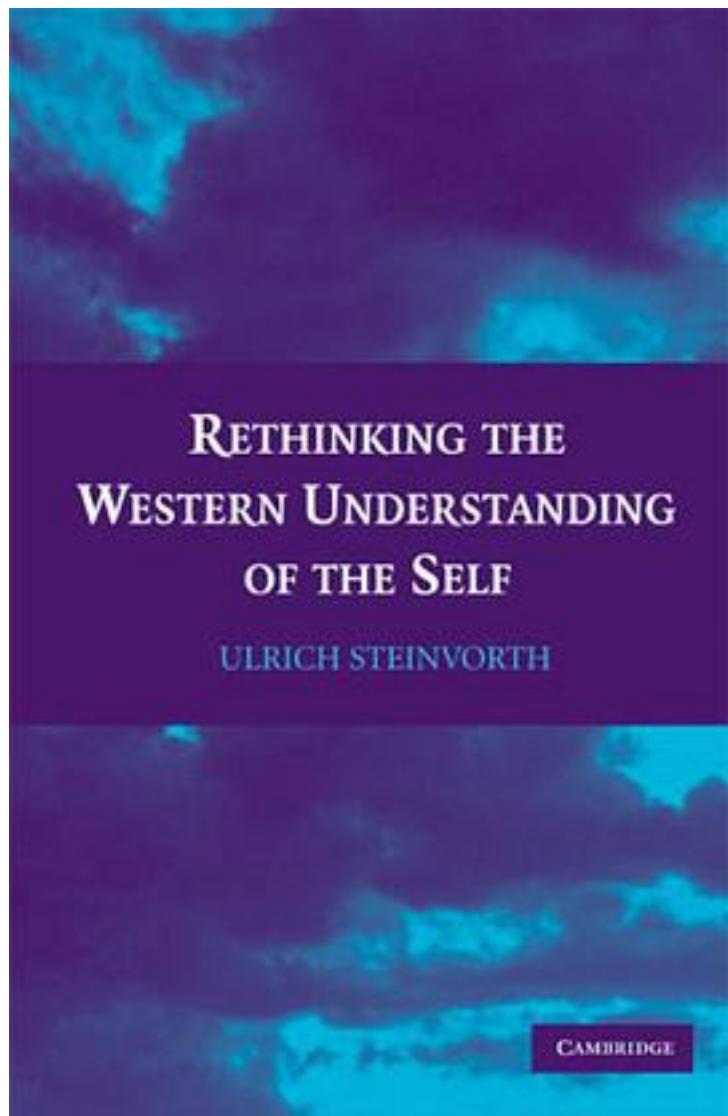


Rethinking the Western Understanding of the Self



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出版者:Cambridge University Press

出版时间:2009-06-22

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780521757072

Ulrich Steinvorth offers a fresh analysis and critique of rationality as a defining element in Western thinking. Steinvorth argues that Descartes' understanding of the self offers a more plausible and realistic alternative to the prevailing understanding of the self formed by the Lockean conception and utilitarianism. When freed from Cartesian dualism, such a conceptualization enables us to distinguish between self and subject. Moreover, it enables us to understand why individualism - one of the hallmarks of modernity in the West - became a universal ideal to be granted to every member of society; how acceptance of this notion could peak in the seventeenth century; and why it is now in decline, though not irreversibly so. Most importantly, the Cartesian concept of the self presents a way of saving modernity from the dangers that it now encounters.

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