

Hardy, Henry, *In Search of Isaiah Berlin: A Literary Adventure* (London, 2018: I.B.Tauris; repr. by Tauris Parke 2019 [with corrections], 2020 [paperback, with new appendix])

Reviews

‘Henry Hardy has produced a capstone to a remarkable story of letters, a Boswellian tale, a 40-year literary adventure.’

Randall See, [Open Letters Review](#), 29 January 2021

‘Entrusted when quite young with the task of bringing Berlin’s Nachlass and extensive body of occasional writings into fit shape for public scrutiny, he successfully transformed essays and lectures that were, in their original form, notoriously slapdash in their presentation into pieces of impeccable scholarship. [...] Hardy’s account makes it clear, and not because of any boasting on his part, that Berlin could not have done better in his choice of executor.’

Nikhil Krishnan, [‘Gift to Humanity: The Life-Work of Isaiah Berlin, the Non-Philosopher’s Philosopher’](#), *The Times Literary Supplement*, 15 May 2020, 10–11

‘Henry Hardy has self-effacingly devoted the larger part of his professional career to the editing, promoting and celebrating of the work of Isaiah Berlin. *In Search of Isaiah Berlin: A Literary Adventure* (I.B.Tauris) looks back over his long labours of love with fondness, a fine dry wit and a light salting of justified irritation at those entrusted with Berlin’s posthumous affairs. The second part consists of Hardy’s own philosophical response to Berlin’s theories on matters such as plurality, religious belief and our shared human nature. A wonderful book on a wonderful subject.’

John Banville, [‘Best Books of 2018’](#), *Guardian*

‘A touching and often fascinating memoir. [...] Like a latter-day Boswell, Hardy has done much to preserve the ideas and, indeed, the memory of an extraordinary man for posterity.’

Adam Sisman, [Literary Review](#)

‘Absolutely fascinating [...] absolutely absorbing [...] Henry Hardy is a highly intelligent thinker in his own right [...] a delightful read.’

Nigel Warburton, [‘The Best Philosophy Books of 2018’](#), *Five Books*

‘Remarkable.’

Anthony Phillips, [Church Times](#)

‘The new perspective on an important intellectual figure is of great value.’

[Publishers Weekly](#)

‘The essential difficulty of Berlin’s intellectual legacy is why Henry [Hardy] was needed, and this book shows more than any other how fruitful the relationship has been.’

Richard Lofthouse, [‘Searching for Isaiah Berlin: November’s Book of the Month’](#), *Quad*

‘Berlin was a refugee from the Russian Revolution who came to embody the spirit of European liberalism, a thinker as much at home on the wireless as in the lecture theatre. And his reputation, perhaps for that very reason, was more founded upon what he said than what he published. But during a long professional and personal association, Henry Hardy helped to condense [Berlin’s] thoughts, to turn radio talks, lectures and pieces of occasional journalism into a coherent account of Berlin’s thinking, properly sourced and footnoted. And Henry’s new book, *In Search of Isaiah Berlin*, preserves for posterity the story of how that thinking was preserved for

posterity.’

Matthew Sweet, [Rethinking the Human Condition](#), *Free Thinking*, Radio 3, 1 November 2018, 10:00 p.m.

‘Currently, Berlin’s published works stand at over twenty volumes, all of which have been either edited or co-edited by Hardy. This must count as one of the great editorial achievements of recent times. As a consequence of these tireless labours, we have virtually full access to one of the most cultivated and fascinating minds of the last century, a mind that had a unique ability to show the endless interest of ideas and the influence, often barely understood, they have on our lives.’

Johnny Lyons, [Dublin Review of Books](#)

‘Hardy cannot be praised enough for all the work he has done.’

Carel Peeters, [Vrij Nederland](#)

‘Henry Hardy [...] is a brilliant literary editor who single-handedly transformed Berlin’s reputation [...] a hugely enjoyable and accessible account of the relationship between the two men [...] Hardy’s account of Berlin’s reluctance to publish some of his great essays, and his indifference to footnotes, is fascinating.’

David Herman, [Jewish Chronicle](#)

‘The scaffolding of scholarship is the well-referenced claim and the definitive footnote. This book is a testament to the unsung effort behind their creation.’

Paschal Donohoe, [Irish Times](#)

‘fascinating’

Michael Tanner, [Spectator](#)

‘Thanks to [Henry Hardy], it is no longer possible to portray Berlin as primarily a “salon virtuoso” who squandered his gifts in conversation.’

Michael Barber, [Oldie](#)

‘Written with passion, wit, and verve [...] beautifully produced [...] an invitation to reread a major thinker whose ideas remain relevant today’

Aurelian Craitu, [Los Angeles Review of Books](#)

‘Henry Hardy [...] single-handedly transformed Berlin’s reputation. Without [him], Berlin’s standing would not be what it is today. It was an extraordinary partnership. “The Genius and the Pedant” is how Hardy describes it. At times, they seem more like a Jewish–Latvian Bertie Wooster and a calm, omniscient Jeeves.’

