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History, Memory, Forgiveness: the Philosophy of History of Levinas and Benjamin

The concept of the philosophy of history in Levinas and Benjamin examines a few excerpts from *Totality and Infinity* by the French philosopher and from *Über den Begriff der Geschichte (On the Concept of History)* by the German philosopher. These are not mere echoes: The two also illuminate each other showing how the philosophers envision, although in very distinct ways, a radical shift of focus concerning historical reflections, in which both attend to *singularity* in critical difference to the usual privileging of *universality* in interpreting history or the philosophy of history. Both authors reach the same conclusions independently. In fact, in their opinion official history is created by the “victors” and expresses the victor’s viewpoint. As a counterpart to such a history Benjamin and Levinas propose another history, that of the defeated and victims of history. In this philosophy of history the authors delineate a particular concept of history, of time and perhaps of the messianic era.