

Isaiah Berlin's obituary of Stuart Hampshire

In 1965 Isaiah Berlin drafted an obituary of Stuart Hampshire for The Times. He revised it in 1973, 1980 and 1991. A transcript of the most recent version is the first item below, in which bold type indicates the main material not used in the final text.

The second item is the published obituary, in which the wording present in the draft, not necessarily in the same order or in precisely the same form, is shown in bold type.

This exercise shows both what was omitted from the draft and how it was otherwise changed and expanded subsequently. It is of some interest to see both what Berlin originally wrote, and how it was altered for publication after his death in 1997.

Henry Hardy, 20 June 2013

IB'S DRAFT; UNPUBLISHED MATTER SHOWN IN **BOLD**

Stuart Newton Hampshire, the distinguished philosopher and critic, was born on 1 October 1914, **the second of the three sons of G. N. Hampshire**, and was educated at Repton School, where he trained as a modern historian. There he read the two books by Namier on eighteenth-century politics in England which made a profound and lifelong impression upon him. He was elected to a history scholarship at Balliol in 1933, where he abandoned history for Greats, in which he obtained an outstandingly good first class in 1936.

His distinction of mind and appearance marked him out from the beginning; he was one of the most admired undergraduates of his day, at once a leading intellectual and a man of exceptional personal charm, **sweetness of character**, and a degree of moral integrity that gave him a good deal of natural authority among his contemporaries.

It was during his undergraduate years that he displayed both originality and sensibility as a student of the arts, particularly painting and literature, which **coloured** his thought in later life. His intellectual development probably owed more to the influence of some highly gifted contemporaries, mainly at Balliol, and contact with two or three dons a few years older than himself, such as A. J. Ayer and J. L. Austin, than to his tutors or **older and more established academic figures at Balliol or elsewhere**.

In 1936 he was awarded a fellowship at All Souls and decided upon a career of teaching and research in philosophy. He began as a logical positivist and a disciple of Ayer, but in a year or two, **for philosophical as well as personal reasons**, he began to move in a **somewhat** different direction. While he remained a convinced naturalist, and was never touched by **anything connected with** religious or **metaphysical** thought in the transcendental sense of these words. He became dissatisfied with what appeared to him to be the over-mechanical concepts and formulae of the British disciples of the then dominant Vienna school – in particular with the atomism of Russell and his disciples, who appeared to him guilty of a radical misunderstanding of the function of philosophy.

His first philosophical essay appeared in 1939, and gave evidence of unusual **sensitiveness to both linguistic and philosophical issues**; his writing was not as precise or rigorous as that of his models, but at times it was a great deal more suggestive, and responsive to a wider range of human activity, especially art, literature and psychology.

The outbreak of war **in 1939** found him at All Souls; he was a passionate socialist, in no degree touched neither by pacifism, nor **Marxist** scepticism about the justice of his country's cause. After training in England he was given a commission, and in due course was sent to Sierra Leone; later he was seconded to one of the Intelligence units near London, working with other Oxford colleagues – Gilbert Ryle, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Charles Stuart – **and in the course of this came in contact with a philosophically-minded lawyer, H. L. A. Hart, then working in MI5; in the midst of his professional duties his philosophical life and that of his colleagues Ryle and Hart went on unimpaired; as the result of such informal discussions (of which there were many in government offices during the Second World War) he emerged with his intellectual appetite greatly whetted.**

In 1945–6 he worked for a short while in the Foreign Office **on Philip Noel-Baker's staff**, then in the Ministry of Food, **where John Strachey was his Minister**. He was re-elected to his fellowship at All Souls, **although the research grant for which he applied was refused him**. In 1947 he was appointed to a Lectureship in Philosophy at University College London, and in 1950 succeeded Berlin as Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at New College.

In 1955 he returned to All Souls as a Research Fellow and Domestic Bursar, and discharged his **administrative** office with unexpected efficiency. He succeeded Ayer in 1960 at London University as Grote Professor of Philosophy, but three years later he moved to Princeton, soon becoming known and respected among American philosophers.

In 1970 he returned to Oxford to succeed his friend, the celebrated Sir Maurice Bowra, as Warden of Wadham College. On retirement from Wadham in 1984 he accepted a chair at Stanford University in California.

Hampshire was elected to the British Academy in 1960, was honoured by several American learned societies, **received an honorary doctorate from Glasgow University, and** for some years he headed the literary panel of the Arts Council. He was knighted in 1979.

He wrote on both philosophy and literature. His study of Spinoza appeared in 1951, and remains one of the most sympathetic and illuminating philosophical studies of a classical thinker in modern times.

His reputation was further enhanced by articles on philosophical topics published in professional journals and elsewhere; these were notable for **the originality of their ideas** and a rich suggestiveness that stimulated philosophical readers more than better formulated arguments **and more tightly organised pieces of writing. He also wrote a good deal on general topics.**

His most important book, *Thought and Action* (1959), gave evidence of his growing interest in Freudian psychology, and his aesthetic preoccupations. This was widely recognised as an innovative work, an attempt to profit by the insights of Hegel and Marx as well as those of Wittgenstein, the philosophers of intentionality and the linguistic analysts. It is an extended essay on the philosophy of mind, at the heart of which lies an 'intentionalist' theory about the shape and content of human experience and expression. Although elusive in places, and often disdainful of logical links, this book had a wide influence on both sides of the Atlantic.