David Herman, [New Statesman](#)

‘a unique and lavish gift for all Berlinophiles, and one which could be given them by only one person’

Beata Polanowska-Sygułska, [Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej](#) (in English); includes reply by Hardy; also available without log in [here](#)

‘an extraordinary literary experience’

Robert Cottrell

‘an absolutely compelling memoir about a relationship between two men which produced some of the great works in the history of ideas in post-war Britain’

David Herman

‘this fantastic book [...] is [...] superbly edited, beautifully produced, [and] extremely well written’

Timothy Garton Ash

Nine Amazon reviews, all five-star:

***** **The Tale of a Thinker and Writer, and His Editor**

‘Berlin was an extraordinary man. Hardy, his long-standing editor and friend, has acted like a modern Boswell and let us read the ideas of a great philosopher. Berlin was very reluctant to publish his many writings, so we owe Hardy a very big thank you.

‘Hardy has written a touching memoir of a genius whose parents were prosperous Jews. He spoke and wrote in a lucid and jargon-free manner. Berlin had a gift for making very complex ideas seem simple. Some of his most original and brilliant ideas originated in improvised lectures. It is evident that editing Berlin’s copious works was not easy, for Berlin could be obdurate. Hardy quotes from the letters between the two that lasted over twenty years. Readers learn a great deal about both men.

‘Isaiah was a champion of liberal values. Never pompous, he had a zest for life; he loved conversation. He captivated listeners with his rapid delivery. Noel Annan said he always used two words where one will not do.

‘Berlin’s essay “The Hedgehog and the Fox” and his book *The Power of Ideas* are outstanding. His book on *Karl Marx* is one of the best books about Marx. Berlin made a major contribution to contemporary thought. He was one of the intellectual touchstones of the past one hundred years.

‘Berlin was born in 1909 in Riga and he died in 1997. All who have studied philosophy will know that his most profound influence has been his articulation of a pluralistic idea of ethics. His work has been translated into numerous languages. As Hardy points out, his work has been controversial, particularly over the relationship between his commitment to liberalism, and his assertion of ethical pluralism. He has been praised and attacked as an intellectual Cold Warrior and for the mildness of his anti-Communism. His preferred writing genre was the essay. All of his later works were essays. Some have queried if he was a philosopher at all. He was, and his writings led to a revival of political theory.’

Dr Barry Clayton, Amazon UK

***** ‘A volume devoted mainly to the problems of editing the voluminous papers of an expert in the history of ideas who was disinclined to let them see the light of day and who had an interesting way with quotations and citations does not on the face of it sound like a riveting read. But when the expert is Isaiah Berlin and the editor Henry Hardy the story is indeed filled with interest and delight. Anybody who enjoys Berlin's writing owes a huge debt to Hardy, whose valiant and long-term struggle to get the essays out has resulted in the magnificent volumes we have access to today. Added to this narrative, Hardy looks at two areas where he felt that Berlin's value pluralism needed further explication – how religions, as essentially monist and potentially authoritarian organisations, fit into a pluralist world; and the nature of the common core of basic values that prevent value pluralism collapsing into relativism. An invaluable book for students and admirers of Berlin and value pluralism.’

Steve Foulger, Amazon UK

***** **'A beautiful book**

'Bravissimo! Marvelous Scherlockismus! Henry Hardy is the Eckermann of our time.'

Farideh Gewsswein, Amazon US

***** 'Henry Hardy, Isaiah Berlin's lifelong editor, provides us with a unique portrait of the man and his ideas. Reading this vivid, heartfelt and eloquently written book you witness at first hand the flowering of a fascinating and productive friendship. Another virtue of Hardy's book is that we are given an accessible and engaging account of Berlin's ideas by a deeply knowledgeable, sympathetic but not uncritical guide.'

JR, Amazon UK

***** 'What emerges most vividly from this very attractive and beautifully written book is the depth of the friendship that existed between the author and Isaiah Berlin. We are now fortunate to have a first-hand account of how their wonderful relationship began and blossomed and of the rich and permanent fruit it bore in the shape of Berlin's scrupulously produced works.'

Johnny Lyons, Amazon UK

***** **Great book**

'Very interesting.'

Guilherme Marques, Amazon US

***** 'What I was hoping for; excellent.'

Edward Penning, Amazon UK

***** **An account of a unique relationship**

'This is a book for someone already well informed on Isaiah Berlin. I found it absorbing both as an intellectual journey and for its psychological insights into IB and HH. Some might regard it as far too detailed but in this instance the detail is exactly what matters.'

K. Thompson, Amazon UK

***** **Berlin's editor**

'Charming and illuminating.'

Jeffrey Weiss, Amazon US