June 4th: Memory and Ethics

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ABSTRACTS

In this essay I look first at some general problems of memory and of how events are retold from memory. Then I focus on memory of June Fourth and divide the question by asking how three categories of people—perpetrators, victims, and bystanders—have remembered, failed to remember, or tried to alter memory. The tripartite division of “perpetrators, victims, and bystanders” is not perfect but I find it illuminating. Nearly all the questions that come up have moral implications, so I call the essay “memory and ethics”. I draw upon examples from literature, memoir, journalism, film, and personal acquaintance.

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