

I am thinking of the attitude that many humanities intellectuals and artists have held toward modernization.<sup>2</sup> I do not mean merely the often-noted 'reactionary' stance of writers like Pound, Céline, or Eliot (although this is certainly relevant). I mean, rather, a more general dislike of the modern, whether of its capitalism, its science, or its Weberian trinity of secularization, rationalization, and 'disenchantment of the world.' It is a dislike that can be found across the spectrum that runs from Right to Left and that exists as a perpetual temptation to radicalize one's opposition to this hated modernity by a movement to the pole of right-wing tyranny or that of left-wing tyranny, in the hope that there a decisive battle can be joined that will destroy whatever is most hated in the modern.

This is scarcely to deny that profound differences of belief and temperament occur between these poles. Near one pole there may be a deep sympathy for Roman Catholicism (or religion generally), as a protector of morality and a guarantor of social stability. Near the other there may be a Voltairian hatred of the 'infamous institution.' One group may welcome redefinitions of sexual roles while the other is nostalgic for gender-role traditionalism. One may dream of a transnational world in which nation-states would be a memory. For the other, utopia may already *have been*, in some bygone world of 'rootedness' and *Heimat*. These are classic modalities of the 'conservative' and the 'radical' and inform much of the thinking about the Heidegger Question in both Wolin and Lilla.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that Lilla and Wolin recognize the dangers of conservative German thought and attitude as these entered (in reactionary forms) into Heidegger's work and temperament. It is less evident, though, that they recognize the sullen dislike and distrust of the modern that also runs through radical thought, including Marxism, the intellectually shrewdest and (when it takes power) most lethal form of radicalism (Lilla seems far more alert to the dangers of a 'reckless' radicalism than does Wolin). It is perhaps an understandable oversight, since, during the past century-and-a-half, radical dislike of the modern managed to capture the commanding heights of political idealism. Self-identified as the proper opponent of exploitation, i.e., the most fully committed advocate of the poor, the humiliated, and the wretched of the earth, the 'most lethal form' of radical dislike identified the original sin of the modern in 'alienation.' And it was the guardian of special methods (dialectic) that would escape the modern-

2 Wolin is probably alluding to this matter in his introduction to an anthology of essays devoted to the matter of Heidegger and the Nazis (*The Heidegger Controversy*, 18).

3 I am not using 'conservative' in the manner in which it is used, say, to identify any defender of 'free market' capitalism. Rather, I am thinking of the classic account offered long ago by Karl Mannheim to describe a social type resistant to the spread of (mostly French) revolutionary ideals ('Conservative Thought').

ized logic of the analytic,<sup>4</sup> permitting it to be unremitting in its identification of ideological mystifications in the apologias of its political enemies (and who was not among its political enemies?).

After years of revelations of the mass slaughters in what we used to call 'the Eastern bloc,' it is still not unusual for quondam sympathizers of Marxism, for example, to receive far more generous treatment than former sympathizers of fascism, when, in fact, it is difficult to determine which was the more repellent system. Martin Amis, for example, recalls the way an audience responded with warm laughter to a lecturer's nostalgic reference to the 'old comrades' with whom he had once attended meetings at Colway Hall, in London: 'And what kind of laughter is it? It is, of course, the laughter of universal fondness for that old, old idea about the perfect society' (256). It is that 'old, old idea' that Derrida identifies as 'messianic' or that Sartre called 'unpassable' for our era.

And yet there are times when its modern enemies have overlapped those of its conservative rival. A capitalism committed to 'creative destruction' is no friend to either. For the thinker who, like Heidegger, has been influenced by German conservatism, the destruction of familial bonds, rootedness in the land, and traditional patterns of living is the infamous sign of the modern. It is for this reason that Raymond Williams was able, in *Culture and Society*, to bring together Carlyle, Lawrence, Marx, Burke, Coleridge, and Bentham. Or that F.R. Leavis could periodically recall the horrified reaction of Lawrence's Constance Chatterley to the brutally industrialized Tevershall. Or that in *The Arnites of the Night* Norman Mailer could call himself a 'Left Conservative,' and mean that he considers himself politically *both*: not an extreme conservative, not a cautious leftist, but a leftist who is simultaneously conservative, determined 'to think in the style of Marx in order to attain certain values suggested by Edmund Burke' (185).

It goes without saying that modernization – understood as comprising science, technology, and capitalism, all organized in such a way as to extend freedom from natural constraints and inherited taboos – has generated conditions that have often entirely justified fundamental critique and horrified recoil. Nor have all recoilers been Nazis or Stalinists. Indeed, once-committed communists, still capable of perceiving instead of imagining, often broke ranks with their failed god. Nor did all those raised under the shadow of German conservatism join the Nazi party. However, Martin Heidegger did, and his choice poses the most celebrated example of the problem with which these books are concerned: not radicalism, not

4 It was shrewd of Lévi-Strauss, in *The Savage Mind*, to challenge Sartrean 'dialectic' and to cast himself as the proponent of a more modern and 'analytic' method of understanding social structures.