



The Wave of Hostility to Ideas
Isaiah Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty*

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The Wave of Hostility to Ideas Isaiah Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty*¹

Nobutoshi Hagihara



Nobutoshi Hagihara, Kagoshima, 1998

[157] Isaiah Berlin is one of the Western thinkers who should be better known and more carefully read in Japan. Fortunately, a collection of his essays, *Jiyūron*,² has recently been published which

¹ Translated by Wang Qian and Henry Hardy from the author's 'Shisō heno tekū no nami: Isaiah Berlin, Jiyūron', *Bungei Shunjū*, December 1972, repr. in *Shosho-shūyū* [a collection of book reviews] (Tokyo, 1973: Bungeishunjū), 157–75 (the page breaks of this version are indicated in the translation thus: [157]); 136–53 in the reprint of *Shosho-shūyū* as no. 5 in the series *The Hagihara Nobutoshi Collection* (Tokyo, 2008: Asahi Shimbun Sha). All notes are the translators'. They would like to thank Kei Hiruta for valuable comments.

² Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, trans. Kōichi Ogawa, Kei Koike, Kanichi Fukuda and Keizō Ikimatsu, 2 vols (Tokyo, 1971: Misuzu Shobō),

sheds light on the question of freedom from various angles. I shall try to introduce it here. However, since what Berlin deals with in this collection are the fundamentals of political philosophy, it often goes beyond my field of expertise, so that this introduction is naturally similar to my review of Tatsuo Hayashi.³ What I provide will very probably be just a *tour d'horizon* of Berlin.

[158] When Berlin deals not with the abstract subject of freedom, but with concrete personalities – politicians, thinkers, revolutionaries, historians, artists – I am maybe more at ease. But things seldom go as one wishes, which is why reviewing books is hard.

‘I am no historian, I’m afraid: and a queer sort of philosopher,’ Berlin said in an interview with British journalist Henry Brandon.⁴ Whether it is portraying a person’s character or analysing his thoughts and actions, his pen is insightful and lively, and his intellectual ability, which always delineates its objects in a broad historical context and positions them accurately, is nothing short of brilliant. Indeed, Berlin himself seems to me to be one of the few first-class examples of an intellectual historian, whatever he himself may say.

But unfortunately, as far as I know, apart from ‘Alexander Herzen’⁵ and ‘Moses Hess’,⁶ Berlin’s analysis of people has not yet

hereafter FELJ; references to the English original cite Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty*, ed Henry Hardy (Oxford, 2002), hereafter L, the volume that replaced and incorporated *Four Essays on Liberty*.

³ Tatsuo Hayashi (1896–1984), a prominent modern Japanese liberal thinker who specialised in Western intellectual and cultural history, and praised IB and Edmund Wilson as first-class modern critics. He was a friend of Hagihara, whose review of *The Collected Works of Hayashi Tatsuo*, ‘Please Speak Softly’, was also included in *Shoshoishū*, 135–56.

⁴ *Conversations with Henry Brandon* (London, 1966: Andre Deutsch) [hereafter ‘Brandon’], 35. The interview is also available [on this website](#), with the original pagination inserted.

⁵ ‘Gerutsen hen’, trans. Tadashi Hagihara, *World Literature Taikei* 82 (Tokyo, 1964: Chikuma Shobō), 449–55.

⁶ ‘Mōzesu Hesu no shōgai to iken’, trans. Kei Koike, *Misuzu* 14 (1972) no. 3 (February [sc. March]), 22–31; no. 6 (June), 38–48; no. 7 (July), 45–58.

[1972] been introduced to Japan. Moreover, it seems that Berlin's works, even if we restrict ourselves to the genre of portraits, take the form of book reviews, lectures and prefaces, and remain scattered. [159] For example, I have a recording of a lecture entitled **'Turgenev and the Dilemma of the Liberal Intellectual'** given by Berlin in November 1970 in Oxford. The BBC recorded his talk and broadcast it on the radio. I happened to be in England at the time, and I taped the broadcast and still occasionally take it out and, so to speak, secretly attend Berlin's lecture. It seems that this lecture hasn't been published yet.⁷