This was followed by several collections of essays on both philosophical and aesthetic topics, and in 1989 by *Innocence and Experience*, a work on political morality, based to some extent on personal experience – it is the nearest to autobiography that he ever approached.

He was the least parochial and insular of essayists, and his literary articles in *Encounter*, the *Listener*, the *Observer*, the *New Statesman* and the *New York Review of Books*, especially those on Henry James, Joyce, Wittgenstein, Forster and Virginia Woolf, formed opinion, and were greatly admired, **especially by young readers.**

He was an excellent critic – his review of *Dr Zhivago* was praised by Pasternak as the best account of his book in English. His influence upon writers and artists, among whom he had many friends, **was perhaps greater than upon philosophers, some of whom found him** lacking in incisiveness, **philosophical** rigour and clarity. He did not generate a coherent doctrine so much as formulate disturbing questions and indicate a wide, sometimes unlimited, range of important considerations – **further than his own intellectual eye could see – which arose out of the basic theses he sketched out.** He was not one of the dominant philosophers of his time, but he moved in a wider world and was **more clearly** aware of implications **or half-implications** of systems of thought which more dogmatic thinkers of greater power tended to ignore.

A singularly fresh, subtle, **interesting**, imaginative, psychologically sensitive thinker, **of considerable depth**, his best work was done in ethics, aesthetics and the philosophy of mind **and of psychology.** Perhaps he understood too much to have the ruthlessness required for parricide that marks great pioneers in thought.

One of the most charming, gifted and civilised Englishmen of his time, a natural member of the intelligentsia **of any country**, he was a central figure in that humanisation of empiricism which gave 'Oxford Philosophy' its special quality.

His first wife, Renée Ayer, **to whom he was most deeply attached**, died in 1980. **He was married again**, to Nancy Cartwright, a distinguished philosopher of science, **by whom he had a daughter. It was a happy marriage. He attained to genuine distinction, both as a philosophical thinker and as a man of letters, and was greatly loved and admired by his friends, his colleagues and his pupils.**

FROM *THE TIMES*, 16 JUNE 2004, 32 (56 IN TABLOID EDITION); MATTER FROM IB'S DRAFT SHOWN IN **BOLD**

The philosopher Stuart Hampshire did not generate a coherent doctrine so much as formulate disturbing questions and indicate the wide, sometimes unlimited, range of considerations that arose from them. He was not one of the dominant philosophers of his age, and was often found lacking in incisiveness, rigour and clarity, but he moved in a wider intellectual world and was aware of implications of systems of thought which more dogmatic thinkers of greater power tended to ignore.

He was fascinated by metaphysical questions but rejected tidy answers such as utilitarianism or positivism. Instead, his thinking was tentative, literary. He valued 'a certain kind of confusion', taking into account the tragedy, individualism and responsibilities of life. For much of his career he put great faith in socialism, as did most of the elite coterie in which he spun, yet he was never a doctrinaire Marxist. In essence he was a late Enlightenment humanist whose belief in the importance of a way of life established over generations could have come directly from Edmund Burke.

Perhaps he understood too much to have the ruthlessness required for parricide that marks great pioneers in thought. Yet he was one of the most charming, gifted and civilised Englishmen of his time, a natural member of the intelligentsia, and a central figure in the humanisation of empiricism which gave 'Oxford philosophy' its special quality.

He was a fresh, subtle, imaginative and psychologically sensitive thinker, and his best work ranged from ethics and aesthetics to psychology and the philosophy of mind. His articles on philosophical topics in professional journals were notable for a rich suggestiveness which at times stimulated readers more than better formulated arguments by others. And Hampshire, with his many literary and artistic friends – from W. H. Auden to Anthony Blunt – had much the wider influence.

The least parochial and insular of essayists, he also wrote a good deal on literature and other topics for *The Times Literary Supplement* (anonymously at first) and elsewhere. **He was an excellent critic – his review of *Dr Zhivago*, for instance, was praised by Pasternak as the best account of his book in English – and his literary articles in the *Listener*, the *Observer*, the *New Statesman* and the *New York Review of Books* were much admired, most notably those on Henry James, Joyce, Wittgenstein, Forster and Virginia Woolf.**

He was also a contributor to *Encounter*, and after the disclosure in 1967 that it had received funds indirectly from the CIA, he was one of a group of friends, including Isaiah Berlin and Richard Wollheim, who discussed establishing a similar monthly magazine. Although nothing came of those plans, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 Hampshire joined another group – including Stephen Spender, David Astor and Lord Gardiner – to form the trust which published *Index on Censorship*.

Stuart Newton Hampshire was born in 1914 and educated at Repton School, where Geoffrey Fisher, later Archbishop of Canterbury, was headmaster. Fisher began every morning, Hampshire recalled, not in prayer but studying his stocks and shares.

