conscientiously leaves the door open for further, less US-centric research on problems facing the law of armed conflict. Within its own parameters, the book is an excellent contribution to the literature and one likely to inspire more analysis of this important dimension of international politics.

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The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin. Edited by George Crowder and Henry Hardy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), pp. 335; US$28.00 (hb).

Part at least of the continuing academic interest in Isaiah Berlin is due to the continuing relevance of what he had to say for our day and age. Berlin built his reputation during the Cold War on his principled opposition, along with philosophers like Karl Popper and Raymond Aron, to Soviet totalitarianism. The core of his critique centred on the concepts of liberty and liberalism, and it is just these concepts that have been thrown into question by the current threat of fundamentalist terrorism.

Berlin’s relevance does not stop there, however, for he also wrote, as a committed Zionist, on nationalism and the founding of the state of Israel, and on the pluralism of values as the basis for a liberal society — which are also dealt with by contributors to this collection of essays.

Berlin was a complex man who grappled with complex ideas. Three strands contributed to his thinking and to making him who he was, as Michael Ignatieff’s fine 1998 biography reveals. These were his Russian origins, his Jewish identity, and his passionate commitment to the Britain that had given his family sanctuary and himself status in one of its finest institutions. Berlin saw himself as inheriting the traditions of all three.

Berlin’s relationship to the Russian intelligentsia is examined by Andrzej Walicki. Berlin identified with that strand of radical nineteenth century Russian political thought exemplified particularly by Alexander Herzen. His profound analysis of Herzen absolved him of responsibility for the repressive aspects of Soviet society by placing him in a wider European context going back to the Enlightenment. There, for Berlin, lay the seeds of the monistic political despotism (as Graeme Garrard shows) that led via Hegel and Marx (discussed by Terrell Carver) on to Lenin and Stalin. So it was Russia that led Berlin from political philosophy to the history of ideas, and to the discovery the “counter-Enlightenment” of Vico and Herder.

If Berlin chose selectively those elements of Russian thought compatible with his own thinking, he chose just as selectively those aspects of his Jewish heritage compatible with his own sense of identity. For as Shlomo Avineri points out, there is no specifically Jewish dimension to Berlin’s thought. Indeed, though Berlin was a Zionist and hailed the foundation of the state of Israel, his refusal to migrate himself suggested a degree of ambivalence.

From Britain Berlin drew his beliefs about liberalism and liberty, which provided the foundations for his rejection of all forms of totalitarianism, and their supporting monistic historical systems. Berlin’s liberalism and his notion of negative liberty sustained his value pluralism. Negative liberty — the absence of external constraint on what an individual can and cannot do — was Berlin’s “big idea” for which he argued against all justifications in the name of some greater good (from personal salvation to group benefit to historical necessity). The locus classicus is Berlin’s essay on “Two Concepts of Liberty”, which, as Mario Ricciardi shows in his examination of the text, leads on naturally to his concept of value pluralism.
The last five chapters in this book take up the challenge of applying value pluralism in a world in which powerful groups reject it as moral relativism. George Crowder argues for the applicability of value pluralism especially in relation to multiculturalism. Jonathan Allen applies value pluralism to justify holding truth commissions (as in South Africa). William A. Galston attempts to reconcile value pluralism with religious belief, while remaining true to Berlin’s secularist stance, a conclusion endorsed by Michael Jinkins in the name of tolerance and humility, but challenged by Henry Hardy, who claims Berlin’s agreement for his rejection of all monisms, religious or otherwise. For as Hardy notes, value pluralism demands reciprocity: if I am to accept the validity of your values, then I expect you to accept the validity of mine. Moreover, if value pluralism accurately describes the human condition, then all monisms are not just false, but dangerous too, in that they nurture fundamentalist totalitarianism.

In sum, the essays in this book admirably demonstrate not just the range and depth of Berlin’s thought, but more significantly its continuing relevance for the problems of our times.

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