Berlin seems to be the type of scholar who likes to talk, but doesn't like to write. Moreover, he does not like to talk in formal settings, such as lectures, but prefers personal conversations. He likes meetings and other occasions where he can speak freely and idly, or, to use a popular, slang expression, *daberu* [idle chatter].⁸ And it is during such idle conversation that he makes especially incisive remarks. Berlin needs a modern version of the biographer Boswell – who described Samuel Johnson's words and deeds in detail – with a tape recorder, though this would probably horrify Berlin.⁹

I have encountered such a display by Berlin only once. I met him by chance, and brought up the name of Thomas Buckle, the author of *History of Civilization in England*, a Victorian-era historian who is almost forgotten today, [160] but is unforgettable to me because of his strong influence on Yukichi Fukuzawa.¹⁰ On hearing Buckle's name, Berlin explained his influence in Germany and East

⁷ A revised version was published as *Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament* (Oxford, 1972: Clarendon Press).

⁸ *Daberu* is a portmanteau word, combining *shaberu* ('talk') and *da* ('wasteful'), and not normally used in writing. It was popularly used in Hagihara's time but is no longer used much in informal conversation today.

⁹ Brandon 11, where the interviewer describes Berlin as 'utterly horrified by day the idea' of a taped conversation, and cites people saying: 'if only he had a Boswell with a tape-recorder!']

¹⁰ Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835–1901), Japanese author, writer, teacher, translator, entrepreneur, journalist and leader who founded Keio University.

European countries, especially in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, where Buckle was all the rage. Berlin spoke considerably as well as prolifically, so that I could understand him despite my limited knowledge of Russian intellectual history. For example, Berlin told me that in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* the line 'Have you read Buckle?' occurs.¹¹ So just because I had mentioned Buckle's name, I was immediately transported into the flow of Russian intellectual history from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, with Berlin's excellent guidance and explanation. I enjoyed the intellectual pleasure of looking at the scenery of the world of Russian ideas. For this I am indebted to Fukuzawa.

Then our conversation shifted to the problem of Romanticism. It is a central concern for Berlin, currently close to his heart, to encapsulate Romanticism. He says that the fundamental value of life changes from truth to sincerity in the middle of the seventeenth century. Then, while going to and fro in the great river of modern European intellectual history, Berlin mentioned the problem of Carl Schmitt's *Political Romanticism*,¹² and told me about the importance of Berlioz's *Memoirs*.

[161] However, I can't quote the whole of my notebook entry for the day I met Berlin, so I shall stop here. I'm a lazy person who rarely keeps notes, but on that day I did, probably because I was so excited.

Now, returning to the main subject, the personal portraits by Berlin that have not yet been introduced to Japan, there is a good chance that I have overlooked some of these for the reason given above, but first of all comes *Karl Marx* (1939), then *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953),¹³ which brilliantly illuminates Tolstoy's historical

¹¹ Spoken by the clerk Semen Panteleevich Epikhodov at the beginning of Act 2.

¹² Translated by Kazuo Ōkubo (Tokyo, 1970: Misuzu Shobō). The 'problem' may be that Schmitt regarded liberalism as Romantic.

¹³ Translated into Japanese by Hidekazu Kawai (Tokyo, 1973: Chūōkōron Sha).

views, citing the French thinker Joseph de Maistre, who preaches the need for absolutism. While apparently writing a review of Churchill's Second World War memoirs, he vividly portrays the contrast between Churchill and Roosevelt, the wartime leaders of the United Kingdom and the United States, who had significantly different personalities and views of life.¹⁴ When writing a portrait of the historian Namier, who delivered a catastrophic blow to the *ideenhistorisch* approach to British political history and was therefore diametrically opposed to Berlin in method, he used gentle brushstrokes, and provided detailed personal recollections.¹⁵ In 'Georges Sorel' he succinctly brings out the contemporary meaning of Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence*.¹⁶ In 'The Originality of Machiavelli' he identifies the quintessence of Machiavelli's thought: namely, his claim that the pagan and Christian ethical systems can never be reconciled, not the separation of politics and morals that Croce portrays. [162] The essay shows that Machiavelli bequeathed to posterity the perennial problem of the co-existence of pagan and Christian ethics, and the difficulty of the need for constant choice.¹⁷ There is also the previously mentioned 'Turgenev and the Dilemma of the Liberal Intellectual', and I remember that there was a treatise about the German historical philosopher Herder, but I cannot now confirm its whereabouts.¹⁸

Of course, I'm sure there are other personal impressions I don't know about, but a quick glance at this list should give us a rough idea of the variety and breadth of Berlin's work.

