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0521431654 - The European and American University since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays

Edited by Sheldon Rothblatt and Bjorn Wittrock

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Universities are said to be the ‘powerhouses’ of modern society. They educate leaders, and advance our basic knowledge of nature and society. Yet historically they have been vulnerable when meeting the challenges of dynamic industrial democracies, let alone modern totalitarian states. Today universities are at the centre of society’s attention, and must therefore balance a great number of contradictory demands and pressures. Can this be done within the structure and ethos of an historic institution called a ‘university’, or are such institutions now *passé* and merely part of a bureaucratically managed higher education ‘system’? These essays discuss the ways in which universities have coped with complexity since 1800, while retaining their basic ‘idea’. Special attention is accorded to the role of the State and the autonomous professions in defining the mission of universities and their struggle for individuality in the face of mounting pluralistic and bureaucratic pressures.

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