

What is Intellectual History?

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RICHARD WHATMORE

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著者:Richard Whatmore

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What is intellectual history? Those who practice intellectual history have described themselves as eavesdroppers upon the conversations of the past, explorers of alien ideological worlds, and translators between historic societies and our own, while their critics have often derided them as narrow-mindedly studying the ideas of dead white men. Some consider the discipline to be among the most important in the humanities and social sciences because it facilitates a better understanding of contemporary ideological programmes and facilitates their rational evaluation.

In this engaging and refreshing introduction to the field, Richard Whatmore begins by examining the historical development of intellectual history, before dissecting its various methodological debates. He presents various alternative ways in which we should think about intellectual history, as well as presenting his own very clear definition of the field. Drawing on a wide range of historical examples, Whatmore shows how ideas – philosophical, political, religious, scientific, artistic – originated in their historical context and how they were both shaped by, and helped to shape, the societies in which they originated. He ends by casting a critical eye over the current state of intellectual history, and a brief discussion of how it might develop in the future.

作者介绍:

目录:

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标签

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评论

更像是一本专门介绍剑桥学派尤其是Quentin Skinner的小册子，主旨就是linguistic contextualism大法好

这本书是个很好的导读，其标志就是提供了一份有效的reading list，而且对每个思想史学者的研究都给出了正反两面的评价，看得出作者做过很好的读书笔记。作者的关怀不仅在于介绍思想史是什么，还试图回答思想史是否有用这样的现实问题。方法论部分主要介绍的还是Cambridge School的linguistic contextualism，核心文本还是Skinner和James Tully的两篇文章。书中对于Skinner、Pocock和John Dunn的论著都有比较细致的分析。但美中不足的就是，所谓思想史不应该仅局限于政治思想史，因此读完比较好奇的是，思想的来源和关联除了政治方面，在教育、社会等其他方面的情况到底如何？此外，欧美思想史研究目前进展如何？还是得认真列个书单，一个一个读过来。

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