

Della Casa, Alessandro, 'Nazionalismo, sionismo e appartenenza in Isaiah Berlin' [Nationalism, Zionism and Belonging in Isaiah Berlin], PhD thesis in Historical Sciences and Cultural Goods, Tuscia University, Viterbo, 2017

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide an intellectual biography of the philosopher and historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), showing the pivotal role played in his thought by the issues of Zionism, nationalism and belonging.

Also, having analysed Berlin's private papers and letters, I aim to overcome the dualism between the philosopher's life and ideas, investigating the correlations between his work and contemporary events and debates.

The first part of the dissertation is focused on the period from the birth of Berlin in a Jewish family in Riga (still within the boundaries of the Russian Empire) to the foundation of Israel, in order to analyse the young Berlin's formative years in his family environment, his English acculturation and his arrival in Oxford, but also his involvement with Zionism, culminating in his collaboration with Chaim Weizmann during World War II.

The second part deals with the elaboration of the thinker's liberal and pluralistic beliefs in the context of the Cold War, revealing the influence on his thought of his convictions about the topicality of the nationalist issue, strengthened by Arab–Israeli tensions.

The third part explores the impact of decolonisation on the elaboration of Berlin's negative/positive liberty distinction and on the evolution of his reflections on cultural and value pluralism.

The last section examines the link between his thoughts on nationalism and those on the sources of student protests in the 1960s, and then focuses on Berlin's attempt to reconcile his defence of Zionism with his opposition to right-wing Israeli chauvinism.

In conclusion I re-read Berlin's politico-philosophical discourse in the light of the new evidence on the nexus between cultural and value pluralism, and between pluralism and liberalism.