Modernity has never been easy. In its early stages, it had to fight gruesome battles against the feudal order. In its successive stages, it has had to fight against itself. Liberty—the elusive aim and defining character of modernity—liberated an array of novel individual and collective dimensions of existence, many of which have proved to be rather unpleasant. Scores of Western intellectuals have acknowledged modernity's unpleasantness by scores of different names: anomie, alienation, absence of recognition, ennui, blasé attitude, inauthentic life, relativism, ejection, meaninglessness, etc. Giacomantonio dubs it "existential uneasiness" (15).

By demolishing the mythical totems of all previous systems and augmenting the individual's perceived opportunities for choice and self-definition, the modern person has had to face a greater degree of uncertainty and responsibility *vis-à-vis* her life. At the same time, the modern person has felt threatened and even dwarfed by the broader, cosmopolitan reality of the new global order unleashed by countless and never fully successful revolutions: English, French, Russian, industrial, sexual, dot com. In other terms, modernity has advanced in two contradictory directions. On the one hand, it has increased the felt scope of individual self-determination. On the other hand, it has diminished the actual importance of the choices we make. Ironically, as Giacomantonio states, "the factors whereby individualisation is accomplished produce standardisation" (23).

Post- or late-modern consumer society is, in this sense, most representative and unsettling. Then, it is exactly the section of modern Western history that Giacomantonio focuses upon in the first part of the book. Specifically, by means of a comprehensive overview of philosophical and sociological critiques of modernity as well as of post- or late-modernity, Giacomantonio endeavours to show how "the I and personhood" are seen no longer as expressions of "linearity, univocity, precise identity, autonomy" (18). Rather, "the individual… perceives her own identity as pulverised, fragmented, troubled, isolated" (18) and condemned to bleak "anonymity" by the affirmation of the impersonal structures of "bureaucracy" (20) and "technological production" (21) in "all the traditionally most relevant sectors of social existence: work, education, communication, emotional ties" (21). The modern person is claimed to be forced by "the society of risk" (24) to strive endlessly for an eventually ungraspable "control" over her own "disenfranchised" and "disenchanted" condition (24). Frustration and a quasi- yet not always pathological "existential uneasiness" cannot but be commonplace.

Nevertheless, Giacomantonio wishes to cure the modern malaise, even if only to a limited extent, as the title of his book suggests. The medicine he decides to employ is a mixture of *Wissenssoziologie*, critical theory and post-structuralism. The first ingredient should help the modern individual to realise that the social and ideological structures that surround her are not at all natural and inevitable. The second ingredient should lead the modern individual to "act", whether to accept or deny her "collocation" within society, the contingency of which she now recognises (31). The third ingredient should make the modern individual understand that her self-perception *qua* individual is itself part of the problem, insofar as modern society has created a certain type of individuality, which is said to be free while is in fact "enslaved to one's own desires" (39). Eventually, if the medicine takes effect, "social philosophy" should enable the modern individual "to find herself and deal with the world, even the post-modern, unequal, pulverising and precarious world of the 21st century" (49).

In this perspective, the second part of Giacomantonio's book offers a rich, diverse array of applications of his proposed medicine. Fields of individual and collective existence as mutually remote as religious belief, football, international law, welfare policies, fast love and spoiled teenagers are discussed in the light of explanatory and hermeneutical criteria derived from the three "ingredients" mentioned above. The outcome of these applications should be a deeper, wiser, healthier understanding of contemporary society and of one's own place within it. And this is probably the outcome that the author must have experienced himself when confronting post- or late-modern phenomena with his armoury of socio-theoretical notions. Will the same outcome be available to anyone reading Giacomantonio's book? This is an empirical question, to which each individual reader is bound to answer for herself.