¹⁴ *Mr Churchill in 1940* (London, [1964]; John Murray); repr. in PI.

¹⁵ 'L. B. Namier: A Personal Impression', in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *A Century of Conflict, 1850–1950: Essays for A. J. P. Taylor* (London, 1966: Hamish Hamilton); repr. in PI.

¹⁶ *The Times Literary Supplement*, 31 December 1971; repr. in AC.

¹⁷ 'The Originality of Machiavelli', in Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972: Sansoni); repr. in AC.

¹⁸ 'Herder and the Enlightenment', in Earl R. Wasserman (ed.), *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1965: Johns Hopkins Press); repr. as 'J. G. Herder', *Encounter* 25 no. 1 (July 1965), no. 2 (August 1965); repr. in TCE.

The process of intellectual formation

Born in 1909 in Riga, then the capital of Livonia, a governorate of the Russian Empire, he grew up in that Empire until he moved to England in 1921, and Russian was his native language. This undoubtedly gave him a big advantage. In addition, because the culture of Western Europe, which goes back to ancient Greece and Rome, was firmly grafted on to him in England, he has a second string to his bow, since he knows the cultural scene west of Suez and Moscow. The significance of the world to the west of Suez is especially marked [163] if we keep in mind that he is of Jewish descent.

When Brandon asked him what his most influential experience was in the process of forming his ideas, Berlin responded by mentioning his relationship with John Austin, his study of Marx, and his wartime sojourn in America. All three are interesting.

Austin, an Oxford logician who died in 1960 at the young age of forty-nine, was a skilled philosopher who undertook the most rigorous linguistic analysis; although unprolific, he was very famous in the world of professional philosophy. Austin and Berlin were both living in All Souls College, Oxford, as research fellows in the early 1930s, philosophising together almost every day during term time, sometimes for hours. Berlin said that they talked about almost everything, not only philosophy, and that this relationship continued for a couple of years. What Berlin learned from Austin was not a particular philosophical theory or doctrine, but ‘rigour of thought, boldness, originality and power of mind’,¹⁹ and in that respect Berlin recalls that he ‘probably gained more from him than from anyone else’.²⁰

After a while Berlin wrote his first book, *Karl Marx*, but before that he had undergone the logical ‘trial’ of rigorous linguistic analysis, one of the extreme forms of British empiricism. Moreover, it is significant that he learned it in the course of

¹⁹ Brandon 35.

²⁰ *ibid.*

everyday life through constant conversations with his close friends, [164] which mattered to him a great deal. If I may speculate, there is no doubt that behind Marx's thought, which Berlin would soon work on, a magnificent fortress of German idealism stands, but its appearance is immediately intimidating and scary. It seems that Berlin completed his mental preparation by the experience of linguistic analysis, with the result that he would not be scared by German idealism.

The second important experience that Berlin cites is his study of Marx. This enabled him to see clearly the importance of the history of ideas, and the relationship and mutual interaction between ideas and practice. Tracing this history became a lifelong concern. In fact, Marx was 'a really strong influence', Berlin said.

Nevertheless, Berlin does not recognise Marxism as an entire system, and his opposition to Marx's deterministic thinking is repeatedly stated in 'Historical Inevitability'.²¹ Regardless of his critique of Marxism, Berlin has consistently emphasised the greatness of Marx as a thinker, from his book on Marx to this day. His attitude is that of a genuine liberal.

It is true that Marx exaggerates one side of things. But how many great thinkers did not do that? 'One-sidedness is a vice of great virtues.'²² Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, [165] Darwin, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Lenin, Freud – all of them did it, didn't they? '[I]f they hadn't exaggerated I don't think they would have broken through the crust of complacent acceptance of existing conventions, which they needed to do in order to put something original and disturbing before the public.'²³

There is no space to give a more detailed explanation of Berlin's view of Marx, but two points are clear. First, Berlin's understanding of ideas is spread over a broad canvas, and the ethical attitude that underpins it is his tolerance. He has a sense of balance that does not fall into the error of Marx's one-sided

²¹ FELJ i.

