual gravitas*. His theme being the current condition of the West, this son of the West brings to bear all that she has made available to her children to live thoughtful and genuinely human lives. Let us hope that he is not a Cassandra, but more akin to Isaiah, albeit in a philosophical mode.

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