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Geschichte zwischen Mythos und Messianischem. Walter Benjamins Jetztzeit als humane Zeit

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Abstract (English)

This thesis investigates Benjamin's notion of history by reference to *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* and the *Passagen-Werk*. This specific understanding of history is developed through the analysis of the conception of the myth in Benjamin's early works. The thesis focuses on a religious-philosophical interpretation of Benjamin's "Jetztzeit" as standing between myth and Jewish-Christian messianism. Therefore, the notion of history is not presupposed in an unreflecting manner but can only be obtained through a fundamental philosophy of time with regards to the historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of time. In this context, a passage from myth to history can only be achieved through the recognition of the vulnerability of man, which is able to capture the messianic dimension of this vulnerability. The central insight of Benjamin's philosophy of history is the vulnerability of the dead, which enables to conceive history precisely on the threshold of the messianic. In this way, history reveals itself to be the opening hiatus between myth and the messianic, which prevents the leveling of time by either a mythic or mythical-messianic timelessness. However, this thesis has to give an answer to the question of the possibility or impossibility of an experience of history when faced with time as empty and homogenous. This paper aims at responding to the current crisis of the consciousness of history, which has led to the loss of any kind of free relation to the past. The hypothesis is that Benjamin's philosophy of history enables us to make a non-chronological experience of the beginning and the ending, i.e. the opening and the withdrawal of time, and therefore manages to rescue an important aspect of the humane experience of time. Benjamin's concept of "Jetztzeit" can serve as the core of a new humane time, which is inseparable from the notion of happiness (*Glück*) and introduces a humane perception of time as well as an ethical praxis of loyalty.