of his ideas and commitments that he permits himself to be an apologist for tyrants or, as in Lilla's account of the sexual habits of Michel Foucault, permits himself irresponsibly to enact his ideas in the extra-textual world?

We might with equal justice call it the '*engagement* question,' taking note of Jean-Paul Sartre, a 'foster-child' of Heidegger whom Richard Wolin does not include in his study of Heidegger's progeny but whose sense of historical responsibility he elsewhere contrasts favourably to Heidegger's passivity before the unfolding of the *Seinsgeschichte* ('Sartre, Heidegger, and the Intelligibility of History'). For it is via Sartre that the notion of the 'committed' intellectual most powerfully entered the West after 1945, while Heidegger was lying low after his disastrous political commitments of the 1930s. That Sartrean forms of political commitment would not be an embarrassment – at least not before the Solzhenitsyn era – is one of the unintended issues generated by both Wolin and Lilla. In Lévy's study of Sartre he forces the issue mercilessly on the reader.

Heidegger and Sartre. Right and Left. One a Nazi The other a fellow-traveller of the USSR. For the former, it didn't matter in 1933 that Hitler was too 'uncultivated,' in Karl Jaspers's word, to govern Germany. 'Culture doesn't matter,' Heidegger replied to his cooling friend: 'Just look at his marvelous hands' (Lilla, *The Reckless Mind*, 24). As for Sartre, in 1954 he could reply to a journalist that 'la liberté de critique est totale en URSS' (Lévy, 24), and it is unlikely that in his comments about de Gaulle or Giscard he was ever as generous as in those he made about Khrushchev, Mao, or Fidel. How did two of the century's most prominent philosophers manage to make such political fools of themselves?

Where Wolin concerns himself with former students of Heidegger, Lilla focuses on intellectuals who reveal in their careers lapses in political judgment that recall the misguided services that, in a German analogue to Plato's trips to Syracuse, Heidegger once offered to a tyrant.[1] Indeed, intellectual apologists for tyrants have so many twentieth-century options before them that Lilla can only list a few before, as he puts it, his pen 'runs dry': Hitler and Mussolini, Stalin and Lenin, Saddam and Khomeini, Mao and Ho, Ceauscescu and Milosevic, Castro and Trujillo, Amin and Bokassa. For Lévy, in his sometimes excessively self-referential but always brilliant survey of French intellectual life of the past century, if Sartre cannot be reduced to a 'child' of Heidegger – as Lévinas put it, Sartre's mind 'was too big to repeat' (44) – his post-1950 shift towards Stalinism made him as morally problematical as the Heidegger who remained in the Nazi party until war's end.

1 Lilla several times recalls the *bon mot* of an unknown colleague of Heidegger who greeted the philosopher, after the latter's resignation as Rector, with the question, 'Back from Syracuse?' He is, however, careful to remind us that Plato's trips to Syracuse were intended to lead a tyrant *away* from his tyranny, not to support his exercise of it.

And it is for this reason that Lévy's is by far the richest of the three books. He senses with utter clarity that there is no reprieve to be granted to fellow-travellers of Stalinism merely because of their commitment to what Derrida (as quoted by Lilla) identifies as Marxist 'messianism':

> Whatever one may think of this event ['the absolute singularity' of the Marxist project], of the sometimes terrifying failure of that which thus begun, of the techno-economic or ecological disasters, and the totalitarian perversions to which it gave rise, ... whatever one may think also of the trauma in human memory that may follow, this unique attempt took place. A messianic promise, even if it was not fulfilled, at least in the form in which it was uttered, even if it rushed headlong toward an ontological content, will have imprinted an inaugural and unique mark in history. And whether we like it or not, whatever consciousness we have of it, we cannot not be its heirs. (*The Reckless Mind*, 185)

This recalls – albeit after the collapse of Marxism – Sartre's remark that Marxism was 'la philosophie indépassable de notre temps.' It also illustrates one of those moments of Heideggerian sleight of hand that led early students of Derrida's *maître* to call Heidegger the 'little magician from Messkirch.' He had a way of offering what appeared to be tangible, only, in the next moment of the lecture, to take it away. Here Derrida manages to insinuate that (a) a disaster occurred but also, (b), that what really matters is the still-lingering messianic aura that transcends the merely 'ontological event,' as if the latter were merely some vulgar extra-textual 'reality.'

Lilla and Wolin return again and again to the question of how such errors of judgment occur, whether in Sartre and Heidegger or in Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Foucault, Derrida, Hans Jonas, Karl Löwith, Herbert Marcuse, Hannah Arendt, and Kojève. It is out of the question to list the many names over which Lévy pauses – sometimes at great length – including Althusser, Gide, Céline, Robert Brasillach, Blanchot, and others. However, he is never far for very long from the 'Heidegger question.' And beyond these great intellectuals, as Lévy calls them, are the thousands whose names are unknown to history and who laboured as fellow-travellers to communist or as apologists for fascist tyrants.

Where Lilla offers a Platonic explanation of the philosopher led astray when his judgment is unable to tame the passions of an Eros that desires to bring his ideas onto the stage of history, and where Wolin offers a compelling critique of the reactionary implications of Heidegger's thought, Lévy is inclined to think of the problem by reference to the degree of what we might call a philosopher's 'social hope.' I will return to this matter, but it may first be useful to identify something that none of the authors takes up, perhaps because they find it self-evident.