

Nazis attempted to bring all areas of the culture into political synchronization (*Gleichschaltung*). After the war, he would write devastating letters to Heidegger, begging his teacher to break his famous silence and confess his misdeeds. Although he studied under Heidegger, his texts were careful not to echo the Master's voice, and in other works of the period (1930s) he was able to insinuate elements of the Marxism that would bring him fame forty years later. So, as we wait for Wolin to repeat his pattern we wonder just how bad the Bad Marcuse will be.

In fact, not too bad at all. There are some half-hearted references to the annoyance Marcuse felt at the Western working class's accommodation with a capitalism that succeeded in raising wages dramatically, thereby undermining the 'immiseration' thesis of classic Marxism. One might have expected a bit more about the influence of Heideggerian elitism – its distrust of the 'mass' mind, committed to 'publicness' and 'idle talk' – or about the authoritarianism inherent in Marcuse's famous 'repressive tolerance' thesis. The latter, in particular, seems one of those places where, like Ribbentrop and Molotov in 1939, 'reactionary' and 'radical' anti-modernism might meet and shake hands. But all in all this most famous member of the Frankfurt School receives something of a pass.

Lilla is a far more elegant writer than Wolin, and because his book is a collection of review-essays (from the *New York Review of Books* and the *TLS*), it is guided by the books it reviews and is thereby spared the incorrigible pattern-finding of Wolin's monograph. Like Wolin he is concerned with the political choices of intellectuals, but these are not constrained by the Heidegger Question. Although clearly influenced by Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault – men of the left, like Kojève and Benjamin – are criticized for sins other than Heideggerianism. Lilla is also easier on Hannah Arendt than is Wolin, refusing the ready-to-hand campus stereotype of a young woman exploited by a 'powerful male.' Unlike Wolin, Lilla, who deals with the anti-fascist Karl Jaspers, is not given to making sweeping judgments about the dangers of 'existentialism,' as if there were no leftists or devout Christians or Jews who might have allied themselves with that school.

What intrigues Lilla is the intellectual's 'reckless' willingness to enact his ideas on the historical stage, and his subsequent failures to recognize that his ideas are not, in fact, representations of the actual working of the historical world. For him, following Plato, we need to see that

there is some connection in the human mind between the yearning for truth and the desire to contribute to 'the right ordering of cities and households.' Yet precisely because Plato recognized this as an *urge* – as a drive that could become a reckless passion – he was alert to its destructive potential and concerned with harnessing it for a healthy intellectual and political life. One is tempted to say that it is this supreme self-awareness about how the mind

handles ideas that distinguishes most fundamentally the philosopher in Plato's sense from so many modern intellectuals. And it is this same self-awareness that we would be wise to acquire in thinking about philo(r)tranny in the twentieth century and learning from it. (*The Reckless Mind*, 214)

It is this lack of 'self-awareness,' some deficiency in their ability to monitor themselves, that Lilla finds lacking in the figures he discusses. Heirs to Plato's rhetors, teachers, and poets – 'what today we would call intellectuals' (Lilla, *The Reckless Mind*, 211) – they are not, in Lilla's account, properly (i.e., *Platonically*), 'philosophers.' This is perhaps an unkind cut for Derrida, Foucault, and Heidegger, although Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, and Kojève could probably have lived with it.

Their mental 'recklessness' takes many forms. In Derrida, for example, it arises, in Lilla's account, from his indifference to the effect on our political thinking of his reduction of the master-terms of Western thought to effects of language. Self, responsibility, nation, identity, propriety, the subject, will, liberty, etc – all fall under the shadow of the Derridean critique of logocentrism, with (to echo Sartre on psychoanalysis) its endless discoveries of the same terrible and tedious truths:

Derrida's radical interpretations of structuralism and Heideggerianism had rendered the traditional vocabulary of politics unusable and nothing could be put in its place. The subjects considered in traditional political philosophy ... were declared to be artifices of language, and dangerous ones at that. The object of political philosophy – a distinct realm of political action – was seen as part of a general system of relations that itself had no center. And as for the method of political philosophy – rational inquiry toward a practical end – Derrida had succeeded in casting suspicion on its logocentrism. (*The Reckless Mind*, 175)

What infuriates Lilla about Derrida is not only his own indifference to the counter-responses levelled against him – how do his own texts escape the ambiguities and *aporias* he finds in everyone else's? – but also his post-1990 entry into 'political' discussion itself, in *Politics of Friendship* (1997) and *Specters of Marx* (1994), where Lilla sees Derrida driven into a corner of his own making. For obvious reasons, the latter is unwilling to accept the logic of a deconstructive method that would make 'fascism, conservatism, liberalism, socialism [and] communism' 'equally unacceptable.'

On the other hand, Lilla notes that in *Moscou aller-retour* (1995) Derrida reports that he still chokes with emotion when he hears the 'Internationale' (recall the messianic aura that remains from the Marxist project). He calls himself a 'man of the left' and hopes that deconstruction will 'serve to politicize or repoliticize the left' (*The Reckless Mind*, 183). *How*, precisely, deconstruction – killer of logocentric political theory – is to do this Lilla cannot understand, and, finally, in exasperation, he reports that in