

Isaiah Berlin Online, OA.1064

Liu, Dong, 'Yuedu Bolin de shinian' ['Ten Years Reading Berlin'], interview with *Zhonghua dushubao* [*China Reading Weekly*] no. 215, 18 May 2011, 9

Liu, from Tsinghua University, was the organiser with the Yilin Press of the Isaiah Berlin and Contemporary China Symposium held in Beijing on 10–12 March 2001, and the chief editor of Renwen yu shehui yicong (The Humanities and Society Translation Series, published by Yilin)

Summary in English

How was IB introduced to the Chinese academic world, and how do Chinese read IB? FEL was the first book Liu recommended to the publisher Yilin, after which they became very interested in IB's books and continue to publish him. The books have been welcomed by the market. So far Yilin has published about 90 books in Renwen yu shehui yicong (The Humanities and Society Translation Series), of which a tenth are by IB.

Because contemporary Chinese society is very materialistic and many people pursue only their own interests, IB's view on negative liberty seemed not to have much impact; indeed it was a more problematic idea in China than elsewhere. But at the same time IB offered the Chinese a really useful intellectual tool for the protection of their liberty against a repeat of the cultural revolution.

If you read IB simply as a liberal political philosopher, maybe he has already been superseded by Rawls. But if you read him as a pluralist and a cross-cultural historian of ideas, he has a lot to say to Chinese readers, who feel that IB writes at their level, so that they can conduct a more active dialogue with him. The strong influence of the Soviet Union on the history of modern China is another reason for the great popularity of IB's books.