²² Brandon 21.

²³ Brandon 22.

interpretation, because he immediately questions Marx's one-sidedness and contrasts it with that of other great thinkers. He also takes a wide historical perspective when he finds in Marx the bloodline of Enlightenment rationalism, or even liberalism. But it is a mistake simply to reduce the tolerance that grounds Berlin's understanding to a matter of erudition. We should keep in mind that the ethical underpinning that supports his erudition is the kind of toleration discussed in 'John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life'.²⁴

The second point is closely related to the first. In general, Berlin clearly has a deep respect for ideas, [166] or in other words the work of the human spirit, and its consequences. Ideas are sometimes erroneous, dogmatic, one-sided, but they constantly open up new horizons of human potential. Berlin always seems to be unaffectedly impressed by such ideas, and by the effort required to generate them.

It goes without saying that, combined with toleration, this respect can help create a fair understanding of different positions. But perhaps the most unbearable thing for Berlin is the spiritual characteristic of modern times described in 'Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century': 'For in the past there were conflicts of ideas; whereas what characterises our time is less the struggle of one set of ideas against another than the mounting wave of hostility to all ideas as such.'²⁵ Furthermore, at the end his essay on Namier Berlin echoes Marx's words: Namier 'might well have said "Above all, I am not a Namierist."²⁶ This conclusion shows his respect for those who pioneer new ideas, his vigilant awareness of those who distort and diminish them, and his common sense in distinguishing between the two.

So is Berlin a pessimist? The answer can be gleaned from Berlin's third important experience, his wartime American life, and his resulting view of America.

²⁴ FELJ ii.

²⁵ FELJ i 151.

²⁶ *ibid.* 230.

[167] The year 1939, when Berlin's biography *Karl Marx* was published, was the year when the Second World War broke out. In due course Berlin was recruited and went to the United States, where he worked from 1940 to 1946 for the British government, first in New York, and then at the British Embassy in Washington. He was tasked with analysing and reporting on the trends of opinion in American wartime society.

It is very probably true to say that someone like Berlin, who likes to talk but not to write, has never wielded his pen as vigorously as at this time. His analysis of the situation sent from the United States was so outstanding that every time it arrived, the staff of the Foreign Office were vying to read it. It also impressed Prime Minister Churchill deeply.

There was a sequel to these events which is often related, though I don't know if it is true or false. Churchill, impressed by Berlin's reports, sent him a telegram when he was still sailing across the Atlantic after finishing his job in the United States, asking him to come to dinner after arriving in London. However, Irving Berlin, a famous American composer of popular songs, was on the same ship, and the telegram was mistakenly delivered to the composer. A few days later, it was the composer, not the philosopher whom Churchill expected, who appeared at the dinner party at 10 Downing Street.²⁷

[168] After this minor digression, I should return to the main story. At the core of Berlin's American experience were the strong impressions and fully sympathetic recollections he derived from the promoters of Roosevelt's New Deal policy. By 1966, when Brandon interviewed Berlin, the idealistic radiance and passion once evoked by the term 'New Deal' had already disappeared from the hearts of many people. None the less, Berlin told Brandon

²⁷ This muddled version of the famous story appears nowhere else. There was no telegram; IB had not finished his job; he was not sailing across the Atlantic; it was a lunch, not a dinner; Irving Berlin was in London, not on a ship. For the authentic version see F 478–80.

clearly that ‘I remain an unrepentant and lifelong admirer of the New Deal and its makers.’²⁸

So what in the US New Deal attracted Berlin so much? Berlin says that, even if there are only a few people with strong determination and ideals working hard together, they can have a great impact on the development of societies, and human beings never do the bidding of ‘impersonal forces’.²⁹ By getting to know the promoters of the New Deal policy and witnessing its effects, he further strengthened his conviction.

