

# Interrogating Modernity: Hans Blumenberg and Roberto Unger Compared

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## ABSTRACT

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Habermas says in his new book “Also a History of Philosophy, Volume 1: The Project of a Genealogy of Post-metaphysical Thinking” (the English version to be published in November 2023) that Blumenberg and himself are only two the 20th century philosophers who justified the value of modernity. In his “The Legitimacy of the Modern Age” (first published in Germany in 1966), Blumenberg defines the modernity as “the second overcoming of Gnosticism”. The deep implications of this intriguing conception of modern age have only recently been appreciated in the English language academic world. For example, the new development of ChatGPT-4 made some scholars realizing that Blumenberg can be viewed as a pioneer of the second wave of AI Critique. In my introduction to Unger’s “Politics: The Central Texts” (Verso, 1997, edited by me), I already explored the relevance of Blumenberg’s theory of modern age as “possible progress” (not “necessary progress”) for understanding Unger’s theory of politics as “society-making”. However, there are other areas of similarity as well as difference between Blumenberg and Unger’s respective theories of modernity. Based on my recent Chinese writings on both authors, I intend to write a systematic essay during my stay in the IEA comparing two theories and their implications for the transformation of the current institutions in the world.

# Paris IAS Ideas



INSTITUT D'ÉTUDES  
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## Interrogating Modernity: Hans Blumenberg and Roberto Unger Compared

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**Friday November 10, 2023**  
10:00 am New York | 3:00 pm London  
| **4:00 pm Paris** | 7:30 pm Delhi |  
10:00 pm Beijing | 11:00 pm Tokyo  
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