

EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is timely that Karine Zbinden has brought together a collection of essays on Tzvetan Todorov that includes his own work as well. Todorov is someone who has long explored notions of intersubjectivity and the relation of I and us with an other/the other/the others. His interest in poetics and ultimately in the connection between aesthetics and ethics represents a key to the debates in world religions, cultures and literatures. In Western thought, Plato and Aristotle looked into the heart of the question of truth and beauty. Whereas Plato, despite or perhaps because of his aesthetic gifts, questions beauty and the seduction of poetry, Aristotle places poetics along side his work on ethics and politics.

In the essay in this special issue, Todorov continues to develop themes from his earlier work but does so with his characteristic ability to reorient his own work and those about him. Once more, and in a suggestive and timely fashion, Todorov enters into this debate of the "disenchantment of the world." He explores how this matter is situated in the human, how the internalization of paradise, of the revolutionary displacement (even replacement) of the divine into the perfectibility of the self, of the communal to the individual, affects the past two centuries. This revolutionary inversion from the late eighteenth century is a movement from the people to the nation for which all can be sacrificed. Nationalism and totalitarianism, this misplaced atonement or identification with a human displaced incarnation, has been the cause of millions of deaths in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Todorov asks what is hiding in collective entities today.

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