At school Hampshire was **trained as a modern historian**, and in particular **the two books by Namier on eighteenth-century politics in England made a profound and lifelong impression on him**. He won a history scholarship at Balliol in 1933, but there **abandoned history for Greats**, in which he obtained an **outstandingly good first in 1936**.

His mental gifts, personal distinction and striking good looks marked him out from the beginning; he was one of the most admired Oxford undergraduates of the day, at once a leading intellectual and a man of exceptional charm, natural goodness, and a degree of moral integrity that gave him a good deal of natural authority among his contemporaries.

During his undergraduate years he displayed both originality and sensibility as a student of the arts, particularly painting and literature, which influenced his thought in later life. His intellectual development probably owed less to his tutors or to established academic figures than to highly gifted contemporaries, mainly at Balliol, and contact with two or three dons a few years older than himself, such as A. J. Ayer

and **J. L. Austin**. Introduced to Isaiah Berlin in 1935 to talk about Kafka, he continued the conversation – as he recalled in his eulogy in 1998 – for 62 years.

In 1936 Hampshire won a scholarship at All Souls and decided on a career of teaching and research in philosophy. He began as a logical positivist and disciple of Ayer, but after a year or two he began to move in a different direction. While he remained a convinced naturalist, and was never touched by religious or transcendental thought, he became dissatisfied with what appeared to him to be the over-mechanical concepts and formulae of the British disciples of the then dominant Vienna school – in particular with the atomism of Russell and his followers, who appeared to him guilty of a radical misunderstanding of the function of philosophy. Part of the duty of moral philosophy, he came to believe, was to guide practice.

His first philosophical essay appeared in 1939, and gave evidence of unusual insight. His writing was not as precise or rigorous as that of his models, but at times it was a great deal more suggestive, and responsive to a wide range of human activity, especially art, literature and psychology.

The outbreak of war found him at All Souls; he was a passionate socialist and a patriot, touched neither by pacifism nor by scepticism about the justice of his country's cause. After training in England he was given a commission and sent to Sierra Leone; later he was seconded to one of the Intelligence units near London, working with Oxford colleagues such as Gilbert Ryle, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Charles Stuart.

In 1945–6 he worked in the Foreign Office and then in the Ministry of Food, before being re-elected to his fellowship at All Souls. Within a year he was appointed a lecturer at University College London, and in 1950 he succeeded Berlin as philosophy tutor at New College. It was while there, in 1951, that he published his study of Spinoza, which remains one of the most sympathetic and illuminating philosophical studies in modern times of a classical thinker.

In 1955 Hampshire returned to All Souls as a research fellow and domestic bursar, an office he discharged with unexpected efficiency. Meanwhile he was working on what was to be his most important and innovative book, *Thought and*

Action (1959), an extended essay on the philosophy of mind. At the heart of its argument lies an 'intentionalist' theory about the shape and content of human experience and expression.

Attempting to profit from the insights of Hegel and Freud as well as those of Wittgenstein, the philosophers of intentionality and the linguistic analysts, it showed Hampshire's growing interest in psychoanalytic thought, as well as his aesthetic preoccupations. This was widely recognised as an innovative work, and although elusive in places, and often disdainful of logical links, it had a wide influence on both sides of the Atlantic.

Hampshire succeeded Ayer in 1960 at London University as Grote Professor of Philosophy, but three years later he moved to Princeton, soon becoming known and respected among American philosophers. He remained, though, a thoroughly established member of Britain's great and good, and in 1965–6 he spent several months reviewing the cost-effectiveness of GCHQ.

In 1970 he returned to Oxford as Warden of Wadham, in succession to his friend Sir Maurice Bowra. Wadham had appointed college men to the post since the seventeenth century, and the erection of an outsider was strongly contested but thoroughly beneficial. A phalanx of college officers resigned in protest – enabling a spring clean as younger dons took over with Hampshire.

His experience of student unrest in the US was useful as it spread to Oxford, and Hampshire, who was sensible and reliable as well as clear-thinking, was soon being turned to for advice by formerly rebellious students and dons alike. He was a strong advocate of the admission of women, not only at his own college but throughout the university. Wadham became mixed in 1974, one of the first group to make the change.

Despite the demands of Oxford administration – 'half dining club and half borough council', as he once described it to John Sparrow – Hampshire was as busy as ever intellectually and socially. He spent Christmas 1974, for instance, with the Annans, the Berlins and the Spenders in Jerusalem, and published and edited several books during his time as Warden. **On retirement from Wadham in 1984** (when Sir Claus Moser took over), **he accepted a chair at Stanford in California.**

In 1989 he published *Innocence and Experience*, a work on political morality based to some extent on personal experience – the nearest to autobiography that he ever came. His last book, *Justice is Conflict*, appeared in 1999.

Hampshire was elected to the British Academy in 1960, and was honoured by several American learned societies. For some years he was head of the literary panel of the Arts Council. He was knighted in 1979.

Hampshire's first wife, Renée (who had previously been married to A. J. Ayer), died in 1980. Five years later he married Nancy Cartwright, a distinguished philosopher of science. She survives him, along with their two daughters and the son and daughter of his first marriage.