

Two hundred years ago, in 1810, Berlin University was founded by Wilhelm von Humboldt, a leading thinker of the German Enlightenment. This was the start of the modern university tradition, where teaching and research complemented each other. The tradition was emulated and developed in the U.S.A., Britain and other countries in the next century-and-a-half. In the last generation there have been fundamental challenges to this tradition, similar in many ways to those which weakened and distorted the early tradition in German principalities, towards the end of the nineteenth century. Today, little is left of the vibrant concept of higher education emerging from its post-Enlightenment roots.

The author of this work has spent most of his adult life in and around universities, in England, Scotland, and since 1977, in New Zealand. While well aware of the discrepancies, even in the hey-day of the modern university, between the idealised rhetoric and the realities, he has seen with dismay the progressive dismemberment since 1980 of a once-vigorous concept of higher education. In *The Subversion of Higher Education*, he describes the origins of the modern university concept, and analyses how it started to fall apart. An overall philosophy of higher education is presented, and developed in relation to major roles of higher education institutions – teaching and learning, assessment of students, research and the interplay between academia and commercial and non-commercial sectors outside its walls, and in administration and finance of academic institutions. Alongside the overall philosophy, this book also presents more detailed suggestions on how the original university concept can be revitalised. In no way are these recommendations an attempt to “turn back the clock” to a supposed golden age: It accepts that mass higher education is here to stay and that closer engagement with communities outside academia can and should be promoted. Nevertheless, in the process of rebuilding, it is hoped that some of Humboldt’s original notions of higher education can be retained, expanded and adapted to be fully attuned to the contemporary world.

ISBN 978-0-473-18227-4

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Robert Miller

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Origins, Analysis, Recommendations



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