

Nidditch, but also in annotated and commented facsimile reprints of period editions and publications. Of course, Locke's way of ideas was immensely influential; but this does not make it a uniquely interesting case—think of the dissemination and reception of the Port Royal *Logic*, of Berkeley's works, or of Hume's essay 'Of Miracles'.

On another score, however, the critics of the history of ideas should, I think, be resolutely resisted. A robust history of ideas should not avoid, and has no need to apologize for, taking as its objects authors, texts, and theories that are still of interest from a theoretical point of view. This obviously poses some particular problems—the most obvious one being that theoretical interpretations are for the most part misreadings from a historical point of view. But it is worth remembering that these are not specific to historians of ideas, of the sciences, and of philosophy; we share them with, say, the historians of the arts and of music. Some creative appropriations may be irritating, even infuriating. And yet they are also a challenge, and a challenge worth taking up: the attention of philosophers lends our historical work an edge often absent from other areas of history. So not only may philosophers profit from the company of historians of ideas—the reverse is also the case.

The persistent theoretical interest in some figures or doctrines is not only a source of irritation and stimulation. Hume's *Treatise* is still interesting for its treatment of causation—which has been read, more or less creatively and interestingly, for two and a half centuries, by, among others, anonymous contemporary reviewers, Thomas Reid, Kant, Husserl, and so on, to Saul Kripke and Simon Blackburn. It is true that being part of such a tradition may well prevent us from having a historically unpreconceived point of view over our object—how can our Hume be really pre-Kantian, or pre-Husserlian, etc.? But then of course it is more than questionable whether such an unprejudiced point of view on a past fact is ever attainable. On the other hand, where the text has been opened up by such a variety of powerful readings, and has thus become a 'classic' in T. S. Eliot's sense, our study of, and presence in its tradition may make us more aware of what we are doing and why. I am convinced that such a reformed history of ideas can re-integrate history and philosophy, the respect due to the pastness of a past work, and the moral and doctrinal engagement of present-day appropriations.

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Intellectual History and Dutch Cartesianism

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My personal interest in an International Society for Intellectual History is determined by my interest in Dutch Cartesianism. The history of this phenomenon is essentially that of the transformation of a non-academic philosophy into an academic philosophy, which means a history of how concepts change through and in the confrontation with the institutional and political (religious) contingencies of a certain period in Dutch history. Moreover, Cartesianism developed into a cultural phenomenon with a strong impact on religion, politics, and literature. I think this makes it an ideal subject of intellectual history and consequently an ideal focus for an international conference in intellectual history.

Furthermore, I have a more general interest in such a society, not only because it allows representatives of small countries to broaden their scope and to find for their ideas a more international audience, but also because a number of Dutch institutions would find in such a society a natural ally. I think especially of the Faculty of Philosophy at Utrecht University, which has a strong section in history of philosophy (programmes concentrating on the editing of texts and their 'reception'), graduate schools in philosophical (the section History of Philosophy) and cultural history (the section History of Ideas) and societies for seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century studies.

For anybody connected with these institutions, with all of which I am affiliated, I think an International Society of Intellectual History would be extremely useful.

Finally, I hope it is understood that I am ready to serve the Society in any stage of its evolution, before and after its foundation.