In America at that time there was no fear of or contempt for ideas. There was no opposition to the intellect. No one was afraid to be called an intellectual, or even doctrinaire. [169] People ‘were not over-impressed by the wisdom of businessmen or the wisdom of other empirically successful persons’.³⁰ People did not doubt the role of the intellect; they were convinced of the power of ideas and tried to put them into practice. Berlin wondered if such a vibrant spiritual atmosphere has ever existed among Britain’s conservative rulers, to this day.

Of course, Berlin was still young and had a strong interest in the politics of the time. In particular, we should not forget that the Europe he experienced in the 1930s was in a terrible condition. It was in the grip of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Chamberlain, Daladier, Franco etc. It was an unbearably dark and treacherous era for those who believed in human progress, freedom and dignity.

For Berlin, who came from this Europe, the only beacon of democracy at that time that continued to illuminate the future of humankind was the United States under President Roosevelt. ‘If President Roosevelt had died for some reason, say at the beginning of the 1930s, then it seems to me that the history of mankind would have been very different from what it was, and a very, very great

²⁸ Brandon 37.

²⁹ Brandon 35.

³⁰ *ibid.*

deal worse. In that sense I'm a full believer in the role of the individual in history.³¹

If you examine these recollections of Berlin's American experience, you find that a fundamentally [170] idealistic or progressive element gradually becomes apparent in Berlin's thought. At the same time, the answer to the suspicion that Berlin might be a pessimist has already emerged. Berlin's perception of reality – 'the mounting wave of hostility to all ideas as such' – is too sharp and therefore too harsh for him to be regarded as a simple optimist. Nevertheless, deep in his heart there is trust in human potential, spontaneous creativity, love of freedom, sense of responsibility, and even the belief that we should never lose faith in human beings. For that reason, I think Berlin is essentially an optimist. Or we can say that he could never be any kind of pessimist.

In fact, when Berlin recalled the 1930s for Brandon, he said: 'The situation is nothing like as gloomy as it was in the 1930s. Whenever one wants to keep one's courage up in the face of all the disasters that we are facing, one begins to remember what a nightmare it was to be young and inadequately equipped with ordinary human attributes and to be living in Europe in the 1930s. There can have been few worse periods.'³²

Needless to say, there are many people who don't see the Europe of the 1930s – and the same applies to the Japan of the 1930s – as being such a 'nightmare' era as Berlin does, and there are also many people who have absolutely no interest in human progress, freedom and dignity. When I think about it, the fact that Berlin dedicates his *Four Essays on Liberty* [171] to none other than Stephen Spender touches my heart.

When I wrote about George Orwell, I mentioned Spender briefly.³³ The poet and critic Spender was a contemporary of

³¹ Brandon 37.

³² Brandon 37–8.

³³ In 'The Revenge of the Dead: George Orwell, "My Country Right or Left"', *Shoshobuyū*, 95–115.

Berlin, born in the same year, who studied at Oxford in the same period. But unlike Berlin, and like the poet Auden, he had a Communist period in the 1930s. He then left the Communist Party, and is now worthy of being called a liberal, just like Berlin. Berlin perhaps sees Spender as an intellectual comrade who lived with integrity in the 1930s, when the question of Communist Party membership arose. Otherwise there would be no dedication to Spender at the beginning of *Four Essays on Liberty*.

The perennial topic

We have reached a point where we have to introduce the contents of *Four Essays on Liberty* in a great hurry. As I mentioned earlier, the subject of ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’ is growing hostility to ideas, which Berlin described in these words:

For the first time it was now conceived that the most effective way of dealing with questions, particularly those recurrent issues which had perplexed and often tormented original and honest minds in every generation, was not by employing the tools of reason, [172] still less those of the most mysterious capacities called ‘insight’ and ‘intuition’, but by obliterating the questions themselves.³⁴

‘Obliterating the questions themselves’ – that is, if you don’t think about them, there can be no problems in this world, and technology will handle everything perfectly well. Berlin identified this trend in modern society as intellectual decadence.

The next essay, ‘Historical Inevitability’, deals with two positions, relativism and determinism, which, taken to their logical conclusion, would deprive the individual of freedom of choice and destroy the concept of individual responsibility. Therefore the essay is a harsh critique of both:

Two powerful doctrines are at large in contemporary thought, relativism and determinism. The first of these, for all that it is

³⁴ L 76, FELJ i 226.

