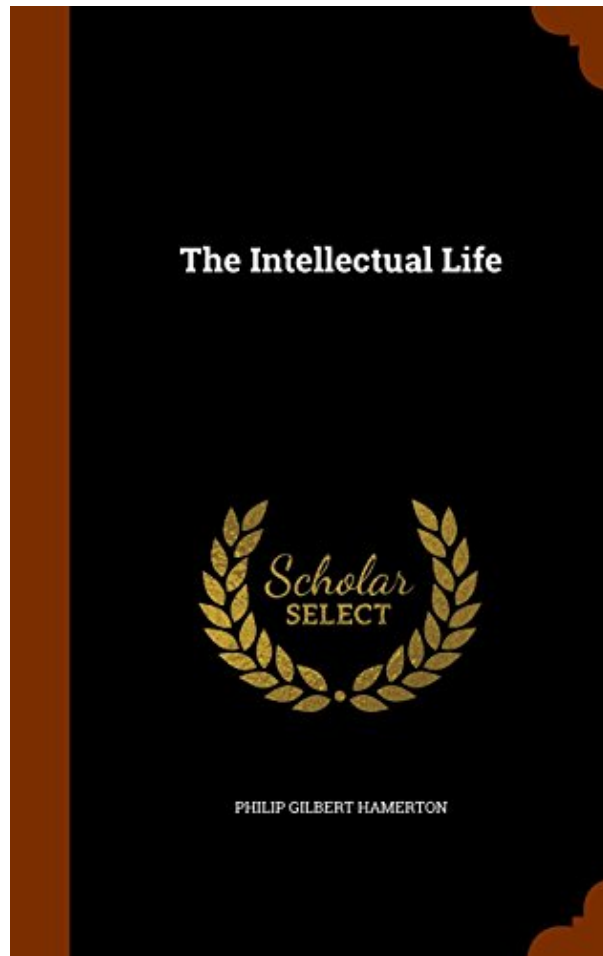


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- Published on: 2015-11-04
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x 1.25" w x 6.14" l, 2.17 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 580 pages

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A Unique and Wonderful Book

By Fu Xi

This book is not about being an intellectual in the American sense of showing off, but about how to be a scholar or other whose work is based on thought. In my case it is science and ancient Chinese thought. The advice in the book applies equally to both fields.

It points out that intellectual work requires asceticism and this is quite true in my experience. Many hours must be spent in study and at the lab bench or computer. While interaction with other scholars is part of the reward, one cannot contribute without the solitary hours of reading and writing.

The book is somewhat repetitious and, like most French philosophy, highly abstract. Yet it is the only source I have found that addresses the life of the mind so completely.

Highly recommended both for those beginning a life of scholarship and for accomplished scholars who want to reflect on their lives.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

The Intellectual Life by Philip Gilbert Hamerton ---Paperback 8x11

By Gary Jedynak

Hamerton uses the word 'intellectual' in the circa 1870's European sense. With careful attention to that word and the 19th century authorship, this book's subject matter itself is perhaps the best book of its kind. For those intellectuals seeking guidance or mentors who seeking guidance for their mentees Hamerton's elegant writing style is a delight for all those who are so intrigued. Hamerton wrote several other equally prescient books.

Hamerton presents his thesis and personal concern using many short stories about the experience of his friends, acquaintances, and his own life. These individuals had very different beginnings in life yet found themselves on similar trajectories. Many if not most of us might (have) find this book life-changing if read seriously while young. However it is edifying at any age. Hamerton gently reminds us throughout life is short and smart people amidst their dreams often overestimate what they can do in a lifetime. Hence they often make a mess in subsequent shortfalls. As a good example of someone avoiding this consequence of haste in living thoughtfully, Hamerton recounts the wisdom of his father's approach to life.

As he used the male pronoun Hamerton throughout, note he writes for both genders (if you read carefully) explaining British culture (~1873) did not recognize female intellectualism. Hence few young women were able to get support for such an orientation. Hamerton clearly observes there was no reason why women could not seek development of a higher intellect. Several of his stories were about young women.

On the topic of the welfare of unmarried men, who as men found it easier to develop as intellectuals in 1873 circa Britain, he laments their frustration with finding suitable marriage prospects. These few women would understand and accept their husbands' psychology and be undaunted by their often uncommon personalities. He notes the unlikelihood of this type of match might lead to poor alternative choices. Happily for Hamerton he did find just the right woman although late in life.

The type font chosen for this publishing, perhaps for economy, has a very thin letter style (ie font weight) and for me is somewhat harder to read. Otherwise this soft cover version is well-made. There are the online versions however as a bookshelf destined gift this book is a classic. There are more recent hardcover reprints. Thus the paperback is a bargain. Otherwise it will be rare book prices for the 1873 printing. Beware there is another book of very similar title but different author. My five star rating is for the original literary work and does not reflect the quality of this particular publication.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Intelligent and timely book

By Siobhan Lyons

I bought this book off another site after reading a snippet in another book. "The Intellectual Life" is a very shrewd piece of work, the writing both articulate and timely. There is philosophical advice on almost every sort of topic, from intellectual friendships to sickness and solitude to nonconformity. Hamerton's writing is sensible, straight-forward but intelligent, and always insightful. For a book written in the 1800s its commentary on life is still relevant in twenty-first century society. I consult this book quite often and always find myself surprised and amused by what is written. This is a neglected piece of work from a neglected writer in philosophy.

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