



A New Journal for the History of Ideas

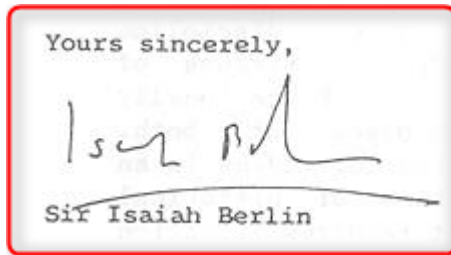
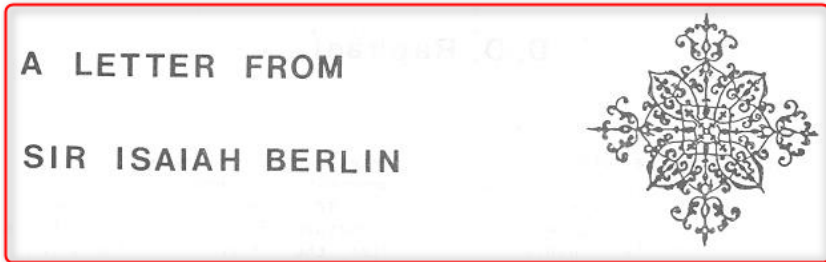
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'A Letter from Sir Isaiah Berlin', *Intellectual History* no. 1 (November 1982), 3



TO MISS GLADSTONE-GOODMAN

21 May 1982

Headington House

Dear Miss Gladstone-Goodman,

I am delighted to hear that you have founded a history of ideas club and plan to produce a journal. As you know, the history of ideas has never flourished as a recognised field of study in British seats of learning. There is nothing to be said against narrative history, or political, constitutional or economic history: all these are serious and important disciplines, and so is the rival *Annales* school – class structure, collective *mentalités* and so on. But cultural history and the history of ideas have largely been ignored: yet no one living in our century can deny the immense power of ideas, for good and ill, and this – quite apart from their intrinsic importance and interest (the history of mankind is a very dreary story without them) – should be sufficient to give this topic a central position, even among academic conservatives. There is something paradoxical about the fact that the country whose thinkers (to take only Adam Smith, Bentham, J. S. Mill, Ruskin, Darwin and even Herbert Spencer) once domina-

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ted the entire world, should shy away from ideas, in contrast to almost every other country in the Western world. Accounts of British ideas are very far to seek.

I therefore warmly welcome this enterprise on your part, and wish you and your journal the greatest possible success.

Yours sincerely,
Isaiah Berlin

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