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represented as being an antidote to overweening self-confidence, or arrogant dogmatism, or moral self-satisfaction, is nevertheless founded on a fallacious interpretation of experience; the second, for all that its chains are decked with flowers, and despite its parade of noble stoicism and the splendour and vastness of its cosmic design, nevertheless represents the universe as a prison.³⁵

The next essay, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, is centred on the conflict between the concept of ‘negative’ freedom (e.g. freedom from domination) and the concept of ‘positive’ freedom (e.g. freedom to dominate). The latter is a ‘strange [...] reversal’.³⁶ As Berlin summarises it, ‘The sage knows you better than you [173] know yourself.’³⁷ He gives us a close analysis of the dangers of promoting the transition from liberalism to authoritarianism and from individualism to totalitarianism.

In these two critiques, ‘Historical Inevitability’ and ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, what Berlin is trying to protect is the individual’s freedom of independent choice and the sense of responsibility that supports it. However, individuals have been slaughtered one after another on the great historical altars such as ‘justice or progress or the happiness of future generations, or the sacred mission or emancipation of a nation or race or class, or even liberty itself’.³⁸ Looking back on history, Berlin says that there is one belief that bears the greatest responsibility above all others: ‘This is the belief that somewhere, in the past or in the future, in divine revelation or in the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution.’³⁹

This is connected to a remark that appears in the next essay, ‘John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life’: ‘[Mill] assumes that finality

³⁵ L 155, FELJ i 276.

³⁶ L 198, FELJ ii 355.

³⁷ L 196, FELJ ii 351.

³⁸ L 212, FELJ ii 381.

³⁹ L 212, FELJ ii 381–2.

is impossible, and implies that it is undesirable too.⁴⁰ Berlin further explains the core of Mill's thought as follows:

[174] At the centre of Mill's thought and feeling lies [...] his passionate belief that men are made human by their capacity for choice – choice of evil and good equally. Fallibility, the right to err, as a corollary of the capacity for self-improvement; distrust of symmetry and finality as enemies of freedom – these are the principles which Mill never abandons. He is acutely aware of the many-sidedness of the truth and of the irreducible complexity of life, which rules out the very possibility of any simple solution, or the idea of a final answer to any concrete problem.⁴¹

In other words, uniformity – which is also another word for 'finality' – is the enemy of freedom, and respect for diversity – that is toleration – is the 'inner citadel'⁴² of freedom. Berlin argues that it is Mill's position, but it seems to me that it is Berlin's own inner voice speaking.

Mill said that in an era of conformity 'the mere example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service'.⁴³ He also said that 'If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.'⁴⁴ [175] These too could probably be Berlin's own words.

What kind of advice, then, is given by Berlin in these four essays, given his clarification of the various difficulties that freedom is currently facing and the various obstacles that face us

⁴⁰ L 234, FELJ ii 420.

⁴¹ L 237, FELJ ii 426.

⁴² L 246, FELJ ii 442.

⁴³ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London, 1859), chapter 3: 274–5 in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. M. Robson and others (Toronto/London, 1963–91), vol. 18. Cited at L 239–40, FELJ ii 430.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, chapter 2, 229. Cited at L 242, FELJ ii 434.

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before we consider freedom? His advice may seem like nothing new, no more than a stale prescription, especially in Japan's intellectual climate, where craving for stimulation and novelty is widespread. 'Yet what solutions have we found, with all our new technological and psychological knowledge and great new powers, save the ancient prescription advocated by the creators of humanism – Erasmus and Spinoza, Locke and Montesquieu, Lessing and Diderot – reason, education, self-knowledge, responsibility; above all, self-knowledge? What other hope is there for men, or has there ever been?'⁴⁵

There are two things I should like people to think about when they feel, after reading this, that Berlin's words are old-fashioned. The first is that the issue of freedom is both an old and a new issue that is perennial for mankind. Secondly, it may be a novel attitude⁴⁶ on his part to sift through such old and new problems over and over again. Viewed from where we stand today, new things can exist only as old things.

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⁴⁵ L 243–4, FELJ ii 437–8.

⁴⁶ Hagihara may be implicitly criticising the tendency, sometimes said to be especially strong in Japan, to follow new intellectual trends uncritically.