

lacks 'perception's' ability continually to extract information from the real. We bring everything to the image for there is nothing to perceive in this 'absent presence.' Call up an image of your desk and you have the thing at once - now try counting the knots in the wood, bubbles in the varnish, scratches, all of those aspects of the real desk that are available to perception for an almost infinite inventory. For Sartre I and Sartre II an essential concern was always that person who seemed to prefer to live 'in' the imaginary mode - Flaubert, Genet, Baudelaire.

If one were to perform an existential analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre or any intellectual whose mind becomes reckless, it may be that Lilla's Plato needs to be supplemented by the Sartrean 'imaginary.' For these are figures who seem to *stop perceiving*, an essential condition of the Tocquevillian liberal who must make continual distinctions among the social and political possibilities offered to him at any given moment. Instead, at some point in their lives they go over entirely to the imaginary attitude and its essential impoverishment: they fail to see (or even entertain) counter-arguments and ignore details embarrassing to their imagined world. That world includes only what they bring to it, as one's imagined desk may reflect the article one is writing or, perhaps, the drawers stuffed with unfinished manuscripts. An impoverished desk, as it were, that omits to include photographs, bills, etc.

The exchange between Jaspers and Heidegger over Hitler's lack of culture is one telling example. At the moment when an argument is presented to him, all Heidegger can call up is an image of his Führer's hands. We probably know what the mental picture was: from those newsreels in which Hitler folds his hands together against his chest as he enters one of his ecstasies. The philosopher discreetly singles out the hands, but the man (and his vulgarity) is not seen. His thuggish cohorts are not seen. His policies slip into some domain of vast generality. Perhaps it is some such imaginative exercise that kept his generals fighting when they should have *seen*, by the winter of 1943, that it was all headed towards doom.

It is something like this that seems often to be at work in the reckless mind. Lilla writes of the intellectual's need for 'self-awareness,' especially an awareness of the dangerous implications of his ideas. But it is not the dangerousness of an idea that is the problem. Liberalism of the kind that Lilla admirably represents will not function if dangerous ideas are self-censored or if all ideas must be safely *liberal* ideas rather than conservative or radical ideas. Earlier I noted that these were positions *near* the political poles, where ideas may convulse into political *acts*, forcing the thinker to choose between this policy or leader and that policy or leader. It is at *that* point, where action beckons, that one should reassess an idea. It was always a desire of Sartre's to 'think against' himself, but too often this meant that Sartre II thought against Sartre I, as if the latter - this nagging after-image from the 1930s - were the problem rather than the former.

Sartre and Heidegger have been dead for many years now, and there is always the danger of thinking that the problem posed by their 'reckless minds' died with the political systems to which they gave their allegiance or merely their sympathy. However, that problem is far older, and for the modern period it goes back at least to the French Revolution, with all that 'revolution' promises of a cleansing whirlwind that destroys the established order and opens the way towards some new planetary possibility for humanity. It is one of the merits of these books that they refuse the false promise offered by yellowing obituary notices, whether of great thinkers or powerful and illiberal ideologies.

WORKS CITED

- Amis, Martin. *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million*. Toronto: Knopf Canada 2002
- Ferry, Luc, and Alain Renaut. *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism*. Trans Mary H.S. Cattani. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 1990
- Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected Problems of 'Logic'*. Trans R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1994
- *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*. Trans Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1999
- 'Political Texts, 1933-1934.' *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. Ed R. Wolin. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1993, 40-60
- *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans W. Lovitt. New York: Harper 1977
- Lawrence, D.H. *Women in Love*. 1921. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas*. Ed J. Robbins. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001
- Lévy, Bernard-Henri. *Le siècle de Sartre: Enquête philosophique*. Paris: Bernard Grasset 2000
- Lilla, Mark. *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*. New York: New York Review Books 2001
- 'A Tale of Two Reactions.' *New York Review of Books* 45 (14 May 1998), 4-7
- Mailer, Norman. *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History*. New York: New American Library 1968
- Mannheim, Karl. 'Conservative Thought.' *Karl Mannheim*. Ed Kurt H. Wolff. New York: Oxford University Press 1971, 132-222
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Trans and intro H.E. Barnes. London: Methuen 1957
- *Critique of Dialectical Reason. I. Theory of Practical Ensembles*. Trans A. Sheridan-Smith. London: New Left Books 1976